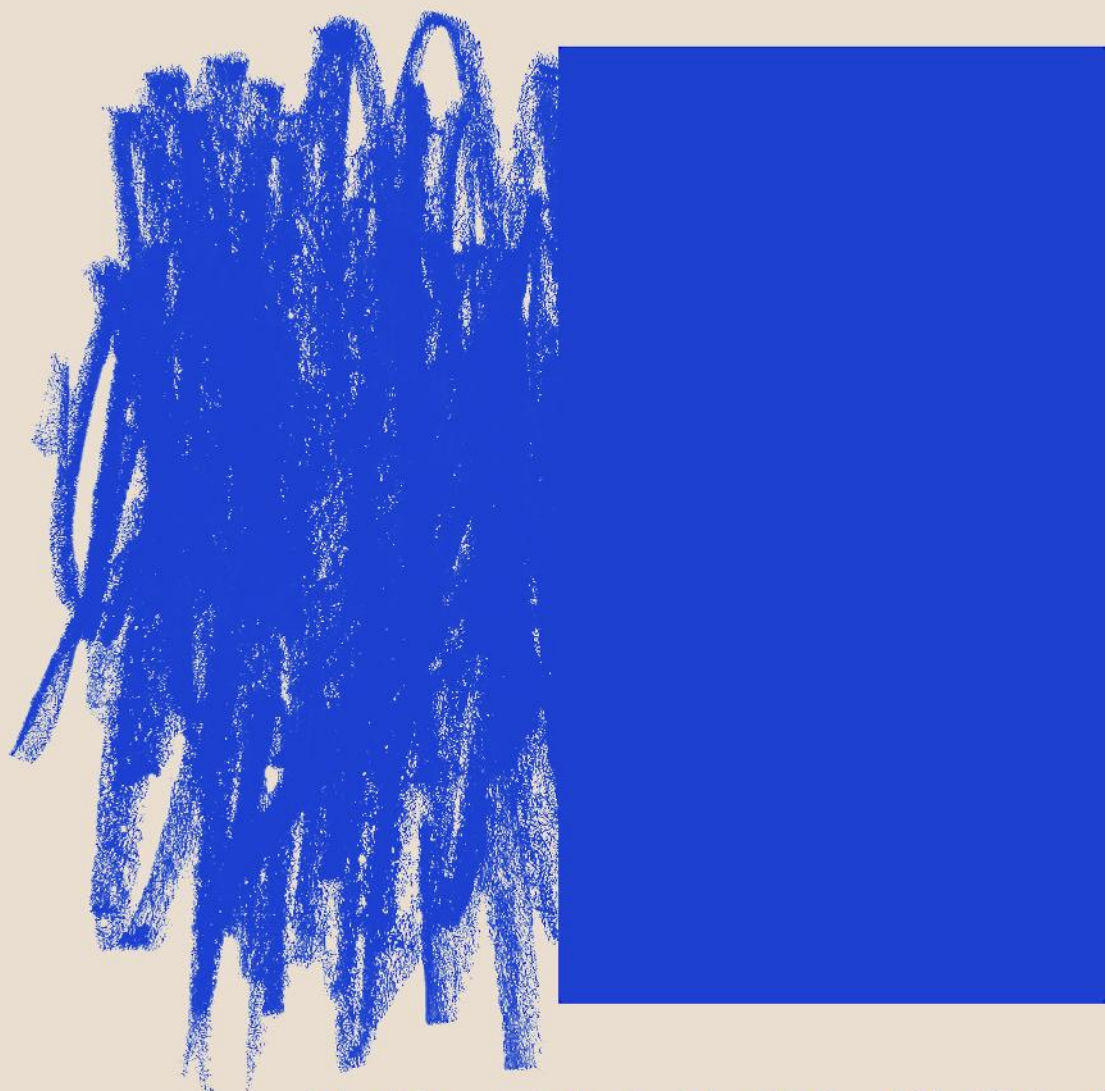


SENSEMAKING



AS PRACTICE



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Introduction

Design Studio IV: Strategic Design – SDG Futures for Madrid
Professors: Clara Llamas, Davide Fichera, Kaleb Cárdenas & Pablo Calderón Salazar
Bachelor in Design Year 4 & Bachelor in Design and Business Year 5.

Design Studio IV: Strategic Design, marks a pivotal moment in the Bachelor in Design: a creative space in which design operates –not only through objects, services, or interfaces– but through systems, communities, institutions, and futures. This book brings together the work of both cohorts from academic year 24.25: a term-long investigation into how strategic design can help shape more just, sustainable, and resilient ways of living in Madrid.

Across fifteen weeks, students engaged with complex societal challenges using a combination of systems thinking, ethnographic inquiry, futures methods, and transition-oriented design. They worked directly with communities, public spaces, informal networks, and local actors, grounding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in situated, place-based realities. The studio's ambition was not to 'solve' problems, but to reframe them, learn from the field, and propose strategic interventions capable of shifting relationships, narratives, infrastructures, and forms of collaboration.

WHY ARE WE STILL TALKING ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

It's a fair question.

The SDGs have been praised and printed everywhere, yet inequality deepens, ecosystems collapse, cities overheat, and many commitments remain a colourful but abstract grid.

So why bring them into a design studio again, asking students to engage with a framework often criticised as technocratic and insufficient?

Because ignoring them doesn't make the world less urgent, and dismissing them is a privilege the planet can't afford.



This year, we asked students to neither worship nor ‘solve’ the SDGs, but to trouble them: to bend them through the scale of a neighbourhood, a community, a body in the heat of August. From that stance, students worked with Latinx communities in Madrid, confronted sexual harassment in university spaces, questioned Gen Z overconsumption, reimagined learning ecologies, addressed urban heat in Puerta del Sol or Vallecas...

Their goal was not to ‘achieve’ SDG 10, 12, or 13, but to root global ambitions in local realities, turning abstraction into attentiveness, and moving from goals to relationships.

THE SCAFFOLDING BEHIND THE WORK

The studio unfolded through four modules, each building the strategic capacities needed to move from systemic understanding to future-oriented intervention:

1. Foundations: Exploring the systemic, organizational, and policy impacts of design

Students mapped systemic landscapes, identified stakeholders and flows, and articulated project boundaries through SDG localization.

2. Research in Strategic Design: Ethnography, embodied inquiry & sensemaking

Teams engaged in fieldwork, observing, interviewing, documenting, learning to read meaning through patterns, contradictions, and lived experiences.

3. Scenario building & prototyping: Designing futures

Students explored speculative approaches, crafted scenarios, and developed prototypes to test emerging possibilities.

4. Pathway to impact: Strategy, implementation & systemic transformation

Teams consolidated their proposals into strategic roadmaps, impact frameworks, and narratives that project toward the year 2030 and beyond.

REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONERS

Alongside the collective project work in this book, and throughout the four modules, each student developed a Strategic Bitácora: a semester-long reflective journal used as a working tool. Students used the Bitácora to track how the process was reshaping their learning. Excerpts and the reason for this exercise are explained in the following pages.

STRATEGIC DESIGN IS COLLECTIVE

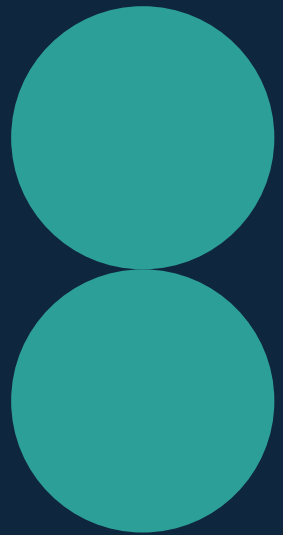
This book is not simply an archive of student projects. It is a collective artifact, a single body of work that mirrors the collaborative ethos of the studio itself.

Every team occupied the same 12-page template, ensuring coherence while allowing creative freedom within. Together, these contributions form a cohesive atlas of strategic design in action: local yet systemic, critical yet constructive, grounded yet speculative.

The result is both a snapshot of this moment in Madrid’s urban, social, and ecological realities, and an invitation to imagine how design can support transitions toward more equitable futures.

We, the four professors, hope that this book gives readers a sense of the care, rigor, imagination, and courage with which these students engaged with the world, and a sense of what design can become when it works not only on systems, but with the people who inhabit them.

Main Projects BID





A New Kind Of Partnership

DESIGNING REFLECTION
AS SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Team:

Giorgia Marullo
Nicole Mosora
Nikita Parrish
Marion Vincey

REFLECTION

“In a system built to stay invisible, the only real transformation begins when someone finally sees themselves.”

Abstract

Sex trafficking in Madrid is not only a criminal phenomenon, it is a self-sustaining system shaped by language, legal ambiguity, institutional fragmentation, and social blindness. Although many actors operate around it, police, courts, NGOs, churches, survivor networks and civil society, they often work in parallel, addressing the surface of the issue while its

psychological core remains untouched. Through systemic mapping, survivor testimonies, and comparative analysis with other distorted realities, we identified how trafficking persists through layers of fake normality: a vocabulary that disguises exploitation as “choice”, institutions that rely on incomplete data, and women whose dissociation becomes a survival mechanism. These intertwined perceptions make the problem systemic, complex, and resistant to traditional interventions.

Our intention is to intervene not in logistics or policy, but in perception. We propose a reflective trigger, a short film designed to evoke a moment of self-recognition, that can be used by different actors as a lightweight, shareable tool to unsettle this fake reality. The impact we seek is relational and cultural: shifting how people see sex trafficking, themselves, and the system surrounding them, enabling more honest connections and new possibilities for future structural change.

Foundations

SDG Relevance

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals is the anchor of our project, not as a bureaucratic framework but as a lens to reveal why sex trafficking in Madrid persists despite the presence of many actors. In this localized context, SDG 17 gains systemic relevance because the issue does not result from a single failure, but from misaligned relationships, fragmented responsibilities, and false assumptions shared across institutions, NGOs, survivor networks, and society. Madrid hosts a dense ecosystem of organizations formally committed to human rights and the SDGs. Yet, the reality surrounding prostitution, legally ambiguous, socially normalized, and linguistically softened as “sex work”, creates a fake normality that prevents meaningful collaboration.

SDG 17 targets, such as 17.16 (multi-stakeholder partnerships) and 17.17 (effective public–civil cooperation), become critical precisely because existing partnerships operate on distorted narratives, failing to reach the women inside the system.

Interdependence becomes evident: trafficking intersects with SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG 16 (justice). Yet these synergies cannot activate without confronting the psychological and linguistic mechanisms that obscure exploitation. Localizing SDG 17 here means enabling more honest, situated, relational connections capable of addressing what the system hides, rather than reproducing structural blindness.



SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals
Enabling collaboration across systemic actors.

Context Of Research

Our research is situated in Madrid, where prostitution exists in a legal grey zone: neither fully legal nor fully illegal. This ambiguity creates a complex systemic landscape shaped by institutions, infrastructures, and cultural logics that hide exploitation behind neutral vocabulary such as “services,” “clients,” “work,” and “choice.”

These terms construct a fake reality that reframes violence as routine and shapes how the system is collectively perceived. The ecosystem surrounding sex trafficking includes the police, the judiciary, municipal and regional authorities, NGOs, churches, survivor collectives, community organizations, and citizens.

These actors operate around the issue but rarely converge at its psychological core. System boundaries become blurred: data is inconsistent across agencies, responsibilities overlap, and access to survivors or women still inside the system is extremely constrained.

This fragmentation informed our mapping efforts, where we followed the journey of a woman through the system, from origin, migration, “job offer,” agency, exploitation, and finally, rescue, and positioned all influencing actors along this trajectory.

The community studied includes survivors, individuals inhabiting other fake-reality environments (e.g., toxic relational dynamics), and the broader public whose perceptions maintain systemic invisibility.

Constraints included ethical inaccessibility to current victims, limited transparency in official data, and institutional silence, all of which shaped our methodological choices. Grounded in situated design, this context mapping revealed that the problem space is upheld not only by structures but by perception, making the system deeply resistant to traditional interventions and requiring a relational, perceptual approach.

“Services.”
“Clients.”
“Work.”
“Choice.”

INVISIBLE SYSTEM

Research

Research Insights & Key Findings

Our research revealed that sex trafficking in Madrid persists not only through criminal structures but through patterns of perception and behavior shared across society, institutions, and the women inside the system.



Throughout interviews, systemic mapping, and sensemaking cycles, several insights emerged. Survivors describe a world where pain becomes routine, fear becomes discipline, and exploitation is renamed as "choice" or "work." This linguistic dissociation is not incidental, it is a survival mechanism.

The system also follows a predictable journey: origin → migration → promised job → recruitment → exploitation → rescue → survival, surrounded by police, courts, NGOs, churches, survivor networks, neighbours, and society at large. Despite Madrid being "a connected city" filled with SDG-focused organisations, trafficking remains almost invisible. Partnerships exist on paper but are built on false assumptions and sanitised language. Institutions claim to address the issue while unintentionally reproducing the same narratives that keep it hidden. Official numbers do not match across agencies, creating further confusion and distrust.

The legal grey zone of prostitution, institutional fragmentation, and limited access to victims create structural barriers. Many NGOs are hard to reach even for researchers; for women trapped inside the system, they are almost inaccessible. Trauma-based dissociation prevents external warnings from reaching those who most need support.

Our embodied inquiry and interviews with people who escaped toxic relational systems revealed a shared mechanism: awareness arises only through self-recognition, not external instruction. This insight suggested that the leverage point is not institutional reform but triggering a rupture in perception, the moment when someone sees themselves from the outside and the fake reality cracks for the first time.

Speculative urban intervention showing the reflective trigger in public space.

face it, face it, face it

AFR ÓNT ALO

face it, face it, face it

Futures & Interventions

Inputs & Activities

Our intervention builds on a combination of human, relational, and material resources identified throughout the research process. Human inputs include survivor narratives, insights from individuals who experienced other forms of fake realities, and our team's skills in systemic analysis, speculative prototyping, and narrative design. Relational inputs emerge from the existing ecosystem of actors in Madrid, NGOs, survivor associations, cultural centres, and community organisations, whose infrastructures can become hosts for screenings and dialogue.

Material and digital assets include the short film itself, documentation tools, interview protocols, and the maps and diagrams generated through our systemic inquiry. We also rely on pre-existing routines such as awareness events, educational workshops, and NGO support meetings, which provide natural entry points for using the reflective trigger. These inputs together form the foundation for a lightweight, shareable intervention that can circulate across different actors and contexts.

Our primary activity is the implementation of a reflective trigger: a short film designed to provoke a moment of self-recognition. The intervention unfolds in three phases.

First, we created a speculative prototype translating the dynamics of fake reality into a cinematic experience that avoids explicit violence while revealing emotional rupture. Second, we conducted testing sessions with individuals who had experienced other forms of distorted realities, such as toxic relational systems, to validate the mechanism of awareness without exposing victims of trafficking to harm. These sessions involved observation of embodied reactions, followed by semi-structured interviews. Finally, the activity expands into a dissemination strategy, in which screenings can be embedded into existing infrastructures: NGOs, cultural centres, classrooms, community events, or online channels. This strategy positions the film not as a standalone artifact but as a micro-intervention capable of travelling across multiple actors, generating conversations and shared recognition.

“If the system survives through fake realities, then the intervention must target the moment when that reality cracks.”

Leverage Points

Our intervention operates on systemic leverage points connected to perception, narratives, and information flows. The trafficking system in Madrid survives through layers of fake reality sustained by language, dissociation, institutional ambiguity, and social distance. Because these layers shape how actors see the issue, and how they see themselves, shifting perception becomes the most effective point of leverage. At the deepest level, the reflective trigger targets paradigms: the belief that prostitution is neutral “work,” or that exploitation can be

understood through sanitized vocabulary. By revealing internal contradiction, the film destabilizes this paradigm from within. At the narrative level, the intervention reframes the issue, creating a shared image that challenges the fake normality upheld by institutions and public discourse. At the relational level, the film becomes a connector: a tool that enables survivors, NGOs, communities, and citizens to confront the same uncomfortable truth, fostering new forms of partnership grounded in honesty rather than bureaucracy.

At the level of information flows, the intervention provides a lightweight mechanism that can circulate across actors, bypassing slow institutional processes and enabling awareness to scale through audiences, conversations, and collective reflection.

Large-scale projection of the reflective trigger in a cultural space. The eyes-detached from context—create an unsettling moment of being watched, mirroring the mechanism of self-recognition the prototype aims to provoke.





RECOGNITION

Consolidation

Outputs & Outcomes

The immediate outputs of our intervention include a speculative short film functioning as a reflective trigger, designed to provoke a moment of self-recognition in viewers. This film is not a final communication product but a diegetic prototype, intentionally constructed as a mechanism rather than a narrative. It embodies the insights of our systemic research and translates them into an experience capable of exposing the fake realities that sustain sex trafficking.

Additional outputs include:

- a testing protocol based on semi-structured interviews and embodied observation, allowing us to evaluate the rupture moment without exposing victims to harm;
- a set of visual documents, such as the system maps, stakeholder constellations, journey diagrams, zoom-in/zoom-out layers, and linguistic clusters generated during our sensemaking process;
- annotated storyboards and mirror-behaviour sketches that shaped the cinematic prototype;
- and reflective transcripts capturing how participants articulated their moment of recognition.

Together, these outputs make our strategic intention visible and testable, forming a toolkit that can be shared with NGOs, cultural centres, educators, and survivor-led groups to spark awareness, discussion, and further adaptation of the intervention¹⁷

Early outcomes emerged during prototype testing with individuals who had experienced other forms of fake realities. Participants showed behavioural and emotional shifts, including changes in posture, breathing, prolonged silence after viewing, and spontaneous reflections such as “I suddenly saw myself” or “This felt too close.” These embodied reactions suggest that the reflective trigger is capable of generating the rupture moment we aimed for.

At a relational level, the prototype enabled conversations that are typically avoided: viewers began discussing complicity, discomfort, denial, and the language that sanitizes exploitation. This conversational opening is a new affordance in a system where silence is a primary barrier.

At a systemic level, the prototype demonstrated that a lightweight intervention can circulate across actors without requiring heavy institutional coordination, creating new micro-routines, screenings, discussions, shared recognitions, that can seed future collaboration.



Speculative public display of the trigger at Cines Callao. By occupying a highly visible urban landmark, the intervention reaches diverse audiences and makes the hidden dynamics of trafficking undeniable at city scale.

Impact

The long-term impact of this intervention lies in its potential to shift the cultural and perceptual paradigm that sustains sex trafficking in Madrid.

By targeting the mechanisms that normalise exploitation, language, dissociation, social distance, institutional ambiguity,

the prototype introduces a new narrative into the system: one that reframes prostitution not as “work,” but as a form of coercion masked by routine.

If adopted across NGOs, survivor collectives, cultural institutions and community settings, the reflective trigger could foster a shared understanding of the invisible structures that keep the system alive. This shared image becomes a foundation for new kinds of partnerships, grounded not in bureaucratic alignment but in honest recognition of the issue’s psychological core.

Structurally, the intervention could influence educational curricula, training programs for frontline actors, and future advocacy campaigns by providing a replicable mechanism for confronting fake realities. Culturally, it may contribute to reducing the social neutrality surrounding prostitution and increasing collective discomfort toward the narratives that sanitize it.

By scaling through screenings, discussions, and community-led adaptations, the intervention plants early seeds for a paradigm shift, one where awareness becomes a systemic force, destabilizing the realities that once kept exploitation unseen.

Installation concept using fragmented eyes and the word "Reflejar" to evoke disruption in perception. As people pass by, the posters create a silent confrontation that destabilizes the neutral vocabulary surrounding prostitution.

"This is a new kind of partnership, not built through structure, but through reflection."



Impact Metrics

To assess the evolution of the intervention, we propose mixed qualitative and quantitative indicators:

- 1. Number and diversity of screenings**
How widely the reflective trigger circulates across NGOs, schools, cultural centres, and community events. Why it matters: measures reach and system penetration.
- 2. Viewer perception shifts**
Pre/post responses to statements such as "prostitution is a neutral form of work." Why it matters: tracks cultural and narrative change.
- 3. Depth of conversations triggered**
Recurring themes of discomfort, recognition, complicity, or rupture in post-screening discussions. Why it matters: measures relational and emotional impact.
- 4. Adoption by organisations**
Number of actors integrating the prototype into workshops, trainings, or awareness programs. Why it matters: indicates structural integration and sustainability.
- 5. Adaptations or remixes of the film**
How communities reinterpret the trigger in new contexts. Why it matters: signals systemic relevance and long-term transformative potential.

PA'LANTE

LO QUE NOS MUEVE

Team:

1. Ana Isabel Santoro
2. Carlota Postigo
3. Marcela Cortes
4. Stephanie Luna

PA'LANTE

LO QUE NOS MUEVE

A community-driven platform designed to facilitate information sharing, communication, and connection among Latinos in Madrid.

Latin American community in Madrid. Interviews, surveys and informal conversations allowed us to identify recurring patterns in their narratives, as well as subtle signals related to the moments, spaces and channels through which information does, or does not, circulate within the community. These findings highlighted the fragility of existing support networks, the fragmentation of information and the lack of a clear path to navigate key issues such as paperwork, housing or work.

Building on these insights we reframe everyday routines as opportunities for knowledge exchange, shifting the focus from products to the circulation of practical guidance and lived experience. In practice this takes the form of a two part system made up of a lightweight online platform for questions, short stories and first steps by topic, combined with in person gatherings at accessible times where people compare paths and resolve doubts face to face. Rather than delivering a finished service we present a strategic plan that sets out the logic, roles and staged steps for this system to emerge, be tested and evolve under community stewardship beyond our initial involvement.

Abstract

This project, aligned with SDG 10 on reducing inequalities, examines the experience of Latin American migrants in Madrid, focusing on the inequalities that arise in the initial stages of their arrival: lack of information, absence of obvious support, and a persistent sense of uncertainty when facing a new system. We concentrate specifically on Latin American migrants not only

because they represent one of the largest migrant communities in the city, but also because of the apparent paradox between formal proximity (shared language, historical ties, specific legal frameworks) and the reality that many still describe their arrival as a lonely, disconcerting and poorly guided process.

Using a user-centred design approach, we conducted both qualitative and quantitative research with workers and residents in everyday spaces frequented by the

Framework

Context

This project is based on SDG 10, which aims to reduce disparities, and stems from a broad question: what is the experience of immigrants arriving in Madrid? The city is home to several migrant communities, each with its own history and circumstances. In this diverse context, we decided to focus the project on people from Latin America who move to Madrid.

There are three main reasons for this decision. First, size: the Latin American community stands out as one of the largest and most visible in the city, especially in sectors such

as services, commerce, and caregiving (one in seven people in Madrid is Latin American). Secondly, linguistic and historical proximity: Latin America and Spain share a common history, a common language, and some legal frameworks that, in theory, should simplify the arrival process. Thirdly, everyday proximity: many of the people we interact with on a daily basis belong to this community, which allows us to work in a localised rather than abstract way. However, despite this apparent proximity, many testimonies from Latin American individuals describe

their arrival in Madrid as an experience characterised by uncertainty, precariousness, and a feeling of “not knowing where to start.” Instead of focusing on grand discourses about migration, we decided to concentrate on everyday life: the spaces where people work, shop, talk, and share strategies for staying put. From there, we asked ourselves not only what is lacking at the institutional level, but also how the resources and networks that already exist in the Latino community could be activated in a more visible and structured way.

EL PAÍS

Madrid

ESPAÑA · COMUNIDAD DE MADRID · AYUNTAMIENTO DE MADRID · CERCANÍAS · METRO · EMT · ÚLTIMAS NOTICIAS

INMIGRACIÓN

E Madrid supera el millón de latinoamericanos, uno de cada siete habitantes

Se acaba de producir un hito: según el censo, en la Comunidad residen 1.038.671 personas que han nacido en un país de América de habla española. Hace 25 años solo vivían aquí 81.552, lo que muestra la velocidad de una corriente que está transformando el rostro y el alma de la región



Ana Isabel Santoro - Venezuela



Carlota Postigo - Spain



Marcela Cortes - Venezuela



Stephanie Luna - Colombia

Team

This project was carried out by four students: three from Latin America and one from Spain. This mix is not just a biographical detail, but something that influences how we approach the subject, formulate questions, and make decisions. For some of us, migration is a tangible reality, while for others, the analysis focuses more on identifying the perspective from which we observe and the benefits we enjoy within the society that welcomes us.

Sharing the language and numerous cultural references with the Latino community in Madrid provided us with opportunities and facilitated dialogue. At the same time, we were aware of the danger of taking things for granted precisely because of that proximity. An essential part of the process involved pausing our own narratives and paying attention to others, which share similarities with ours in certain aspects but present different times, difficulties, and forms of violence. The team became a place of contrasts: between those who consider themselves “from here and there,” those who have arrived recently, and those who have always lived in Madrid.

Collaborating led us to question the role of design in an environment of inequality. To what extent can we discuss a community without replacing its voice? What does it mean to suggest an intervention when we are aware that our participation in the project is temporary and that eventually we will no longer be there? Rather than remaining in the theoretical realm, these questions directly affected the way we structured our research and the way we conceived of entering and exiting the project. This is precisely where the concepts of designing our way in and designing our way out, which organize much of our work, come from.

Designing Our Way In

Mercado De Maravillas

To delve into the reality of Latin American migration in Madrid, we needed a place that would bring together, in a single space, many of the layers we wanted to explore: work, support networks, the informal economy, affection, tensions, and care. The Mercado de Maravillas, in the Tetuán neighborhood, quickly emerged as that entry point. Not only is it a market with a strong presence of stalls run by Latin Americans, but it is also a place where the clientele reflects, day after day, the diversity of the city and the diasporas that inhabit it.

From our first visit, we identified the market as a microcosm. Its aisles are filled with overlapping smells, accents, musical rhythms, imported products, and local adaptations.



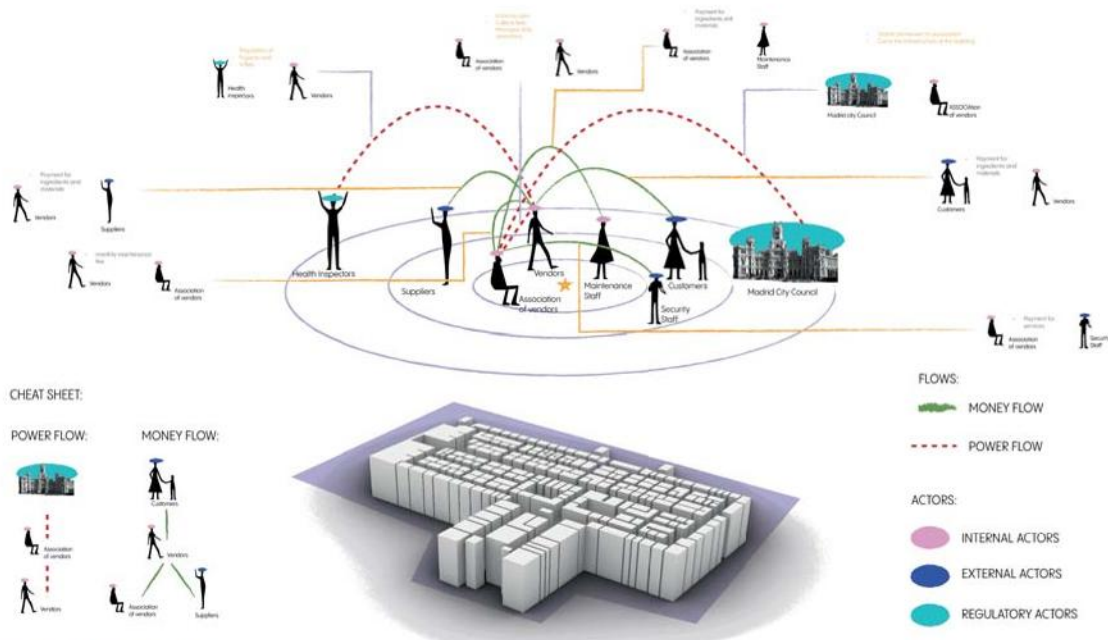
The conversations between stalls are as much about prices and recipes as they are about papers, rents, jobs, and pending paperwork. We were interested precisely in this density: a space where everyday life and the experience of migration are not separate, but occur simultaneously in every interaction.

Choosing the market as our entry point was also a methodological decision. Instead of starting with formal reception institutions or mechanisms, we wanted to place ourselves in a space already appropriated by the community, where people are not defined solely as “migrants,” but as workers, vendors, mothers, students, or neighbors. In this way, designing our way in meant building a relationship with the market and its actors, understanding its internal dynamics, and recognizing it as a living system with its own rules, tensions, and possibilities.

Market Research

Our first approach to the project was to enter the Mercado de Maravillas and go directly to the stalls run by Latin American people. There, we carried out qualitative research based on in-depth interviews with market workers. Through these qualitative interviews, we asked them about their arrival in Madrid, how they had ended up working in the market, the Latin American community that has formed in this “microcosm,” and the difficulties, frustrations, or fears that had arisen in the process. These conversations were key to distancing ourselves from our own narrative and listening to the reality in their own words. Through their stories, we began to better understand what it means to arrive in Madrid from Latin America, what role the market plays in that journey, and what kind of support networks (formal or informal) are activated there. The stories not only talked about work, but also about family, expectations, changes of plan, and decisions made “on the fly” in order to stay. These initial interviews also revealed the first signs of the issues that would later become central to the

project: the siesta period as a mandatory closing time that many experience as wasted time, and the shared feeling of a lack of clear information and communication channels designed specifically for newcomers. These signs served as clues that would guide the next phases of our research.



Findings

After the first phase of qualitative interviews within the market, we felt it necessary to broaden our focus and contrast what we had heard with other voices from the Latino community in Madrid. We therefore carried out a second phase of qualitative research, this time outside the market, through informal conversations with Uber drivers, manicurists, doormen, and other people present in our daily lives. The goal was to step outside the microcosm of the Mercado de Maravillas and understand to what extent the issues that had emerged there were repeated in other contexts.

To complement this second block of qualitative research, we also designed an online survey aimed at Latin Americans living in Madrid. In it, we asked about four key aspects: why they decided to migrate, what challenges they faced upon arrival, what helped them most, and what they would have liked to know before coming. The survey allowed us to reach a broader and more diverse group and to relate individual stories to certain more general patterns.

The stories gathered in the conversations and the survey responses showed very different trajectories, but also a striking repetition of certain themes. The search for better job and educational opportunities appeared to be the main reason for migration, often linked to situations of instability in the countries of origin.

However, once in Madrid, the focus shifted to something more immediate: the difficulty of understanding how the system works (papers, housing, healthcare), the feeling of going “blind” and the almost total dependence on the advice of friends, acquaintances, or family members.

Three major patterns emerged from this set of materials. The first was a clear lack of structured support: help exists, but it is often sporadic, informal, and uneven. The second was a lack of clear and accessible information: information is scattered, outdated, or written in language that is difficult to understand. The third is the absence of a defined path to finding help: many people do not know which door to knock on, in what order, or what rights they actually have. These findings led us to think of the project not only as a matter of “telling stories,” but also as an attempt to reorganize how information circulates and how support is woven together.



Weak Signals

Beyond the major patterns, there were two elements that appeared less obvious but ended up becoming central pieces of our proposal. We identified them as weak signals: aspects that no one mentioned as “the problem” but that pointed to design opportunities. The first signal was the siesta schedule. Several people who work in the market told us that the mandatory midday closure was ill-suited to their reality. Although the market closes to the public, many of them do not go home: they stay in the vicinity, resting half-heartedly, without that time translating into income or meaningful meeting spaces.

The second sign was the way information circulates within the community. The stories showed a strong dependence on word of mouth: someone who tells you about a job offer, an acquaintance who explains a procedure, a friend who accompanies you to an appointment. However, this network is not uniform: some people are very connected, while others remain on the margins. What some have figured out, others do not even know exists. This internal inequality is rarely mentioned, but it has concrete effects on each person's possibilities.

Reading these weak signals led us to reformulate the design question. It was no longer just a matter of “providing more information,” but of thinking about what times and places could become infrastructure for a more equitable and structured exchange of knowledge. The downtime of the siesta and scattered micro-conversations became, in our view, potential anchor points for an intervention that would build on existing reality rather than impose an external logic.

HUMANS OF NEW YORK Series

These stories focus on specific populations, examining their experiences and the challenges that they face.

Humans of New York

A model for the emotional and narrative side of storytelling. It demonstrates the power of personal narratives in building empathy, visibility, and connection.



Ahmed Öhut's Silent University

A platform where displaced people share knowledge and teach others. It inspired us to see migrants as knowledge producers, not passive receivers



Market for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge

Reframes knowledge exchange as participatory and horizontal, challenging who gets to own or legitimise information.

Proposal

Based on our findings, the weak signals, and the references we've worked with, we began to imagine how everything we'd learned could be translated into a concrete structure. The Mercado de Maravillas had served as our entry point and a very clear image of what an exchange space means: products are bought and sold there, but advice, contacts, news, and strategies for getting by are also shared. What we do in this project is take that market logic as an exchange system and apply it to our own context, transforming it into an exchange of information, support, and knowledge among Latin Americans arriving in Madrid.

From this came the idea of creating a support association for Latin Americans in Madrid. This association is conceived as a digital space where the community can meet, ask questions, share resources, and support each other on issues that appear repeatedly in

their stories: basic procedures, housing, work, health, rights, care networks, or simply making friends. We don't see the association as a rigid or overly institutional structure, but rather as a minimal framework that allows us to organize meetings, give them continuity, and make it clear that there's a place to go when you "don't know where to start."

Our proposal is a strategic design project with a service design approach, integrating systems thinking, ethnographic inquiry, and futures perspectives. We listen and observe to understand recurring needs; we map actors, pathways, and information flows to see where they get stuck, and we use futures to guide without closing off possibilities, leaving room for what the community decides to activate.

The service we offer is simple. A digital platform that functions as a shared space where people can ask questions, tell short stories, and find

first steps. An announcements section gathers opportunities and makes activities visible as they arise, without prescribing what has to happen or who should organize it. We don't organize the meetings; they appear when someone proposes them, and the platform makes them accessible. The value lies in the fact that guidance and experiences are readily available, organized, and easy to retrieve, instead of getting lost in scattered conversations.

Our contribution is to shape a service that is easy to adopt and maintain, with clear rules and a form of participation that anyone can understand. In essence, this project is about a strategic plan based on a service logic and a community governance framework that allows the system to start small, adapt with use, and be able to sustain itself without us.



Designing Our Way Out

Future Vision

To guide the project's direction, we conducted a futures cone that allowed us to explore everything from projected scenarios, which are those most likely to occur if things continue as they are, to preferable scenarios, which represent our vision for change. This exercise wasn't abstract speculation; it was informed by our field observations and the weak signals we detected, helping us design with intention and preventing the proposal from being trapped by short-term considerations.

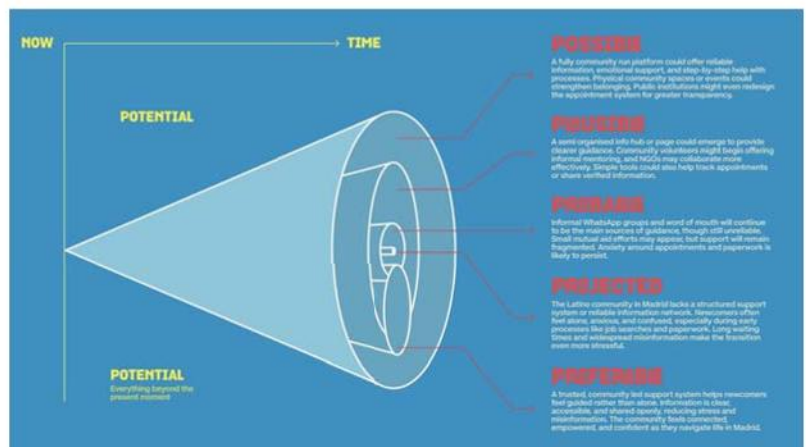
In the projected scenario, information flow continues to depend on informal chats, personal favors, and fragmented searches. The result is predictable: downtime, anxiety, and decisions made with incomplete information, especially at critical moments. The likely scenario isn't much different: well-intentioned, one-off initiatives emerge, but they lack continuity and a simple mechanism for preserving and redistributing collective learning. As a result, each newcomer partially repeats the mistakes of those who came before. From here, we open up the exploration of plausible scenarios where small support infrastructures generate positive disproportions: a streamlined space for posting questions, sharing verifiable doubts, and synthesizing answers, combined with in-person meetings at accessible times. In these

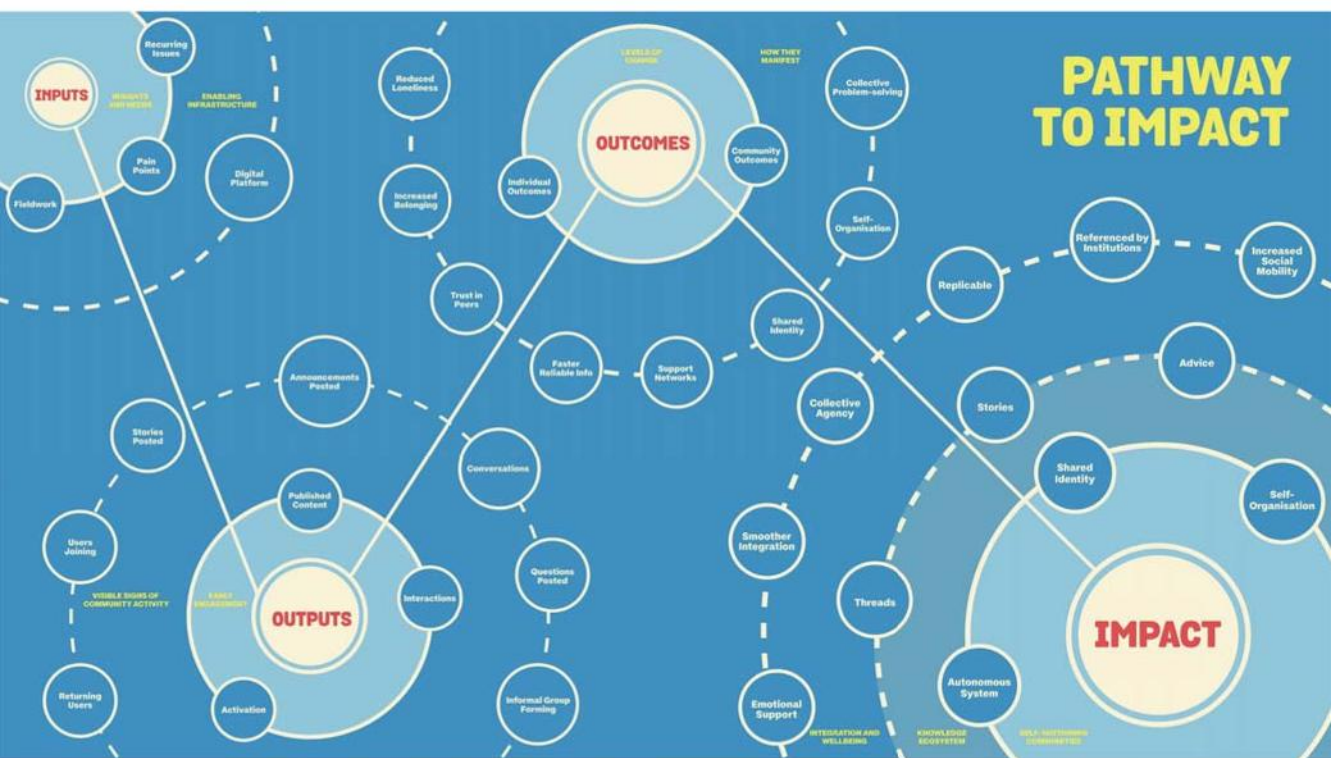
plausible futures, distributed roles emerge, peer trust becomes central, and a synthesis practice is established that prevents knowledge from evaporating after each meeting. Finally, we describe a possible scenario of greater coordination, in which this micro-infrastructure is recognized as a clear "entry point": it doesn't replace institutions or NGOs, but complements them by reducing friction during the initial implementation phase.

The preferred future that guides our design is a community-owned support system capable of transforming individual experiences into a living knowledge ecosystem: short narratives, question-and-answer threads, initial thematic pathways, and a meeting schedule that sets rhythms and fosters a

sense of belonging. In this scenario, inequality of access to guidance decreases because it no longer depends on chance, as the expert voice is no longer monopolized by "the know-it-all" but redistributed among "those who have been there." The city also gains in legibility, since there would be a place to turn to, both physically and digitally, when someone doesn't know where to begin.

This analysis of the future serves as a strategic compass. It allows us to distinguish the inevitable from the avoidable, modulate ambition in stages, and justify why we work with a minimal yet sufficient system being simple enough to be adopted, structured enough to support accumulated learning, and open enough to evolve without us.





Strategic Pathway To Impact

Inputs:

We started with what we observed on the ground: recurring doubts, scattered information, and the constant feeling of not knowing where to begin with paperwork, housing, work, studies, and daily life. These insights and pain points led us to propose a lightweight digital platform (forum-style) where people can ask questions, share helpful experiences, and find "first steps" for each topic. We complemented the platform forum with a section about announcements where people can post events to foster physical connection and communication where people can come together and support each other.

Outputs:

Upon activation, visible signs of use appear. People register and return, stories are posted about arrival and adaptation, questions and conversations arise in specific threads, and a classifieds tab featuring opportunities (jobs, workshops, invitations, study groups, meet-ups). Informal groups based on shared interests also emerge (job seekers, those seeking credential validation, those looking for accommodation). These outputs demonstrate traction: the system is not just an idea, it's in use.

Outcomes:

After a few weeks or months of use, behaviors and relationships change. On an individual level, loneliness decreases, a sense of direction increases, and information is disseminated more quickly and with greater confidence because it comes from those who have already experienced the same thing. People know where to turn when they have a question. At a community level, a shared identity emerges, self-organization increases, and collective problem-solving becomes more effective. The important thing here is not just the activity itself, but the change it generates.

Impact:

When these changes are sustained, they begin to shift the system. First, communities become self-sustaining: roles are distributed, a stable identity develops, and continuity is achieved without depending on the initial team. Second, a knowledge ecosystem is created, documented in threads and stories, preventing the repetition of mistakes. Third, integration and well-being increase: more emotional support, less frustrating arrival processes, collective agency, and a replicable model that other neighborhoods or cities can adapt and that institutional actors can use as a reference. We don't promise to "fix" migration; We establish a social and cognitive infrastructure that brings people closer to reliable guidance and that can impact the system in the long term by remaining in the hands of the community itself.

PA' LA



RO ANUNCIOS HISTORIAS

NTE

S MUEVE

UN LUGAR PARA
ENCONTRAR
RECURSOS,
COMUNIDAD Y
COMFORT EN
MADRID!

Conclusion

This work does not end with us. It sets the conditions for a community to organise its own orientation, drawing on what people already know and have lived. The plan is simple on purpose so it can be adopted, adapted and handed over. If it succeeds, the first signs will be easy to recognise. Newcomers will know where to start. Stories will become guidance. Questions will find answers faster. Meetings will leave a trace that others can use later. Over time, the platform and the gatherings will belong to those who use them and keep them alive. What we offer is a way to begin. A place to meet, a place to ask, a place to return. The value is not in a perfect service but in a shared practice that grows with the people who sustain it. If the community keeps the rhythm, the city becomes more legible and the first months become less lonely. That is the change we aim to enable.

paper recycling
station but it's
actually not about
the paper

The 18th Goal

Team:

Ariadna Fernández
Estrella García

(BASED ON REAL EVENTS)

ARI: So, Estrella, the final presentation is now, and we haven't done anything.

Here we go again, we have no clue what to present, and also, we were supposed to test our prototype.

You know?

EST: So... What if?...

As our last act of vulnerability... We don't present anything? Because the reality is that, throughout this semester we've already done so much. The lesson we have really learned from this project is that we are much more interested in what we can become or how we can take care of ourselves as people, than in any grades we might get for it.

It is a way of reaffirming everything we have said during the course, because as we have also said, we do not care about any grading criteria that has a patriarchal thinking behind it.

ARI: I mean, the "problem" is that we created our prototype, but we haven't quite tested it ever since. Why should we try and test it in a rush, with half the agents we want, without being able to go deep in the way we would truly be excited to do it? That takes time, not only ours but others. Besides, why should we even decide on a solution at all? The other day I was watching a podcast with Sara Torres, and she said:

“Cuidado con quien te demanda concreción en el lenguaje, porque esa demanda de un tipo de mensaje cerrado concreto también es una demanda ideológica. A veces, no cerrar el lenguaje no es que tú no te quieras comprometer, es que te quieres comprometer con la complejidad de la vida y los procesos.”

ARI: I mean do we remember how this all started?

FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION



ARI: The SDGs already failed. The originals were first aired in 2000 with 2015 as a goal. The new ones were crafted by an open working group and officially adopted the same year with 2030 as a goal. And we will never achieve them.

Basically. The SDGs are a wish list for the world. A list of desirable outcomes. Is not a strategy. Strategies involve isolating the crux of a problem and finding the best way to tackle it.

EST: The goals are not only a missed opportunity, they are actively dangerous. They lock in the global development agenda for the next 5 years around a failing economic model.

To be clear.

The SDGs are incoherent, contradictory, and impossible to implement.

Maybe the only thing worse than failing to achieve the SDGs would be failing to ask how we once believed they might be possible.

ARI: How?

EST: So how did we reach that conclusion? The first thing was to realise that the structure of the SDGs is completely vertical. When we mapped them out, we saw a kind of organisational chart that functions almost like a patriarchal family: 'Father, eldest child (machines), middle child (institutions), youngest child (citizens). Friends (machines), friends (institutions), friends (citizens).'

This made us understand that the logic behind the SDGs reproduces a hierarchy based on power. Just as Arturo Escobar defines patriarchal culture in his book, a structure where the rational, the technical and the institutional dominate over relationships, emotionality and bodies. And he himself says:

“The basis of biological existence is the act of emotioning, and social coexistence is based on love, prior to any mode of appropriation and conflict that might set in.”

EST: Based on this reflection, we categorised the systems we had identified: "Entities. Matristic system. Patriarchal thought. Strategic agents. Grassroots. Local discontinuities. Autonomous systems. Human and non-human agents." This led us to a key question: If the foundation of life is "emotioning": emotion, connection, care, how can we expect to design a world based on structures that prioritise the opposite?

And we began to think about a possible alternative approach: By involving expert and diffuse design to create an entity that identifies unexplored potential autonomous systems allowing them to scale and remain over time and move on to another.

ARI: But we didn't decide to just keep this to ourselves; we wanted to put it into practice. We wanted to see if this would work as an autonomous system within a formalised institution. So we set up our own recycling and paper-making station, where we clearly saw that the conversations and behaviours generated around its autonomy were fundamentally relevant to the rest of the things that awaited us.



FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION
FOSTER HUMAN INTERACTION



do you know how
much theory took
me to realize all
I had to do was



paper recycling
station but it's
actually not about
the paper



TO DO:
to go to the gym
to prepare my thesis
to research on this
etc.





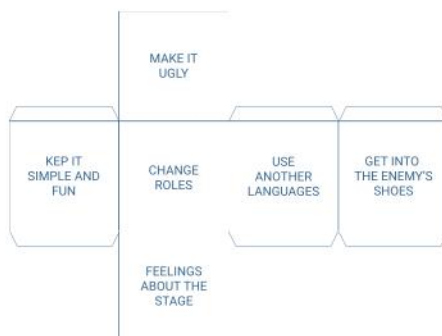
ARI: Then we realized.
 If we had to very quickly summarize our research: I would say that humans are fucked up because we are just putting rationality over emotioning, which goes against our very same nature and leads to structures of hierarchy and power. How are we going to keep looking at a project that is about the critique of rationality, with more rationality? So we started generating conversations that came vulnerability because that's the patriarchal system main enemy, and it rarely leaves us that chance. Maybe this is the opportunity to do so. Maybe vulnerability itself can be the design tool. Maybe we'll end up being the entity ourselves.

EST: Then Pablo, Davide and Kaleb suggested to make this exercise of the I like, and I wish and What If, where we were supposed to be vulnerable with our group members. It didn't just happen, maybe our insistence in sparking these conversations, had something to do with it, specially in academic settings.

After many "what if's" that played with very specific changes to the dynamics of our relationship, we ended up imagining a dice, that would allow us to explore new and disruptive ways of interacting. A simple facilitation toy, tailored made for us born from a deeply horizontal and vulnerable conversation.

ARI: So... let's roll that dice.

Let's test our prototype here, right now, and find out what we are gonna do for the final.



ARI: Ok, so... how do you feel?

EST: Ah. I'm happy but tired.

ARI: And about the project?

EST: No, I feel that the project is already done. I feel the project is us, the attitude we've had during the semester, that led us to develop this idea, this coherence, to document the entire thing our own way and eventually to create our methodology.

ARI: If you are grounded as a designer, everything will come naturally because you are not designing arbitrarily, but from humanity, and it will extend everywhere without even trying.

EST: So why should we have an end goal? When we design around scale, standardisation and efficiency, we are reproducing that patriarchal logic: rationalisation over emotion, systems over relationships.

Escobar said it himself when talking about ways to start designing for matristic ontology:

“The paths and character of the transitions cannot be predicted in advance to change the way we think about change itself.”

The project is in the conversations we have sparked, in the people we've had a tiny bit of influence on, in our classmates, in our professors, in the bitácoras we are in.

¿So, tu Ari? How do you feel?

**NOT
CHEAT:
YOU
WILL
ONLY
USE
RECYCLE
D OR
USED
PAPER.**

**YOU SHALL NOT LIMIT THE MATERIAL'S
POTENTIAL, NO MATTER HOW SIMPLE OR
EASY IT MAY SEEM.**

**YOU SHALL NOT REJECT ANY
IDEA, NEITHER FROM OTHERS
NOR FROM YOURSELF.**

**YOU SHALL BE OPEN TO
SHARING THE FINDINGS AND
RESULTS OF YOUR
WORK, WHETHER IN KNOWLEDGE
OR MATERIAL, BY
COLLABORATING WITH THE
COMMUNITY.**

**YOU SHALL RESPECT ALL HUMAN
AND NON-HUMAN FACTORS
INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT AND ITS
ECOSYSTEM.**

**YOU SHALL
NOT
PURCHASE
ANY NEW
MATERIAL
FOR THE
PROJECT.
WHATEVER IS
NEEDED,
YOU WILL
USE YOUR
CREATIVITY
TO DESIGN A
SOLUTION.**

**YOU SHALL BE
OPEN BOTH TO
RECEIVING HELP
AND TO HELPING
OTHERS WITHIN THE
COLLECTIVE.**

**YOU SHALL GENUINELY SHARE
EVERY FEELING, POSITIVE OR
NEGATIVE, YOU EXPERIENCE
TOWARD THE PROJECT AND
ITS PROCESS.**

**ANY
APPROACH
DRIVEN BY
PERSONAL
AMBITION OR
BY PURE
EXPERIMENTATION
WITHIN
THE PROJECT
SHALL BE
WELCOMED
BY THE REST
OF THE
COMMUNITY.**

**THIS IS AN
AUTONOMOUS
PROJECT
OF THE
ARCHITECTURE
AND DESIGN
COMMUNITY
BASED
AT THE
FAB**

**LAB, BUT
IT SEEKS
TO
EXPAND
THROUGH
ANY
FORM OF
COLLABORATION
BEYOND
ITS INITIAL
BOUNDARIES.**

**YOU SHALL NOT LET MATERIAL,
SPATIAL, OR INSTITUTIONAL
LIMITATIONS BECOME BARRIERS TO
CREATIVITY OR THE**

do you know how
much theory took
me to realize all I
had to do was

take in the world and
be a part of it

and that's all I
had to do

ARI: I feel very fulfilled with what we have already done. I feel happy. This has been my favourite semester since my first year. All of the projects I have created are interconnected, based on the same stance, and I know the near future looks the same. For the first time in a long time, I feel like I truly know who I am, I have clarity of what I want to do, and what I don't want to do, and I also dare to do it. Most importantly: I have the courage to do it, because I believe in it, I know you feel the same way. I also know, it is because of this project. Because we are the project, and we have a lifetime to make a statement about the outcome of it, not a 10-minute presentation. In fact, I don't want my project to be defined by a set of metrics based on a patriarchal system.

EST: At the very first presentation, we said we were gonna find and work on the 18th goal. Well, the 18th goal is not to have a goal. It is to be faithful to ourselves. To the love and vulnerability we have within that the patriarchal systems we are surrounded with force us to push down.

The 18th goal is to refuse living and designing if it does not come from vulnerability, if it does not come from horizontality, if it does not come from true human connection. To refuse the ego, the concept for the concept, to refuse engaging in any act cemented in something we cannot really relate to on a human basis.

ARI: Sorry if we went overtime. But time constraints are ontologically, a patriarchal concept.

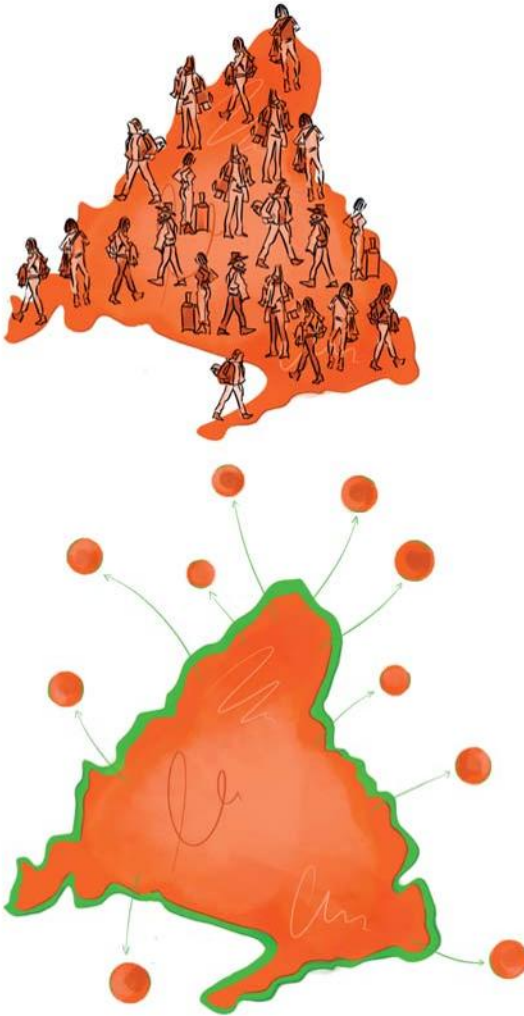
All these photos are posters that we have made in our recycled paper station, which we created ourselves and laser cut in this papers.

Patones



Team:

Charles Martel,
Isa Valero
Anyia Gomez-Tagle
Pao Gutierrez



Speaking with locals revealed concerns about infrastructure loss and the fading craft of black slate architecture, a key part of Patones' identity. This led to our intervention: transforming an abandoned building in Patones de Arriba into a fabrication lab where residents, students, and designers can learn and practice slate construction. The lab includes a museum, work rooms, classrooms, storage, and a restored plaza, all supporting hands-on craftsmanship and sustainable design. Further engagement revealed long-standing tension between Patones de Arriba and Patones de Abajo, prompting a key shift. Instead of concentrating activity in Arriba, we propose a codependent system: Arriba becomes the research and fabrication node, while Abajo hosts the residential and development hub. This approach distributes benefits, strengthens community ties, and creates shared value for both towns.

Abstract

This project focuses on revitalizing small towns at demographic risk, using Patones de Arriba as our case study. We began by examining Madrid's rapid expansion and realized that many rural residents migrate to the city due to limited opportunities, leaving their towns behind to decline.

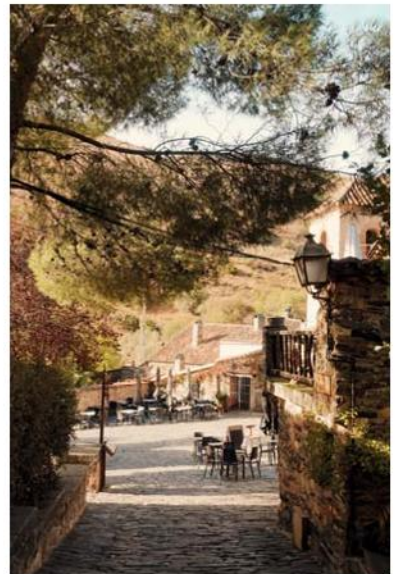
Working through SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, we aimed to address this imbalance by bringing attention, skills, and autonomy back to rural communities.

FOUNDATIONS

SDG Relevance

Our project is anchored in SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, focusing on how rural towns can localize this goal in ways that strengthen identity, heritage, and community resilience. In the context of Patones de Arriba, SDG 9 is especially relevant because the town faces aging infrastructure, limited economic opportunities, and the loss of traditional building knowledge. Localizing SDG 9 means designing innovation systems that are rooted in place, supporting small-scale industries, restoring cultural infrastructure, and empowering residents with skills that enable long-term autonomy. We also touch on interdependent SDGs, including SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through heritage preservation and community-led planning, and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by generating new forms of local employment linked to craft and design.

These synergies reinforce systemic relevance: strengthening local infrastructure simultaneously protects culture, boosts economic resilience, and reduces pressure on Madrid's urban expansion. A key trade off involves tourism: while it offers economic value, it also strains infrastructure and deepens inequalities between Patones de Arriba and Patones de Abajo. Our intervention responds by proposing a distributed system that balances activity across both towns. Ultimately, our project reframes SDG 9 through situated, culturally grounded innovation, demonstrating how rural revitalization can emerge from local assets rather than external imposition.





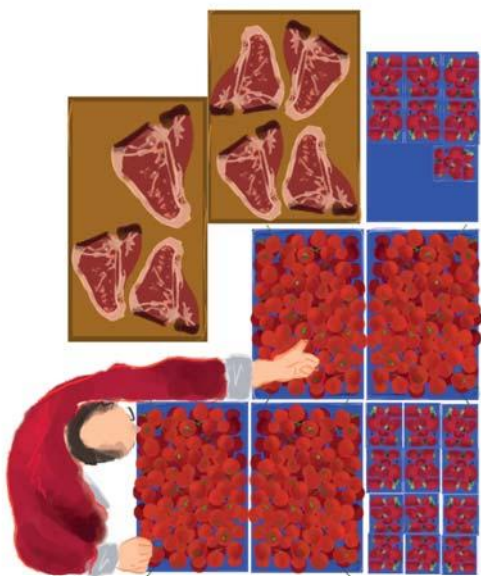
**PATONES
DE ARRIBA**

**PATONES
DE ABAJO**

Our project is situated within the systemic landscape of rural Spain, focusing specifically on Patones de Arriba and Patones de Abajo, two interconnected towns experiencing demographic decline. The actors within this system include long-term residents, local authorities, tourism flows, artisans, and potential newcomers such as designers, students, and remote workers.

Key infrastructures include housing, mobility routes, water systems, and cultural assets all aging or insufficient, reflecting a wider lack of investment in rural areas. Cultural logics also shape the context: pride in heritage, resistance to external imposition, and a long-standing tension between the two towns influence how any intervention is received.

Using a situated design approach, we grounded our research directly in conversations with residents. These encounters revealed the social dynamics, emotional layers, and power imbalances embedded in the towns, particularly the limited autonomy of Patones de Arriba due to administrative control from Patones de Abajo. Understanding these realities helped us define the system's boundaries: we are not solving depopulation at a national scale, nor are we redesigning the entire municipality. Instead, we are working within the constraints of existing infrastructures, cultural identity, and community expectations. Through context mapping, we identified the central problem space: rural towns are losing population, knowledge, and agency due to limited opportunities and uneven distribution of resources. At the same time, Patones holds unique assets, its black slate architecture, landscape, and cultural memory that all serve as drivers for regenerative development. Recognizing these elements allowed us to frame a proposal that is locally grounded, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the system rather than imposed on it.



RESEARCH

Our ethnographic research in Patones revealed recurring patterns of behavior and values that shape the community's daily life. Residents expressed a strong sense of pride in their heritage, particularly the black slate architecture, yet also a deep fatigue with tourism and its impact on their routines. Many locals avoid public spaces on weekends to escape overcrowding, highlighting a pattern of withdrawal rather than engagement. At the same time, we observed a strong cultural value placed on community memory, craftsmanship, and autonomy. Through sensemaking, we identified several paradoxes and tensions. Patones de Arriba attracts most of the tourism and cultural attention, yet it holds almost no administrative power; meanwhile, Patones de Abajo governs the municipality but receives little visibility or economic benefit.

This imbalance fuels resentment and reinforces a divide between the towns. Another tension is that while heritage is celebrated, the craft that preserves it, black slate construction, is disappearing. Our systemic analysis surfaced key barriers. Structurally, infrastructure is poorly maintained, and decision-making is centralized in Patones de Abajo. Relationally, mistrust between the two towns limits collaboration. Institutionally, there is no mechanism for residents of Arriba to participate meaningfully in planning or resource allocation. Despite these constraints, several early leverage points emerged. The town's architectural heritage is both a cultural asset and an untapped economic resource. There is also a gap between tourist behavior (passive consumption) and resident needs (active stewardship and autonomy), signaling an opportunity to redesign participation. Misalignments between governance and identity point toward interventions that redistribute agency rather than impose solutions. By clustering stories, embodied observations, and systemic structures, we identified a pathway toward revitalization grounded in heritage-based innovation, shared governance, and community-led learning.

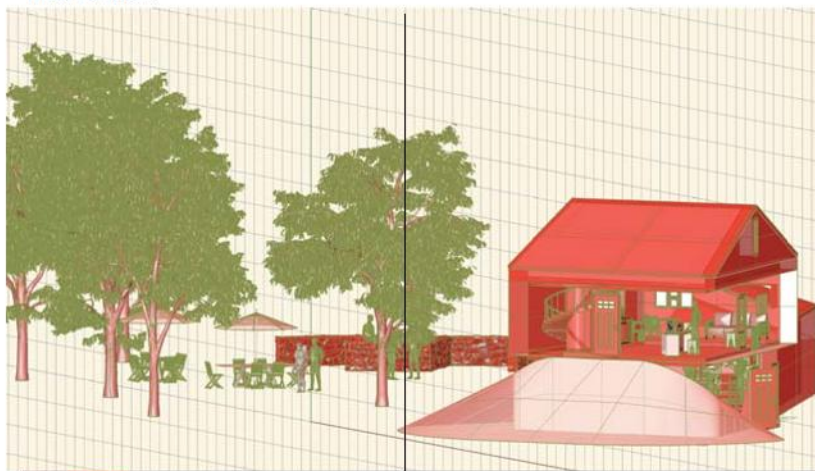




FUTURES & INTERVENTION

Our project activates a mix of human, material, digital, and relational resources. Local residents, artisans, and builders provide essential knowledge of black slate craft, while designers, architects, and students contribute technical and creative skills. Collaboration with the Patones municipality is key for access, permissions, and alignment with community priorities. Material inputs include abandoned buildings in Patones de Arriba, existing slate ruins in the plaza, and locally sourced black slate for fabrication and learning. Digitally, we rely on documentation tools, mapping, and design software to support research and prototyping.

Key stakeholders are residents, artisans, designers, and the town council, each play a role in shaping, teaching, governing, and sustaining the intervention.



We build on existing infrastructures such as public paths, historic structures, and community rhythms transforming them into touchpoints for learning, making, and shared stewardship.

Activities

Our main intervention is the transformation of an abandoned building in Patones deArriba into a living architecture lab focused on black slate craftsmanship. Key activities include creating a museum space, workshop rooms, classrooms, and a restored plaza that serves as the first hands-on restoration project. We will prototype a two-town system, where Arriba operates as the research and fabrication node and Abajo functions as the residential and development hub. This involves sequencing activities such as community interviews, co-design sessions, slate-building workshops, and small-scale material tests. Our piloting strategy treats prototyping as inquiry: early workshops will test how residents engage with slate fabrication, how tourists respond to active participation, and how movement between Arriba and Abajo can become more balanced. Eachprototype informs the next step, allowing the system to evolve with community feedback and real-world constraints.



Leverage Points

Our intervention targets several leverage points within the Patones system to shift long-standing dynamics between heritage, governance, and community identity. The first leverage point is knowledge restoration: teaching black slate craftsmanship revives a disappearing local skill and repositions heritage as an active, future-oriented resource. This shifts information flows by giving residents access to techniques that were once exclusive or forgotten.

A second leverage point is redistributing agency. By establishing Arriba as a research and fabrication node and Abajo as a residential and development hub, we modify existing “rules” of how the towns relate. This begins to rebalance power and benefits across both villages, addressing structural tensions.

The feedback loop of tourism is another key target. Instead of passive consumption overwhelming Arriba, the lab introduces participatory tourism, creating a reinforcing loop where visitors contribute to preservation and learning rather than strain infrastructure.

Finally, our intervention challenges the underlying narrative paradigm, from seeing rural towns as declining spaces to understanding them as sites of innovation rooted in tradition. This shift has the highest systemic leverage, reframing how residents, visitors, and institutions value Patones and similar rural contexts.





CONSOLIDATION

Outputs

Our intervention generates several tangible outputs that make the system visible and testable. The primary output is the Living Architecture Lab, a functional prototype composed of a museum, work rooms, classrooms, a storage area, and a restored plaza used as an active learning site. This space serves as a micro-infrastructure for experimentation with black slate craftsmanship and community participation. We also produce prototypes of interactions and experiences, including slate-building workshops, guided learning routes between Arriba and Abajo, and participatory tourism activities that shift visitors from observers to contributors. Additional outputs include visual frameworks that map the two-town system, communication materials explaining the intervention to residents and policymakers, and protocols for collaborative fabrication, allowing locals, artisans, and designers to co-create with shared tools and methods.

The project also yields speculative artifacts, such as models and renderings imagining how restored slate structures and community spaces might evolve. Collectively, these outputs allow us to test assumptions, observe community responses, and refine the system before scaling or adaptation.

Outcomes

Our activities enable meaningful behavioral and relational shifts within Patones. Residents begin engaging more actively with their heritage through slate workshops, rebuilding confidence in their ability to shape their own infrastructure. The codependent system between Arriba and Abajo encourages new forms of collaboration, softening long standing tensions as both towns share responsibilities and benefits. Tourism flows also shift, visitors move from passive sightseeing to participatory learning, reducing weekend overcrowding and distributing activity more evenly. New routines emerge as locals, artisans, and designers interact regularly in the lab, creating a culture of shared making and co-design. Processes such as decision-making and maintenance become more transparent and community-driven, setting the foundation for longer-term governance and economic change. Overall, the project sparks a renewed sense of agency, connection, and purpose across both towns.

IMPACT

In the long term, this project has the potential to transform Patones into a model of heritage-driven rural innovation. By restoring black slate craftsmanship and embedding it into a functional learning and fabrication system, the town strengthens its cultural identity while gaining new economic and social opportunities. The codependent structure between Patones de Arriba and Patones de Abajo can shift long-standing power imbalances, creating a more equitable distribution of resources, responsibilities, and visibility. Structurally, the project lays groundwork for new forms of community-led governance, where residents participate directly in building, maintaining, and shaping their environment. Culturally, it repositions rural living as desirable and future-oriented, challenging narratives of decline and demonstrating that tradition can be a foundation for innovation. The model is replicable: other rural towns facing depopulation or loss of craft heritage could adapt the living-lab approach to their own materials, histories, and needs.

Over time, this work could influence regional policy by showing how SDG localization, circular economies, and participatory design can strengthen rural territories. Ultimately, the project sustains a vision of rural futures where autonomy, craftsmanship, and community collaboration reshape development from the ground up.

INTRODUCTION: THE OVERGROWTH OF MADRID

Madrid has grown beyond its own limits.

The city expands restlessly, replacing greenery with concrete and prioritizing speed over sustainability. As new developments rise, nature retreats, and infrastructures strain under the pressure of overpopulation. Public transport, housing, and resources can't keep up with demand, while gentrification and high costs push people further away from the center. Yet the outskirts remain disconnected, treated as dormitory towns rather than opportunities for balance.

Madrid doesn't need more expansion; it needs redistribution.

Degrowth and dispersion of opportunity could reconnect people with nature, transforming small surrounding towns into active, connected extensions of the city: not abandoned relics, but living systems.

2. RETHINKING CONNECTION: PATONES AS A LIVING SYSTEM

By rebuilding the relationship between Patones de Arriba and Patones de Abajo, we propose a model of self-sustaining collaboration.

Patones could evolve from dependency into autonomy where its architecture,

history, and community become engines for regeneration. A circular system between the two towns would balance tourism, craft, and daily life: creating spaces for cultural exchange, local production, and innovation within tradition.

This approach can be replicated across other small towns around Madrid,

forming a regional network of living laboratories that preserve heritage while enabling new forms of sustainable growth. In this system, the town is not just maintained; it learns, produces, and evolves on its own. By rebuilding the relationship between Patones de Arriba and Patones de Abajo, we propose a model of self-sustaining collaboration. Patones could evolve from dependency into autonomy where its architecture, history, and community become engines for regeneration. A circular system between the two towns would balance tourism, craft, and daily life: creating spaces for cultural exchange, local production, and innovation within tradition. This approach can be replicated across other small towns around Madrid, forming a regional network of living laboratories that preserve heritage while enabling new forms of sustainable growth.

In this system, the town is not just maintained; it learns, produces, and evolves on its own.

3. REBALANCING GROWTH: FROM CITY TO TERRITORY

If Madrid redefines its infrastructure to connect and support towns like Patones

growth could finally become balanced rather than centralized.

By creating meaningful infrastructure mobility links, creative residencies, ecological housing, and hybrid public spaces urban dwellers could rediscover the value of living beyond the capital. This shift would relieve pressure from the city, decentralize opportunity, and allow rural areas to thrive without losing their essence. Through co-creation and sustainable infrastructure, the people of Madrid could look outward instead of upward.

building through nature, not over it

and together, shape a new territorial ecosystem where both city and countryside sustain one another.

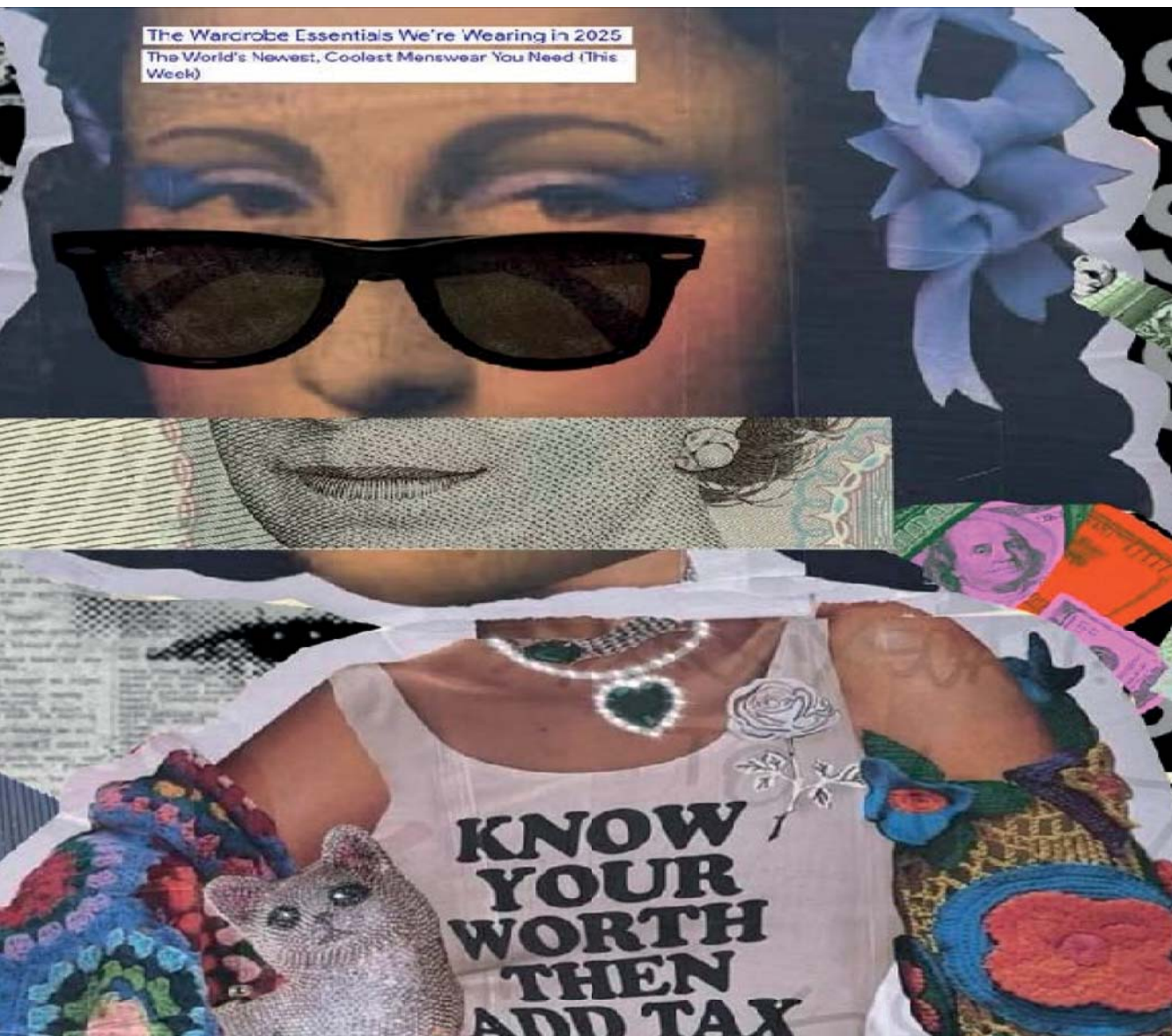
PATONES
DE ARRIBA
centro de arquitectura y cultura



Impact Metrics

To measure the evolution of our intervention, we combine quantitative and qualitative indicators. First, we track participation rates in workshops, classes, and co-design sessions, which indicate community engagement and the revival of slate craftsmanship. Second, we measure infrastructure improvements, including the number of restored structures or active projects initiated through the lab. Third, we monitor tourism flow distribution between Arriba and Abajo to assess whether participation-based tourism reduces weekend overcrowding and balances economic benefits. Qualitatively, we evaluate resident satisfaction and perceived autonomy through interviews and feedback cycles, since community agency is central to the project's goals. Lastly, we assess emerging collaborations between residents, designers, and institutions, as these relationships are critical for long-term sustainability. Together, these metrics create a clear dashboard for understanding cultural, structural, and economic impacts over time.





Do You Really Need It?

THE CONSUMERIST BREAKDOWN

Team:

1. Joseph Weinstein
2. Selene Torres
3. Sofia Arenas
4. Thomas Jackman
Kuwabara

Abstract

This project investigates the systemic drivers of overconsumption within the fashion industry through the lens of Sustainable Development Goals 11.6 and 12.8, addressing both urban sustainability and responsible consumption. Focusing on Gen Z as a primary community of study, the research examines how emotionally charged and insecurity-based marketing strategies, rooted in the legacy of consumerist thinker Edward Bernays, influence purchasing behavior and contribute to escalating textile waste. By combining interviews, ethnographic observations, and digital research, the project uncovers how cultural norms, education, and psychological manipulation are used to shape consumption habits. These habits thus reveal a gap between individuals' stated values and their actions.

We leveraged design frameworks and the role of digital culture, this project explores interventions within the very platforms that drive modern consumerism. TikTok, memes, and music function as communicative prototypes that speak in Gen Z's own cultural language, allowing our team to navigate and target this generation. Engagement data from these interventions, such as audience demographics, view and save counts, and comment activity, served as indicators of early signals of potential impact. The project introduces *mère*, a new term centered on reconnecting with nature through radical self-love, as a potential agent to go against consumption-driven culture. By embedding awareness into relatable digital content rather than formal messaging, the project demonstrates how subtle, culturally embedded interventions can attempt to shift perceptions of sustainability. This projects long-term vision is to seed new vocabulary, spark online and offline

discussions, and inspire reflective thought about personal consumption. Ultimately, this project argues that meaningful cultural change can emerge through the same digital systems that currently promote overconsumption, when used intentionally to foster agency, personal consciousness, collective discussion & thought.

Foundations

SDG Relevance

We are addressing SDG's 11 and 12, focusing on both making cities more sustainable and ensuring responsible consumption habits. We are focusing on point 11.6, which focuses on the impact waste has on cities as well as 12.8 to promote a sustainable lifestyle. Both of these work seamlessly because they feed into the other, by having a sustainable lifestyle one produces less waste which has a greater impact on the cities. We are focusing on the root of consumerism, which is marketing and how it's worked to manipulate people to buy things they don't need. Specifically when it comes to shopping for clothes, the amount of waste the fashion industry produces is growing at an exponential rate.

Context Of Research

Our project explores the systemic landscape of consumerism specifically within the fashion industry. In the western world, a consumerist culture has arisen, impacting how individuals act and how companies operate. With mental health on the rise among younger generations, fashion companies have been exploiting certain emotions through marketing and advertising to gain people's attention and money. Key actors in this topic are fashion brands, their marketing and advertising teams, and their means of communication (social media, television, posters, etc.).

The community studied in this project is Gen Z. As stated previously, mental health has been on the rise among younger generations. As we are Gen Z as well, there is a connection that we had to our community of study.

The problem space focuses on how fashion companies use emotionally/insecurity charged messaging and trend-based designs to stimulate overconsumption. This project explores the possibility of how this system can be changed to provide individuals with their own thought and agency.

Research

Research Insights & Key Findings

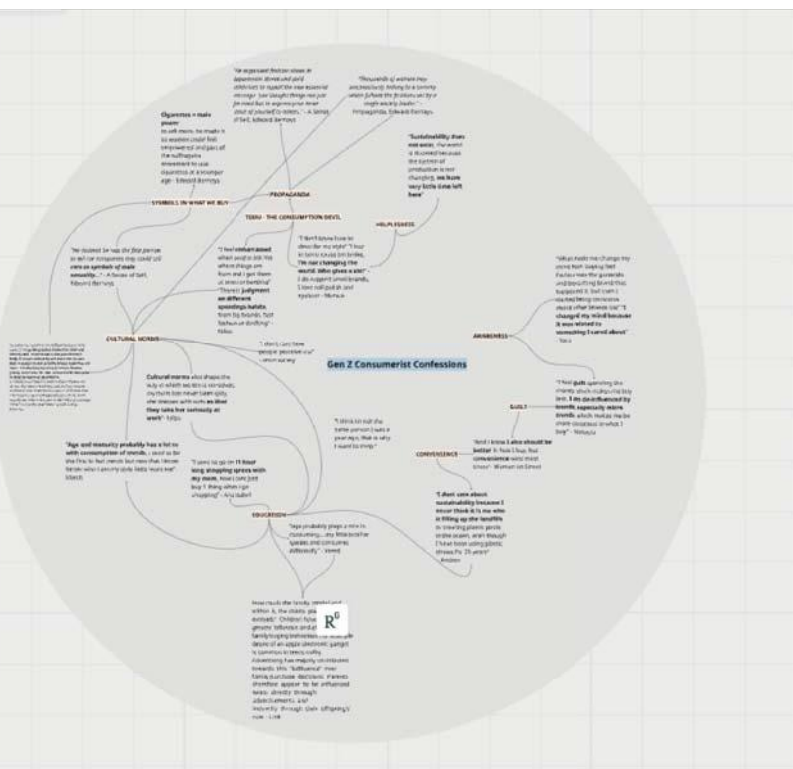
Our research was divided into three aspects: interviews, ethnographic work, and literature. For the interviews, we conducted surveys as well as more spontaneous conversations with strangers, classmates, and other university students. We wanted to understand the broader reasoning behind people's consumption habits. This also connected to our ethnographic research, since while observing behaviors in Fuencarral, we often asked shoppers about their actions and motivations.

In Figure 1, we mapped the main insights from our interviews about consumption and sustainability habits. The most recurring categories were education and cultural or familial norms, revealing how these factors intersect. Figure 2 highlights a particularly striking conversation with a BBA student, showing that while many claim to care about sustainability, their actions often contradict those claims. The student noted that the BBA curriculum itself conflicts with sustainable values, making sustainability seem more performative than genuine.

We tested this observation by surveying design and BBA students about sustainability and whether they felt the university took it seriously. Out of 39 responses, 53% were from BBA students, many of whom said that although they care about sustainability, the university fails to make them feel genuinely responsible for it—especially regarding consumption habits. Lastly, we turned to literature, studying Edward Bernays, nephew of Sigmund Freud, to understand the psychological basis of desire and consumption. Bernays, a pioneer of marketing and propaganda, famously advised car companies to market vehicles as symbols of male sexuality (Curtis, 2005). Learning how figures like Bernays shaped mass consumption by manufacturing desire helped us realize how constructed these systems are. That shared realization ultimately connected us as a group.

BBA

Figure 2



Futures & Interventions

Inputs

This project was supported by the help of a variety of theoretical design frameworks. When forming ideas, it was important to figure out the actors who would be involved in any design activities and interventions as well as any tools and assets to use. The most important tool for this project was TikTok. Internet culture is an important actor among Gen Z, in general. And when connecting them to consumerism, TikTok plays an important role due to how it connects people to brands and how they discuss brands and products. This relationship is one that was sought to be leveraged further in the process of this project.

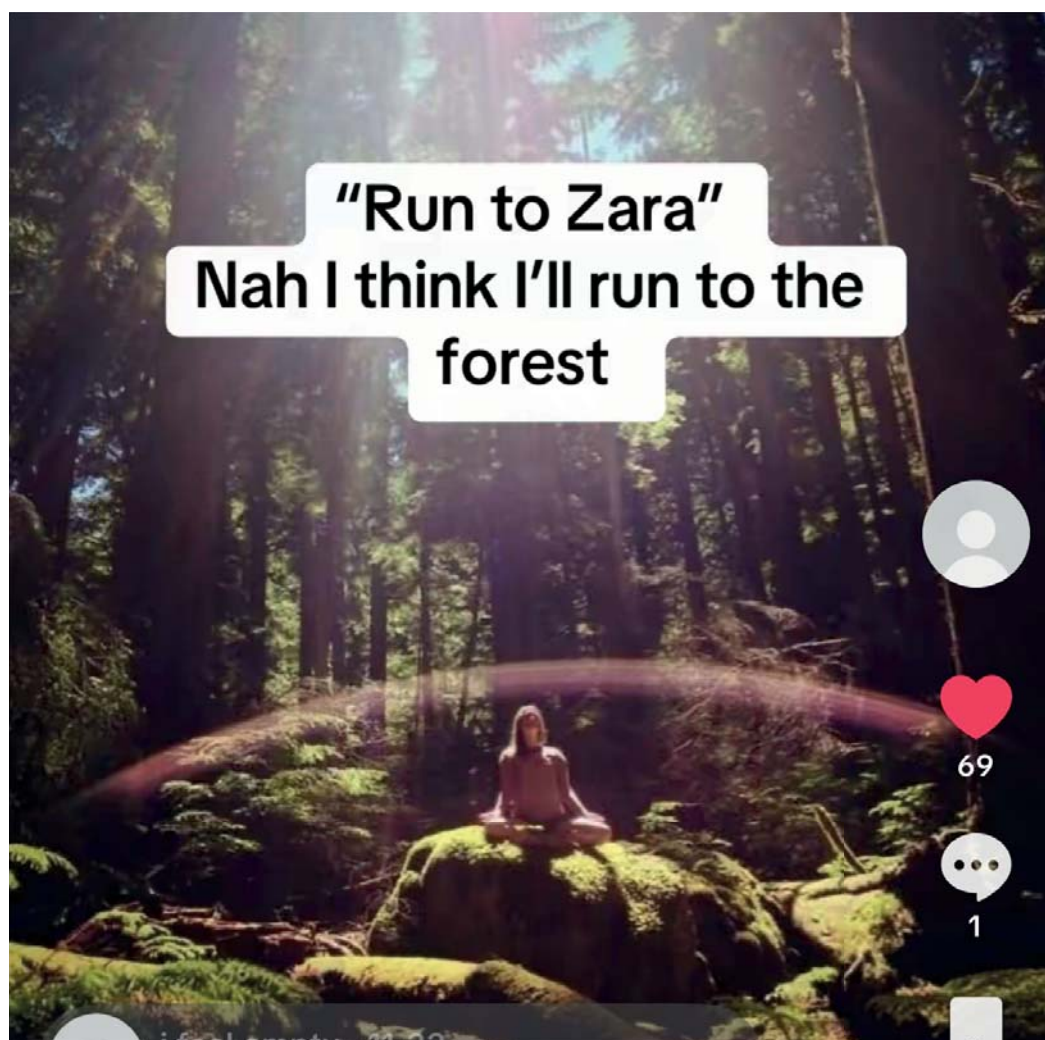
Activities

We had three main intervention methods: class conversations, memes rooted in Gen-Z internet culture, and music — each building on the last. Through class presentations, we explored how people our age perceive overconsumption and sustainability, as shown in Figure 1. From this, we realized that outside the classroom, the best way to reach Gen-Z was by speaking their language, as we are a chronically online generation. This led to our use of memes (Figures 3 & 4), our first real prototype, meant to test our audience and find where we could strike a chord. Our final tactic was music — a less typical design intervention but one deeply connected to emotion. Music helps people disconnect, decompress, and sometimes manifest change, often searching its lyrics for guidance or reassurance.

Leverage Points

In a world and society formed on consumerism, and capitalism, making a change in culture and society is difficult. Companies, and the market as a whole, reach the masses through the internet. For younger audiences, this is done specifically through social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. If companies are able to gain millions of impressions through social media and drive up their sales, why can't individuals and projects use the same means to share an opposing view? TikTok is seen by many as the social media platform that is easiest to gain large amounts of views on. Therefore our group decided to explore the use of TikTok as a means to get within an in-group and share opposing views about what has been instilled in them.





Consolidation

Outputs

The first tangible results came from our TikTok posts and the audience they began to attract. Around 85% of viewers were female, and over half were aged 18–24 (Figures 8–11). Seeing this data helped us understand who was actually engaging with our content. Our memes and videos worked as prototypes — ways to test which tones, visuals, and messages resonated most.

The video that captured our core concept of mere — reconnecting with nature, community, and ourselves through radical self-love — reached 1,220 views, 235 likes, and 17 saves (Figures 6–7). Considering we only had seven followers, this felt like real traction. The engagement, especially the saves, suggested the content struck an emotional chord. Each post became a small experiment in communicating with people like us: chronically online individuals navigating a constant stream of media and consumption.

Watching how the numbers reflected something deeper — how metrics tied back to meaning — was both surreal and validating. Even the engagement with our song mirrored the same themes, showing that our creative and conceptual goals weren't just aligning, but actively resonating (Figures 12–13).

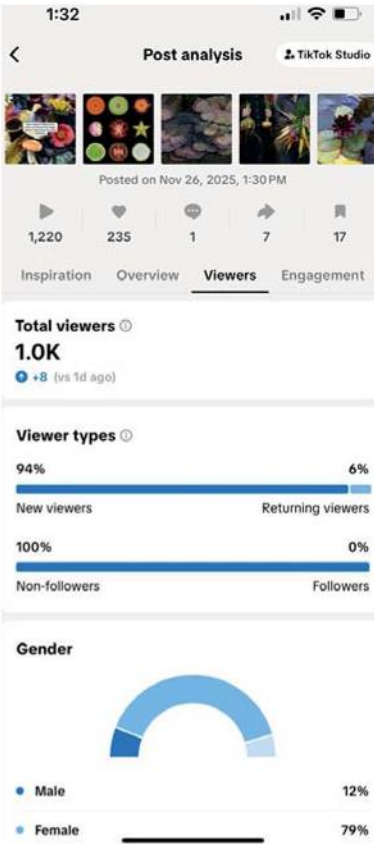


Figure 8



Figure 9

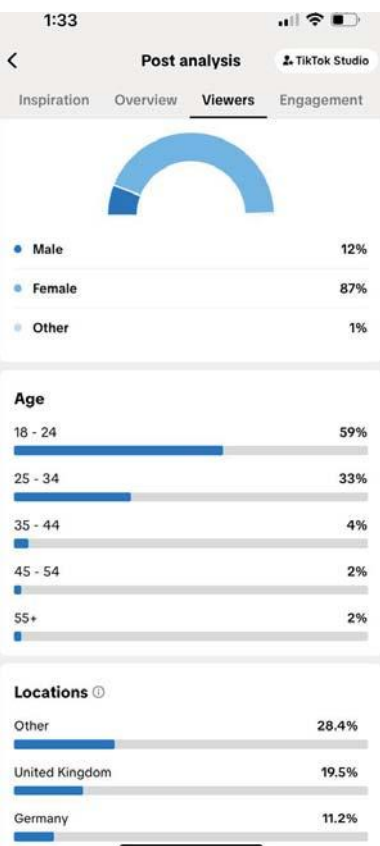


Figure 10



Figure 12

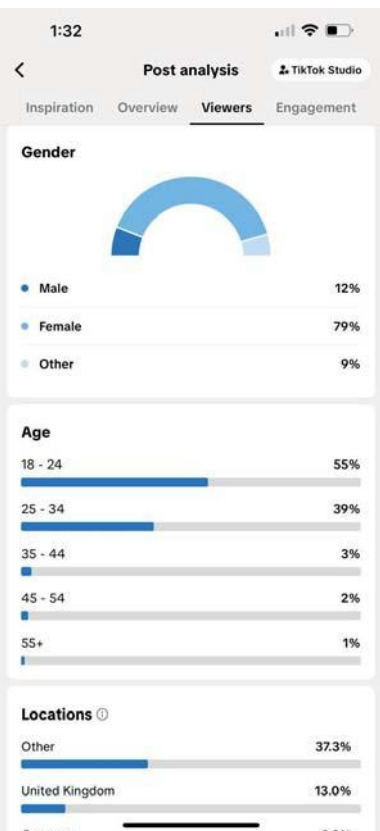


Figure 11

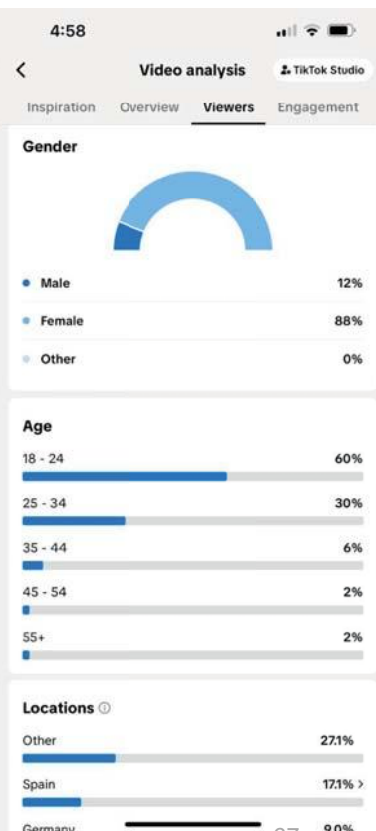


Figure 13

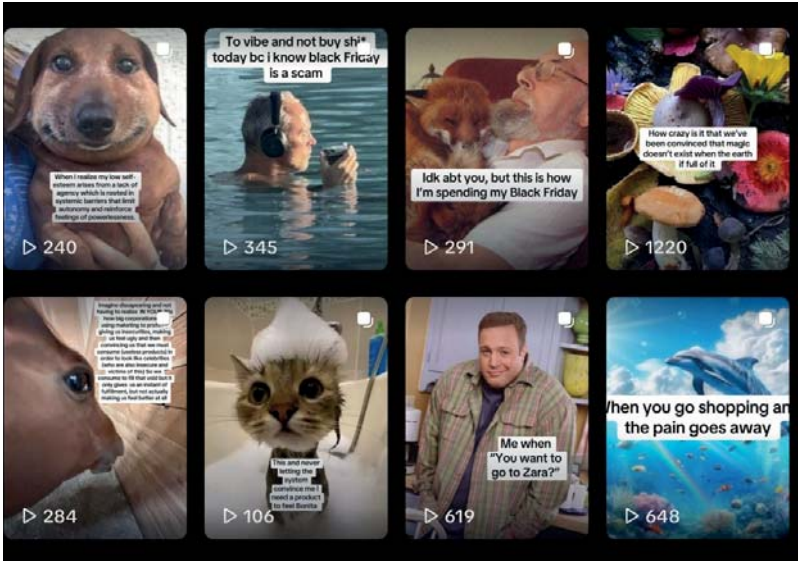


Figure 6



Figure 7

Outcomes

TikTok, similar to other social media platforms, have clear metrics (likes, comments, & reposts/shares) that indicate outcomes of a post. Based on the success, or failures, of posts, we are able to understand what concepts, topics, or ideas do people agree with. Based on these metrics, we are able to understand and focus on topics that people most connect with. To define mid-term outcomes, it will be based off if people are actively discussing the topics or words posed by our memes both in our comment section, in new posts, or in real life.

Impact

The whole point of this project was to talk about why we consume and bring awareness to it. We wanted to stay conscious of who we were speaking to, and to think about the long-term effects of what gets shared online. How once something is out there, it kind of lives on in that digital space. Through the memes and the song, the idea was to create something that sticks with people, that makes them stop and think about their own habits. It's not about talking down to anyone, but being on the same level and sharing something relatable. In the bigger picture, small things like words, sounds, or rhythms can take root in someone's mind and quietly shift how they see or act. Maybe that's how change builds—slowly, through what stays with us without us even noticing.

Impact Metrics

There are a few impact metrics that will help us understand the effectiveness of this project. Firstly being the introduction of 'mere' into people's vocabularies and internet culture. This metric matters as the more people who use 'mere' in conversation, the more people will understand its meaning and have the possibility to change their perspective on sustainability. The second impact metric is the performance and usage of our song. To us, the song will perform well if strangers are using the tik tok audio on social media platforms. This is important as it proves that we were able to "hack" the system by spreading awareness about consumption motivations on a platform built to sell.



LUCIDUS

BEHIND OVERCONSUMPTION

Team:

1. Ainara Rodríguez
2. Ivanna Cabrera
3. Maya Ishaq
4. Valeria Geyne



These prototypes acted as real-world probes, allowing us to observe how people respond when confronted with the idea that everyday consumption mirrors addictive patterns, as well as how influenced we have been by the algorithm.

The speculative rehab program reframes addiction as a cultural and environmental issue rather than an individual failure, imagining new therapeutic infrastructures for identity, emotion, and community building. Together, these interventions aim to shift behavior, as well as create awareness by transforming unconscious consumption into conscious decisions, encouraging individuals to pause, question, and reconnect with their values, and how they define their individuality.

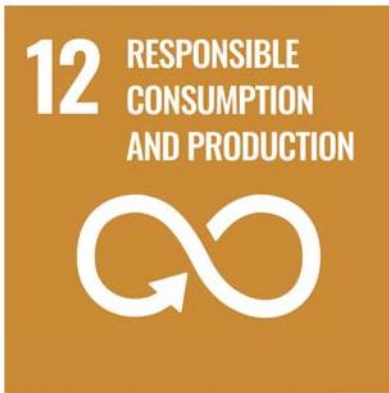
Abstract

This project examines consumerism as a psychological and systemic condition shaped by emotional regulation, social comparison, and algorithmic pressure. Field research and the iceberg model in our study reveal that people do not buy objects, they buy relief, belonging, and identity, driven by subconscious triggers and environments engineered for desire. The challenge is systemic: brands, social platforms, influencers, and spatial

design reinforce addiction-like behaviors through feedback loops of insecurity, overstimulation, and identity gaps.

To address this, the project explores interventions that make conscious reflection instinctive. We tested different types of prototypes in Fuencarral, including reflection prompts, speculative pamphlets, and a street-level ad campaign introducing Centro Lucidus, a fictional "rehabilitation" weekend program for consumerism and social media addiction.

Foundations



"Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns." (United Nations, 2015)

SDG Relevance

This project localizes SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production within the streetwear-focused retail environment of Fuencarral. In this context, consumption is shaped not only by product availability but by emotional needs, identity construction, and digital influence. Our field insights show that many young shoppers buy for relief, validation, or comparison rather than necessity—a pattern supported by the systemic pressures mapped in our iceberg analysis

Relevant SDG 12 targets include 12.8 (awareness for sustainable lifestyles) and 12.6 (encouraging responsible practices among businesses). By introducing subtle interventions—reflection prompts, speculative rehab pamphlets, and an ad campaign—we explored how spatial and communicative cues can interrupt automatic consumption and support more conscious decision-making.

These prototypes help translate SDG 12 into everyday experiences, demonstrating what SDG localization can look like at the scale of a single commercial street.

Interdependencies emerge with SDG 3 (Health and Well-Being) because emotional regulation and compulsive behavior significantly influence consumption. This connection informed our speculative rehab center, which reframes overconsumption as a behavioral and cultural issue rather than a purely economic one.

Overall, the project strengthens SDG 12 by addressing the psychological drivers underlying unsustainable consumption and by experimenting with interventions that promote reflection rather than impulse.

Research Context

This research is situated within the systemic landscape of Madrid's Gen Z fashion culture, where consumer behavior is shaped by intertwined actors—streetwear brands (Nude Project, Cold Culture, Eme Studios), influencers, social media algorithms, and retail spatial design. These infrastructures reinforce cultural logics such as performative authenticity, social comparison, and the illusion of individuality, as reflected in our tensions map (e.g., authenticity vs. performance, belonging vs. individuality, awareness vs. automation). Together, these dynamics create a system where buying becomes emotional regulation rather than material decision-making.

Our study takes place in Fuencarral, a youth-dense commercial street that functions as a situated micro-ecosystem of contemporary consumerism. Through interviews and observations, we found that shoppers routinely describe purchases as mood-enhancing or

self-expressive, yet simultaneously acknowledge the influence of algorithms and group trends. This contradiction positions Fuencarral as an ideal environment to examine how identity, emotion, and unconscious pressures shape consumption.

The problem space centers on consumers' difficulty in becoming conscious of their own habits. Its boundaries include store atmospheres engineered for desire, digital recommendation systems, and cultural norms around individuality. These constraints limit opportunities for reflection and make behavior feel automatic. Using Module 1 tools—situated research, system boundary mapping, and context mapping—we identified structural barriers (overstimulation, scarcity aesthetics, trend cycles) and emotional drivers (belonging, insecurity, relief).

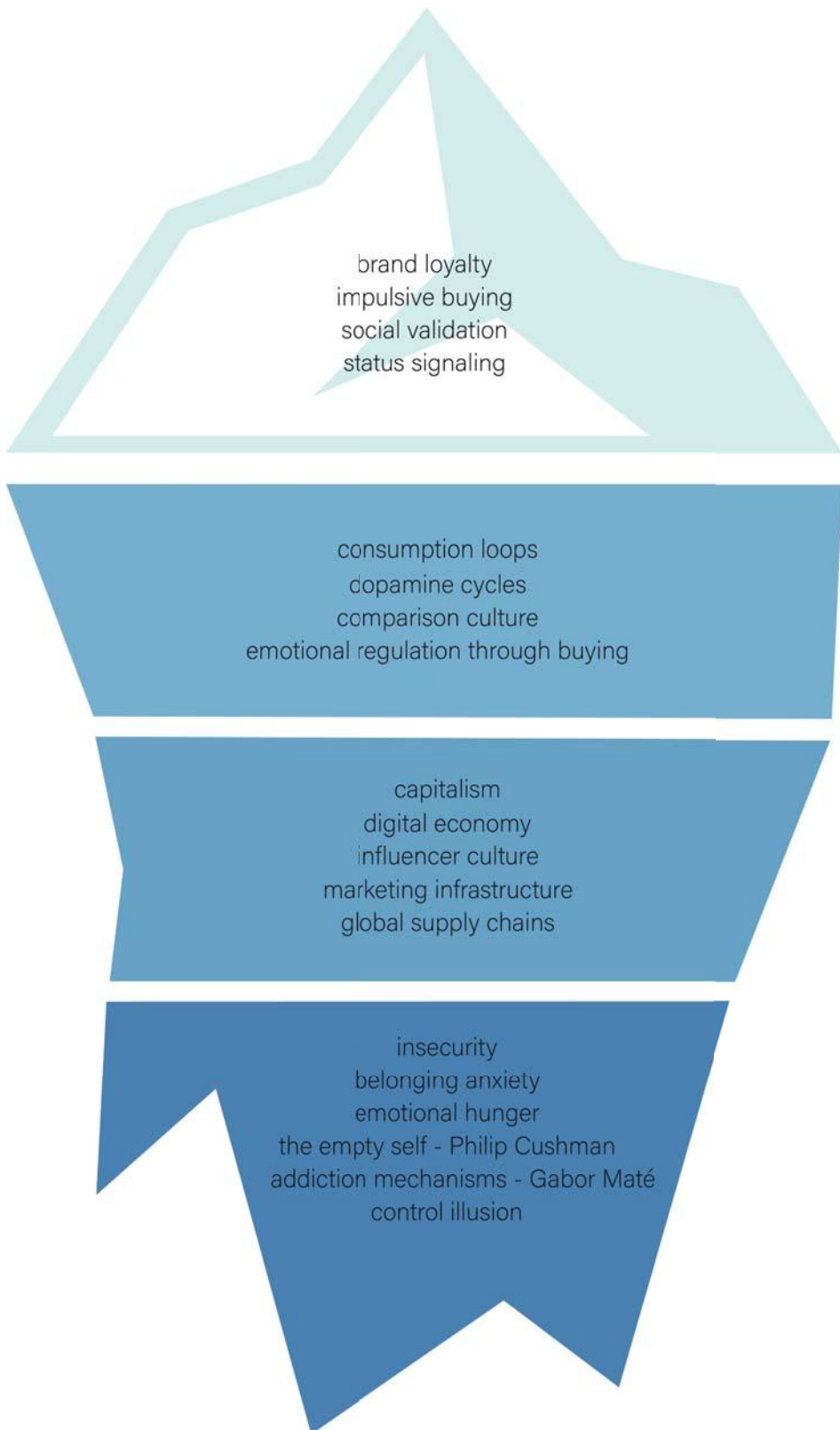
This framing guided our interventions, which explore how design might interrupt automatic behavior and create moments of awareness within the retail and digital systems that currently promote impulsive consumption.



People making line outside EME Studios in Fuencarral.



People waiting in line to enter Nude Project in Fuencarral.



Research

Insights & Key Findings

Across our research layers, one insight became increasingly clear: younger consumers are not only influenced by what they see online – their identities are being actively shaped by algorithmic cues. Many participants described discovering brands exclusively through social media, and several admitted that trends, influencers, and platform recommendations heavily guided what they “felt like” wearing. This mirrors the emotional dependency patterns Gabor Maté describes in behavioral addiction, where external stimuli co-create internal needs.

This link between algorithmic identity formation and emotional consumption strengthened our decision to view overconsumption through an addiction lens. While examining existing models, we encountered CITA, a behavioral addiction center treating shopping and social-media addiction through long-term therapeutic programs (ages 30–45, minimum duration three months, high cost). Their approach validated the psychological dimension of our findings, but also highlighted an accessibility gap: such treatment is intensive, expensive, and oriented toward late-stage dependency.

In contrast, our prototype explores an early-stage, short-term alternative: a 3-day reflective program aimed at people aged 25–40, a group that showed higher willingness to change and deeper self-awareness during field testing. Unlike CITA's clinical model, our program uses spatial, emotional, and social prompts to create micro-interventions that help individuals notice their patterns before they escalate.

This shift, from blaming individual irresponsibility to acknowledging emotional and algorithmic vulnerability became a key leverage point. Participants responded more openly when messaging felt supportive rather than judgmental, reinforcing our hypothesis that awareness emerges when people feel understood, not accused.

Tension	Description	Insight	Key	Take
Authenticity vs. Performance	People say they love what feels “real” or “authentic,” but think “real” people are limited and nonperformant through social media curation.	People buy what “feels real,” but authenticity is a performance. Authenticity is not a performance. Authenticity is not a performance. Authenticity is not a performance.	Designing community and products that need their own authenticity. Authenticity is not a performance. Authenticity is not a performance. Authenticity is not a performance.	Designing community and products that need their own authenticity. Authenticity is not a performance. Authenticity is not a performance. Authenticity is not a performance.
Awareness vs. Automation	Most know social media influences them – but they still follow those leads automatically.	Consumers know they're influenced by algorithms but still act automatically.	Then algorithms alone doesn't change behavior.	Designing interactive systems or real experiences that can show decision-making, prompting reflection before purchase.
Belonging vs. Individuality	They consume to fit in with a group while believing they're expressing their individuality.	Buying has become a social ritual of belonging.	Then clothes are more like design for identity expression than economic, social and identity community and culture.	Designing systems that have design for identity expression, where they can express a sense of belonging and identity.
Emotion vs. Rationalization	Buying is emotional, but they justify it with logic (“quality,” “the price”).	Good (quality) products usually aren't better. They're just better.	Then authenticity is being critically challenged.	Designing tools that help people regulate their identity in others for example a mirror for seeing their identity following service building.
Identity vs. Appearance	They feel clothing shows who they are – get about it mostly shows how they want to be seen.	People justify emotional purchases through logic (“quality,” “the price”).	Then authenticity is being critically challenged.	Designing user interfaces to guide them to acknowledge emotional purchase through design. Designing 15 minute time capsule to explore the feel.
Control vs. Influence	They believe they make independent choices, but these choices are shaped by algorithms and peers.	People justify emotional purchases through logic (“quality,” “the price”).	Then authenticity is being critically challenged.	Designing alternative value systems that can show social models or similar design that reward longevity over variety.
Accessibility vs. Exclusivity	Everyone can use the brand online, but only a few get to see or wear it first before through social.	Access and scarcity shape desirability.	Then exclusivity is social currency.	

Tension map

If/Then Provocation Grid



Stakeholders map



ethnographic research & interviews done at fuencarral

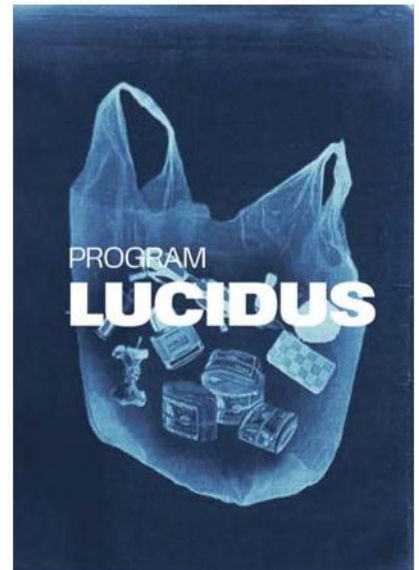


Futures & Interventions

Inputs

This project relies primarily on human and digital inputs. Human inputs include the interviews and street conversations conducted in Fuencarral, which offered direct insight into consumer behaviors, emotional drivers, and generational differences. These interactions also informed how people responded to our speculative pamphlets, ads, and awareness prompts. Digital inputs include the psychological and systemic research carried out online such as studies on consumer addiction, emotional regulation, algorithmic influence, and identity formation, along with analysis of brand communication across social media platforms.

Key stakeholders consist of Fuencarral shoppers, store communities, and younger consumers most affected by algorithmic pressure. Retail environments, social media ecosystems, and digital infrastructures serve as existing systems we build upon to test interventions. Using modules 2–3 tools such as tension maps, stakeholder mapping, and clustering, we used these inputs to design and prototype subtle disruptions—pamphlets, ads, and app concepts—that aim to trigger awareness within familiar consumption routines.

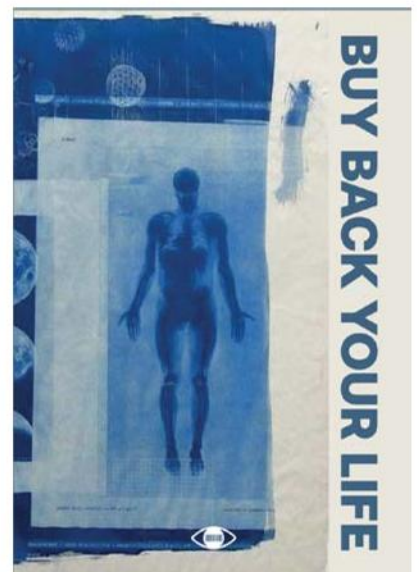


3-day Residential program at CITA

Activities

We tested a series of prototypes, a speculative rehab pamphlet, an on-street ad campaign, and an app concept—to observe how small narrative disruptions could trigger reflection in real time. These were distributed and displayed in Fuencarral to capture authentic reactions across age groups.

Our sequence of activities began with street intercepts, followed by prototype deployment, real-time feedback collection, and iterative refinement through clustering and storytelling tools. Testing functioned as inquiry: each prototype revealed emotional triggers, resistance points, and opportunities for awareness-building within everyday retail environments.



Pamphlet Prototype



Visual Social Media Ad campaign for a daily 5€ purchase

Outcomes

In the short to mid-term, our intervention aims to generate behavioural, relational, and process-level shifts.

For participants, the program and app foster increased awareness of emotional triggers, measurable reductions in impulsive purchases, and the emergence of new habits such as waiting periods, budgeting rituals, or alternative coping strategies (calling a friend, going for a walk).

Relationally, group sessions and alumni circles build micro-communities of accountability, where individuals can share struggles without shame and co-create strategies for more sustainable consumption and digital use.

At the process level, collaborating institutions, including CITA or similar wellbeing organizations, begin to expand their offerings to address compulsive consumption earlier and more accessibly. Instead of focusing only on long-term treatment for older adults, they start developing shorter, preventive programs tailored to younger audiences, who emerged as the most vulnerable in our research.



Ad campaign for Lucidus program.



IT ISNT TOO LATE.

+ 34 567 873 198

Stopping, taking a pause, and self-reflecting in middle of all the noise is what we need.

IMPACT

Long-term, *Recupera tu Vida* imagines a cultural and structural shift in how Madrid understands and responds to overconsumption. Instead of framing compulsive shopping and digital addiction as individual irresponsibility, the city begins to recognise them as symptoms of emotional distress and systemic design.

If scaled across neighbourhoods and integrated with municipal and NGO partners, the program could contribute to a city-level narrative change: responsible consumption becomes less about moralistic advice and more about creating conditions for emotional safety, time to reflect, and access to support.

Structurally, this may influence how public health campaigns are framed, how budgets allocate resources for prevention, and how urban and commercial spaces are designed, they could quieter zones, as well as alternative “third places” that are not consumption-based.

From an SDG 12 perspective, the project suggests a pathway where reduced material throughput and waste are co-produced with mental wellbeing, relational resilience, and new forms of community infrastructure, rather than demanded from already overstretched individuals.

SDG ONE

The unseen journey in Madrid

Noanne Khawly
Rohan Morar
Sofia B
Kate Chroma

Foundations

Abstract

SDG ONE

This project focuses on homelessness in Madrid and looks at it as a problem created by the system, not by individual people. Through observation and secondary research, we studied how a series of connected factors push people toward homelessness long before they end up living on the street. These factors include immigration rules, long delays in paperwork, a housing market that is too expensive and too strict, shelters that are always full, and mental health services that cannot meet demand. All of these issues interact and create cycles that are hard to escape, such as not being able to get a job or rent a home because you do not have the right documents.

Our goal is to help people in Madrid change the way they see homelessness by making the hidden structures behind it visible. Through awareness tools, we hope to encourage empathy and help people understand that homelessness is a public and community issue, not a personal mistake. This shift in perception can support long-term changes in the system, including more acceptance of Housing First approaches and better support services. Overall, the project aims to humanize homelessness and help society respond with more understanding and care.

Our project focuses on SDG 1: No Poverty, looking specifically at homelessness in Madrid. In this context, poverty is not just about lacking money, it is about losing stability, rights, housing, and connection to society. Many people end up homeless not because of personal mistakes, but because of a mix of problems in the system: slow documentation processes, very expensive housing, limited shelter options, and poor access to mental health support. These issues interact and make it difficult for people to rebuild their lives.

SDG 1 targets that relate directly to our work include: reducing poverty in all its forms, ensuring access to basic services and housing, creating policies that better support vulnerable people.

Our project also connects with other SDGs because homelessness is an interconnected issue:

- SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being): mental and physical health worsen when people live on the street.
- SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): migrants face extra barriers and discrimination.
- SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities): cities should be safe and inclusive for everyone.

By understanding these links, we show that ending homelessness is not just a social goal; it is a system-wide challenge that requires coordination between housing, health, and community support.

Context Research

Hidden System

Our research takes place in Madrid, a city where homelessness is easy to see on the streets but hard to understand in terms of the system behind it. The issue is connected to many factors happening at the same time: people arriving from other countries, the lack of affordable housing, slow and complex paperwork, and limited social services. These elements work together and often push people into homelessness even when they are trying to avoid it.

We focused our study on the early stages of this journey the moment someone arrives, tries to apply for documents, looks for housing, and begins to struggle with mental health. This helped us understand how people “fall through the cracks” because the system does not support them at the right time.

We looked at a range of actors who shape this experience: municipal shelters, NGOs like Hogar Sí and Cáritas, immigration offices, mental health services, local police, and even everyday residents, whose reactions influence stigma and visibility. Our observations in places like Gran Vía showed clear patterns: exposure to weather, very limited movement, lack of food, and the way people avoid looking at or interacting with the homeless population.

Interviews with foundation workers revealed deeper system problems: shelters are full, documents take years to process, and the stress of waiting creates serious psychological pressure. By studying these conditions together the city’s infrastructure, social attitudes, and institutional delays we came to understand homelessness as a systemic issue, not an individual one. This forms the base for our strategic design work.

“People don’t fall through cracks cracks are designed into the system.”

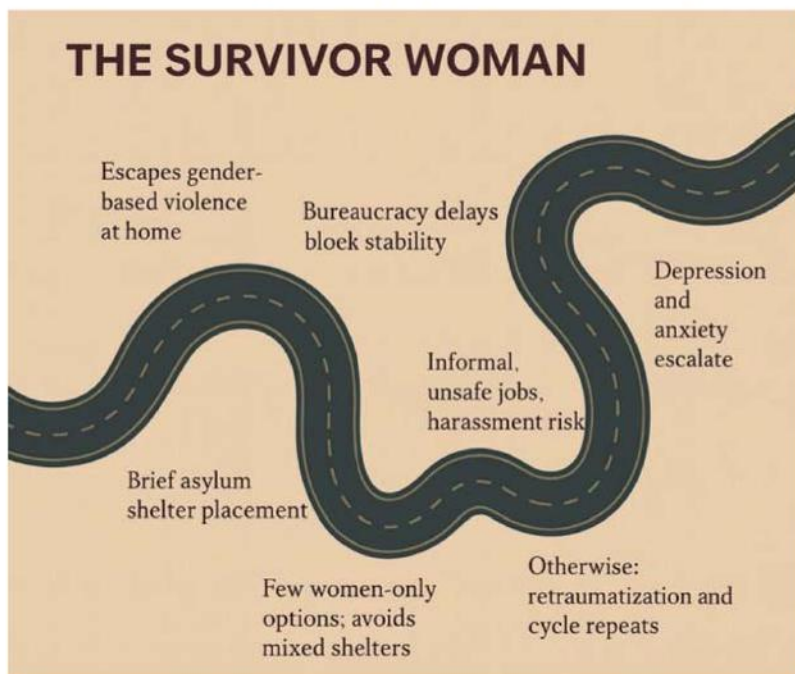
1 NO POVERTY



Research

Insights And Key Findings

Our research combined street observation, conversations with NGO workers, and data about homelessness in Madrid. From observing people living on Gran Vía, we noticed clear signs of struggle: improvised sleeping spaces made from cardboard, very few belongings, strong exposure to the weather, long periods of staying in the same place, and irregular access to food. These visible conditions suggested that people were not just lacking resources, but were caught in a deeper system that limited their options.



Speaking with organizations such as Hogar Sí and Cáritas helped us understand this system more clearly. Workers explained that most people do not end up homeless because of personal failure, but because they get stuck in processes that are too long or too complex to navigate alone. The most severe issue they described was the documentation loop, where people wait years for papers they need in order to work, rent a home, or access support.

Shelters in Madrid are almost always full, and some individuals avoid them entirely because they feel unsafe. Mental health services are also difficult to access, with long waitlists that leave many people without help for months.

Secondary research supported these findings. Migrants are especially affected, women often hide due to fear, and young people lose direction quickly when they are not guided. Across all groups, we observed patterns of isolation, shame, and lack of information about where to go next. Systemic barriers, social stigma, and fragmented services make it extremely hard for anyone to rebuild stability once they begin to fall through the cracks.

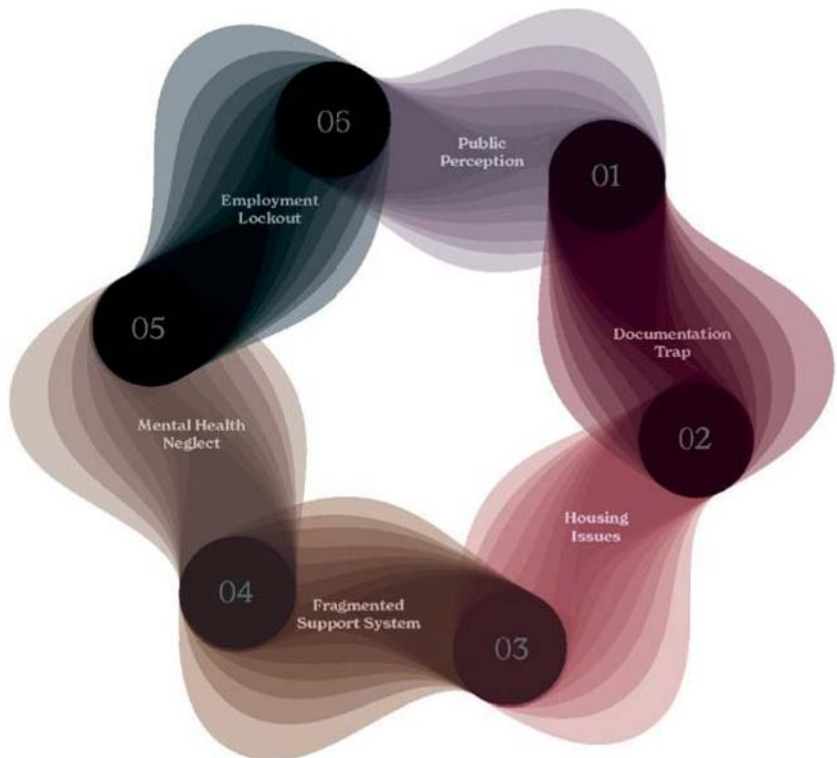
Overall, Understanding these patterns helped us identify where design could intervene to create awareness and support change within the system. These insights reveal homelessness as a journey shaped by systemic interactions, not a static condition. They point toward leverage opportunities in public perception, inter-institutional coordination, and narrative reframing, forming the foundation for our strategic intervention.

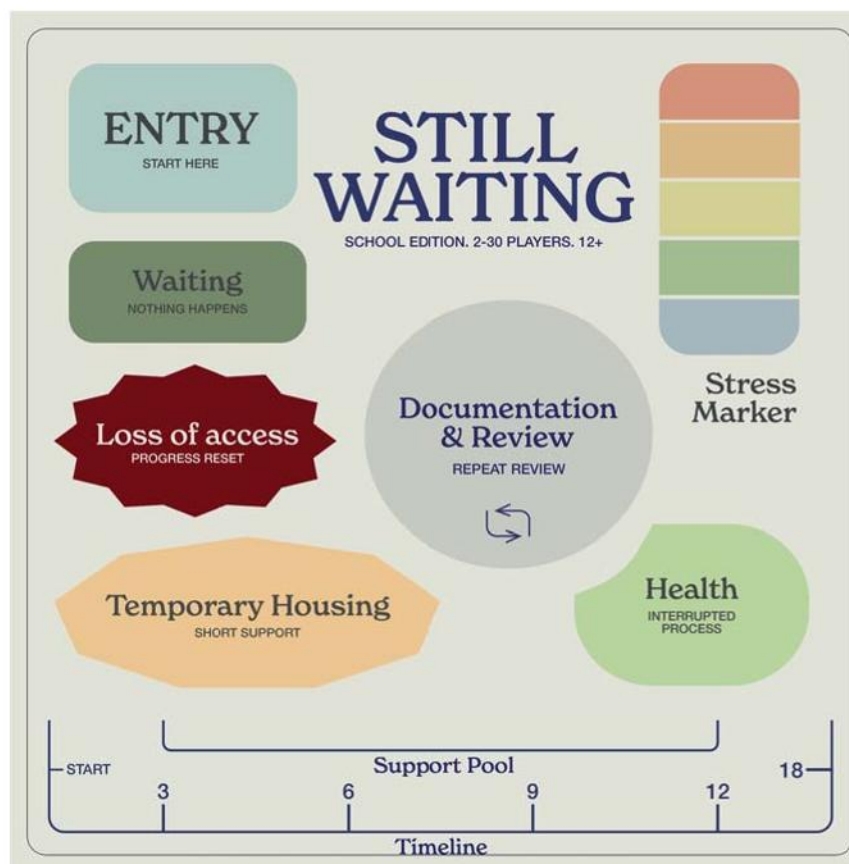
Inputs

Our project relies on a combination of human, organizational, and environmental resources that make the intervention possible. Partnerships with NGOs such as Hogar Sí and Cáritas provide essential expertise about the daily challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness and ensure that our work remains ethical and grounded in reality. Insights from social workers, volunteers, and municipal support services help us understand the system from the inside and identify where awareness is most needed.

Our field observations in areas like Gran Vía give us the visual and contextual information necessary to represent the homeless journey accurately. Interviews offer real stories, clarifications, and systemic details that shape our narrative approach. We also draw on existing data about housing, migration, and mental health in Madrid to support our findings.

These inputs allow us to design an intervention that is informed, sensitive, and connected to the system it aims to transform.





Activities

Our activities focus on turning our research into interactive tools that help people understand how someone becomes homeless in Madrid. The first tool is Still Waiting, a cooperative board game where players experience the delays, confusion, and lack of control that many people face in the real system. Each round represents a month, and players move through zones like documentation, waiting, housing, and health. The game shows how progress often depends on paperwork, chance, and support that arrives too late. We tested the game with students to see if it clearly communicated the barriers we learned about during our research.

The second activity is an interactive questionnaire that places users in the role of someone trying to move through the system. No matter what they choose, they often end up back at the beginning, just like the real documentation loop. We prototyped the flow, tested it with users, and refined the questions so the experience feels honest and realistic.

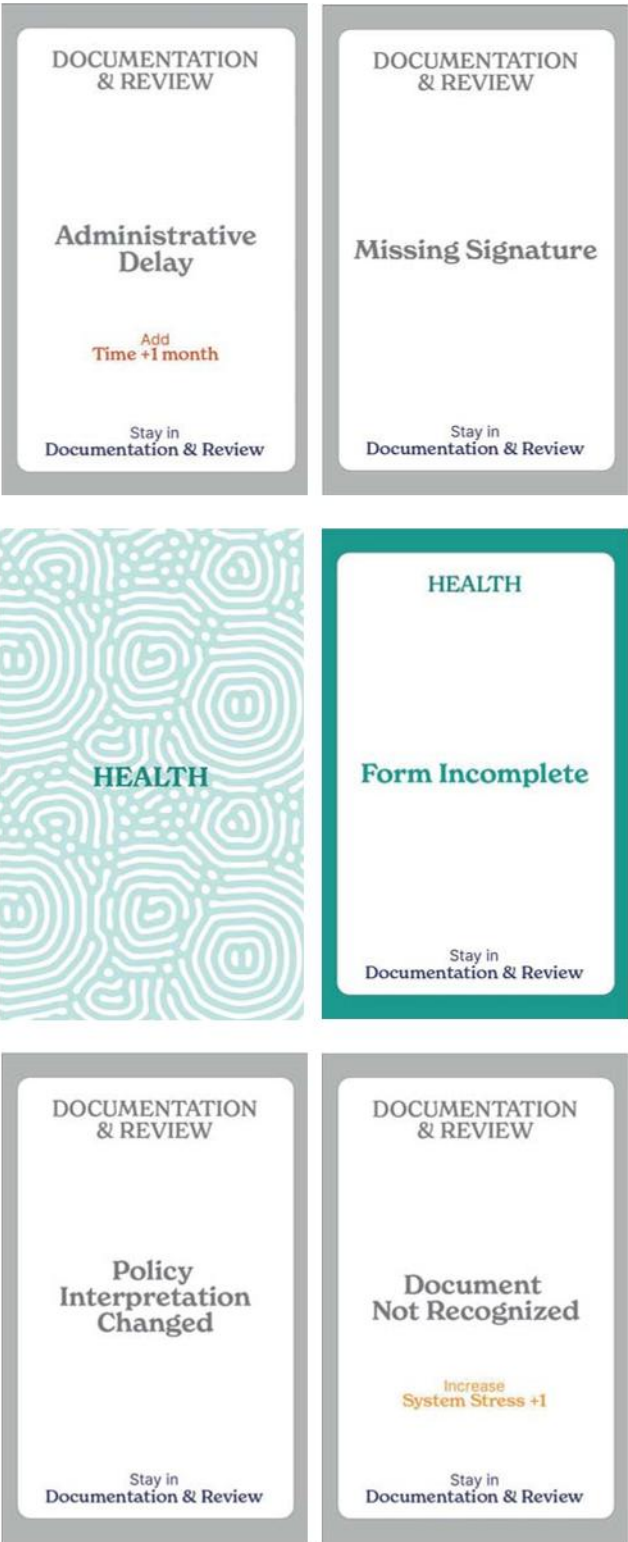
Leverage Point

Our project targets two key leverage points within the system: public understanding and narrative reframing. Many structural barriers in Madrid's homelessness system are slow to change, but the way people understand the issue can shift quickly and create momentum for broader transformation.

Both of our prototypes work on the flow of information. The board game "Still Waiting" allows players to experience how limited control, long delays, and unpredictable system stress shape a person's journey. This changes the narrative from "they should try harder" to "the system makes progress difficult," reducing stigma and increasing empathy. When people emotionally understand the system's constraints, they become more supportive of long-term solutions like Housing First or improved documentation processes.

The looping questionnaire acts as a second leverage point by exposing the illusion of choice within the system. Even when users make the "right" decisions, the structure pulls them back to the beginning. This highlights how people become stuck not because of personal failure, but because the system restricts mobility.

Together, these interventions shift mindsets, reveal hidden structures, and encourage the public to see homelessness as a shared responsibility rather than an individual fault unlocking cultural and relational transformation within the wider system.



Outputs

Making The System Visible



Our intervention produced two tangible outputs that translate our research into interactive and testable experiences. The first is Still Waiting, a fully prototyped board game that represents the real journey of navigating homelessness in Madrid. The game includes a board with systemic zones, four decks of event cards, player tokens, a time system, and a stress mechanism that reflects how external pressures shape progress.

This prototype allows players to experience delays, uncertainty, and limited support in a controlled, collaborative environment. It functions as both an educational tool and a conversation starter, making the system visible through play.

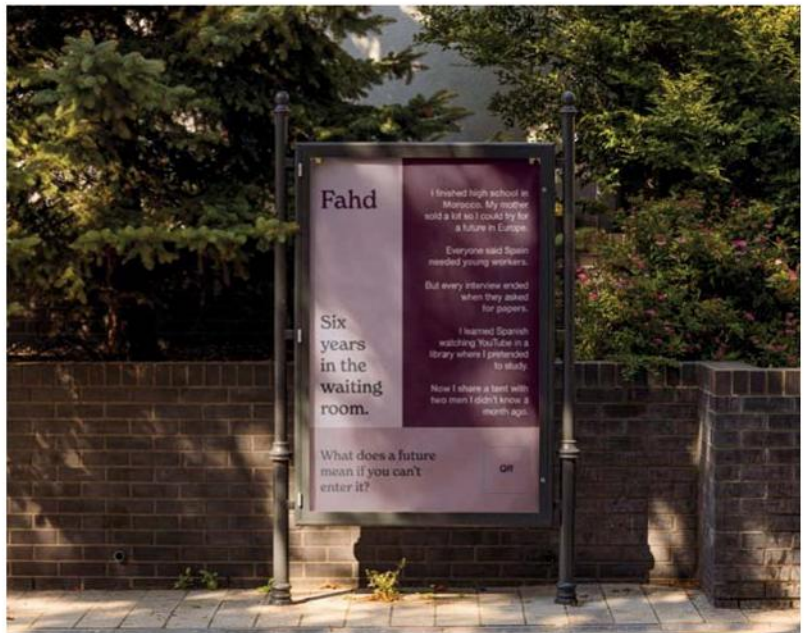
The second output is an interactive questionnaire designed to mirror the documentation loop and the feeling of being unable to move forward. The interface presents a series of choices that always lead users back to the beginning, visually and emotionally communicating how people become trapped in bureaucratic cycles. This prototype includes narrative prompts, branching paths, and a looped flow that reinforces systemic barriers.

Both outputs make our strategic intention visible: helping people understand that homelessness is shaped by structures, not individual decisions. They offer accessible ways to test how the public responds to system-centered storytelling.

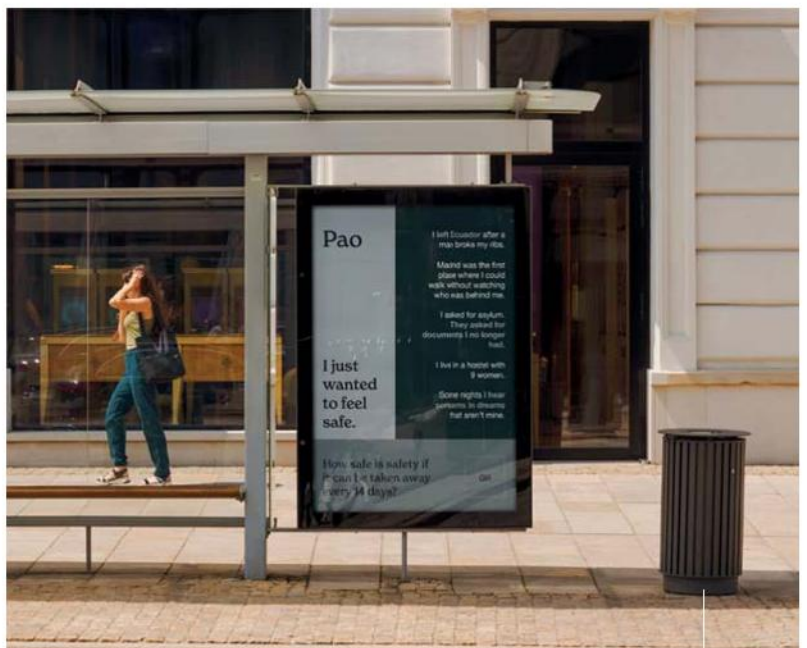
Outcomes

The immediate outcomes of our intervention are shifts in understanding, reflection, and conversation among the people who interacted with our prototypes. By playing the Still Waiting board game, participants experienced the emotional weight of delays, blocked progress, and limited support, leading many to express new awareness of how little control people have once they enter the homelessness system. This created early behavioral and relational changes, such as increased empathy, reduced judgment, and a willingness to discuss systemic causes rather than personal blame. The looping questionnaire produced similar outcomes by allowing users to feel the frustration and confusion of being returned to the start despite making “good” decisions. This helped them recognize how bureaucratic structures trap individuals.

Together, these prototypes generated early signals of impact: clearer understanding of systemic barriers, stronger emotional connection to the issue, and a shift in participants’ language from “why don’t they...?” to “why doesn’t the system allow...?”



“Experiencing the delays and loops firsthand created a new awareness of how little control people have inside the homelessness system.”



Impact

Long Term

The long-term impact of this project is the creation of a cultural shift in how homelessness is understood in Madrid. By using interactive tools that simulate real systemic barriers, the intervention encourages people to move away from blaming individuals and instead recognize the structures that shape their situations. This reframing can influence how residents talk about homelessness, how they respond to people on the street, and how willing they are to support policies centered on dignity, stable housing, and mental health access.

The board game Still Waiting has the potential to become a recurring educational tool in schools, community centers, and NGO workshops, helping new audiences understand the journey behind homelessness. The looping questionnaire offers a lightweight, easily shareable digital experience that can reach wider populations and spark conversations online. Over time, these tools can contribute to broader systemic change by increasing empathy, reducing stigma, and generating public support for more coordinated, humane approaches to homelessness.

By shifting narratives and strengthening awareness, the project helps build a societal environment that is more prepared to advocate for solutions such as Housing First, improved documentation processes, and integrated social services.

Metrics

To measure the evolution of our intervention, we propose a mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators that capture changes in understanding, attitudes, and engagement. One key metric is participant comprehension, measured through short pre- and post-interaction questions that assess how well players or users understand systemic barriers such as documentation delays or limited access to housing. Another metric is empathy shift, observed through changes in language, reflections, and emotional responses during group discussions after the game or questionnaire.

We also track engagement levels, including the number of people who complete the looping questionnaire, replay the game, or participate in discussions. A fourth metric is behavioral intention, measured by whether participants express willingness to support NGOs, learn more, or engage with homelessness-related initiatives.



STILL WAITING

SCHOOL EDITION. 3-6 PLAYERS. 12+

NO WINNERS. ONLY OUTCOMES.

STILL WAITING

3-6
PLAYERS

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



PARTNERSHIPS IN CRISIS

INTERVENING MADRID'S SEX WORK
SYSTEM THROUGH SDG 17

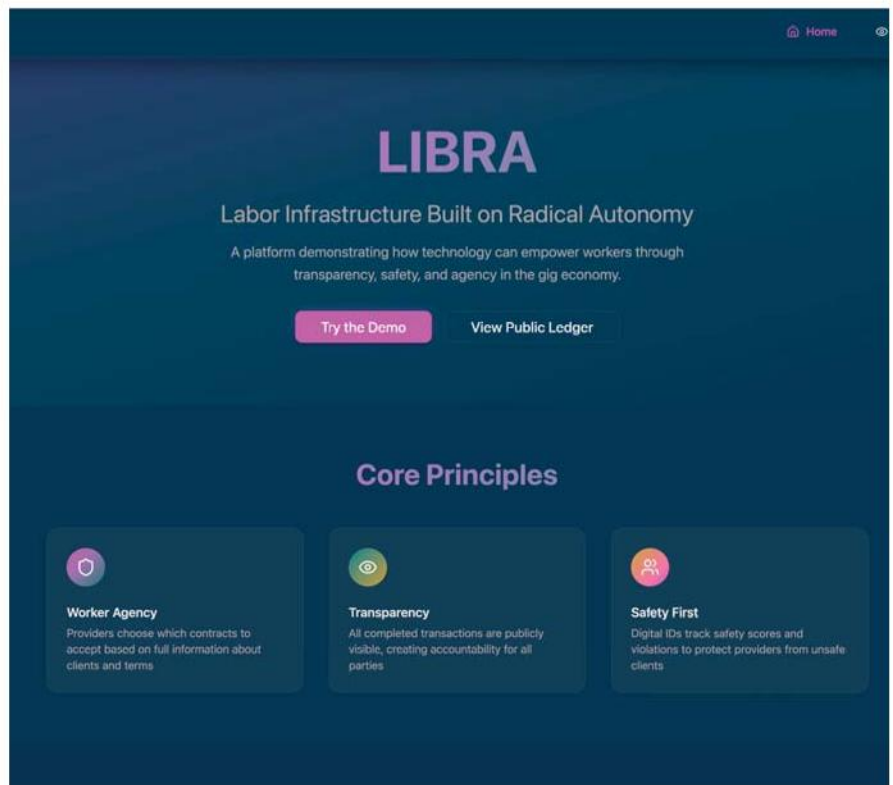
Team:

1. Sophie Rueger
2. Lucy Lampe
3. Court Granville
4. Phoebe Binneman

Abstract

This project intervenes in Madrid's sex work system through a blockchain-based platform that decentralizes power from providers to workers. Ethnographic research on Calle de la Ballesta revealed organized hierarchies where pimps hold centralized control, enabling violence and exploitation despite organic solidarity networks among workers. The systemic challenge stems from power concentration in intermediary actors, lack of transaction accountability, and ideological divides between abolitionist and rights-based approaches that fragment support systems. Operating within a speculative future (~5 years) where sex work is normalized and regulated, this intervention requires verified digital IDs for all participants—clients, providers, and facilitators.

By transforming pimps into limited "facilitators" with transparent commission rates and defined security roles, the system removes their financial control while preserving legitimate protective functions. A blockchain ledger creates permanent, tamper-proof transaction records with built-in escrow mechanisms and mutual feedback systems. The intervention aims to shift behavioral dynamics through accountability ratings, relational dynamics by enabling peer-to-peer networks over hierarchical control, and structural dynamics through decentralized power distribution, addressing both abolitionist concerns and rights-based priorities through systemic transformation.



Foundations



SDG Relevance

This project addresses SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), specifically Target 17.17 on effective public-private-civil society partnerships, revealing critical systemic interdependencies in Madrid's sex work context. SDG localization demonstrates how partnerships meant to support workers can paradoxically undermine their objectives when organizations shift ideologies—Médicos del Mundo's transition from harm reduction to abolitionist positions illustrates how partner misalignment fragments support systems. The systemic relevance emerges through examining incompatible paradigms: abolitionist frameworks view all sex work as inherent violence requiring elimination, while rights-based approaches recognize it as legitimate labor requiring protection.

This creates a central trade-off where pursuing one goal (abolishing sex work) directly conflicts with another (protecting worker rights and safety), paralyzing effective intervention. However, synergies exist—both approaches share concerns about violence elimination and exploitation prevention. Our intervention creates systemic relevance by focusing on these shared objectives: minimum violence, minimum exploitation, maximum worker agency. This enables coalition-building across ideological divides through pragmatic, harm-reduction-focused outcomes. The interdependence between partnership quality and worker safety demonstrates that SDG 17's effectiveness requires moving beyond organizational alignment toward outcomes defined by affected communities rather than external advocacy agendas.

Context Of Research

Madrid's street-level sex work operates as a complex adaptive system involving interdependent actors: workers with varying autonomy, pimps controlling territory and transactions, clients, police maintaining informal surveillance, and NGOs advancing competing ideological agendas. Infrastructure includes physical elements (street corners, alley checkpoints, territorial positioning) and relational structures (pimp networks, peer support systems, transaction protocols).

Cultural logics normalize police awareness without enforcement, creating quasi-legal operational space where sex work exists visibly yet remains structurally unprotected. Policy frameworks maintain deliberate ambiguity—sex work itself isn't criminalized, but surrounding activities occupy gray zones enabling both operation and exploitation. Our situated design approach focused ethnographically on Calle de la Ballesta in Madrid's Chueca neighborhood through observation sessions (November 10th-15th, 7pm-12am).



We mapped spatial positioning, transaction protocols, hierarchical structures, and solidarity networks. Workers demonstrated territorial organization with assigned positions, mandatory pimp checkpoints, and coordinated mutual protection responses. The problem space centers on centralized power concentration in pimp figures controlling financial flows, client access, and spatial positioning—creating structural violence regardless of individual actor intentions. System boundaries include Madrid's specific legal context, cultural norms around sex work visibility, and existing informal worker organization. Constraints involve entrenched power dynamics, worker vulnerability to retaliation, absent legal recourse mechanisms, and fragmented support systems divided by ideology. Context mapping revealed critical interconnections: legal ambiguity enables pimp control, necessitating peer networks that remain insufficient without formal protection—demonstrating why intervention must address systemic structure rather than isolated components.



Research



Research Insights & Key Findings

Ethnographic observations revealed consistent behavioral patterns: workers operate within connected networks rather than competing territories, demonstrating collective values around mutual safety through coordinated positioning, cross-distance communication, and emotional support (one worker received group comfort after crying, returning to work within three minutes). Transaction protocols remain standardized—client approaches worker, discussion, separate walking, pimp checkpoint, alley entrance—while police pass regularly (four times in twenty minutes) with recognition nods rather than intervention. The "Corner" position holder demonstrates leadership by directing spacing and teaching newer workers. Critical paradoxes emerge: workers demonstrate strong collegiality and mutual protection, yet remain structurally controlled by pimps managing finances and client access; some operate independently (umbrella women) while others work under supervision; the system simultaneously enables safety through facilitator presence while enabling exploitation through financial control.

Systemic barriers include centralized power preventing direct client negotiation, absence of accountability mechanisms for violations (no consequences unless caught in-the-moment), opaque payment systems enabling wage theft, inability to report violations without retaliation, legal ambiguity preventing formal protections, and ideological divides fragmenting support systems—Médicos del Mundo's shift from harm reduction to abolitionist stances exemplifies partnership contradictions. Early leverage hints emerged from existing peer-to-peer networks demonstrating workers' self-organization capacity, suggesting that preserving positive facilitator aspects (security, vetting) while eliminating exploitative elements (financial control) through transparent platforms could formalize organic solidarity and decentralize power from hub-and-spoke (pimp-controlled) to mesh networks (worker-controlled).

Futures And Interventions

Inputs

This intervention requires blockchain developers to build decentralized ledgers and smart contracts ensuring transparent, tamper-proof transaction records, digital identity verification systems adapted from European models (Denmark's kørekort digital ID system, Estonia's e-Residency program), secure escrow payment mechanisms that protect both parties during transactions, and mobile platform designers experienced with creating interfaces for vulnerable populations that prioritize safety and usability.

Key stakeholders include sex workers (providers) who autonomously set service terms, accept or reject contracts, and rate clients and facilitators; clients who create verified accounts, post service requests, and confirm completion; facilitators (transformed from pimps) who provide physical security, conduct in-person ID verification, and escort clients to ensure safety; platform administrators who maintain system infrastructure, process violation reports, and manage dispute resolution; and government verification authorities who issue tamper-proof digital IDs linked to real-world identities.

The platform builds upon existing infrastructures: workers' organic peer networks and communication systems, established spatial organization and territorial protocols, standardized transaction routines (approach, negotiation, checkpoint, completion), facilitators' current protective functions (security and vetting separated from exploitative control), high mobile adoption rates among stakeholders, and emerging European digital identity frameworks—formalizing informal relational assets into accountable, transparent, worker-controlled systems that preserve existing solidarity while adding structural protection.

How LIBRA Works

1 Facilitator Creates Contract

Facilitators verify client Digital IDs to check safety scores and violation history. They create contracts specifying service details, payment, and commission rates. Contracts are posted to the public marketplace.

2 Provider Accepts Contract

Providers browse available contracts and view full client information including safety scores. They have complete autonomy to accept or decline based on their assessment. Payment is held in escrow until service completion.

3 Service Completion & Feedback

After service completion, both provider and client submit feedback ratings. Payment is automatically released and split between provider and facilitator. The transaction is recorded in the public ledger for transparency.

Activities

Key interventions include implementing blockchain-based transaction ledgers requiring verified digital IDs for all participants, transforming pimps into "facilitators" with defined services (security, ID verification, escort) and transparent commission rates without control over pricing or client selection, creating digital job listing systems where providers autonomously post terms, establishing smart-contract escrow systems where payment locks upon agreement and releases after dual confirmation, and enabling bidirectional feedback mechanisms where providers rate client safety, clients rate service, and both rate facilitator effectiveness.

The sequence follows: account creation with ID verification → contract posting → provider acceptance → facilitator in-person ID check → service delivery with security presence → dual confirmation → automated payment distribution (85% provider, 15% facilitator) → feedback submission updating permanent records. Testing strategy employs system flow mapping across scenarios including standard transactions, violation reporting, multi-provider bidding, and dispute resolution, using interaction diagrams, user journey maps, and data flow architectures to prototype stakeholder experiences at each platform touchpoint.

Public Transaction Ledger

Complete transparency - all COMPLETED transactions after service delivery and feedback
Looking for available contracts? [Browse Contract Listings](#)

All Statuses

TX-9849

CT-1001

violation_reported

Service:

90 min special

Duration:

90 min

Total:

\$175.00

Date:

18/11/2025

View Details

⚠ Safety violation reported for this transaction

TX-9848

CT-1001

completed

Service:

2 hour extended

Duration:

120 min

Total:

\$200.00

Date:

18/11/2025

View Details

TX-9847

CT-1001

completed

Service:

1 hour standard

Duration:

60 min

Total:

\$150.00

Date:

18/11/2025

View Details

About the Public Ledger

This ledger provides complete transparency by recording ONLY completed transactions after service delivery and feedback collection. Pending contracts appear in the [Contract Listings](#). Every completed transaction is permanently recorded here, including any safety violations, ensuring accountability for all parties and maintaining platform safety standards.

Leverage Points

4. Power to Self-Organize



Support **peer-to-peer** networks and parallel services

Create new **coalitions** across ideological divides

7. Negative & positive feedback loops



Consequences for violations that **reduce repeat harmful behavior** in the system

Reinforcement for interactions that **increases positive outcomes over time**

Leverage Points

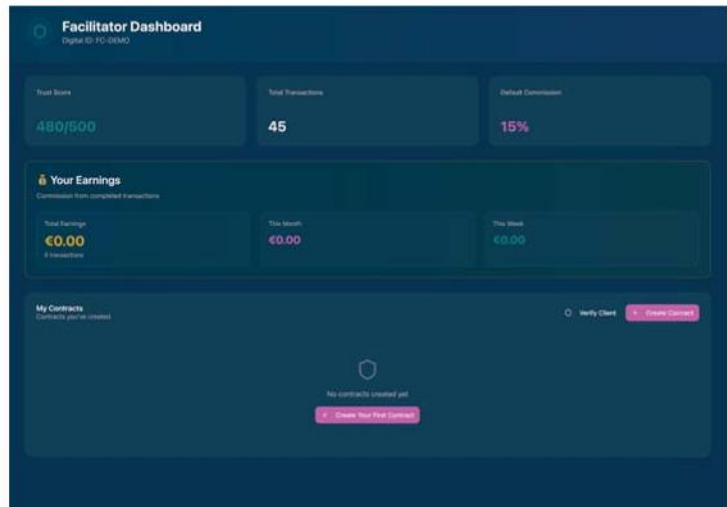
This intervention targets two critical leverage points in Meadows' framework. First, Power to Self-Organize (Level 4) decentralizes power from singular actors (pimps) to distributed networks (peer-to-peer worker connections), fundamentally restructuring who can change system rules.

By supporting existing organic worker networks through platform infrastructure, providers gain power to set terms, accept or reject clients, and organize collectively without intermediary permission. This shifts the system from centralized hub-and-spoke structures (all connections flowing through pimps) to decentralized mesh networks (direct connections between all actors), transforming relationships from hierarchical control to lateral collaboration. Second, Feedback Loops (Level 7) creates accountability mechanisms currently absent. Negative feedback loops through permanent consequence records (client violations result in strikes and platform bans) systematically reduce harmful behavior, while positive feedback loops through satisfaction scoring reward respectful interactions. Currently, violations carry no consequences unless caught in-the-moment, and positive interactions build no reputational value. The permanent ledger ensures information about repeat offenders and reliable facilitators reaches providers before harm occurs, making previously invisible patterns permanently visible to all participants, thereby changing information flows and rules governing behavior.

Consolidation

Outputs

The intervention produces five concrete deliverables that make strategic intentions visible and testable. First, platform architecture diagrams demonstrate complete system flow mapping showing three user categories (clients, facilitators, providers) and their interaction pathways through job listings, contract negotiation, service delivery, and feedback cycles, including alternative pathways for multi-provider scenarios, violation reporting, and dispute resolution. Second, blockchain ledger structure visualizes decentralized data architecture showing how transaction records link digital IDs, service terms, payment distributions, completion confirmations, and bidirectional ratings in tamper-proof, permanent format accessible to all participants. Third, escrow system prototype details the five-step smart contract: payment lock (contract agreement) → freeze (during service) → dual confirmation requirements (provider + client) → automated distribution (85%/15% split) → permanent ledger recording, demonstrating protection against contract breaches.

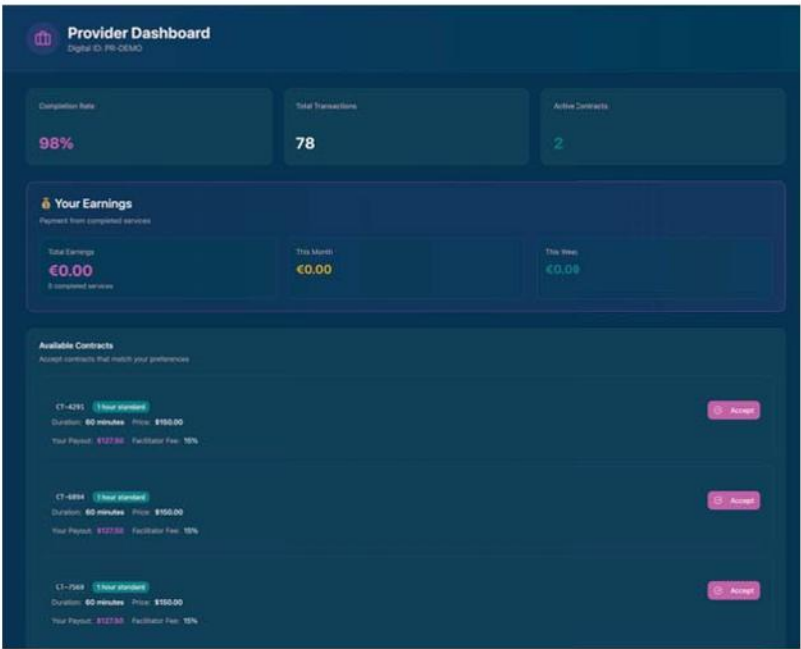


Fourth, digital ID infrastructure model adapts existing European systems (Denmark's kørekort, Estonia's e-Residency) showcasing six key features: individual data control, universal access/speed, frictionless onboarding, security/convenience, parametric extensibility, and financial inclusion catalyst properties.

IMAGE

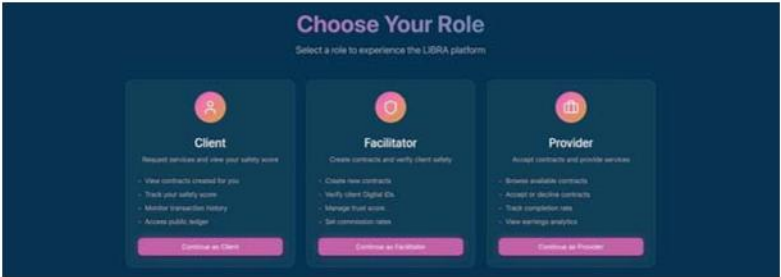
Fifth, safety mechanism frameworks outline three-layered protection including provider violation reporting (client strikes/bans), facilitator security protocols (pre/during/post-meeting responsibilities), and distributed feedback checkpoints (ID verification → escort presence → post-service reporting without retaliation risk).

Payment systems shift from pimps collecting money and distributing arbitrary amounts (enabling theft) to automatic splits guaranteeing providers 85%. Information becomes symmetric—previously only pimps knew which clients were dangerous; now all workers access identical safety data before accepting contracts. Power redistributes from centralized (every decision required pimp approval) to distributed (workers collectively validate actors through ratings). New collaborations emerge: workers share safety information directly without intermediaries, organizations from different ideologies recognize shared harm-reduction goals, facilitators develop professional reputations based on security rather than control, and workers potentially govern platform rules collectively through emerging decision-making structures.



Outcomes

The platform enables behavioral shifts where clients act respectfully knowing violations create permanent records, while facilitators compete on security quality rather than exploiting workers. Providers gain power to choose clients and facilitators based on transparent ratings. Transaction processes transform from opaque pimp-controlled negotiations into transparent worker-defined contracts.



Impact

The long-term vision transforms sex work into a normalized economy where violence and exploitation are systematically prevented through transparent accountability rather than eliminated through criminalization or prohibition. Workers exercise genuine labor rights including contract negotiation, working condition control, and collective organization. Facilitators operate as legitimate security professionals rather than exploitative intermediaries, and clients participate in accountable transactions where violations carry permanent consequences.

Culturally, this shifts discourse from binary framings (inherent violence vs. empowered choice) toward pragmatic harm-reduction frameworks focused on measurable safety outcomes. Structurally, power redistributes from hierarchical concentration (pimps controlling access and finances) to distributed networks (peer-to-peer organization with optional professional security services). Normalization enables police intervention for violence as with any assault, without system-wide criminalization creating vulnerability.

The blockchain accountability model could replicate across other informal labor sectors (domestic work, gig economy, agricultural labor) where power asymmetries enable exploitation. Platform governance demonstrates worker-led regulation alternatives to state paternalism or corporate control. As labor increasingly moves toward platform-mediated gig structures, this intervention offers a model ensuring worker agency and safety within decentralized systems, addressing broader questions about digital labor platforms, peer-to-peer economy accountability, and harm reduction in contested social domains.



Available Contracts

Browse and accept contracts posted by facilitators. All information is transparent so you can make informed decisions.

1 hour standard

🕒 60 minutes CT-4291

€15000.00

Total Price

Client Safety

Safety Score:

☆☆☆☆ 0.0/5

Transactions:

0

Facilitator

Trust Score:

☆☆☆☆ 0.0/5

Commission:

15%

(€2250.00)

YOU EARN

€12750.00

(85% of total)

👤 Accept Contract

🚫 Decline

Impact Metrics

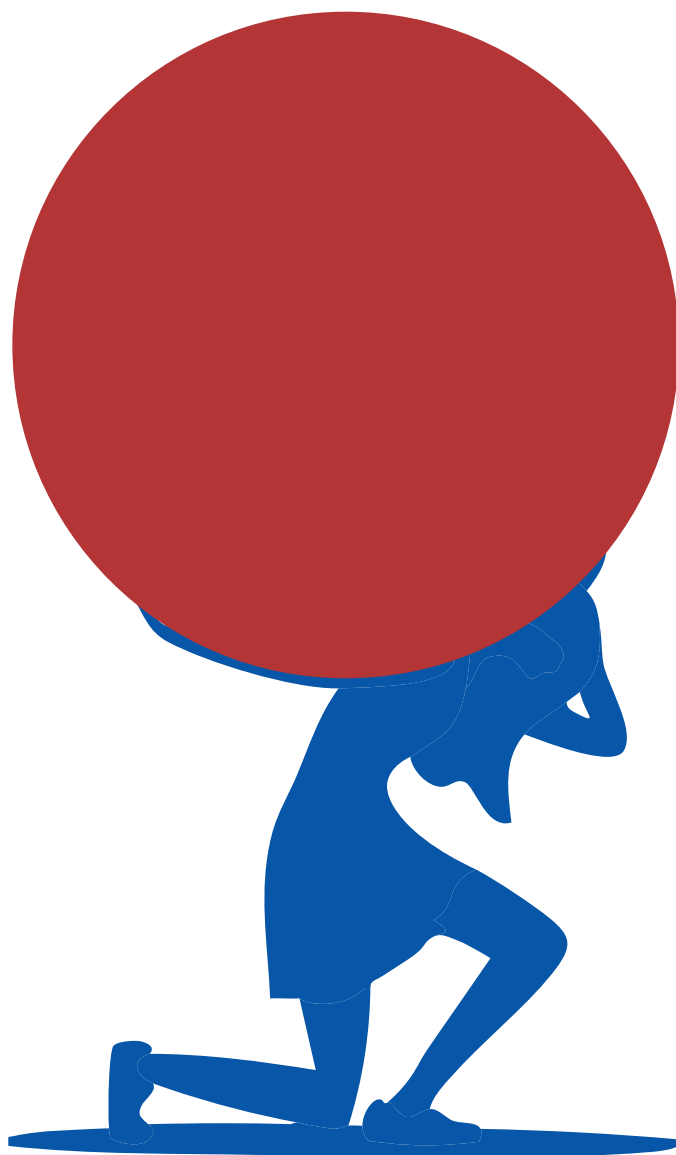
Five indicators measure intervention success. Violence Reduction Rate (Quantitative) tracks percentage decrease in reported violence, client strike frequency, and permanent bans—showing whether accountability makes workers safer. Worker Autonomy Index (Qualitative) surveys providers' perceived control over terms, client selection, and facilitator choice—revealing if power truly shifted from pimps to workers. Economic Equity Metric (Quantitative) compares provider earnings to facilitator commissions, counts wage theft complaints, and measures payment reliability versus pre-platform baseline—showing whether financial exploitation decreased.

Network Density Score (Quantitative) counts direct worker-to-worker connections and information-sharing instances without facilitator mediation—measuring independent self-organization capacity. Cross-Ideological Coalition Formation (Qualitative) documents collaborations between previously opposed organizations (abolitionists and rights-based advocates) on shared goals—critical for long-term policy support. These metrics collectively assess immediate safety improvements, structural power shifts, economic fairness, worker independence, and political sustainability—ensuring comprehensive evaluation beyond surface outcomes and capturing both immediate harm reduction and systemic transformation.

Period

Team:

Divya
Sydney Diers
Andrea Pescador
Yara Tarhini





Abstract

This project was born from silence—the kind that grows between fear and misunderstanding. Within IE University, we explored gender equality not as a statistic, but as a heartbeat that struggles to be heard. Through surveys, interviews, and an open board of confessions, we found that many carry stories of harassment, discomfort, or injustice, yet keep them unspoken. The official channels exist, but they feel cold, distant, and unwelcoming. People fear being judged, doubted, or labeled.

What we uncovered is not just a gender issue—it's a systemic silence. A network of emotions, power, and cultural scripts that keeps empathy on hold. The lines dividing men and women, victims and aggressors, right and wrong, have grown too thick for real listening to flow.

Our intention is to thin those lines, to design a space—physical, digital, or symbolic—where we can be simply human. A space for listening before responding, for understanding before defending. We seek to plant the seed of collective vulnerability, where awareness can grow into equality.

"Of all the nasty outcomes predicted for women's liberation... none was more alarming than the suggestion that women would eventually become just like men".
-Barbara Ehrenreich

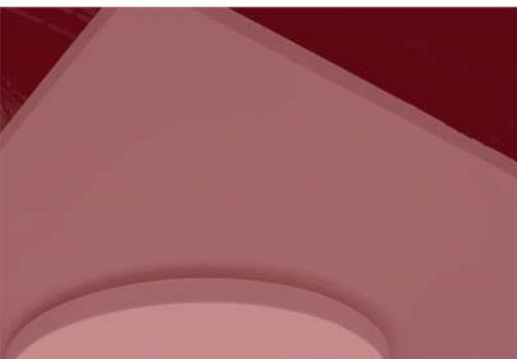
SDG Relevance

Our work speaks to SDG 5: Gender Equality, yet it also echoes across SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). We localize these goals within the microcosm of a university—a mirror of society's larger systems, where culture and policy collide.

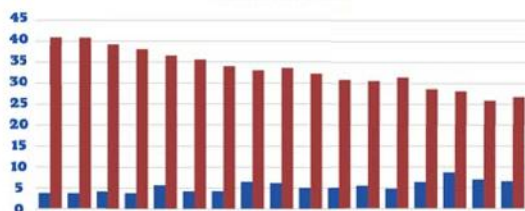
Spain has advanced far in gender policies, but in the corridors of IE, we found that laws do not erase fear, and procedures cannot replace empathy. Equality here is not a document—it's a daily interaction. The absence of open dialogue and trust shows that cultural transformation must accompany institutional structure.

Our project explores these invisible infrastructures of emotion: how safety is felt, how trust is built, how voices are invited or dismissed. By creating a space for honest conversation, we aim to transform awareness into action, and coexistence into connection. This is our act of SDG localization—turning global intentions into lived experiences within a specific community.





Percentage of “inactive” people (age 16 and over), whose main type of inactivity is housework.
Ciudad de Madrid

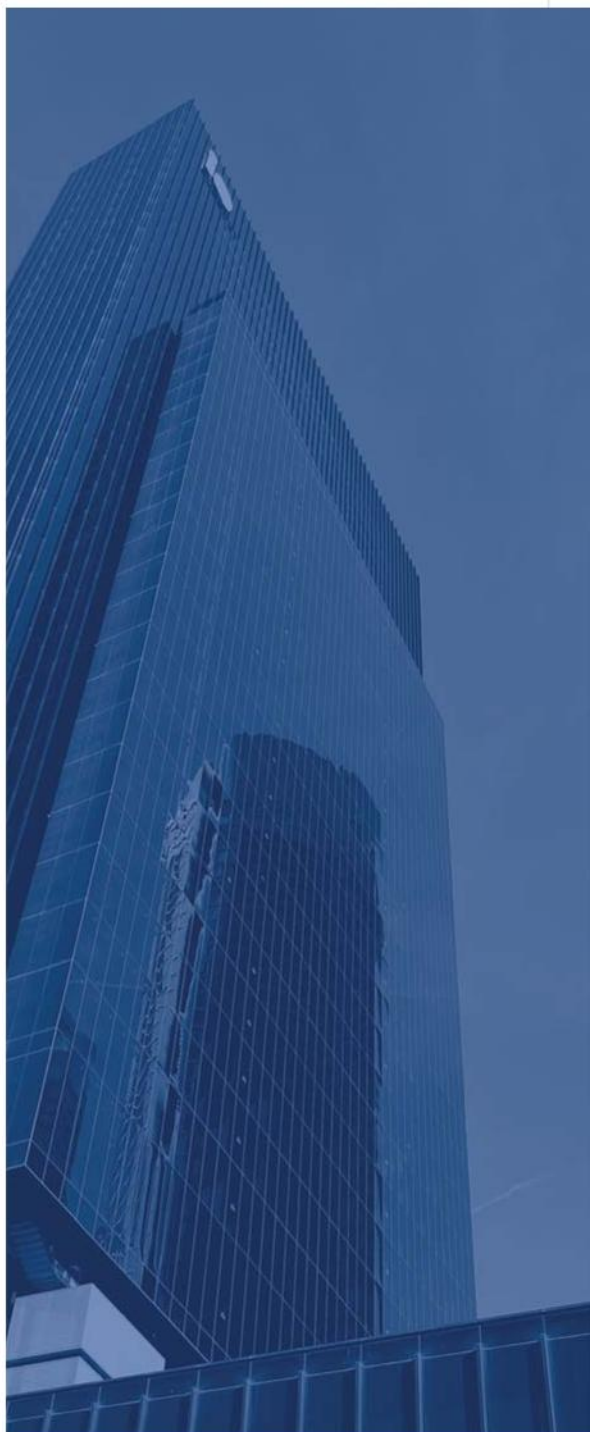


Context Of Research

The landscape of our research is IE University in Madrid, a multicultural environment that celebrates diversity yet struggles with its contradictions. Within its classrooms and hallways, stories of gender-related tension circulate quietly. Through our participatory methods—a board of voices, surveys, and interviews—we opened a door for those stories to surface. What came out was not only pain, but fear. Fear of being misread. Fear of consequence. Fear of saying too much. The reporting system, though structured, feels more like a wall than a bridge—its language formal, its process detached from emotion. Mapping this system, we saw its boundaries: where care should flow but gets stuck, where awareness campaigns echo but rarely transform. The cultural logic that divides people into categories—man, woman, victim, abuser—has left no room for the complexity of being human.

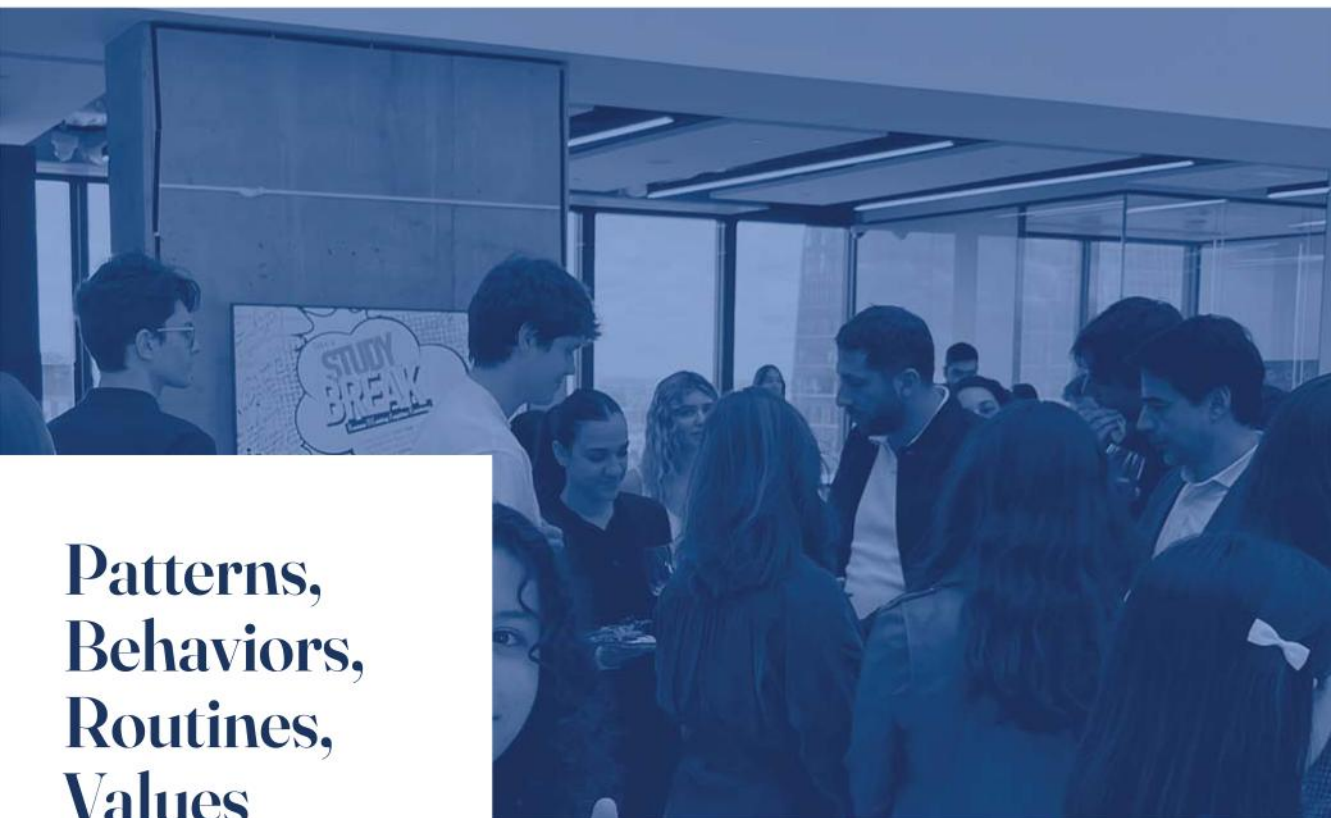
Our work uses situated design to listen within this specific context, tracing how emotional, institutional, and cultural layers interlock. The goal is not to accuse, but to understand; not to fix people, but to rebuild trust. We envision a safe, living space for dialogue—a small ecosystem where empathy becomes an everyday practice and equality begins to breathe.

CLEANING TASKS



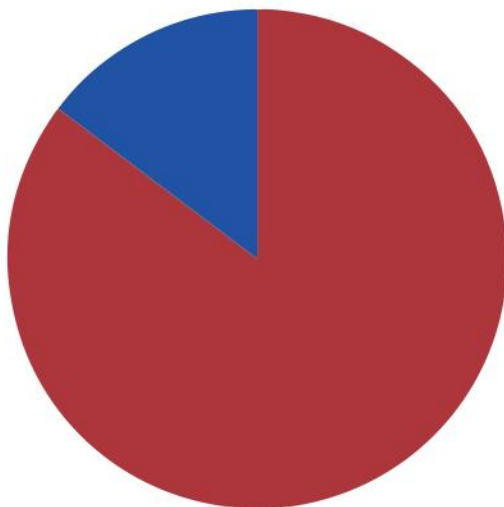
Research Insights & Key Findings

Ethnographic research—including surveys, interviews, clustering, and embodied inquiry—revealed a set of recurring behavioral patterns, paradoxes, systemic barriers, and leverage points shaping how sexual harassment and gender inequality are understood within the university environment.



Patterns, Behaviors, Routines, Values

Across interviews and surveys, students demonstrated a limited or inconsistent understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment, often equating it exclusively with extreme or overt violations. Subtle behaviors—boundary-blurring comments, coercive dynamics, unwanted proximity—were frequently normalized or dismissed. Survey results visually illustrated that once participants were given a clear definition, self-reported experiences of harassment increased by 237%, revealing a substantial gap in baseline knowledge.



85%
*ready
to talk*

Paradoxes And Tensions

A key paradox emerged through narrative mapping: while many students believed harassment was “not a major issue” on campus, the same participants disclosed experiences that align with harassment when definitions were clarified. Interviews also displayed a tension between cultural norms and individual discomfort, with participants acknowledging harmful behaviors but feeling pressured to “let it slide.” justo.

*“I normally don’t like
to share because
nothing changes either way,
I’d rather save my breath”*

Systemic Barriers (Structural, Relational, Institutional)

Systemic analysis—particularly the “Gender Equality Iceberg” diagram we created—highlighted hidden layers: stereotypes, rumors, silence, and lack of reporting structures. These relational and institutional barriers maintain ambiguity and prevent collective acknowledgment of the issue.

Early Leverage Hints

Clustering exercises and embodied inquiry pointed to actionable leverage points:

- Clarification of definitions (high impact, low effort)
- Inclusive educational spaces that acknowledge all genders
- Story-sharing mechanisms (anonymous box prototype)
- Structured conversations that normalize naming harmful behaviors

These insights informed the development of the mandatory educational module as an intervention bridging awareness gaps and systemic misalignments.

*“Having a concrete definition
is not inclusive.”*

Inputs

The intervention builds on a combination of human, digital, and institutional resources to translate research insights into an actionable educational program. Key human inputs include the design team's skills in facilitation, curriculum design, visual communication, and systems thinking, supported by collaborations with IE University faculty, student services, Diversity & Inclusion offices, and student organizations. These stakeholders serve as advisors, content contributors, and future facilitators for the course.

Existing infrastructures—such as IE's Blackboard platform, mandatory seminar structure, student orientation programs, and campus reporting channels—provide a foundation for integrating gender education into established routines. Digital inputs include survey tools, communication channels, and potential social platforms for continued engagement.

Relational assets, informed by interviews and story-based inquiry, ensure the intervention remains sensitive, inclusive, and responsive to students' lived experiences. These inputs collectively activate the leverage points identified earlier, enabling a systemic shift toward awareness, shared responsibility, and safer campus dynamics.



LET'S
CARE
MORE!

*What if..
Genders didn't exist?
What if..
Being "normal" was not a thing?
Society sucks
Men suck
Women suck
What if life was more fun?*



Activities

The intervention builds on a combination of human, digital, and institutional resources to translate research insights into an actionable educational program. Key human inputs include the design team’s skills in facilitation, curriculum design, visual communication, and systems thinking, supported by collaborations with IE University faculty, student services, Diversity & Inclusion offices, and student organizations. These stakeholders serve as advisors, content contributors, and future facilitators for the course.

Through the Assumption Swap, stereotypes are examined not for truth but for origin, helping participants understand how biases form and become normalized. Silent Conversations then allow written, non-verbal dialogue around difficult questions, giving introverted voices space and generating collective reflection.

Finally, the Harassment Continuum Game positions everyday interactions along a spectrum—from normal to harmful—to reveal grey zones and diverse interpretations. We treat each activity as a prototype, observing emotional responses and group dynamics to continually refine the experience toward deeper empathy and awareness.





Listen

Leverage Points

Our intervention targets leverage points where small shifts can trigger deeper cultural change within the university system. The first leverage point lies in information flows: students often lack clear, shared understanding of what constitutes harassment or bias, allowing harmful behaviours to be normalized. The workshop activities—reflection stations, myth-debunking cards, and the harassment continuum—redirect these information flows by making invisible experiences visible and shared.

The second leverage point operates at the level of social norms and feedback loops. Many students stay silent because silence feels socially safer than intervention. Activities such as Silent Conversations and Assumption Swap create new feedback loops: students see their peers questioning stereotypes and expressing vulnerability, which slowly shifts the norm from avoidance to collective responsibility.

At a deeper level, the intervention touches institutional narratives and paradigms. By reframing gender awareness as a shared inquiry rather than moral instruction, the course challenges the underlying belief that harassment is “rare,” “obvious,” or “someone else’s problem.” This aligns with Meadows’ higher leverage points: shifting mental models and opening space for new cultural narratives around consent, empathy, and accountability. Ultimately, the workshop becomes an entry point for long-term systemic transformation—where awareness is not a policy requirement but a living, community-driven practice.



Outputs



Our intervention results in a set of tangible outputs that turn an abstract issue, gender awareness, into something students can physically interact with, reflect on, and emotionally process. The first collection of outputs consists of the five experiential prototypes: Personal Reflection Stations, Controversial Comments cards, the Assumption Swap activity, Silent Conversations posters, and the Harassment Continuum line. These are not just materials; they are emotional touchpoints. Each station, card, and prompt is intentionally designed to hold vulnerability, spark dialogue, and make space for discomfort in a safe, guided way. We additionally created a structured prototype of the course journey, including a draft syllabus, a flow of activities, and redesigned interaction formats such as face-to-face circles, AA-style small groups, and anonymous story-sharing tools. These provide a clearer blueprint for how the intervention can be repeated, scaled, and embedded into university culture. Finally, the process produced visual frameworks, insight maps, scenario diagrams, and objective clusters, that translate research into a coherent system. These visuals help us test our logic, check alignment, and communicate the emotional and experiential intention of the workshop.



Outcomes

Our activities enable immediate behavioral and relational shifts within the IE community. In the short term, students begin recognizing subtle forms of discomfort, boundary-crossing, and normalized behaviors through shared dialogue rather than fixed definitions. This opens space for empathy-driven conversations and reduces the silence surrounding harassment. Mid-term, we expect adjustments in everyday flows: students communicate boundaries more clearly, intervene earlier when witnessing inappropriate behavior, and feel safer addressing grey zones through tools like the “Is it harassment?” continuum and anonymous storytelling prompts. New routines—such as checking in with peers, discussing consent openly, or challenging harmful jokes—emerge as early signals of cultural change. These activities also encourage cross-year and cross-major collaboration, enabling students to co-create safer micro-environments within studios, group projects, and social spaces. Together, these shifts form the groundwork for a more accountable, aware, and supportive campus culture.



Impact

This intervention can contribute to a sustained cultural transformation where sexual harassment is neither minimized nor misunderstood but openly addressed as a shared responsibility within the IE ecosystem. Our long-term vision is a university culture in which students, faculty, and staff develop a collective literacy around boundaries, consent, and power dynamics, rooted not in one fixed definition but in ongoing dialogue and reflection. As students internalize these practices, we expect shifts in institutional norms: more transparent reporting pathways, increased trust in support systems, and the integration of reflective activities into classroom and studio routines.

Structurally, this work could inspire replication across departments, serving as a model for embedding gender-awareness education into orientation programs or mandatory first-year modules. It may also influence policies by highlighting gaps in communication, accessibility, and student support identified through our research. Systemically, the project contributes to a future where universities prioritize relational well-being, foster safer learning environments, and empower students to intervene early, preventing harm before it escalates. The long-term relevance lies in cultivating a community that treats gender equality as a continuous, evolving practice—one grounded in empathy, shared accountability, and collective cultural resilience.

Impact Metrics

To measure the evolution of our intervention, we will track both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

(1) Awareness Expansion: Instead of testing a single definition, we will measure how students' descriptions, interpretations, and examples of sexual harassment evolve through open discussion. By comparing pre- and post-workshop written reflections, we can see growth in nuance, empathy, and recognition of subtle behaviors—reflecting our belief that sexual harassment cannot be reduced to one definition.

(2) Reporting Confidence: Percentage increase in students who know where and how to report incidents at IE, addressing the gap highlighted in our research.

(3) Perception Shift: Qualitative reflections after activities (e.g., the "Is it harassment?" continuum) to understand how students redefine boundaries, consent, and power.

(4) Engagement Levels: Participation in discussions, activities, and anonymous storytelling, reflecting emotional safety.

(5) Sustained Impact: A follow-up survey 4–6 weeks later to assess how students applied these insights in real contexts.





SOMBRAS

A COMMUNITY-BUILT LIVING PAVILION
FOR COOLING PUERTA DEL SOL

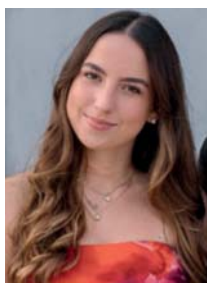
Team:



Tamara El Attar



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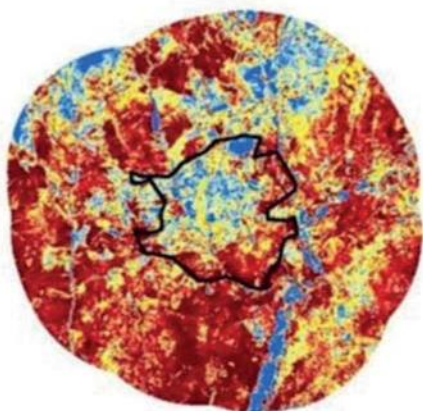


Mansour Bachi

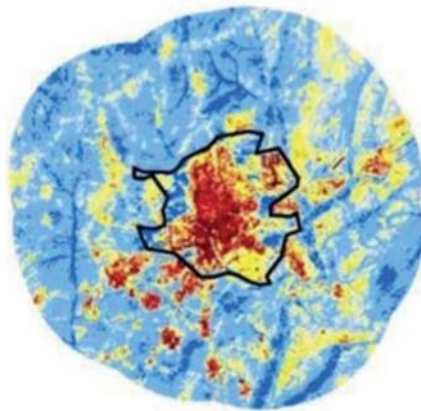
Abstract

Puerta del Sol—often described as Madrid’s frying pan—is one of the city’s most extreme urban heat hotspots. The plaza’s highly reflective stone surfaces, absence of trees, and continuous solar exposure render it nearly uninhabitable during warmer months. Traditional responses, such as shade awnings, have been largely symbolic and ineffective, offering minimal cooling while reinforcing systemic constraints around heritage protection.

Madrid’s Urban Heat Island



DAY



NIGHT

This project introduces a community-built bamboo pavilion: a removable, plant-covered structure designed to cool the plaza through natural shading and evapotranspiration. The pavilion is created through public bamboo workshops where volunteers learn construction techniques, and plant-training workshops that teach participants how to cultivate and maintain drought-tolerant Mediterranean species. An accompanying public poster stand educates visitors about urban heat in Madrid, the disproportionate impacts on low-income neighborhoods, future climate risks, and the ecological benefits of the plants used.

By activating volunteers and making environmental knowledge visible, the pavilion shifts Sol’s paradigm—from a heat-impaired symbolic space to an inclusive, community-driven model of climate adaptation grounded in collective care and ecological function.

FOUNDATIONS



SDG Relevance

This intervention directly supports SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, with emphasis on inclusive urbanization, reduction of environmental impact, and accessible, safe public spaces. Rising temperatures in Madrid have increased heat-related stress, especially among elderly residents, outdoor workers, and economically vulnerable populations. Puerta del Sol frequently records some of the city's highest heat levels, exacerbated by its open layout and lack of vegetation.

Heritage regulations and underground infrastructure limit conventional adaptation options such as permanent shading or tree planting. As a result, responses have been largely aesthetic rather than functional. The project works within these constraints by proposing a removable, plant-based pavilion that cools the plaza while preserving sightlines and heritage values.

Through community-building workshops and an educational poster stand addressing urban heat, heat inequality, future climate impacts, and the cooling role of plants, the project integrates environmental, social, and educational dimensions into a single, heritage-compatible climate adaptation strategy.

Context Of Research



Puerta del Sol 1860



Puerta del Sol 1960



Puerta del Sol 2025



Puerta del Sol is a historic, symbolic space at the intersection of tourism, mobility, and civic life. Yet its spatial qualities—a wide paved surface with no shade—produce intense heat that discourages lingering and social interaction. Observational research showed that people avoid the central area, instead seeking narrow pockets of shade or rushing across the open void.

The plaza is shaped by a layered system of constraints: strict heritage rules, subterranean transportation infrastructure, political pressure to maintain visual openness, and urban design traditions that prioritize monumental form over thermal comfort. Recent interventions such as fabric awnings provided limited relief, highlighting a recurring pattern in which heritage considerations override functional climate adaptation.

Stakeholders include visitors, workers, local businesses, residents, heritage authorities, gardeners, and city planners. Many expressed the need for meaningful cooling solutions that respect heritage conditions.

The project responds by introducing a lightweight bamboo pavilion covered with heat-resistant plants. Because it is modular and removable, it operates within the plaza's regulatory limits. Its construction through public workshops engages the community directly, while the poster stand provides information about Madrid's urban heat challenges and the ways vegetation can mitigate them. The intervention transforms the plaza through ecological function, community action, and climate awareness.



‘Agua, agua...’

RESEARCH

Research Insights & Key Findings

1. People adapt individually when the environment fails them
Visitors rely on improvised shade, increased hydration, and quick movement to cope with heat. These behaviors indicate that Sol’s design does not support comfortable public occupation.

2. Spatial configuration amplifies heat
The plaza’s reflective paving, lack of vegetation, and total exposure create a heat-intensifying environment. Past shading attempts offered minimal practical benefit, revealing a disconnect between design intentions and environmental realities.

3. Governance emphasizes heritage over comfort

Interviews revealed frustration with municipal decisions that privilege visual preservation while offering limited cooling. The result is a space where symbolism is maintained at the cost of habitability.

4. Ecological potential is underutilized

The same solar exposure that produces discomfort also presents an opportunity for plant-based shading, evaporative cooling, and community-integrated ecological structures.



Taken together, the findings show that heat in Sol is not accidental—it is the direct result of spatial, cultural, and political choices. Effective interventions must therefore address thermal discomfort while honoring heritage constraints and enabling community involvement. The proposed bamboo pavilion does this by using lightweight, removable ecological structures and by empowering citizens to become active participants in climate adaptation through building and maintaining the installation.

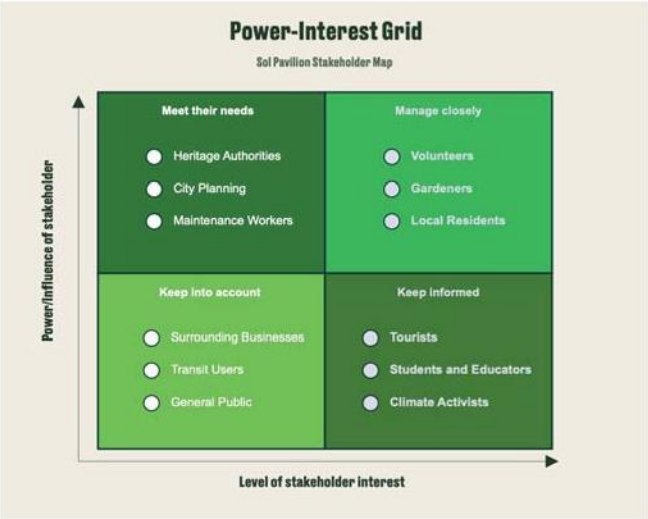


FUTURES & INTERVENTION

Inputs

The pavilion relies on community participation, ecological expertise, and lightweight bamboo construction compatible with heritage constraints. Volunteers attend bamboo workshops to learn structural bending, joining, and assembly techniques. They also participate in plant-training workshops that prepare vegetation for containerized, vertical growth. Selected plant species—*Pistacia lentiscus*, compact olives, myrtle, lavender, rosemary, and resilient grasses—were chosen for drought tolerance, heat resilience, and their ability to cool air through aroma and evapotranspiration.

Removable planters minimize weight on the underground slab. An on-site educational poster stand communicates the impacts of urban heat in Madrid, highlights the disproportionate burden on low-income communities, explains long-term climate risks, and details the ecological benefits of the chosen plants. These inputs together create both the physical and educational foundations of the intervention.



Stakeholders include volunteers, gardeners, residents, tourists, surrounding businesses, and maintenance workers who collectively activate and care for the pavilion.



Activities

1. Bamboo-building workshops where volunteers construct modular arches using bending and lashing techniques.
2. Plant-training workshops where participants prepare, position, and guide the selected species along the bamboo structure.
3. Installation in Sol, using removable, heritage-compatible bases that avoid excavation and maintain sightlines.
4. Microclimate testing to document cooling effects, aiming for a 3–5°C temperature reduction beneath the pavilion.
5. Public engagement, inviting people to rest, gather, learn, and contribute to plant care while accessing the educational poster stand.
6. Seasonal removal and reinstallation, following city precedents and reinforcing shared stewardship.

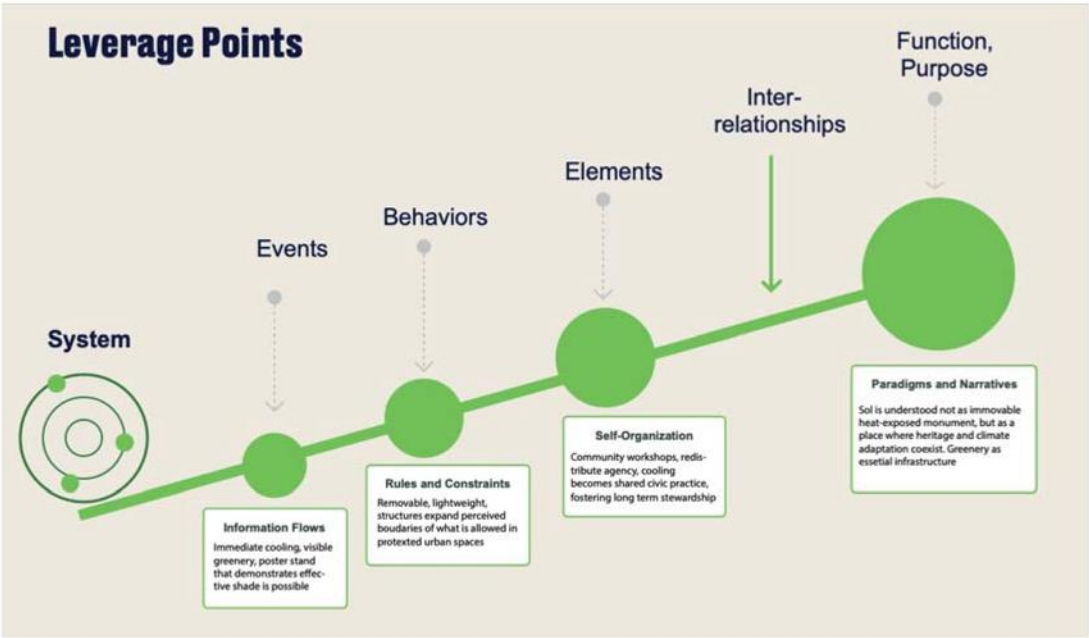
These activities ensure that the pavilion is not simply installed but collectively created, maintained, and understood.

Leverage Points

The intervention strategically activates several leverage points capable of shifting entrenched dynamics in Puerta del Sol.

Information Flows
The pavilion provides immediate cooling, visible greenery, and accessible information through the poster stand. Together, these elements demonstrate that effective shade is possible within heritage restrictions.

Rules & Constraints
By showing that removable, lightweight ecological structures can comply with heritage regulations, the project expands the perceived boundaries of what is allowed in protected urban spaces.



Self-Organization
Community workshops redistribute agency from institutions to citizens. Cooling becomes a shared civic practice, not solely a municipal responsibility, fostering long-term stewardship.

Paradigms & Narratives
The most profound shift occurs at the cultural level: Sol begins to be understood not as an immovable heat-exposed monument, but as a place where heritage and climate adaptation can coexist. The pavilion reframes greenery and shade as essential public infrastructure rather than decorative elements.

Together, these leverage points seed enduring systemic change rooted in ecological performance and community capability.

CONSOLIDATION

Outputs

The project produces:

- A community-built bamboo pavilion with climbing and aromatic Mediterranean plants.
- A hands-on assembly toolkit documenting bamboo bending, structural formation, plant-training, and seasonal maintenance.
- Shaded seating areas integrated beneath the living canopy to increase comfort and invite socialization.
- A planting and care guide tailored to species selected for their urban resilience and cooling benefits.
- A public educational poster stand explaining urban heat, heat inequality, climate futures, and the ecological contributions of the pavilion's plants.
- A temperature-measurement framework documenting before-and-after cooling data.
- Visual documentation of workshop processes, community involvement, and pavilion performance.

These outputs materialize the project's central aim: to demonstrate that climate adaptation can be community-led, ecological, and compatible with heritage constraints.



FUTURES & INTERVENTION

Outcomes

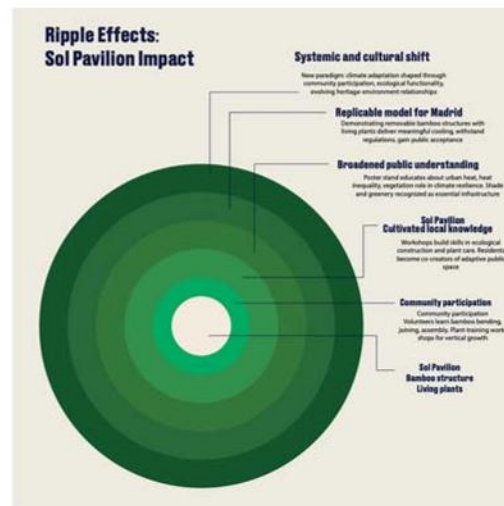
The final outcome is a community-built living pavilion, constructed from bamboo arches and heat-resilient climbing plants that volunteers assemble through free bamboo and plant-training workshops. As the pavilion becomes established in Puerta del Sol, people begin to gather, rest, and interact beneath its naturally cooled canopy. The selected species improve microclimate conditions through evapotranspiration, shade, and aromatic comfort.

A public poster stand informs visitors about the drivers of urban heat in Madrid, how heat disproportionately affects lower-income neighborhoods, the future risks of rising temperatures, and the cooling and ecological benefits of plants. The pavilion and its accompanying educational component foster a culture of shared responsibility, transforming Sol from an overheated transit space into a site of environmental awareness, collective care, and civic adaptation.

Impacts

The workshops cultivate local knowledge in ecological construction and plant care, enabling residents to become co-creators of adaptive public space. The poster stand broadens public understanding of urban heat, heat inequality, and the role of vegetation in climate resilience. These elements collectively support a cultural shift toward recognizing shade and greenery as essential components of urban infrastructure.

Over the long term, the pavilion encourages a shift in how Madrid approaches climate adaptation in heritage-protected public spaces. By demonstrating that a removable bamboo structure with living plants can deliver meaningful cooling, withstand regulatory constraints, and gain public acceptance, the project provides a replicable model for other plazas.



At the systemic level, the intervention seeds a new paradigm in which climate adaptation is shaped not through top-down symbolic gestures, but through community participation, ecological functionality, and the evolving relationship between heritage and environmental realities.

Impact Metrics

Evaluation focuses on environmental, social, and cultural indicators:

Environmental

- Temperature reduction beneath the pavilion (target 3–5°C).
- Surface temperature differences compared with exposed stone.
- Plant health and survival rates.

Social

- Increased dwell time and comfort beneath the pavilion.
- Participation rates in workshops and ongoing plant care.
- Public feedback and perceived comfort levels.

Cultural & Economic

- Visitor and business perceptions of improved usability during peak heat.
- Community sentiment toward ecological structures in heritage contexts.
- Evidence of shifting expectations for climate-adaptive public spaces.

These metrics capture both immediate microclimate improvements and broader cultural shifts toward ecological urbanism.

Metrics Dashboard: Sol Pavilion Performance Evaluation

Comprehensive evaluation framework measuring environmental impact, social engagement, and cultural transformation





Share A Memory

STUDIO IV

Team:

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Abstract

This strategic design project, undertaken for "Studio 4: Strategic Design," explores the challenge of Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production within the specific context of Madrid. Focusing on tourism—a cornerstone of the city's economy—the research identified the souvenir industry as a critical area for intervention regarding consumption and production cycles.

Initial research examined the volume and nature of souvenir production and consumption in Madrid, analyzing issues related to the commodification of local culture and linear, centralized production models. The project then investigated the potential for decentralized production, asking: Can tourists become both the producers and consumers of their own souvenirs?

Using qualitative research and strategic design tools, including future's thinking, we developed the core design challenge:

How might we design an experience that incentivizes the exchange of narratives through the medium of collected items?

Revisiting the etymological root of 'souvenir'—meaning 'remembrance'—the project shifted its focus from material objects to the value of storytelling. The resulting design is an infrastructural intervention that facilitates the exchange of personal travel narratives, independent of mass-produced goods. The final prototype was an interactive installation featuring a "Take one, Leave one" board and postcards.

This simple system encourages users to exchange their stories, leaving a personal narrative and taking that of a stranger. This installation aimed to demonstrate that a story, functioning as a true remembrance, can serve as the ultimate souvenir.

By providing a platform for this non-material exchange, the project ultimately sought to incentivize responsible consumption and production by decoupling the act of remembrance from the need to purchase a mass-produced, material commodity.

Initial Research

Desk Research

The project's initial phase of desk research was dedicated to contextualizing SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production within the dynamic urban environment of Madrid. Our investigation into consumption patterns quickly exposed a critical local issue: the gentrification of Madrid Centro. This phenomenon, driven by increasing foreign settlement and high rent hikes, was directly causing the closure of countless small, traditional shops. We constantly zoomed in and out during our research, and we explored broad themes like consumerism and the commodification of culture.

Zooming in on the existing problems with consumption, we decided to put our focus on tourism. Tourism, as part of Spain's tertiary urban economic sector, had recently broken records in 2024, attracting 93.8 million visitors and generating €126.28 billion in spending (El Pais). This economic activity presented

both the biggest challenge to responsible consumption and the greatest leverage point for strategic design. Going back to our sustainable development goal, Responsible Consumption and Production, we narrowed our focus to the souvenir industry, which we identified as the most tangible and visible output of cultural commodification.

This synthesis led to our second question: "How might we design systems in Madrid that preserve and celebrate cultural identity without reducing it to a consumable commodity?" We found that the current production model was highly centralized and unsustainable: most souvenirs are mass-produced, often produced in China before being imported to Madrid, with only a small fraction being locally manufactured. This linear, externalized cycle stood in direct contrast to the principles of Decentralized Production, where manufacturing operations are distributed across locations.



Tourists in the Sagrada Familia area in Barcelona, on Tuesday, August 20.
Gianluca Battista (El Pais)



Photo taken during out field research

This exploration led us to the strategic concepts of Prosumerism and Social Innovation. Prosumerism, defined as the socio-economic phenomenon where individuals act as both consumers and producers, offered a theoretical solution to the unsustainable production cycle which we could employ in our design solution. Instead of passively consuming mass-produced items, could tourists become active co-creators? Ultimately, the goal became transforming the social practices and systems that exist in the souvenir-shopping ritual, rather than just modifying the product.

Our research then shifted to understanding the consumer's role in the industry through The Tourist Gaze, recognizing that travel is consumed on two levels: The Virtual Gaze (through media representations like Instagram) and the Corporeal Gaze (the physical, sensory experience). We concluded that everyone is a tourist and we have pre-conceived ideas of places we haven't physically been to, but have traveled to with images we're exposed to through representations of it.

We framed souvenir shopping as a ritual of consuming 'pre-packaged culture', which prompted a deeper look into tourist behavior: "How might we define the ritual of souvenir shopping to understand tourists' behavior around consumption of pre-packaged culture?"

This extensive desk research made it clear to us that in order to achieve responsible consumption and production in the souvenir industry, we needed to shift the value of a souvenir from its material, mass-produced form to the narrative of remembrance. This systemic challenge paved the way for our final, and provided a route to our final design intervention.

Qualitative Research

Interviews

Following the desk research that identified the souvenir industry as a core site of unsustainable consumption and cultural commodification, the project transitioned to qualitative field work to ground the findings in real-world tourist behavior. This phase aimed to understand the ritual of souvenir shopping.

1. Defining the Scope

The geographical scope for the study was defined as the strip between Ópera and Sol, chosen for its high concentration of souvenir shops (approximately 20), making it the optimal area for observing the phenomenon.

2. Observations

Initial observations without intervention were conducted in the Sol area. It was noted that most tourists tended to make their souvenir purchases towards the end of their trip, treating it as a final task, while their pace varied between rushed and deliberate. This suggested that souvenir shopping often functions as an afterthought or a required duty before departure.

3. Tourist and Manager Interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with tourists (like Carla & Jeri, Leonor & Francisca, etc.) and shop managers (like Rodin, Edimar, etc.). The questions were designed to probe the emotional and functional significance of these purchases:

- Do you buy souvenirs?
- Do you have a collection from the places you visit? If so, tell us about it.
- Do you think that souvenirs are a good representation of the places you visit?
- Do you prefer buying handmade souvenirs or does it not matter?
- What do you think (generally) represents Spanish culture best?
- Which symbol do you think represents Spanish culture best?

“I don’t think the souvenirs are a good representation of Spanish culture, but it’s the most cheap and accessible thing for people to buy and bring to their loved ones to share the experience.”

Conclusions

The synthesis of the interview insights revealed a significant disconnect between what tourists ultimately desire (meaningful remembrance) and what they buy (cheap, accessible items) .

The key findings were:

- The Go-To Item: Both tourists (10/12) and shop managers (4/5) confirmed that magnets and keychains are the most frequently bought and sold souvenirs, highlighting a preference for cheap, accessible, easy ways to remember a trip .
- The Driving Motivation: A large majority of tourists (9/12) and shop managers (4/5) stated that gift-giving is the main purpose for souvenir shopping, confirming the social function of the object as a medium for an experience taken home.

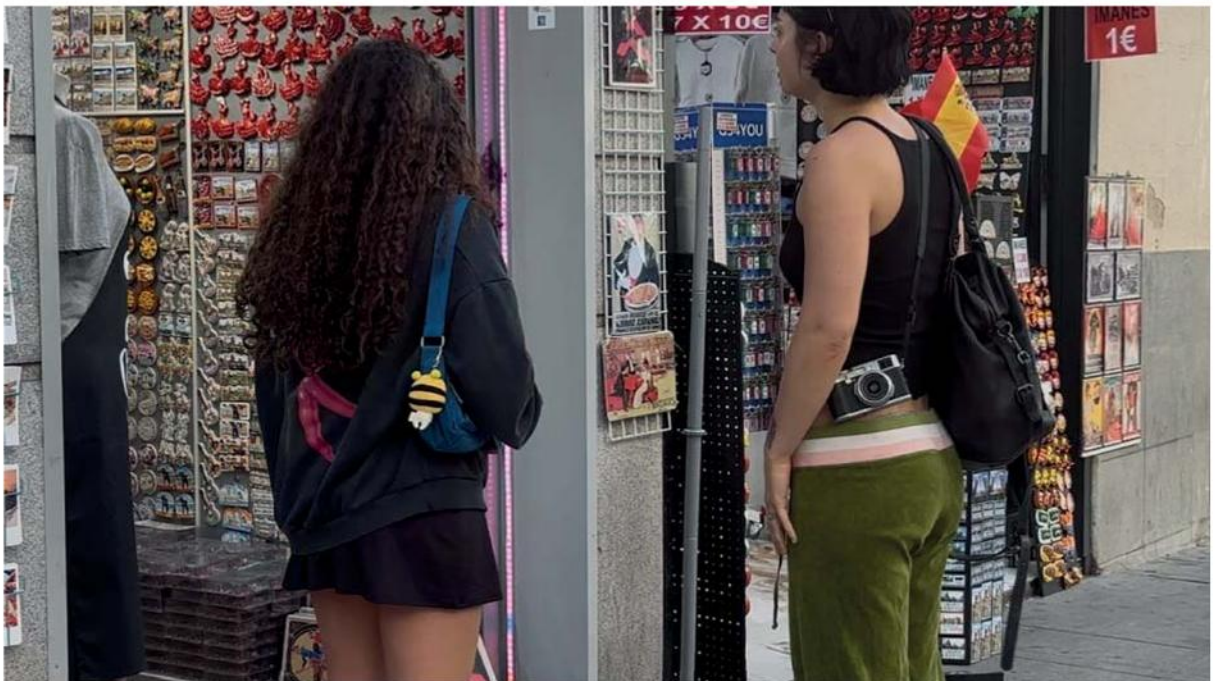
Crucially, a significant portion of tourists (7/12) and shop managers (3/5) agreed that souvenirs don't truly represent culture. Tourists often associated Spanish culture best with jamón, flamenco, and bulls, yet still purchased the mass-produced, unauthentic items that represented these clichés .

The research concluded that people buy souvenirs not only for remembrance but also because they have a need for material possessions, despite knowing the items lack of cultural depth.

These findings validated the project's hypothesis: Tourists are using mass-produced objects as a flawed medium to fulfill a deeply human need for storytelling and remembrance. This set the stage for the final design challenge, shifting the focus from modifying the product to transforming the system itself by implementing Social Innovation and Prosumerism (where tourists act as producers and consumers of their own narratives) .

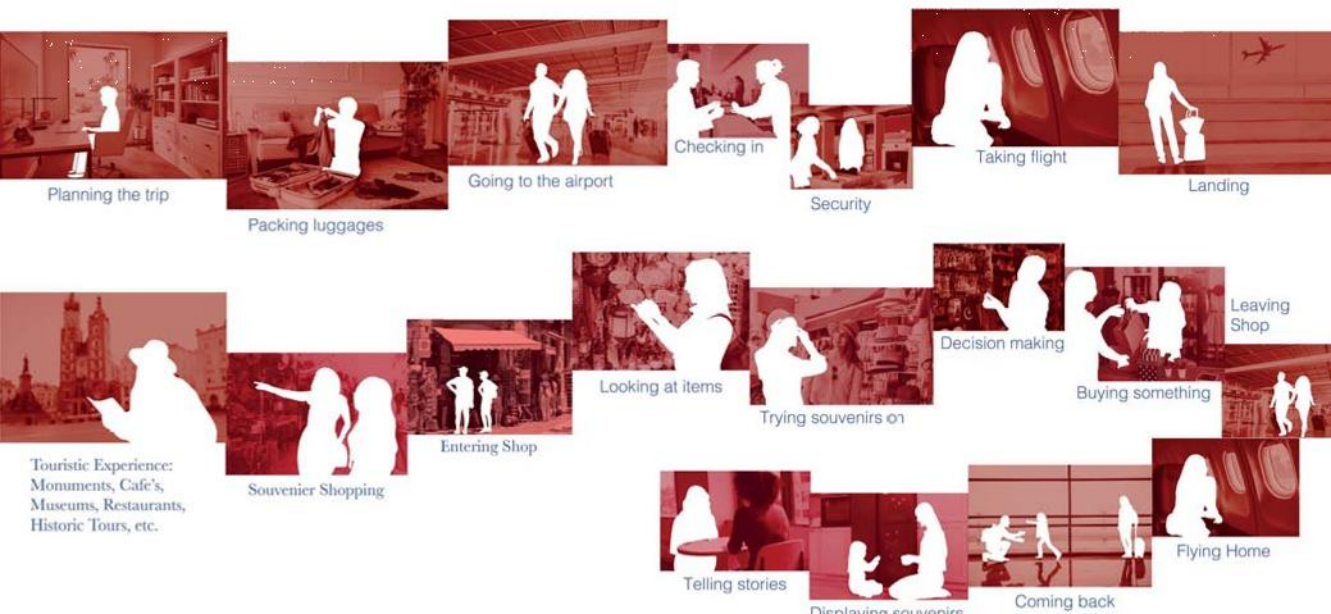


Photo taken during our field research

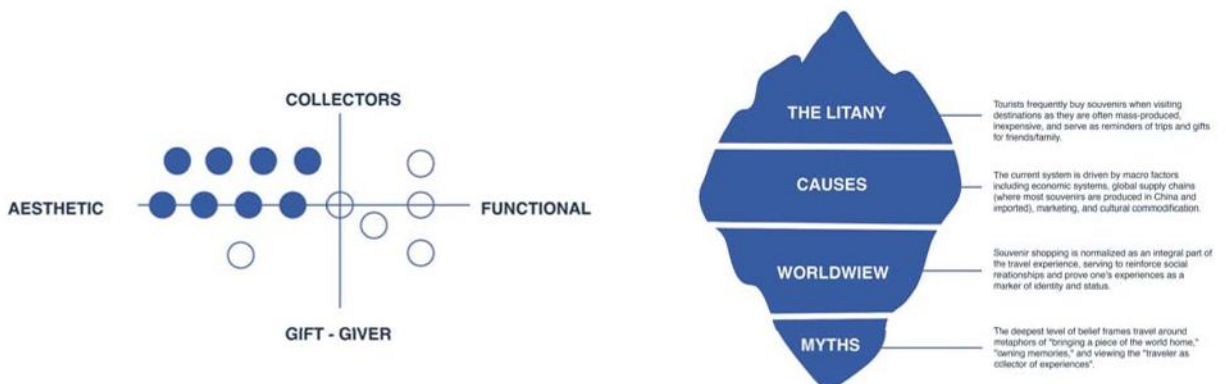




What if Scenarios?



Journey Mapping of a souvenir shopper



Systems Thinking

Mapping

The third phase of the project leveraged the qualitative and desk research through strategic design mapping tools to precisely locate the tension points, identify intervention opportunities, and redefine the problem.

To visualize the complexities of the existing souvenir system, three key mapping tools were employed:

Tension Map:

Based on interview findings, the tension map analyzed souvenir characteristics across four axes: Aesthetic, Functional, Gift-Giver, and Collector. The data showed that the majority of souvenirs purchased fell strongly into the Collector quadrant and were primarily valued for their Aesthetic appeal. This confirmed that souvenirs are largely bought as visual tokens for personal collections, despite the buyers also acting as gift-givers.

Journey Mapping:

We mapped the user's entire travel experience, from planning to returning home, was mapped out.

This process identified two critical moments for intervention within the ritual of souvenir acquisition:

1. The moment before tourists enter a souvenir shop.
2. The moment they return home and share their stories with loved ones.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA):

The CLA helped understand the underlying causes and worldviews supporting the current souvenir system.

The Litany (surface level) described that tourists frequently buy mass-produced, inexpensive souvenirs as reminders and gifts.

Causes included economic systems, global supply chains (where most souvenirs are made in China and imported), and cultural commodification.

Worldview revealed that souvenir shopping is normalized as an integral part of travel, and souvenirs serve to reinforce social relationships and prove one's experiences as a marker of identity and status.

The deeper analysis showed that the core Worldview included the belief that objects act as storytellers of journeys, and that the traveler is a collector of experiences. This crystallized the gap: the desire is for a story, but the system forces the purchase of a material object.

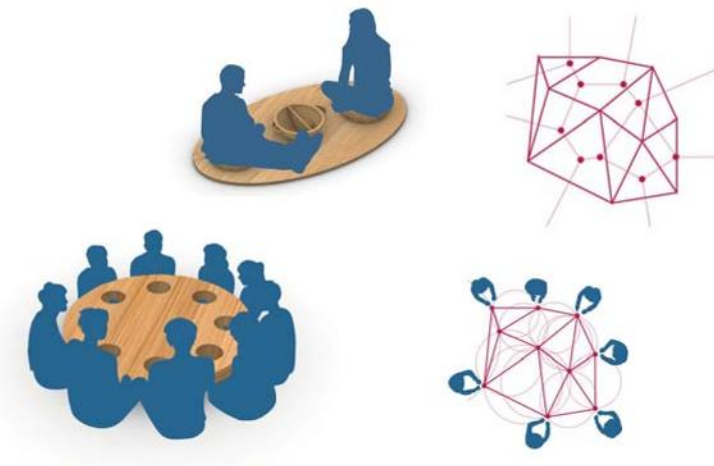
The project then moved into future's thinking to challenge the status quo and imagine a new system.

- Looking for Weak Signals: Analysis of current and past trends revealed a shift toward sustainable materials in production and a growing preference for hand-crafted or local over mass-produced items.
- What If Scenarios: To radicalize participation and reshape perception by focusing on experience rather than physical manifestations, various challenging "What If" questions were posed, including: What if souvenirs didn't exist? What if souvenirs were trade based? What if tourists could produce their own souvenirs? What if souvenirs were just stories?

Prototyping

Sketching

The final phase of the project focused on developing and testing a strategic design intervention based on the insight that a souvenir's true value lies in its function as a medium to tell the story of the trip you took with your loved ones. The goal was to create an infrastructure that facilitated the exchange of stories, using materiality that wasn't necessarily mass-produced souvenirs. Prototyping began by sketching several initial ideas for changing souvenir production and consumption. One idea involved designing a physical table placed in a touristic location where two people would sit down, place their own existing souvenirs, and, by turning the table, exchange both the objects and the stories belonging to them.



Further ideation explored adapting this concept for multiple participants or using different geometries to enable face-to-face communication for narrative exchanges. These ideas were sketched, but were deemed too complex to execute easily, leading the team toward a simpler, more streamlined final prototype.

The final prototype aimed to facilitate a "Take one, Leave one" exchange where a stranger would come, write a story or message, and leave it, to then take someone else's written story on a postcard. The entire prototype consisted of three main components:

1. A big canvas with the written instructions of the project.
2. Empty postcards for people to write their stories/messages on top of.
3. A frame that held all of these elements together.

The purpose was that these postcards, now carrying a unique narrative, could serve as material souvenirs to remind people of their trips, planting the seed of the idea that a souvenir doesn't have to be a mass-produced material good; it can be something as simple as a story.

In terms of Limitations & Legal Framework, the team encountered no difficulties since the prototype involved no monetary exchange, and it was voluntary.

To maximize participation, the team executed three key iterative tests, learning and refining the intervention with each deployment.

Test 1: The initial deployment utilized a board and postcards with instructions written only in English: "Share a travel story with a stranger." A key oversight was the failure to account for the large Spanish-speaking population in Madrid. During this test, the design team was the one verbally explaining the prototype to participants, which led to confusion in some cases. A critical piece of feedback came from a participant who suggested changing the intimidating word "stranger" to "friend I haven't met yet." Furthermore, because the prototype lacked a structure, the team was physically holding the sign and handing out postcards, which proved intimidating for many people to approach, resulting in only 5 participants.



Photos taken from the prototyping phase
Share A Memory Madrid in Sol



Testing

Test 2: Based on the initial feedback, we implemented several crucial fixes. The sign was translated to include both English and Spanish, and text was added that the project was a school assignment. The word "stranger" was switched to "friend I haven't met yet." Instead of walking around, we waited for people to approach the prototype. Despite these improvements, there were 10 participants and people still seemed hesitant to approach the prototype.

137

Test 3: The team introduced a major structural change by using a canvas to hold the sign and the postcards. Written postcards were displayed on the prototype to make the concept clear. The methodology was changed and we did not interact with the participants at all, setting the prototype up anonymously and observing from a distance. There were 20 participants and people were visibly less intimidated to come and interact. The installation was self-sufficient and successful.

Impact

Measuring The Impact



Photos taken from the prototyping phase
Share A Memory Madrid in Sol

Our Conclusion

In terms of the success of our design, although it is still an ongoing project, we have decided that it has been doing well in our efforts so far. Out of the four prototypes we have made, which were improved each time based on conclusions from the previous prototypes, we have seen a lot of engagement and participation, and we believe that this is a feasible project that can be implemented to a broader context.

We've seen that although people are hesitant to approach our model initially, once they see participation from other people they are more likely to engage, and our last prototype has had the most engagement from different demographics.

Future Implementation

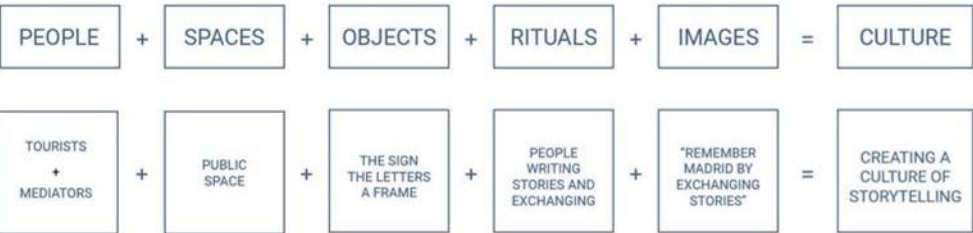
To take our project to a broader context, we thought of ways in which we could spread this design to other cities around the world. In order for our project to be disseminated, we had to develop a system that could be applied to any context. We decided to make a framework, and based it on the five components that made culture, to see how the same five components could be applied to create a culture of storytelling. Here's the framework we've created:

- People: The users and the mediators (the people responsible for setting up the installation).
 - Spaces: Any public space in a city
 - Objects: The sign (with instructions), the postcards (to be exchanged), a frame to hold all together.
 - Rituals: the ritual of exchange, the ritual of collecting
 - Images: The postcard, "Remember Madrid by exchanging stories"
- By using all of the parts that create culture, we aim to create a culture of exchange, storytelling, and open communication.



A couple taking someone's postcard, Photos taken from the prototyping phase Share A Memory Madrid in Sol

DEFINING CULTURE





Photos taken from the prototyping phase
Share A Memory Madrid in Sol

Photos taken from the prototyping
phase Share A Memory Madrid in Sol



Future Focus

The final phase of the project outlines a clear strategy for transitioning the localized intervention in Madrid into a scalable, community-driven global initiative, ensuring the project's core goal of incentivizing responsible consumption through narrative exchange can be adapted worldwide.

To maximize the project's reach and impact, a digital presence was established to document the Madrid intervention and foster a global community:

An Instagram account was created to visually share the project's mission, process, and the outcomes of the Plaza Sol installation. This platform serves as the primary visual medium for spreading awareness and showcasing the power of exchanged narratives.

A comprehensive website was developed to serve as the project's central hub. This site includes information about who we are; the team, vision, and origins of the project; our intentions; the strategic alignment with SDG 12 and the philosophical foundation (souvenir as remembrance); and testimonials of stories and positive feedback generated by the Madrid installation.

"A beautiful memory of Madrid."

SHARE A MEMORY

GET IN TOUCH JOIN THE INITIATIVE

SHARE A MEMORY

WRITE A STORY, SHARE A STORY

SCROLL TO LEARN MORE

BRINGING BACK REAL CONNECTION

CONNECTION IS WHY WE'RE HERE. IT IS WHAT GIVES PURPOSE AND MEANING TO OUR LIVES. -BRENE BROWN

we just want to be loved.

In a world so disconnected, we create small moments that make people feel again. In popular touristic spots, we invite anyone passing by to write down a travel story, and in return, they receive a stranger's story. This simple exchange reminds us that everyone has something to share, everyone wants to feel seen, and everyone wants to feel/share love. The story you receive becomes a memory from that place, a different kind of souvenir.

View our framework

Join the initiative

BECOME A PART OF SOMEONE'S STORY.

We're hoping to grow this initiative beyond one city. If you believe in keeping human connection and storytelling alive, you can represent your own city and bring this experience to the people who live there and the travelers who pass through. Joining the initiative means helping us build small moments of connection all around the world.

TESTIMONIES

FROM THE FRIENDS WE MADE :)

Share your experience with us!

"I would have never thought of something like this myself, great initiative"

"I got emotional writing my letter. I love travel so much, and I want to share these experiences with my daughter"

"this is what travel is all about, making these connections."

"this is a beautiful initiative"

"a beautiful memory of madrid"

"the world needs more people like you"

"thank you for allowing me to reflect on my adventures"

"we need more initiatives like this"

BECAUSE EVERYONE HAS A STORY.

OUR LOCATIONS

EXPLORE

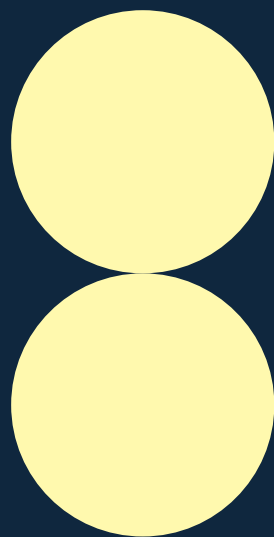
LEARN

LET'S CHAT

Curious to know what we're up to? Subscribe to our newsletter!

EMAIL

Main Projects BBABID



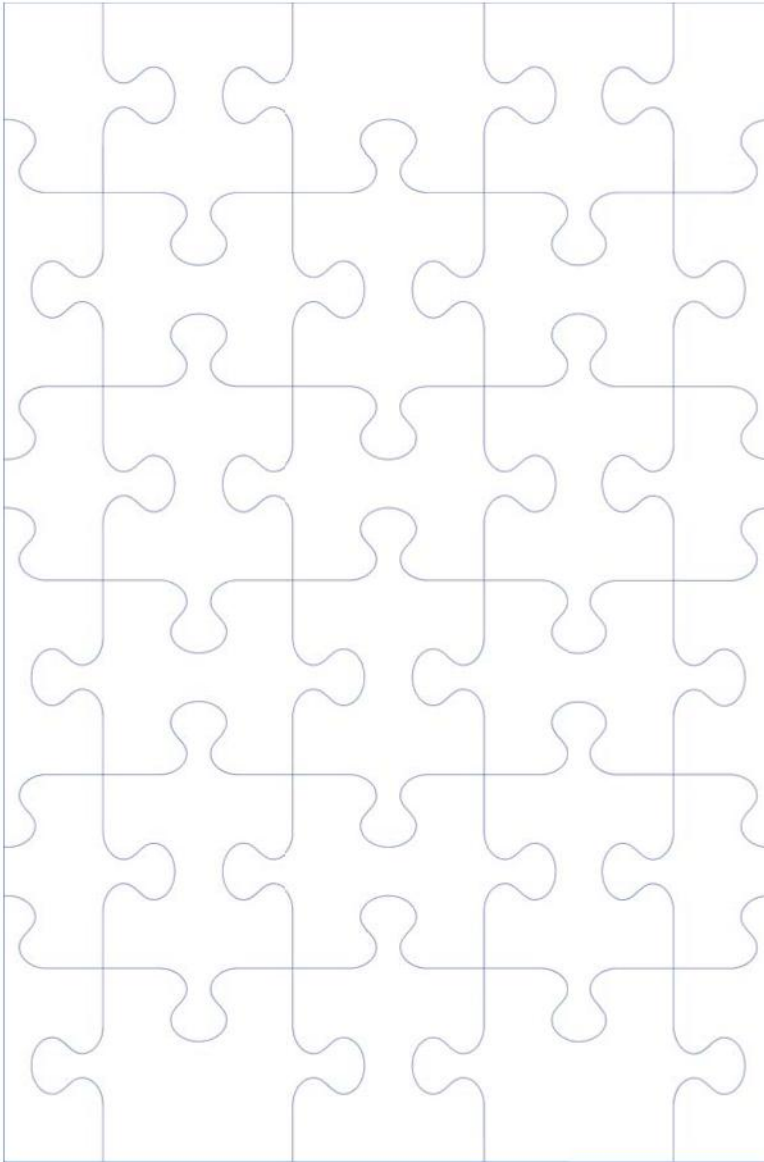
The Menu

DON'T EAT YOUR WORDS, SPILL 'EM!

Team:

Antonia Hernández
Pablo Soriano Vergés
Yigit Uyangor

Abstract



Madrid looks warm from the outside. People talk loudly, the sun hits everyone equally, and you could almost believe the city is as open as it claims to be. But if you pay attention (really pay attention) you notice these small fractures in daily life. A voice softens when mentioning a religion. Someone swallows their accent like it's something to apologize for. A stranger looks away too quickly when gender enters the conversation. None of it is dramatic, but it leaves marks.

Our project began in those in-between moments. Not in institutions, not in policies, in everyday micro-encounters where belonging is negotiated quietly. We created The Menu as a gentle excuse for people to talk about things they usually avoid. It was never meant to fix anything; it was meant to open a door. And people walked through it.

Then something surprising happened: when you give strangers choice, humor, and a bit of structure, they start telling you who they really are. So The Menu evolved into The Menu Hides Nothing, a game where vulnerability becomes less frightening and more... human. This project is about tiny shifts. Soft ones. The kind that begin with someone saying, "Okay, I'll share this," and trusting that the world won't break them for it.

Foundations

SDG Relevance

SDG 16 talks about peace, fairness, and strong institutions in a way that feels almost ceremonial; like something written for reports, not people. But in Madrid, peace looks more like the moment someone stops hiding a part of themselves. Justice sounds like someone being listened to without being evaluated.

Institutions start in the way we treat each other in line at a café, not in a courtroom. Bias here doesn't interrupt life; it seeps into it. It's the quiet kind, the kind that makes someone hesitate before telling you where they really come from. And yet, there's this beautiful contradiction: Madrid can also feel like a spot where strangers become soft with each other for no reason at all.

SDG 16 becomes real when we admit that inclusion is a relational practice. It lives in body language, in tone, in shared glances that say "it's okay, you can speak." It touches SDG 5 and SDG 10 because identity refuses to stay in a single box. Everything blends.

Working with this SDG here means accepting that peace is built in fragments, one conversation, one micro-shift at a time.

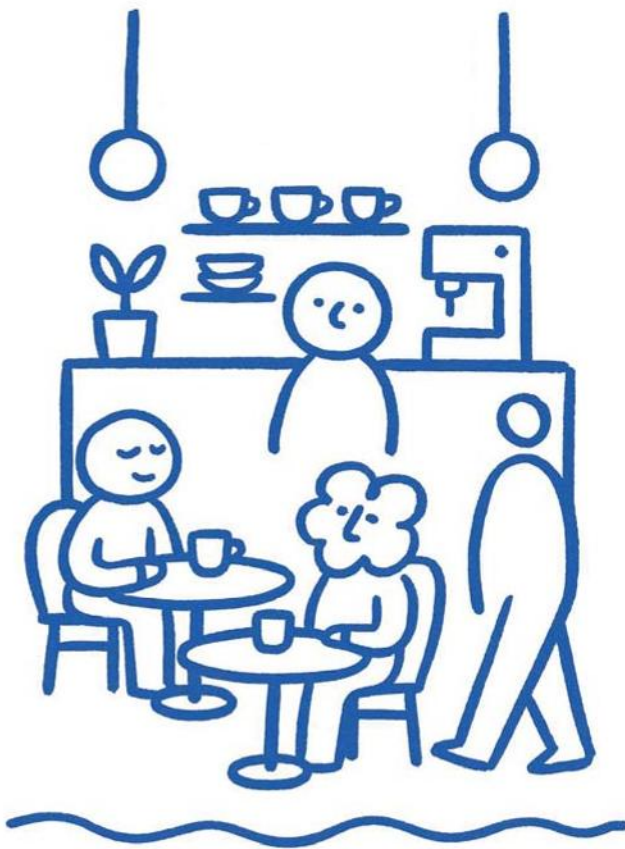
Most of our research didn't happen in official spaces. It happened in places where people forget they're being observed: in Retiro's sunlight, in the muted hum of cafés, in churches where silence holds people together differently, in university hallways with their strange mix of confidence and insecurity.

We entered these spaces with our own identities first: young, queer, multicultural, which meant we weren't pretending to be neutral. Neutrality is a myth anyway. Instead, we let ourselves be part of the environment, part of the dynamic. People responded to that honesty.

What we found wasn't discrimination in the cinematic sense. It was softer, almost invisible. A woman lowering her voice before mentioning her faith. A man apologizing for his accent before he even speaks. Someone laughing too quickly to avoid awkwardness. People showed us how delicate self-expression becomes when you're unsure of the room's temperature.

Madrid revealed itself as a constellation of micro-worlds that rarely touch. Bubbles, not bridges. We didn't want to burst anything. We just wanted to create one gentle crossing.

That's how The Menu came to life, a tool disguised as play, made for real conversations carried with care.





Research

Insights

What we discovered in the field wasn't loud or dramatic, it was subtle, almost fragile. The honesty people allowed themselves depended entirely on where they were. A park bench loosened their bodies; cafés softened their voices; churches made them careful. Space shaped truth long before words were spoken. People adjusted themselves to match the mood of the environment, revealing how comfort is something we negotiate quietly. Language exposed another layer. Accents, pauses, even a single mispronounced word shifted the entire energy of a conversation. No one openly judged, yet people still

felt judged. They described moments when their voice betrayed them, when the way they spoke altered how they were seen. We realized language is never just communication, it's a filter, a vulnerability, a gate. We also learned that people preferred stories to categories. Identity labels made them tense, as if preparing for an argument. But when asked about experiences, moments where they felt included or excluded, they relaxed. Stories humanized everything. Concepts felt risky; memories felt safe. Faith carried contradictions. Some held it close as a source of strength, while others hid it to avoid being misunderstood. They lived between wanting to be open and fearing how others might interpret that openness.

And belonging turned out to be unstable, constantly shifting. Madrid felt like a series of bubbles, intimate circles where people felt known, surrounded by broader spaces where they suddenly felt exposed. Belonging wasn't a constant; it was a moving target.

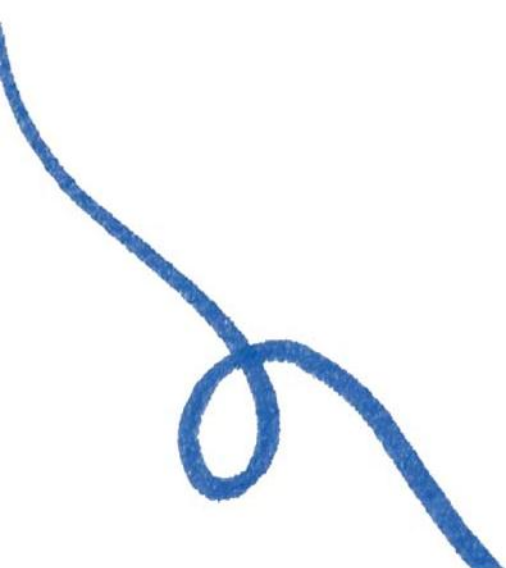
All these patterns revealed the same truth: people want connection, but only if they can protect themselves while reaching for it. They aren't afraid of sharing who they are, they're afraid of the cost. This is what led us to design *The Menu*: a structure that offers choice, gentleness, and a safer place for vulnerability to land.

Futures & Intervention

Inputs

We didn't enter this project pretending to be blank slates. Our identities, young, queer, multicultural, came with us into every conversation. Instead of trying to hide that, we let it be the bridge. People sense when you're holding parts of yourself back; they also sense when you're offering yourself honestly. That honesty softened the entire process. It made strangers more willing to meet us halfway, to trust that we weren't there to extract stories but to share space with them.

Madrid itself became our biggest collaborator. The city's different microclimates, its cafés with their gentle hum, its parks that make time feel slower, its churches full of quiet contradictions, gave us environments that shaped the emotional temperature of the research. And then there were the participants: people who had no reason to open up to us but still did, carefully at first, then more freely once they felt the conversation was theirs to shape.





Activities

The project unfolded through movement, walking, observing, immersing ourselves in the city's quiet rhythms. We began by looking for subtle sites of tension: places where people seemed to fold into themselves a little tighter, or where interactions felt intentionally shallow. These weren't dramatic "bias zones," but soft, atmospheric places where belonging didn't flow as easily.

From there, we introduced The Menu, first as an experiment, then as a living thing that kept teaching us how to refine it. Conversations using it didn't feel like interviews. They felt like exchanges where strangers slowly tested the water with their stories. We tried the tool across spaces: Retiro, a church courtyard, cafés where the air smelled like pastries. Each space revealed something different about how people choose to open up.

We spent hours listening, not just to what people said but to what they avoided, how their voices changed, how their bodies shifted when a topic felt close to home. Those observations shaped the transition from a conversational tool into a full game.

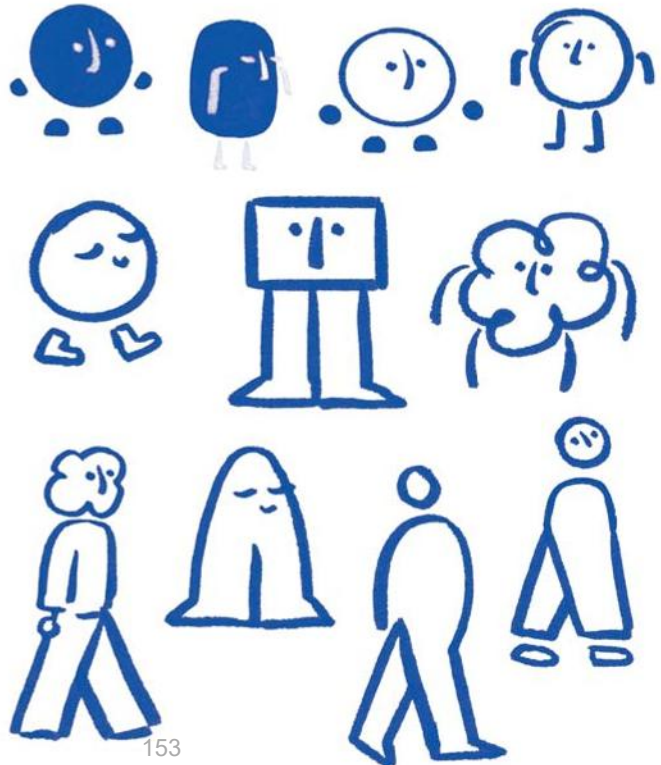
Leverage Points

Our leverage points weren't structural in the traditional sense, they were emotional. They lived in the micro-movements of how people relate to one another. We noticed early on that giving participants choice changed everything. When people chose their level of vulnerability, they didn't feel exposed; they felt in control. This small shift rewired the entire emotional dynamic of the conversation.

Play introduced its own kind of magic. It softened the edges, dissolved tension, and made vulnerability feel less like a performance and more like a natural step in the flow. Humor, randomness, and structure became tools for disarming defensiveness. These emotional feedback loops, laughter turning into honesty, honesty turning into recognition, became our quiet form of systemic intervention.

We also saw how narratives shifted. Labels made people brace themselves. Stories made them breathe. By anchoring conversations in moments and memories, we disrupted the narrative patterns that usually keep identity topics rigid and polarizing.

The rules of the game created temporary worlds where everyone had equal speaking space, where no identity held more authority than another. And beneath all this lived the deeper paradigm shift: helping people see identity as something shared, not weaponized. Our leverage lives in that tiny moment of softness when someone stops protecting themselves long enough to actually connect.



Consolidation

Outputs

The Menu became our first tangible output: a physical object with emotional intentions. On the surface, it mimicked a restaurant menu, simple and inviting. But its real purpose was to give people a safe entry point into conversations they normally tiptoe around. Each “dish” carried a level of vulnerability, letting participants decide how deep they wanted to go. It was playful without being trivial, structured without being strict.

From there came The Menu Hides Nothing, which felt like the version of the project that had been waiting beneath the surface. The game used cards, rounds, roles, and storytelling prompts to guide people into a shared emotional experience without forcing intensity. It created moments of unpredictability, just enough to reveal truth, not enough to overwhelm.

Alongside these, we produced dozens of field notes, audio fragments, diagrams, and written reflections, what you might call emotional data. These weren’t just “outputs,” but traces of human interaction that helped us understand how people open, retreat, protect, and reveal themselves.

Together, they form a toolkit not just for facilitating conversations, but for understanding them.



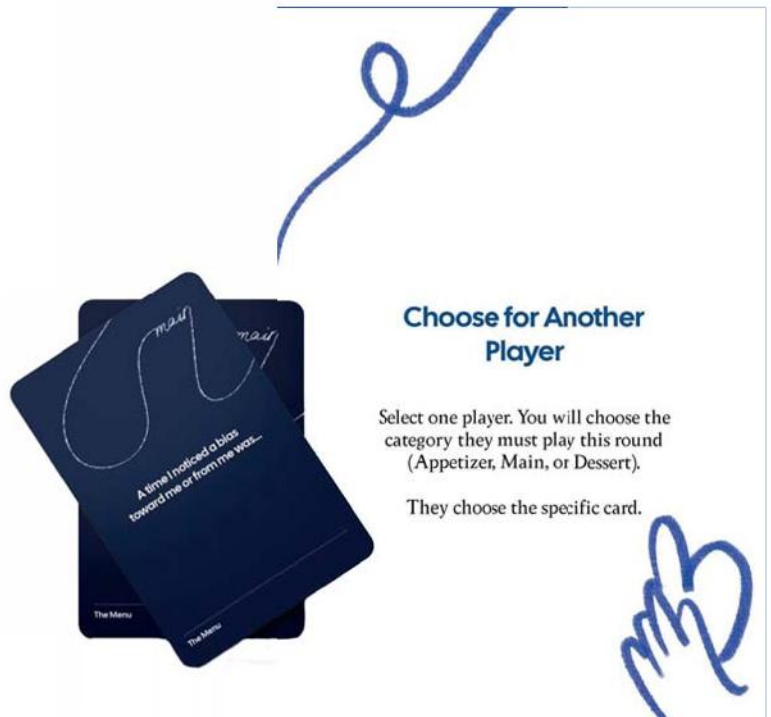
Two iterations of the menu we created.



The Menu Game that we created at the end and that became our final product.

Outcomes

The most immediate outcome was a physical one: people visibly relaxed. Shoulders dropped. Breath slowed. Faces softened. You could see the shift happening before a single meaningful sentence was spoken. That bodily change told us more about the tool's impact than any recorded quote ever could. Conversations became deeper, but not in a heavy or forced way. People shared things they admitted they rarely talk about. Not because the topic demanded it, but because the structure gave them permission. They recognized themselves in each other's stories, even when the stories came from completely different backgrounds. It was subtle, but connection usually is. Participants also began reflecting on their own biases, not defensively, but curiously. They noticed how they reacted to accents, how they interpreted certain identities, how they carried assumptions without realizing. These realizations didn't feel like guilt; they felt like small awakenings. The outcome wasn't transformation, it was possibility. And sometimes possibility is the most powerful beginning.



An example of the cards that can be found inside the game.

*the menu
hides nothing*

Impact

Long-term impact isn't something we expect to happen overnight. What we're cultivating is a slow shift, a cultural softening that ripples through everyday interactions. If the tool continues to spread, it could normalize the idea that identity conversations don't have to be confrontational or heavy. They can be playful. Gentle. Curious. Human. Imagine community centers, cafés, student groups, or public gatherings using the game as a way to bridge gaps that usually remain untouched. Imagine small pockets of the city becoming places where people feel safer expressing who they are without calculating the emotional risk. That shift, multiplied across time and space, becomes cultural change.

Our hope is that The Menu Hides Nothing becomes a quiet social technology, something people reach for when they want to understand others, or themselves, a little more honestly. And if that happens, then the project will have achieved something institutions often struggle with: making empathy feel natural instead of exceptional.

Impact Metrics

Measuring the impact of this project means paying attention to the small, human signals that show when something meaningful has shifted. One metric is willingness: how many people choose to sit, stay, and engage without being prompted, revealing an underlying sense of safety. We also look at emotional comfort, how bodies relax, how voices steady, how eye contact grows over time, quiet indicators that vulnerability became less frightening. Depth of disclosure matters too; when participants move from surface comments to personal stories, we know the structure allowed them to open up.

Cross-identity encounters are another sign, moments where people from different "bubbles" connect naturally instead of cautiously. And finally, we observe recognition, those soft, unexpected sentences like "I never thought of it that way," where empathy becomes visible. Together, these metrics capture not just participation, but the deeper relational shifts the project aims to spark.

Final iterations of The Menu Game.





Vallecas Habla

AN INVESTIGATIVE DESIGN APPROACH
TO CONTEMPORARY INEQUALITY

Team:

1. Enkhzul Ulambayar
2. Teresa Vargas
3. Flore D'Sury
4. Gabriel Winckler



ESTO ES EL BARRIO DE VALLECAS, EN MADRID

Abstract

Vallecas Habla is a strategic design intervention that responds to the intersecting crises of heat, neglect, and identity loss in Vallecas, one of Madrid's most environmentally vulnerable and socially overlooked districts. Although rising temperatures, deteriorating public spaces, and significant loss of trees shape daily life, residents rarely identify heat as the core problem.

The project reframes complaining as civic participation. Through accessible reporting channels, open source documentation, and speculative visualizations of a reclaimed public plaza, Vallecas Habla converts individual frustration into collective voice. The intention is to shift the neighborhood's cultural and behavioral landscape from resignation to agency. By making participation visible and easy to engage with, the project strengthens SDG 11, creates new forms of community led knowledge, and lays the foundation for long term, resident driven transformation.

Foundations

SDG Relevance

SDG 11 is the core framework that captures the spatial and social inequalities present in Vallecas. Although Madrid surpasses international benchmarks for green space on paper, actual access to shade and cooling infrastructure is distributed unevenly.

Vallecas has some of the lowest vegetation coverage per inhabitant and some of the highest heat island intensities in the city. After Filomena, the district also lost a significant portion of its trees, and recovery has been slower compared with wealthier districts, which reinforces this inequality.

SDG 11.7, which focuses on inclusive and accessible public space, is unmet in many parts of Vallecas where plazas are paved, abandoned, or used as informal parking instead of functioning as community spaces.

SDG 11.3, which focuses on participatory planning, is also weak due to low trust in municipal channels and the difficulty residents face when attempting to make formal complaints.

SDG 7 is indirectly relevant. Energy poverty affects a large part of Madrid and limits the ability of low income residents to cool their homes. Their quality of life becomes directly tied to the state of public space. Vallecas Habla supports SDG localization by creating accessible pathways for civic engagement and by reframing public space as a collective resource shaped by the people who inhabit it.

PUENTE DE VALECAS



Map of the tree population in a section of Vallecas: Provided by Vallekas Sostenible

Research was carried out within the everyday spaces of Vallecas. Narrow streets without shade, abandoned municipal plots used for parking, concrete plazas, and treeless playgrounds were documented through regular field visits. These visible conditions point to deeper systemic structures. Through interviews with residents, activists, and groups such as Vallekas Sostenible, it became clear that Vallecas exists within a long standing pattern of infrastructural neglect. Projects are often announced but not executed, maintenance is inconsistent, and resources are distributed unevenly when compared with central or wealthier districts.

Socially, the district contains strong traditions of activism and identity, yet it also experiences high turnover, which makes it difficult for residents to maintain long term community ties. Trust in institutional channels is low, and many residents described the formal complaint system as slow, confusing, or ineffective. As a result, informal communication, such as WhatsApp groups and street conversations, has become the most trusted space for civic expression.

By mapping these dynamics, the project understood that heat was only one part of a much larger socio political ecosystem in which belonging, visibility, and systemic neglect shape the lived experience of the neighborhood.

Research

Insights And Key Findings

Firstly, our expansive secondary research showed that race, income, and even education level were linked to disproportionate heat exposure. That made us realise that all of these systematic issues are interconnected and that Vallecas is a hub to these issues, making the residents vulnerable and exposed.

The research revealed that heat is not perceived by residents as the main problem, even though the data shows that Vallecas experiences some of the highest temperatures in Madrid. Instead, people speak primarily about neglect. They describe unclean streets, unfulfilled public projects, abandoned lots, and a general feeling that the district receives less institutional care than others. Heat, therefore, becomes a symbol of these conditions rather than the root cause.

Another key insight concerns information flow. Complaints circulate constantly in conversation, yet they never reach the municipal level in a meaningful way. The bureaucratic process is perceived as slow, rigid, and ultimately useless.

As a result, frustration remains private and fragmented. This fragmentation prevents the emergence of collective power. It also contributes to resignation, which reinforces the belief that nothing will ever change.

A paradox emerged during interviews. Vallecas contains strong activist histories and moments of intense community identity, yet present day participation is fragmented. A clear leverage point surfaced when residents reacted strongly to speculative images of a future plaza. Visualizing alternatives reopened the possibility of change and disrupted the narrative of inevitability.

These insights shifted the project from a focus on environmental redesign to a focus on socio psychological intervention, where participation, communication, and collective expression became the primary materials for transformation.

“We had to shift our approach to focus on action inequality over the products of it”

Futures & Intervention

Inputs

The intervention uses a combination of human relationships, everyday infrastructures, and simple digital tools. Conversations with residents, elders, activists, and families shaped the tone and structure of the project. Informal networks such as neighborhood messaging groups and spontaneous street discussions became natural testing grounds for design communication. Posters, QR codes, and printed cards provided material entry points into the system. The Google Form and public Drive folder served as digital infrastructures that could collect, store, and display community knowledge in real time.



Municipal open data, such as heat maps and tree coverage, provided systemic context that supported the speculative visualization of public spaces. These inputs work together to create an intervention that fits within the rhythms and realities of the neighborhood instead of disrupting them.

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Activities

The project unfolded through interventions placed directly in public space. Large posters were installed near abandoned lots, along streets lacking shade, and close to schools. Each poster carried a QR code that residents could scan to submit concerns. The form was intentionally short so that participation required minimal effort.

All submissions were collected in a public Drive folder that anyone could access, which created a transparent archive of community issues and shifted complaints from private frustration to shared documentation. Speculative visualizations of a transformed plaza circulated both digitally and in print. These images did not promise construction.

Instead, they offered a narrative tool that showed residents how neglected space could be reimagined. Every interaction, scan, and conversation became part of an iterative cycle that shaped the next move. Prototyping was treated as a method for sensing the emotional and cognitive landscape of the neighborhood.

PROMESAS VACIAS

PLANES HAY.
LO QUE FALTA ES ACCIÓN.



EXIJAMOS QUE CUMPLAN.



One of multiple posters placed around Vallecas to measure community engagement via the use of smart QRs.



Leverage Points

One of the strongest leverage points identified in the system comes from the emotional weight attached to the abandoned free parking lots that residents consistently describe as symbols of municipal neglect. These lots are widely disliked, and this shared frustration creates a rare form of social alignment in a district that otherwise struggles with fragmentation. Instead of treating this anger as a problem, the project uses it as a source of energy for reimagining public space. By directing attention toward a site that residents already resent, the intervention transforms existing dissatisfaction into a catalyst for imagining alternatives that feel both urgent and realistic.

Beyond this emotional leverage, the project also shifts information flows. Vallecas has never lacked opinions or frustration, but it has lacked a channel that preserves and amplifies these voices. The QR system and public archive interrupt this pattern by capturing what is usually lost in private conversation. At the same time, posters and speculative images act as social cues that challenge resignation and normalize civic expression. Finally, the deeper leverage sits at the level of mental models. When residents see their own frustrations reframed as possibilities for transformation, the long standing narrative of being forgotten begins to destabilize.

Consolidation



Our rebrand and redesign of Vallekas Sostenible Instagram account.

Outputs

The intervention produced a set of interconnected outputs that together function as a system for communication, participation, and collective agency. Rather than isolated design artifacts, these outputs form an open, reusable infrastructure that enables residents and local groups to continue the work independently.

A first set of outputs was the series of street-facing posters installed throughout Vallecas. These posters acted as public provocations, making neglect visible while offering clear entry points into participation through QR codes. Their presence interrupted the everyday visual language of abandonment and reframed complaint as a legitimate civic act.

A second core output was the QR-based participation workflow, connecting posters to a simplified Google Form and an open-access Google Drive. This system transformed individual frustration into shared documentation by preserving complaints, evidence, and research in a transparent, collective archive that anyone could access, reuse, or build upon.

One of the most significant outputs of the project was the complete rebrand and redesign of the Vallekas Sostenible Instagram presence. We retained the collective's iconic neon green color and strengthened it through a coherent visual system, premade posts, templates, typographic rules, and ready-to-use graphic elements.

This rebrand was not cosmetic. It created a shared design language that allows anyone to participate in communication, lowering the threshold for engagement and democratizing design as a tool for activism.

Finally, speculative before-and-after visualizations of a reclaimed plaza functioned as narrative tools rather than promises of construction. Alongside systems diagrams, field documentation, and instructional guides, these elements formed a cohesive, open-source ecosystem that extends beyond the project itself.

“We designed with the diffuse designer to deliver the maximum output.”

Drawing on Ezio Manzini's concepts of collaborative design as the future. And the importance of recognises both diffuse and expert designers in provoking change.

Outcomes

The project generated visible shifts in how participation, complaint, and public space were understood. Residents engaged with the posters, scanned QR codes, shared materials, and began to use the system to articulate concerns collectively rather than in isolation. Conversations increasingly linked heat, neglect, and institutional responsibility, reframing heat as a symptom of deeper systemic conditions.

Relationally, the intervention strengthened connections between residents and local organizations. The redesigned Instagram system allowed Vallekas Sostenible to communicate more consistently and clearly, making participation feel open rather than expert-led. Because the tools were familiar and accessible, residents could contribute without needing design training or professional software. Although much of the outcome is yet to come as this is a long-term sustainable project.

Cognitively, speculative visuals helped destabilize the belief that neglected public space is fixed or inevitable. By making alternative futures visible and shareable, the project reopened the possibility of change and supported a shift from resignation to agency.



One of multiple posters placed around Vallecas to measure community engagement via the use of smart QRs.

Impact

In the long term, Vallekas Habla operates as a civic infrastructure rather than a finished design. It continuously gathers resident voices, preserves collective knowledge, and makes patterns of neglect visible in ways that can support advocacy and negotiation with institutions.

Culturally, the project challenges the narrative that Vallecas is forgotten or powerless. By making participation visible, readable, and repeatable, it reframes the neighborhood as capable of self-organization and sustained collective action. Importantly, the project does not position designers as external problem-solvers. We worked closely with members of Vallekas Sostenible to design with people, not for them, deliberately avoiding extractive or solutionist dynamics.

Because the system relies on free tools, open documentation, and transferable design structures, it can be maintained, adapted, and scaled by local groups or applied in other underserved districts. Vallekas Habla demonstrates how design can act as an agent of change by shifting information flows, relationships, and mental models without producing a single fixed object.



A speculative rendering of how Vallecas could look if the free parking lot was properly transformed into a dynamic public space.

Metrics

Impact for this project is understood through use, continuation, and visibility rather than abstract indicators. The primary measure of success is whether people actually use the system: posters remaining in circulation, QR codes being scanned, templates being reused, and the Vallekas Sostenible Instagram continuing to publish, adapt, and grow using the redesigned visual system.

Change is observed through moments of adoption: residents sharing materials, associations using the documentation in conversations with institutions, and the system being carried forward beyond the studio context.

Evidence of reuse or adoption by neighborhood associations, as well as any form of acknowledgment or response from municipal actors, will signal system-level relevance. Together, these metrics capture not only participation rates, but also cultural and cognitive transformation within the neighborhood.

“Vallecas Habla is not a finished design, it’s an open system that helps the neighborhood speak and sustain its own change”





Reimagining The Maravillas Market

A STRATEGIC AND SPECULATIVE
DESIGN APPROACH

Team:

Pedro Camacho
Nathan Drira
Alejandra Gabián
Clara García



Abstract

This project, developed within Design Studio VI under the theme of SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, reimagines Madrid's Mercado de las Maravillas as a space of connection rather than mere commerce. Once vibrant social hubs, Madrid's 45 municipal markets have seen their relevance fade.

Today, 18% stand non-operational, and together they account for just 8% of the city's food retail activity compared to 52% dominated by supermarket chains. Consumers have increasingly prioritized price and convenience, reshaping food buying into a quick, transactional act stripped of interaction and identity. Our team framed this decline not as inevitable but as a design challenge: how could Maravillas market reclaim its cultural role in Tetuán, a district marked by strong local identity, multiculturalism, and social diversity?

Through ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews with vendors and shoppers, and field comparison with other markets like Vallehermoso, we identified core tensions: fragmented visual language, poor wayfinding, and a lack of community-centered experiences, all of which contribute to disorientation and disengagement.

The project's goal became to transform the market from a place of transaction to a place of experience. Our interventions focused on service and experience design, working at the intersection of communication, space, and behavior. We proposed a unified wayfinding and signage system inspired by the clarity of metro networks, color-coded by product category; redesigned entrances and ceilings to strengthen first impressions and coherence; and introduced a "community stall" to host shared activities, workshops, and cultural exchange without falling into gentrified "food-hall" aesthetics.

Ultimately, our project argues that sustainability in urban consumption is not only about sourcing or waste reduction; it is about rebuilding the relationships that make local systems thrive. By enhancing usability, visibility, and emotional connection, Maravillas can once again act as a neighborhood commons: a living, social, and sensory ecosystem where buying local becomes meaningful, accessible, and joyful.

Desktop Research

System Problem

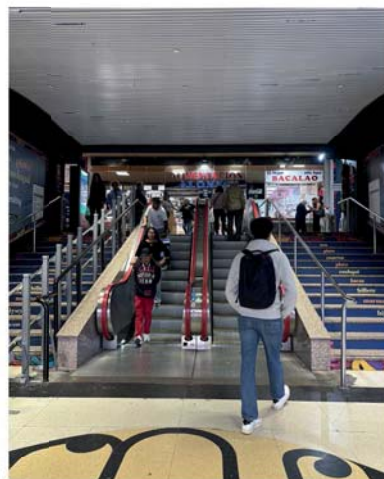
Our project began with a broad, exploratory phase of desktop research aimed at understanding the systemic issues surrounding municipal markets in Madrid, with a particular focus on Mercado de las Maravillas. Before we could design anything, we needed to situate the market within its historical, social, economic, and urban context.

This meant gathering data not only about the market itself, but also about shifting consumer habits, the dominance of large supermarket chains, demographic patterns in Tetuán, and the broader challenges surrounding SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

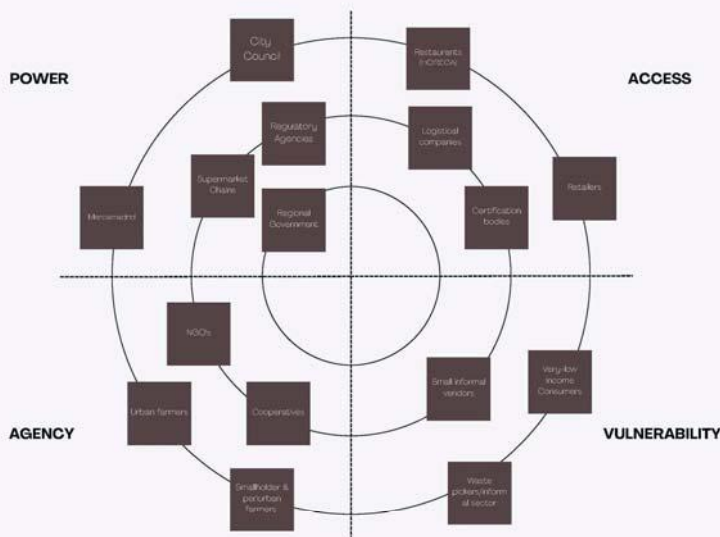
The first stage was mapping the macro landscape: how food consumption operates in Madrid today. Reports from Mercamadrid, the Ayuntamiento de Madrid, and the Ministerio de Agricultura revealed the imbalance in the city's food system.

While Madrid once relied heavily on its network of 46 municipal markets, today only about 8% of fresh-food purchases occur there, compared to more than 50% in modern supermarket chains. This quantitative layer helped us frame the issue as not just aesthetic or logistical, but structural. Trends like price sensitivity, convenience culture, and the rise of delivery platforms also emerged repeatedly across articles, economic reports, and consumer surveys.

In parallel, we conducted a second layer of research focused specifically on Mercado de las Maravillas. We searched for archival documentation, urban plans, and historical records that describe its evolution. Maravillas, inaugurated in 1942, was once considered Europe's largest market and a symbol of postwar reconstruction.



Maravillas Market main entrance on Calle Bravo Murillo 122.



Map of relevant actors in terms of agency, vulnerability, power and access. Provided insights into possible intervention points.

Over time, however, based on historical retrospectives and municipal revitalization plans, we found evidence of gradual decline, empty stalls, and fragmentation of stalls without a coherent identity. At this stage, we also investigated comparable markets (such as Vallehermoso or Barceló) through articles, social media, and case studies to understand why some markets had successfully “rebranded” themselves while others stagnated.

A third layer involved studying neighborhood dynamics. Using demographic data from the Ayuntamiento, local press articles, and cultural reports on Tetuán, we built a clearer picture of the community that surrounds the market. Tetuán’s multicultural population, mixed socio-economic layers, and informal retail culture gave us clues about how the market functions socially, and which types of users it currently attracts or fails to attract. These sources helped us understand, for instance, why certain audiences prefer supermarkets (predictability, time efficiency, uniform pricing) while others value the market’s informality and personal interactions.

Finally, we researched design precedents: wayfinding systems, signage strategies, market revitalization case studies, and user-experience analyses. This included referencing manuals from transport systems, public-building signage programs, and successful markets abroad. Desktop research here shifted from problem-definition to solution-generation. By analyzing multiple precedents, we identified patterns: the importance of hierarchy, color-coding, legibility, and intuitive navigation—all essential insights that later shaped our visual interventions, as shown in our 75% review deck.

Overall, this desktop research phase allowed us to construct a strong foundation before entering fieldwork. It helped us understand not only the “what” of the problem, but the “why,” enabling us to approach the project from an informed and systemic perspective.

Field Research

Visiting Maravillas

Our first in-person visit to Mercado de las Maravillas immediately confronted us with a complex, almost contradictory atmosphere: lively, crowded, and visually overwhelming, yet simultaneously disjointed and difficult to navigate. Walking through the main entrances, we noticed a strong contrast between the market's historical architecture and the ad-hoc layering of contemporary commercial elements. The first impression was one of visual noise, clashing signboards, neon lighting, and inconsistent stall facades that seemed to compete for attention rather than guide visitors.



Circulation quickly became a central focus of our observation. Movement inside the market felt intuitive only for those who already “knew the map.” For newcomers, it was easy to get lost. The aisles varied in width; some felt spacious and airy, while others suddenly narrowed, creating bottlenecks—particularly around popular protein stalls.

The lack of a clear wayfinding system meant that orientation depended almost entirely on guesswork, memory, or wandering until you stumbled upon the right section. The ceiling lighting also shifted abruptly from warm, dim industrial panels to harsh LED strips, affecting both visibility and the perceived cleanliness of different areas.

We also paid close attention to the atmospheric fragmentation: each aisle seemed to have its own micro-identity. Some corridors felt vibrant and social, with vendors chatting across stalls, while others were noticeably quieter, with shuttered or semi-vacant units contributing to a sense of decline. The sensory experience changed constantly (from the smell of fresh fish to spices to cleaning detergents) reinforcing the idea that Maravillas is less a unified market and more a mosaic of worlds stitched together.

Vendor–customer interactions, even though not yet analyzed through interviews, were revealing in themselves. We observed moments of friendliness, familiarity, and negotiation, but also moments where transactions were purely functional. The social warmth that traditionally defines markets seemed unevenly distributed.

Overall, the visit allowed us to understand Maravillas not as a single space but as a patchwork ecosystem with tremendous character and equally significant usability challenges, a place full of potential, but lacking cohesion, clarity, and a strong sense of unified identity.



Semi-Structured Interviews

During our visits to Maravillas, the informal interviews we conducted with both vendors and customers helped us understand the human side of the market's ecosystem. Vendors consistently expressed a mix of pride and frustration: pride in the quality of their products and the long-standing relationships they maintain with loyal clients, but frustration with the market's declining foot traffic and the lack of unified communication or support.

Several stall owners mentioned how younger shoppers rarely come to the market, often choosing supermarkets for speed and predictability.



Customers, on the other hand, often described the market as charming but confusing. Many admitted they only visit specific stalls they already know, because navigating the rest feels overwhelming or time-consuming. Others mentioned that the atmosphere has changed over the years, becoming less social and more fragmented. These interviews made clear that both groups care about the market, but feel its identity and usability have weakened over time.

Fish and seafood store. The picture was taken as part of a price tracking experiment with the purpose of verifying Supermarkets price dominance.



How Vallehermoso Balances Structure and Chaos to Create a Comfortable Market Flow

Visiting Vallehermoso

Our visit to Mercado de Vallehermoso served almost as a counterpoint to everything we had been observing at Maravillas. From the moment we approached the exterior, it was clear we were stepping into a different ecosystem. The façade itself had a curated charm: peeling paint that somehow looked intentional, climbing vines framing the entrances, and a general "Instagram-friendly" aesthetic that communicated character without chaos. Even before entering, you understood that the market was telling a story: clean, cohesive, and unmistakably designed.

Once inside, the contrast became even more evident. Vallehermoso has a strong visual identity that is impossible to ignore. Typography is everywhere, consistent and clearly commissioned; banners, signs, and even the colour palette feel unified. The blues, whites, and warm accents repeat across surfaces, ceilings, and even pipes. It is the kind of visual coherence that suggests a conscious branding effort, the kind that immediately reflects a higher socioeconomic context. Compared to Maravillas, where each stall fights visually for survival, Vallehermoso feels orchestrated. Not in a sterile way but rather in a way that ensures the visitor is never overwhelmed.

Wayfinding is one of the clearest demonstrations of this intentionality. Arrows lead you naturally through the space, signage appears exactly where you expect it, and you can find essentials like bathrooms or exits in seconds. The spatial rhythm also contributes to clarity: patterned ceilings, generous lighting, and pockets of natural light give the market a sense of depth and legibility. It feels like someone thought carefully about user flow, how people move, wander, pause, and navigate. You can tell the environment wants you to explore, but never to feel lost.

Beyond the visuals, the vibe of Vallehermoso is distinct. The atmosphere is more “posh,” reflecting the demographic profile of the neighborhood. Stalls often function less like traditional fresh-food vendors and more like artisanal or gourmet micro-restaurants. People linger, chat, and taste. Consumption happens as much in the aisles as at the tables. It is a market that has embraced experience over necessity.

As a reference for our own project, Vallehermoso was both inspiring and cautionary. It showed us what successful branding and spatial coherence can achieve, but also highlighted how easily such interventions can drift toward gentrification. For Maravillas, copying this model would erase the authenticity, informality, and multicultural layers that make it unique. The visit ultimately sharpened our central question: how do you redesign a neighborhood market without sanitising or displacing its identity? Vallehermoso offered answers, but also clear limits.



Picture of Krudo which is one of many gourmet and high end dining options in Vallehermoso Market.



de Agustín
z Sahagún



Fundación Cana

TETUÁN

Bernabéu

Design Opportunity

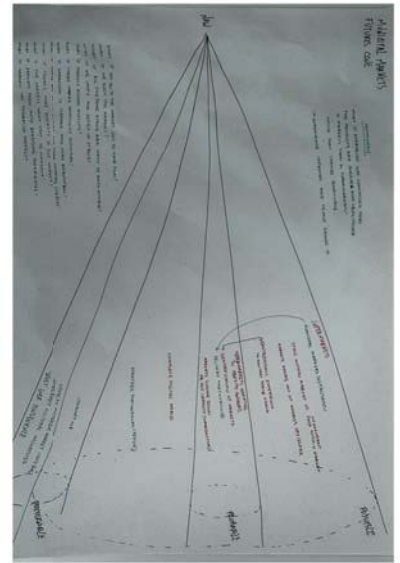
Markets As Commons

The central design opportunity for Mercado de las Maravillas emerges from a simple but significant cultural shift: consumption today is largely treated as a transaction rather than an experience. Supermarkets have perfected an anonymous, efficient, and automated model that satisfies speed but drains meaning. In contrast, traditional municipal markets once embodied a civic, relational function. They were places of encounter, memory, and community. Maravillas still carries some of this potential, but it is buried under visual fragmentation, unclear navigation, and a declining sense of cohesion. Our opportunity is to reactivate this latent identity without turning the market into a polished, gentrified food hall.

The neighborhood context reinforces this direction. Tetuán is one of Madrid's most socially diverse and culturally plural districts. It combines immigrant communities, long-time residents, younger newcomers, and lower-income households.

This mix creates strong neighborhood attachment, intergenerational life, informality, and a natural openness to participation. Rather than imposing a new identity onto the market, the opportunity lies in designing from what already exists: a multicultural, accessible, lived-in environment that people care about. Preserving this authenticity while making the market more usable, legible, and welcoming is the key challenge.

Our reframed point of view asks how design can make Maravillas more attractive without erasing its character or pushing it toward a full gastronomic, tourism-oriented model like others in the city. The opportunity is to shift the market from being perceived as a place of transactions to a place of connection. This involves moving from a visually overloaded environment to one that feels coherent and recognizably "Maravillas." It means enabling people to navigate the space intuitively, find what they need, and feel comfortable exploring beyond the stalls they already know.



A future cone that categorized imaginative futures related to the markets issue in terms of what is possible, probable and preferable.

The questions raised in our ideation phase point directly to the potential of this project. What if people went to the market not only to buy food, but to enjoy themselves? What if community activities or a shared cultural stall reinforced the social and multicultural layers already present in Tetuán? What if the stalls shared a unified design language that expressed the identity of the market without forcing homogeneity? And what if navigating Maravillas were as intuitive and legible as navigating the Madrid metro?

Design, in this context, becomes a tool to rebuild relationships, between vendors and customers, between the market and the neighborhood, and between everyday consumption and meaningful experience. The opportunity is not to transform Maravillas into something new, but to help it become more clearly what it already is: a community commons hiding in plain sight.

Prototype Overview

Visual Identity Prototypes & Validation

Our prototypes were designed to test one core hypothesis: that small, strategic visual and experiential interventions could make Mercado de las Maravillas easier to navigate, more welcoming, and more coherent, without compromising its authenticity. Instead of proposing structural changes or redesigning stalls, we focused on lightweight transformations that could realistically exist inside a working municipal market. These included reworked entrance signage, cleaned-up visual communication, a new system of directional graphics inspired by metro-style clarity, and color-coded wayfinding to help people intuitively identify product zones. The “before/after” photoshops made these ideas tangible by showing how the space could feel more ordered and legible while still preserving the market’s informal charm.

The prototypes aimed to simplify three pain points consistently identified during research: disorientation inside the market, visual clutter caused by advertising and mismatched signage, and the lack of a recognizable identity.

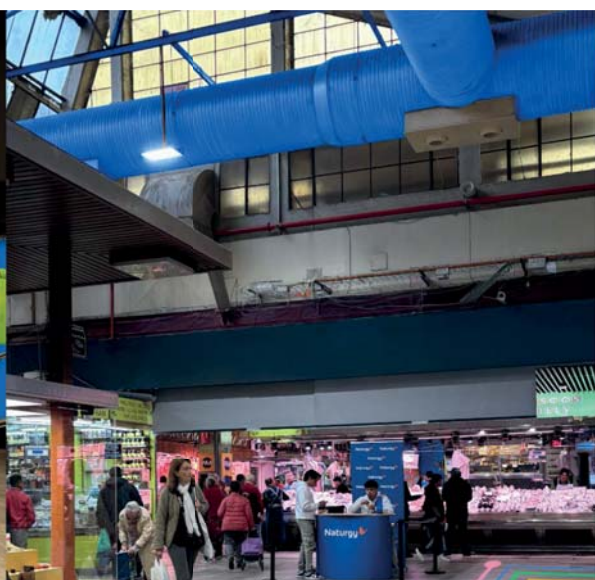
By applying unified colors, clearer arrows, stall-cluster labeling, and decluttered entrance experiences, we wanted to prove that improving usability did not require transforming Maravillas into a “trendy” gastronomic destination. Instead, the goal was to strengthen what already makes it unique.

Validation with market users confirmed this direction. Across multiple short conversations, shoppers described the prototypes as “more ordered,” “easier to understand,” and “helpful for newcomers,” comments like “esto te guía, ¿no?” and “los jóvenes vienen despistados... esto les viene bien”. Many appreciated the modern touch as long as it did not introduce screens or overly polished elements. Others emphasized longevity, that changes should “stay for good” and not constantly shift. Vendors also validated the need for clearer signage, noting that customers often feel lost when entering the market. People want clarity, not reinvention; coherence, not gentrification. The responses showed that our direction is both culturally sensitive and practically desirable

“A good identity system makes the complex instantly understandable.”

-Michael Bierut.

Vivamus sit amet velit diam. Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia



Our Final Proposal

Strategic Booklet

Our final booklet was designed as both a strategic document and a gesture of respect toward the Mercado de las Maravillas community. It is written in Spanish because it is meant to be read by vendors, market leadership, neighborhood associations, and anyone connected to Maravillas' daily life. From the beginning, we wanted to avoid producing a purely academic or speculative piece. Instead, we aimed to create something useful, legible, and grounded, something that could start real conversations inside the market.

The booklet organizes our entire process into a coherent narrative—context, diagnosis, opportunity, interventions, validation, and possible futures, so that readers can understand not only what we propose, but why. This narrative structure is visible throughout the document, from the historical overview of Maravillas and its role in Tetuán to the systemic challenges facing municipal markets in Madrid and the contemporary transformations that shape consumption habits today.

One of our main goals was to show that design is not cosmetic, and that the issues in Maravillas are not aesthetic flaws but structural tensions: saturation of visual messages, lack of unified identity, difficulty orienting oneself, uneven lighting, and the fragmentation of the market's internal narrative. By presenting these obstacles clearly and respectfully, we hoped to validate the daily frustrations that both vendors and customers expressed, and to demonstrate that we listened before proposing anything.

The booklet also works as a proposal for a shared vision. Through the reframed perspective and the strategic opportunity sections, we tried to articulate what Maravillas could become without losing what makes it special: a commons, a social infrastructure, a multicultural anchor for Tetuán. The interventions, wayfinding, signage, lighting, the "Puesto Comunidad", are shown not as impositions but as tools that reveal and support the market's existing strengths.

Finally, the booklet is an invitation. By visually mapping possible futures and offering actionable recommendations, we wanted to show that the transformation of Maravillas is not a single project, but an ongoing, participatory process. The booklet becomes a bridge between design and community: a document that helps people imagine, question, and discuss the next chapter of Mercado de las Maravillas.

Diseño Especulativo: Reimaginando los Mercados en Madrid

Plan Estratégico
Mercado de las Maravillas

IE University
Design Studio IV





From Students For Students

DESIGNING WELLBEING

Team:

1. Cristina Acevedo
2. Natalia del Real
3. Lucía Martos



Abstract

The strategic design project for students from students at IE University works to enhance SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing through its strategic design approach. The university provides numerous well-being activities, yet students do not engage in these programs at a significant level. The research identified a fundamental problem: students are interested and would like to engage more actively in wellbeing-related topics, but there is, however, a large gap between intention and action.

The organisation faces challenges in executing its purpose due to its insufficient clarity in its communication systems. The research involved systems mapping and interview sessions, which revealed that Campus Life, Counselling, the Wellbeing Centre, student clubs, and peer networks all support student wellbeing, but their information does not follow a unified pattern. Students encounter disorganised information, which fails to create meaningful connections with them. Students have access to wellbeing resources, but these resources remain hidden from view, and students face challenges when trying to access them during their daily activities.

The intervention program uses student-focused dialogue to create a new perspective on student wellbeing. The team developed two prototype solutions, which included student-generated Instagram content for student audiences and a Gift Card program that motivated people to join social activities. The two prototypes presented innovative methods which users could use to transition from awareness to action.

The project establishes wellbeing as an integral component of university life which students should access easily while it remains relevant to their daily activities and social interactions and self-care practices.

Foundations

SDG Relevance

The project bases its foundation on SDG 3, which focuses on achieving Good Health and Well-being for all. The SDG requires local interpretation, as it requires community-specific analysis of how people experience well-being in their particular settings. The community we are studying comprises young adults in Madrid, with a focus on IE University students.

Students face multiple challenges, including academic work, a busy daily routine, social responsibilities, and the process of learning to be self-sufficient. The environment exhibits an uneven distribution of well-being. The research results demonstrated that mental and emotional health exists in a state of high vulnerability. The supportive programs at IE remain accessible to students, although they do not always receive direct invitations to join these initiatives. The research showed that people wanted to care for themselves but lacked the ability, time, and mental clarity to do so.

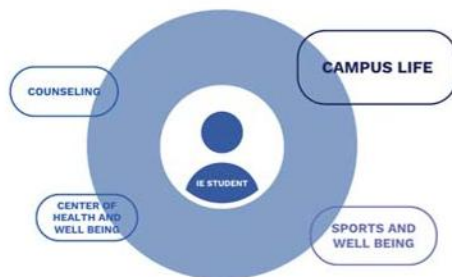
The local perspective on SDG 3 revealed that individual well-being develops through connections with others and their surroundings, as well as through social interaction. The success of inclusive learning environments depends on three essential factors: the quality of information dissemination, students' connection levels, and resource accessibility.

The project bases its development on this knowledge, which seeks to reveal student well-being through authentic human experiences that match their actual college experience.

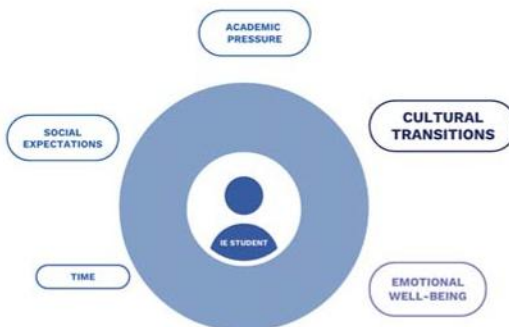


Context Of Research

Stakeholders Mapping



Actors



Contextual Forces

The research takes place at IE University, a dynamic system in which multiple operational elements influence students' wellness experiences. The Wellbeing Centre, along with Campus Life and Counselling services, student clubs, and academic departments, work together to establish a supportive environment at the institution. Students face multiple challenges as they manage their busy lives, academic work, social responsibilities, cultural adjustments, and the emotional demands of adolescence.

Students who genuinely care about their health struggle to access existing resources since they lack both time and mental clarity. The communication system IE Connects creates overwhelming experiences for users, but institutional messages fail to create individual connections with students. Students fail to identify the specific opportunities available to them.

The institution faces a problem space because the services it offers do not align with students' actual experiences. The existing gap between these two systems emerged from the combined effects of established operational procedures and predetermined standards and the lack of proper communication between different entities. The interview data and systems mapping process revealed this organisational pattern by demonstrating how various communication channels and multiple message types work against one another to prevent student access.

The research methods we used were developed from our understanding of these systems. The research team studied wellbeing as a system that grows through social connections, cultural practices, and communication methods, rather than relying on personal decisions. Our study's research direction followed this approach to create communication that connects with students in their current location while demonstrating that wellbeing practices are both accessible and easy to use in their regular activities.

Research

Research Insights & Key Findings

The ethnographic research included interviews with students, wellbeing leaders, and practitioners, which revealed multiple patterns explaining why students who care about their health do not participate in wellbeing activities.

Students base their learning choices on what they find both familiar and functional in their studies. Their daily activities included studying, exercising, and spending time with friends. Students view introspective practices, which include meditation and journaling, as unnecessary even though they understand these activities provide advantages.

Second, awareness does not equal accessibility. Students who know about wellbeing resources face challenges when they try to access these resources. The IE Connects system creates excessive complexity, making it difficult for users to understand, while institutional communication conveys messages that appear official rather than being addressed to specific individuals. Students now choose to use their trusted communication channels, which include Instagram and WhatsApp, and personal recommendations from others.

Third, communication fragmentation plays a significant role. The independent promotion of events by different departments results in messages that become dispersed and fail to deliver consistent information to students. The existing members of the wellbeing ecosystem maintain their involvement, but new members fail to join the system.

Our discussions with Jimena from Chika Moments demonstrated that students deeply connect with educational content which presents a student-centred approach through genuine and affectionate communication. Real stories create stronger connections than the official branding which institutions present to the public.

The research provided specific areas where we could gain an advantage through peer-based communication, improved information availability, simplified communication processes, and transforming wellbeing from work to personal experience. The two researchers discovered that students want to take care of their health, but the existing educational framework fails to create spaces for their involvement. Our project began with the conflicting elements which we identified in the space.

Adriana Grossman - Head of marketing at
the center of well being



Rodrigo Aguirre - PEACE COACH,
Professor of Contemplative Leadership
at IE



Jimena Mesonero - CEO of
CHIKA Moments



Valentina Caldas - President of
well-being club at IE University

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

SONSOLES DE LA LASTRA

CASE 2:

AWARENESS

They notice a sign hung up around university advertising a wellness event happening in the coming week.

CONSIDERATION

Texts their friend to convince them to join and attempt to log sign up on le Connects. They sign up easily as the link takes them to the corresponding link directly

DECISION

They get sent a follow up mail with an incentive gift and, despite the lack of time, they attend the event with even more excitement than they had anticipated.

ENGAGEMENT

They are very please with the outcome of the event and starts to be more and more interested in Wellbeing. She follows the IE Wellbeing club on social media and recomends it to her friends

RETENTION

They come again with a new group of friends who are willing to try out something new and purpusefull

**Wellbeing Is Not Only
Individual.
It Grows From
Relationships**

Futures And Intervention

Inputs

The intervention program uses existing well-being infrastructure at IE through its events, clubs, and support services while creating additional student-centred contact points. The project received its most important resources from participants, including Wellbeing Club members, students, and staff who gave their time for interviews, and our team members who worked on the project while living in the community.

The research employed digital tools which students already use on Instagram and WhatsApp channels, short surveys, and basic analytics to determine their most interesting content. We developed physical prototypes for the Gift Card referral system and communication templates to create a friendly, personal connection with users.

The school organised weekly events and club activities, which functioned as our primary testing environment. The intervention maintained its focus on students' actual needs because all stakeholders worked together to achieve this goal. The university maintained organisational systems, while the club members built social connections that students used to turn the project into a practical reality.

Activities

The three-week prototyping phase allowed us to evaluate two essential interventions which aimed to connect wellbeing practices with students' regular activities.

- 1. Instagram "From Students to Students"
The platform displayed student-generated content through reels, carousels, and stories, which showed their actual experiences and feelings. The message presented itself as a personal invitation from a friend instead of an official announcement through the sharing of "One Day With Me at a Wellbeing Event."
- 2. Gift Card Reward System
The system included a basic referral system, which allowed students to earn virtual stamps whenever they successfully invited friends to attend events. The program awarded small rewards to participants for every three stamps they collected, which brought social entertainment to the participation process. The evaluation of impact involved A/B testing, different posting rhythms, in-event activations, and analytics tracking methods. The activities enabled us to track immediate feedback about participant engagement, their ability to stay involved, and their emotional reactions.

Vivamus sit amet velit diam. Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia



Leverage Points

The well-being system at IE has undergone multiple changes as a result of our implemented intervention.

Leverage Point 1: Information flows
The system now distributes information through student-to-student communication rather than through institutional channels. The research findings show that formal communication is the primary obstacle people need to overcome.

Leverage Point 2: Feedback loops
The Gift Card referral system operates as a positive feedback mechanism because students receive benefits from joining, which leads to better promotion of the system, which attracts additional students to the platform.

Leverage Point 3: Mental models
The practice of wellbeing as a social activity which people share together, instead of being an additional formal program, will transform how students view their role in creating a wellbeing culture at their university.

Leverage Point 4: Relationships
People develop trust and feelings of belonging through their natural peer-to-peer communication. Students who act as messengers create an experience which becomes more personal and emotionally connected to human nature.

The three leverage points follow Meadows' mid-level levers, which include flow redesign, incentive creation, and narrative transformation. The two approaches offer authentic methods that help people change their permanent behaviours and transform cultural attitudes toward wellness.

Leverage Points



Feedback loops



Mental models



Relationships

Consolidation

Outputs

Our intervention produced specific results that allowed us to demonstrate our concepts through practical testing. Our team created a complete Instagram communication system, which included ready-to-use reel templates, carousel content, and caption writing and storytelling methods based on genuine student stories. The user-generated content prototypes enabled real students to present their well-being moments through their personal statements. The team developed a working Gift Card system, which included digital tracking, virtual stamps, and basic reward functionality. The team developed survey tools and analytics platforms that tracked content views and interactions, using metrics such as reach, impressions, engagement rates, saves, and shares. We established a new information distribution system, which demonstrated how data could efficiently transition between official systems and social networks. The combined results showed that students could access the well-being ecosystem through information sharing when distribution methods were adjusted slightly.

Outcomes

The prototypes created instant changes which people could easily observe. New students began attending events, marking their first experience after discovering relevant content on social media or when friends invited them. Instagram saw increased user engagement through saved content and shared posts, indicating that the published material connected with people on a personal level. Students in the Wellbeing Club built stronger relationships by sharing posts, inviting friends, and adding their personal stories to the platform. The campus became more accessible to students who had not previously noticed wellbeing resources, as these resources became more visible across the entire campus. Students began to create a new story which showed that wellbeing existed as a social practice which students actively participated in and controlled. The initial changes indicate that people are progressing from being unaware to taking an active role which could lead to enduring modifications in their cultural practices.



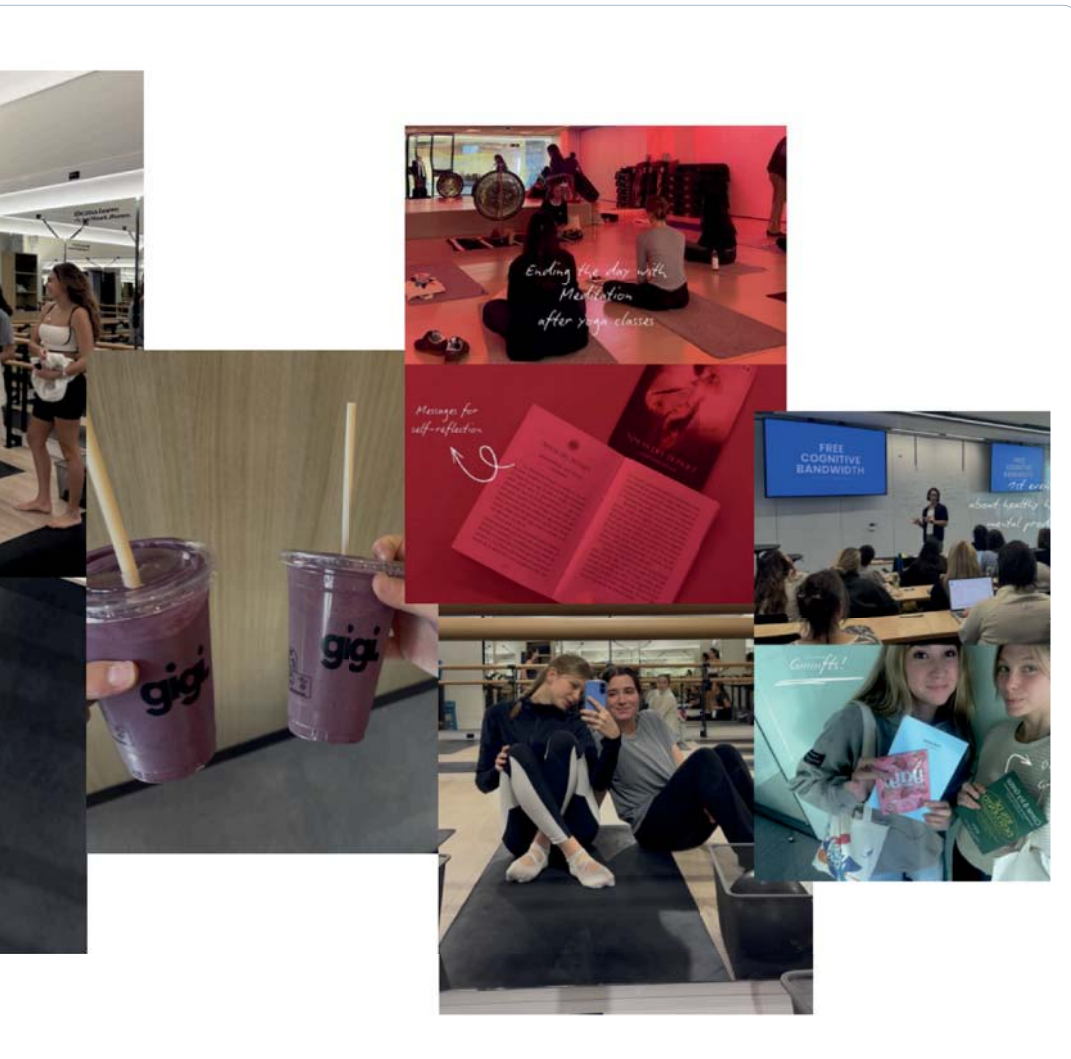
Impact

The university should implement this intervention as a campus-wide initiative to create enduring cultural changes at IE. The well-being system becomes more accessible and emotionally meaningful when it uses actual student experiences to establish its communication foundation.

The approach should expand its reach to include the Wellbeing Club and Counselling services, Campus Life, and academic departments to establish a single wellbeing identity for IE. The system would develop into a customised digital system which uses artificial intelligence to suggest appropriate events and resources that match student requirements and preferred activities.

The institution would transition from its current reactive approach to proactive wellbeing practices, which would create better social connections and equal opportunities for mental and emotional support access. Students would experience a stronger sense of being noticed, receiving backing, and developing relationships with others. The project establishes a basis for developing a wellbeing system which will expand with student numbers while providing ongoing value to their university life.





Redesigning The Club' Instagram Communication



Impact Metrics

The proposed metrics will track both behavioural changes and emotional involvement of participants throughout the intervention process. The Instagram engagement rate shows how well content connects with users and creates meaningful interactions.

Retention data from events indicates how many students return to develop their wellbeing practices. Number of first-time attendees: indicates reduced barriers and increased accessibility.

The Gift Card system enables participants to measure how their relationships affect others and what drives their peers to take action.

The assessment of communication clarity is conducted through scheduled student surveys that measure how well students understand the information and receive individualised attention.

The indicators use quantitative data, including reach and impressions, and attendance numbers, together with qualitative data, which shows how people feel about the content and their sense of community. The two entities work together to determine if communication obstacles are becoming less prominent while a stronger, well-being culture based on connection develops.



Sabor Y Barrio

RECONNECTING TETUÁN THROUGH FOOD KNOWLEDGE

Team:

Ana Herrera
Anna Sofie Levine
Manuela Correa
Valentina Caldas



our own cooking practices. We found that many young adults, including ourselves, lacked basic cooking skills until life transitions such as living independently forced us to learn. After meeting with vendors in markets such as Mercado de San Enrique, we found that while supermarkets offer speed and convenience, the traditional markets provide something deeper: a space to learn, connect, and build community.

Through strategic communication, digital archiving, and storytelling, our intention is to make traditional markets more visible, accessible, and relevant to all generations. Our aim is to strengthen food literacy, promote sustainable and local consumption, and bridge the gap between generations through food. We hope to highlight the importance of cooking as a meaningful activity and an act of care, rather than it being a chore.

Abstract

Sabor y Barrio is a project that hopes to connect communities through food. We focused on the traditional markets of Tetuán to help individuals in the community strengthen their food literacy. We address the loss of generational cooking knowledge and the growing disconnect between residents and their local markets by focusing on this cycle: buying, cooking and eating.

Our research highlighted several systemic challenges: older vendors in the markets have a wide range of expertise about seasonal produce, where their produce comes from, freshness, and preparation. However, this knowledge is rarely passed down to younger generations. We were told by parents that they did not know how to cook well or to be mindful about what they were eating until they had children, revealing how life transitions shape food practices. To further understand this concept, we used auto-ethnography to reflect on

Foundations

SDG Relevance

Our project aligns primarily with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), as we are focusing on community resilience, local economies, and cultural heritage. Markets are vital infrastructures in neighborhood communities that support social cohesion, access to fresh food and generational knowledge. In Tetuán, we have seen that these assets are undervalued and individuals are often in favor of supermarkets as they are seen as more convenient.

We hope to strengthen food literacy by preserving traditional cooking knowledge and expertise from the markets. Through this, we are contributing to SDG 11.4 (Protect cultural and natural heritage). We also touch SDG 11.3 (Inclusive Urban Communities) by fostering community identity and reinforcing networks between the market vendors, families and young residents.

There are also synergies with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption), as bringing visibility to knowledge about seasonal and local products promotes sustainable food choices. Convenience-driven lifestyles make traditional practices feel less practical and accessible, but making the knowledge more available and easy to engage with can rebalance this dynamic.

By situating the SDGs with Tetuán's local ecosystem, we hope to show how infrastructures such as the markets can become sites of intergenerational learning, environmental awareness and community building.





Mercado de San Enrique in Tetuán

“Antes, los jóvenes aprendían en casa. Ahora muchos no saben ni por dónde empezar,” Almudena, vendor at Mercado de San Enrique

Through our research, we found paradoxes within the system. Markets are perceived as more expensive, despite the availability of fresh and affordable options. Even as people romanticize tradition, they often default to convenience. And although cooking is associated with love and care, many lifestyles can reduce the time available to practice it. Many people can decide to order Uber Eats because ‘they don’t have time’ and then later realize it would have taken less time to cook.

Early leverage points appeared when we noticed the knowledge gaps and community strengths that weren’t being used enough. Vendors hold deep expertise that is not widely accessible. Community pride around the market exists, but it lacks visibility. There is strong potential to bridge the gap between generations through shared stories, skills and food expertise. We decided that making this local knowledge visible digitally or physically could enable new behaviors and connections, setting the foundation for our intervention.

Research

Insights & Key Findings

We found our insights through auto-ethnography, interviews with vendors, cultural probes with parents and field observations in El Mercado de San Enrique. Several clear behavioral patterns surfaced. We found that people tend to cook more, and with more intention, when it is for others. This reinforces the idea that cooking is a relational act. Parents described becoming more mindful about their own food habits and learned how to cook with care only after having children. Young adults frequently expressed how they were insecure about their skills in the kitchen and that they struggled with ingredient selection. Many, including ourselves, often opted for the convenience of supermarkets.

We identified significant systemic barriers: generational knowledge is not being passed down, supermarkets dominate daily routines by offering speed and anonymity, and economic and time constraints reduce the capacity to engage with fresh, local food. Additionally, there is a cultural disconnection from cooking that is intensified by digital-age habits that prioritize efficiency over building skills.

Another insight that shaped our understanding of the system was the cycle of buying, cooking, and eating, which we began to see as a loop that constantly reinforces itself.



We described this as "La pescadilla que se muerde la cola" or the fish that eats its own tail. Essentially, if you do not know how to cook, you will not know what to buy. If you do not know how to buy, you will not be able to cook well nor eat well.



Futures & Interventions

Inputs

Our project builds on the people, markets, digital platforms, and community relationships in Tetuán. Human assets include market vendors who provide expertise on freshness, seasonality, and preparation, local families who contribute insights into daily cooking routines and younger adults who represent a key audience for strengthening food literacy. Material resources include traditional markets, food stalls, and seasonal produce.



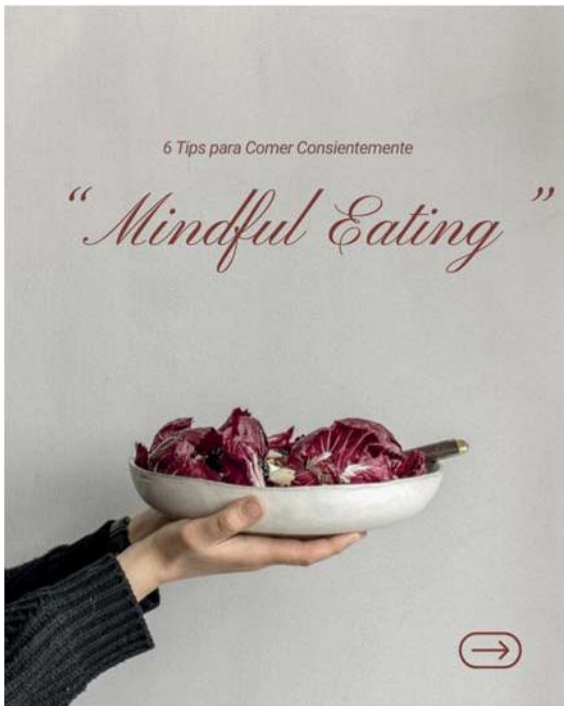
Manuel, vendor at Mercado de San Enrique

Digitally, we leverage existing online communities and Instagram as both a way to reach out to people and as a testing environment. Through this, we can build on the trust developed with vendors in El Mercado de San Enrique and the willingness to share stories, tips and recipes. Actors such as neighborhood associations and community accounts such as @mercadosdemadrid and @madridsecreto can increase visibility and validate prototypes. Together, these inputs create a grounded ecosystem for co-creating and circulating local food knowledge.

Activities

Our primary intervention is Sabor y Barrio, a digital archive and a platform for communication, which documents market knowledge and community stories. The content was chosen based on the insight we gathered through interviews with vendors, auto-ethnographic observations of our own cooking habits, and conversations with parents and young adults. These insights guide the categories of content such as freshness tips, seasonal produce guidance, simple recipes and stories from the neighborhood.

We prototype this content through posting on Instagram, testing the tone, format and relevance. Using A/B testing in Tetuán and checking Instagram analytics, we evaluate which types of content generate engagement, curiosity and an eagerness to learn. The process is iterative: insights → content → testing → refinement. This approach allows us to explore how food choices could be influenced by the accessibility of a variety of small pieces of knowledge. Furthermore we can see if residents feel reconnected with their local markets.



A/B testing prototypes exploring tone and visual style

Leverage Points

Our intervention operates through four key leverage points. The first is knowledge transfer. As we have seen, vendors possess expertise that rarely travels beyond the markets. By transforming this information into digital and physical content (tips, posters, stickers), we hope to shift how knowledge circulates through the neighborhood.

We also address social norms. We found that cooking is often perceived as a burden or trámite, especially for younger adults with limited time and or confidence. Through sharing stories, humor and even embarrassing cooking experiences, we can challenge the idea that cooking must be difficult, expensive or time-consuming.

A third leverage point is skills and capabilities. Many young people avoid fresh ingredients because they lack basic knowledge. Simple how-to content, seasonal guides, and step-by-step explanations can help build confidence and reduce the barriers to entering market culture.



A third leverage point is skills and capabilities. Many young people avoid fresh ingredients because they lack basic knowledge. Simple how-to content, seasonal guides, and step-by-step explanations can help build confidence and reduce the barriers to entering market culture.

Finally, we have the potential to bridge the gap between generations. Older generations have a lot of culinary knowledge that younger generations may want but cannot easily access. Co-created content with vendors, parents and students can help rebuild relationships, making the market a space to learn, connect and reconnect with one's identity. Together, these leverage points aim to shift cultural narratives around food being a burden and restore the markets as community hubs.

RECETAS DE TEMPORADA

Berenjena



*



TEMPURA DE BERENJENA



1. CORTA LA BERENJENA EN BASTONES

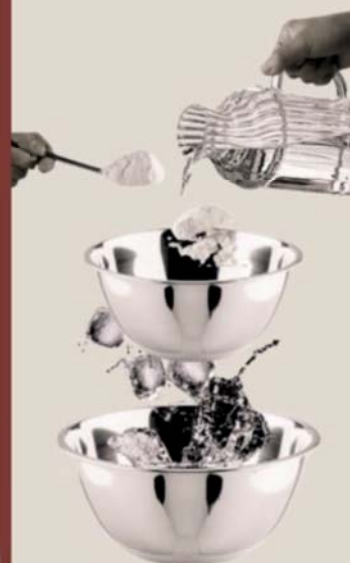
2. DEJALA REMOJAR EN AGUA CON SAL PARA SACAR LA AMARGURA

4. CUBRE LOS BASTONES EN LA MASA

5. SACUDE EL EXCESO Y A FREIR

*

3. PREPARAR LA MASA



1. Coloca en un bol grande agua fría y hielo
2. Con un bol más pequeño, añade 5 cucharadas de harina preparada para tempura
3. Añade agua gradualmente y mezcla. (NO GRUMOS)



Sabor y barrio

Consolidation

Outputs

Our intervention is a series of tangible outputs that make local food knowledge visible, accessible and engaging. The central output is our digital archive Sabor y Barrio, which includes Instagram content such as market tips, seasonal product guides, vendor and resident stories, simple recipes, and mindful eating prompts. These pieces allow us to test tone, clarity and relevance, while opening a channel between markets and younger residents.

We created prototypes that can be digital or physical touchpoints within the market context. For example, posts containing mindful eating prompts, seasonal produce, or recipes can be used as posters, stickers, or labels that communicate freshness tips, seasonal highlights, and vendor expertise. These prototypes help us examine how knowledge can be shared directly at the point of purchase.

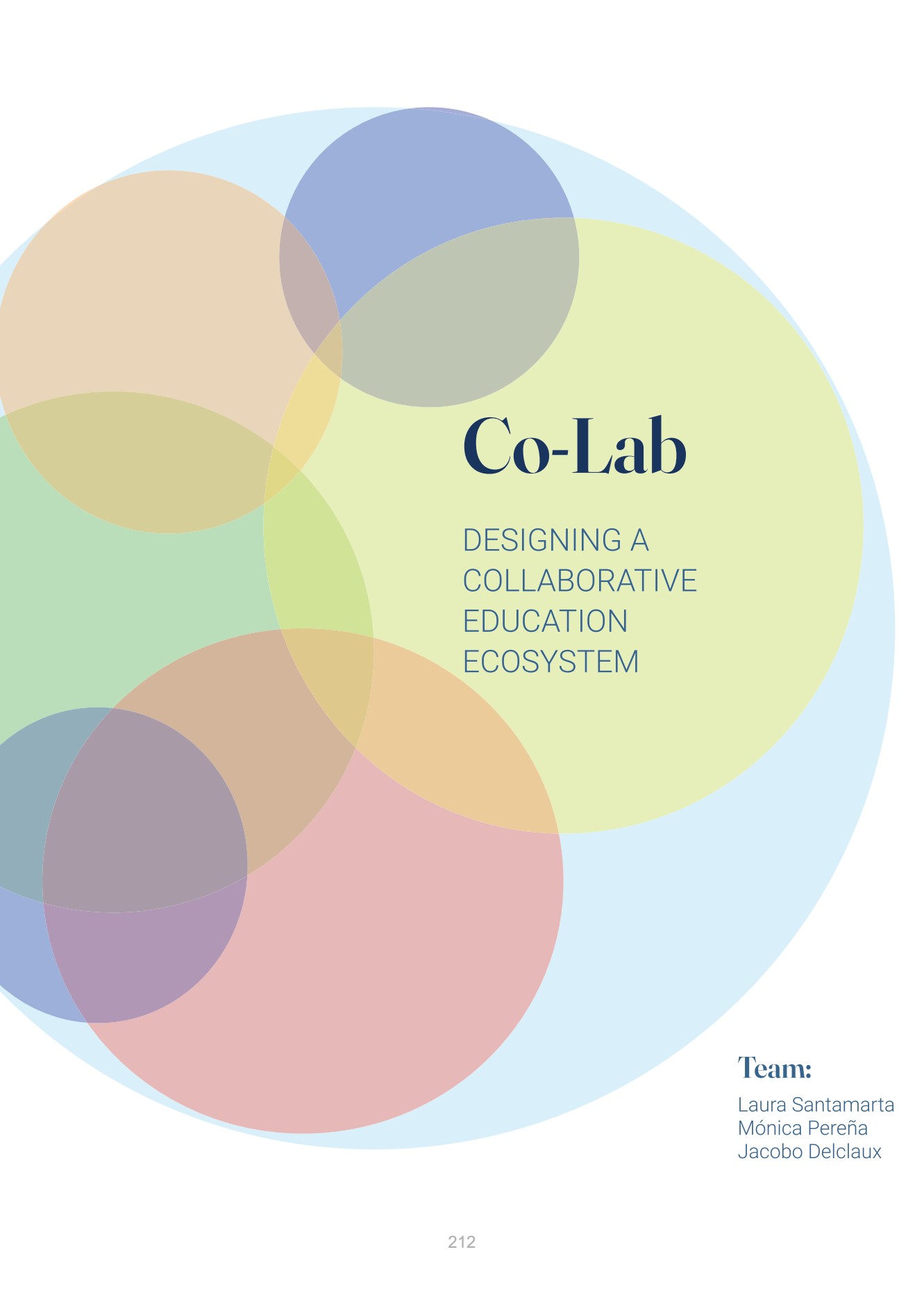
Additional outputs include an illustrated Buying → Cooking → Eating model that visualizes everyday food routines and collaborations with aligned community accounts that help extend visibility.

Together, these outputs form a communication system that supports both physical and digital engagement and this enables residents to learn their markets in simple, informal ways.



Outcomes

Our activities are already generating early shifts in awareness, behavior, and relationships. Vendors have expressed joy, pride and a willingness to share their expertise. This reveals that visibility can be renewed within the community if we continue working with the markets. Young adults engaging with our content are beginning to recognize that cooking is a learnable skill rather than an intimidating burden. This reflects our insights from our auto-ethnographic studies.



Co-Lab

DESIGNING A
COLLABORATIVE
EDUCATION
ECOSYSTEM

Team:

Laura Santamarta
Mónica Pereña
Jacobo Delclaux

Abstract

This project addresses a systemic gap in higher education: the lack of visibility and shared understanding of the relational and emotional dynamics that shape learning within the classroom ecosystem. Traditional educational structures prioritize content delivery and evaluation, but overlook how dialogue, belonging, and collaboration influence engagement, motivation, and agency. These relational dynamics remain invisible, causing communication gaps and mismatched perceptions between students and professors.

The issue is systemic because it emerges from entrenched power structures, rigid pedagogical routines, and institutional cultures that normalize one-directional teaching and minimize emotional presence. These conditions produce persistent feedback loops where teachers lack real-time insight into student experience, students feel unheard, and the relational fabric of the class weakens over time.

Our intention is to shift this system toward shared reflection, relational awareness, and co-created learning environments. We propose a participatory tool that collects perceptions from both students and professors, visualizes the evolution of three relational axes—Dialogue & Power, Emotion & Belonging, and Autonomy & Collaboration—and reveals transitions and perception gaps. By making relational dynamics visible, the tool supports behavioral, emotional, and structural transformations, enabling classrooms to function as collaborative, caring, and interdependent ecosystems.

Foundations

SDG Relevance

This project directly advances SDG 4: Quality Education, specifically the targets related to inclusive learning environments, participatory pedagogies, and learner well-being. While SDG 4 is often interpreted through access, curriculum, or assessment, our research highlights a localized gap within the university context: the relational quality of the classroom. The emotional climate, the distribution of voice, and the degree of shared agency significantly shape students' ability to learn, participate, and feel included—yet these dimensions remain unmeasured and unnoticed in conventional educational systems.

Our intervention strengthens Target 4.7 by fostering learning environments grounded in dialogue, empathy, and collaboration—competencies essential for sustainable and just societies. It supports Target 4.5 by addressing inequities in participation and voice, ensuring that quieter or marginalized students can be recognized and heard. It advances Target 4.a by providing a relational monitoring system that helps educators cultivate safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning settings. Finally, it contributes to Target 4.1 and 4.4 by improving student engagement, emotional safety, and motivation—factors proven to enhance both learning outcomes and skill development.

By making relational dynamics visible and actionable, our tool reimagines SDG 4 at the micro-level, showing that quality education begins with the quality of relationships inside the classroom.



Context Of Research

Our research took place within the ecosystem of undergraduate classrooms at IE University, a context shaped by diverse student backgrounds, studio-based learning, and fast-paced academic routines. This environment revealed a complex interplay between pedagogical structures, interpersonal dynamics, and emotional climates. The system includes multiple actors—students, professors, program directors, and institutional norms—whose interactions shape how learning is experienced and enacted.

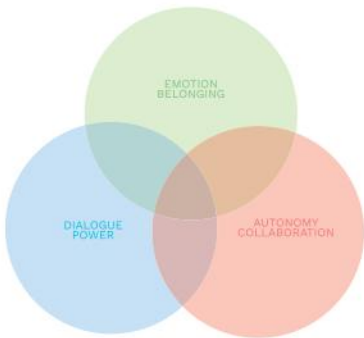
Using situated design and ethnographic methods, we observed classes across different formats (lectures, discussions, working sessions) and documented behaviors, participation patterns, emotional cues, and micro-interactions. Journals, relational maps, and class bingo logs helped us capture both visible behaviors and subtle relational signals. These observations highlighted how classroom dynamics fluctuate session by session, influenced by energy levels, expectations, and the implicit rules governing participation.



Arturo Escobar · bell hooks · Paulo Freire

Our theoretical framework offered a relational lens for understanding the classroom as a dynamic ecosystem. Freire’s critique of “banking” education revealed how power and voice circulate in learning spaces, shaping who contributes and how knowledge is co-created. bell hooks’ engaged pedagogy emphasized emotional presence, care, and belonging as essential foundations for motivation and genuine participation. Escobar’s notion of autonomy as relational interdependence showed how agency emerges through collective interaction rather than individual independence.

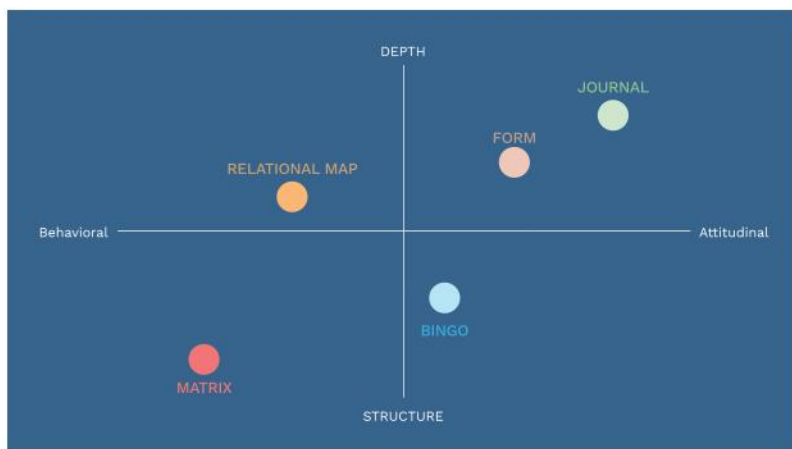
Together, these perspectives helped us see autonomy, emotion, and dialogue as interdependent forces that structure the classroom experience—and clarified the systemic challenge: these relational dynamics deeply shape learning, yet remain largely invisible and unaddressed in current educational practice.



Research

Insights & Key Findings

Our research revealed that the classroom operates as a relational ecosystem shaped by the quality of interactions between students and professors. Through ethnographic observation, journals, bingo logs, and relational mapping—combined with literature from Freire, bell hooks, and Escobar—we identified patterns that consistently influenced the learning experience.



1. Dialogue is unevenly distributed

Following bell hooks, our observations showed that care, reassurance, and emotional presence increased participation, while tension or uncertainty reduced trust. This highlighted the need to track emotional shifts that strongly influence learning.

2. Emotional climate shapes engagement

Drawing on bell hooks, our findings showed that emotional presence—humor, reassurance, acknowledgment—directly increased students' willingness to participate. Conversely, moments of tension, confusion, or lack of clarity quickly reduced trust and engagement. These patterns demonstrated how essential it is to monitor emotional shifts throughout the session.

3. Agency is constrained by structure

Escobar's framing of autonomy as interdependence revealed that students rarely felt they could influence the flow of the class, even in collaborative formats. Agency emerged only in scattered moments, showing a gap between the intention to create co-agency and the structural conditions that limited it.

4. Perception gaps are persistent and invisible

Teachers and students often interpreted the same class in contrasting ways. Professors perceived active engagement where students felt disconnected, or assumed autonomy was present when students felt restricted. Without shared relational indicators, these mismatches remained invisible and unresolved.

5. Relational dynamics fluctuate session by session.

Across weeks, we saw dialogue, emotion, and autonomy rise and fall depending on class type, energy levels, and micro-interactions. Because these dynamics were not systematically tracked, important patterns stayed hidden, and opportunities for early intervention were missed.

Together, these insights revealed a systemic need for a tool that makes relational dynamics visible, measurable, and discussable.

Futures & Intervention

Inputs

CO-LAB builds on the relational, human, and material resources already present in the classroom ecosystem. The intervention activates the participation of both students and professors, who contribute quick relational reflections after each session. It leverages existing digital infrastructures—such as Google Forms or the university’s learning platform—to collect scores and comments without disrupting current routines. The project also draws on theoretical inputs from Freire, bell hooks, and Escobar, translating their relational principles into measurable axes that guide reflection and interpretation.

Operationally, CO-LAB relies on basic analytical tools (spreadsheets, visualization dashboards) to process relational data and generate clear color signals and evolution graphs. The main human inputs are openness, willingness to reflect, and a shared commitment to improving the classroom environment. These inputs turn CO-LAB into a low-tech, high-impact micro-infrastructure capable of revealing and strengthening relational dynamics in everyday academic life.

Activities

CO-LAB unfolds through a sequence of lightweight, repeatable activities embedded into everyday classroom routines. After each class, students and professors submit a quick 1–5 relational reflection covering dialogue, emotion, and collaboration. These inputs feed into a simple processing sheet that calculates weighted scores, identifies transitions from previous sessions, and highlights perception gaps. The system then generates a visual dashboard combining color signals and a timeline graph, making relational dynamics easy to interpret at a glance.

These visualizations are used to prompt short moments of individual or collective reflection—micro-interventions where teachers may adjust facilitation strategies or students may express emerging needs. Periodically, the group revisits the dashboard together to discuss patterns and co-design improvements for the next sessions. Through this iterative cycle, CO-LAB becomes an ongoing practice of awareness, adaptation, and shared authorship of the classroom ecosystem.

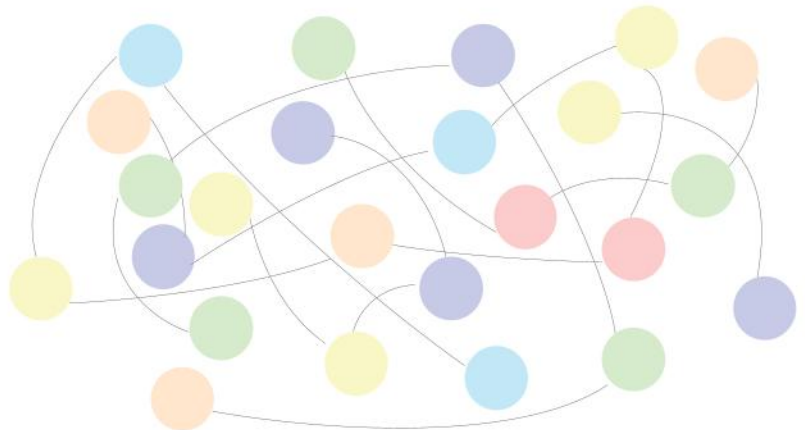
Leverage Points

CO-LAB targets leverage points within the classroom ecosystem where small shifts can produce meaningful relational change. The first leverage point is information flow: by making dialogue, emotion, and autonomy visible through simple metrics and visual signals, CO-LAB alters what teachers and students can perceive about their own interactions. This new visibility interrupts habitual patterns and enables more informed choices.

A second leverage point is feedback loops. Typically, relational dynamics reinforce themselves—silence leads to more silence, tension reduces participation, limited agency suppresses initiative. CO-LAB introduces continuous micro-feedback, allowing the group to adjust before negative loops solidify and amplifying positive loops such as trust and shared agency.

The third leverage point lies in relational norms and narratives. By revealing perception gaps and encouraging co-reflection, CO-LAB challenges the underlying narrative of the professor as the sole evaluator and positions the classroom as a shared ecosystem. This shift in mindset opens the door to structural changes in facilitation, participation, and emotional presence.

Finally, CO-LAB operates at the level of collective autonomy, a deeper leverage point where students and professors begin co-designing the learning experience. This enables long-term cultural transformation toward more collaborative, caring, and equitable educational practices.



Consolidation

Outputs

The primary output of CO-LAB is the relational dashboard, a clear and accessible interface that compiles all classroom reflections into a single view. The dashboard brings together four key elements: Class Classification, which grounds each session in its context; Axes Performance, which displays weighted relational scores with intuitive color signals; Relational Evolution, which tracks how dialogue, emotion, and autonomy shift over time; and Perception Gap, which highlights differences between student and teacher experiences. Paired with a timeline graph, the dashboard offers an immediate understanding of the classroom's relational health.

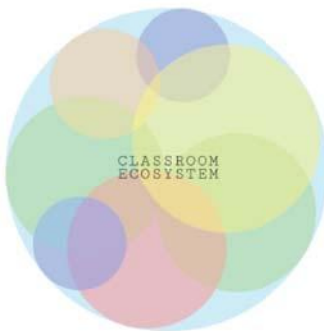
The second major output is the criteria and metrics system. This includes the class-type weighting model, the three axes scales, and the scoring formulas that define how relational data is interpreted. These criteria ensure consistency in evaluation and allow the system to adapt to different teaching formats by emphasizing the most relevant relational dimensions.

Finally, CO-LAB produced a set of visual communication materials—including explanatory posters and diagrams—that make the tool easy to understand and implement. Together, these outputs form a lightweight but powerful micro-infrastructure for relational awareness and continuous co-creation in the classroom.

WHAT IS CO-LAB?

Participatory tool designed that makes TSR (teacher-student relationships) dynamics visible helping understand how dynamics of dialogue, emotion and autonomy, shape the learning experience.

Our proposal aims to tackle the communication and perception gap between students and professors by making relational dynamics of the classroom visible and measurable for easier understanding and smoother intervention.



CO-LAB METHOD

- 1 COLLECT**
classroom experience → data
- 2 VISUALIZE**
shape data into visuals
- 3 ANALYZE**
recognize patterns and gaps
- 4 INTERVENE**
adjust strategies dynamics
- 5 CO-CREATE**
reflect and jointly shape the classroom ecosystem

THEORETICAL

Freire positions dialogue as the foundation of liberatory learning, where teachers and students co-create knowledge rather than reproduce hierarchy



PAULO FREIRE

1 COLLECT

1 CLASS CLASSIFICATION

date
course
type of class | lecture
discussion
presentations
...

*axes have different weights

Identifies the basic context of each session by logging the date, class name, and type. This allows users interpret the relational data accurately, since different formats naturally shape dialogue, emotion, and collaboration in different ways. Simply select the class type that best matches the session to ground all following insights in context.

3 RELATIONAL EVOLUTION

AXIS	CHANGE	DIRECTION
dialogue	+0.3	+
emotion	-0.1	=
autonomy	-0.4	-

Compares today's axis scores to the previous session, marking each with an upward (+), stable (=), or downward (-) transition. Allowing to track how the classroom ecosystem is changing over time, improving, weakening, or stabilizing across dialogue, emotion, and collaboration. Use it to spot meaningful shifts and relational patterns.

2 AXES PERFORMANCE

AXIS	AVERAGE	WEIGHT	SCORE	SIGNAL
dialogue	3.8	40%	1.52	
emotion	4.1	30%	1.23	
autonomy	3.2	30%	0.96	
total			3.71	

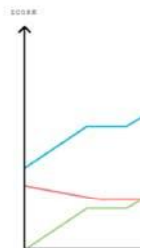
Reflects the final weighted scores (1–5) for the three relational axes. These scores combine student and teacher inputs and are displayed with color signals (green/yellow/red) to indicate relational health. Use this section to quickly understand how the class felt, flowed, and functioned that day.

4 PERCEPTION GAP

AXIS	STUDENT AVG	TEACHER AVG	GAP	SIGNAL
dialogue	2.4	4.3	1.9	
emotion	4.1	4.1	0	
autonomy	3.1	2.8	0.3	

Highlights differences between student and teacher ratings for each axis. Large gaps reveal mismatched experiences of the same class, an important signal for dialogue and reflection. Use this section to identify where expectations, emotions, or interpretations diverge, and to open conversations that can rebalance the relational ecosystem.

2 VISU



The visualization correlates patterns easy to understand across time, all in the classroom ecosystem.

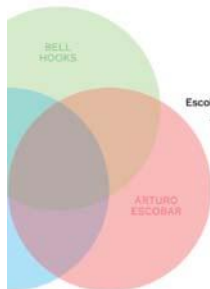
3 4 5

Once we've
insight into
how the
ecosystem
works. The

AL FRAMEWORK



bell hooks expands focuses on engaged pedagogy, emphasizing care, emotional presence, and belonging as essential conditions for meaningful learning.



Escobar reframes autonomy not as individual interdependence but as interdependence, proposing that learning emerges within relational ecosystems shaped collectively.



THREE AXES



Co-lab measures classroom dynamics through three relational axes derived from this theoretical foundation:

Dialogue & Power

captures how voice circulates, whether the class operates through hierarchical transmission or shared inquiry.

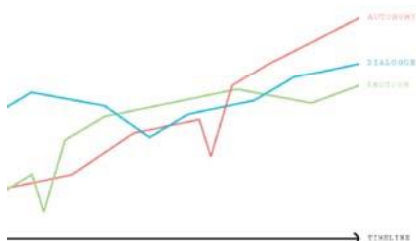
Emotion & Belonging

reflects the emotional climate, revealing how students experience presence and care.

Autonomy & Collaboration

measures the degree of collective agency, showing how interdependence and co-creation shape the learning process.

IALIZE



mbines a timeline graph and a summary table to make relational lerstand at a glance. The graph displays the evolution of the three owing users to track trends, fluctuations, and moments of change system.

1 CLASS CLASSIFICATION

05/11/2025
design studio
working session

2 AXIS PERFORMANCE

3 RELATIONAL EVOLUTION

4 PERCEPTION GAP

DIALOGUE	3.8	+	1.9
EMOTION	4.1	=	0
AUTONOMY	3.2	-	0.3
TOTAL	3.71	=	2.2

Besides it, a color-coded table summarizes each session through three elements: Axes Performance, Relational Evolution, and Perception Gap. Green indicates healthy dynamics, yellow signals areas to watch, and red highlights relational tensions. Together, the graph and table provide a clear, intuitive picture of how the class is functioning and evolving, helping users quickly identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

ANALYZE INTERVENE CO-CREATE

se you've explored the graph and the color signals, take a moment to analyze what they al. Look for patterns, shifts, or mismatches in dialogue, emotion, and autonomy as these ghts help you understand what shaped the class experience. From there, you can rene: adjust an activity, open space for new voices, check in emotionally, or redesign / collaboration happens. This tool isn't here to prescribe solutions but to support your reness. Share what you see with others, talk about what it means, and decide together / you want the next class to feel. This is your space now, play with it, bend it, invent it. re are no rules. Co-create the classroom you want to experience.



CO-LAB CRITERIA METRICS

CLASS TYPE & WEIGHT

Each class format influences relationships differently, so you can assign a weight to each axis depending on what matters most that day. For example, a discussion-based class may prioritize Dialogue, while a workshop may emphasize Autonomy. Weights let you adapt the system to the nature of the session, ensuring the final score reflects what was most relevant for that class.

TYPE	DIALOGUE	AUTONOMY	EMOTION
lecture	55%	20%	25%
discussion	35%	30%	35%
flipped	40%	45%	20%
working	15%	55%	30%

AXES SCORE

Final scores are calculated by combining the average student and teacher ratings with the selected weight for each axis. The formula is straightforward: Final Axis Score = (Average Rating) × (Axis Weight). The three weighted scores then create a clear picture of the session's relational performance. Color signals (green, yellow, red) help you instantly interpret how each axis is doing.

$$\text{AXIS AVERAGE} \\ (A1\% * A1AVG) + (A2\% * A2AVG) + (A3\% * A3AVG) \\ \text{AXIS AVERAGE} * \text{AXIS \%}$$

$$\text{AXIS WEIGHT} \\ \geq 4 = \text{Healthy Score} \\ 3.0 - 3.9 = \text{Watch Area} \\ \leq 2.9 = \text{Needs Attention}$$

AXES
SCORE

AXES SCALE CRITERIA

1 DIALOGUE & POWER

SCALE	DESCRIPTOR	INDICATORS
1 - BANKING MODE	Communication is hierarchical; knowledge transmitted downwards.	Teacher dominates discourse; little questioning; passive listening.
2 - EMERGING DIALOGUE	Teacher encourages some participation but remains primary knower.	Occasional student input; still teacher-led.
3 - RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE	Students' voices appear there is some shared knowledge.	Dialogue alternates; teacher listens, meaning discussed.
4 - CO-LEARNING	Teacher and students think together; dialogue shapes content and direction.	Student ideas shift; discussion joins problem posing.
5 - TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUE	Full relational approach; shared transmission of knowledge and opinion.	Students initiate inquiry; power is redistributed; community learning.

2 AUTONOMY & COLLABORATION

SCALE	DESCRIPTOR	INDICATORS
1 - STRUCTURED DEPENDENCE	Learning predetermined; students cannot influence direction.	Teacher designs everything.
2 - GUIDED CONTRIBUTION	Students participate but do not shape the process.	Some input; little co-creation.
3 - RELATIONAL PARTICIPATION	Interdependence becomes visible; students shape some dynamics.	Shared responsibility; peer support; teacher adapts.
4 - SHARED CO-CREATION	Teacher and students share learning as a relational system.	Fluid roles; co-design moments; adaptive flow.
5 - COLLECTIVE AUTONOMY	Classroom is a relational ecosystem where learning is equally designed.	Student-led initiatives; community agency; co-governance.

3 EMOTION & BELONGING

SCALE	DESCRIPTOR	INDICATORS
1 - DISEMBODED CLASSROOM	Emotions suppressed; emotion or disconnection dominates.	Students withdrawn; low trust; high atmosphere.
2 - PARTIAL SAFETY	Some warmth, but vulnerability and care is limited.	Selective comfort; limited sharing.
3 - RESPECTFUL PRESENCE	Basic relational needs; emotions acknowledged but not central to learning.	Polite warmth; emerging trust; occasional humor.
4 - CARING COMMUNITY	Students feel seen, heard, and supported; emotional presence shapes learning.	Laughter, empathy; shared reflection; strong inclusion.
5 - ENGAGED PEDAGOGY	Relational space where emotions, bodies, and minds co-create learning.	High trust; collective vulnerability; belonging; shared engagement.

Outcomes

The implementation of CO-LAB generated meaningful short- and mid-term shifts in how classroom relationships were perceived, discussed, and acted upon. By visualizing dialogue, emotion, and autonomy session by session, CO-LAB helped students and professors develop a shared awareness of the relational ecosystem shaping their learning experience. This visibility allowed both groups to recognize imbalances—such as uneven participation or emotional tension—and respond with small but intentional adjustments in facilitation, communication, and collaboration.

In several cases, students expressed feeling more heard, involved, and emotionally supported, while professors gained clearer insight into how their actions influenced classroom climate. The dashboard's perception gap feature also encouraged more open conversations about expectations and experiences, reducing misunderstandings.

Overall, CO-LAB fostered more reflective, relationally attuned classroom practices, strengthening trust, motivation, and collective agency within the learning environment.

Impact

In the long term, CO-LAB has the potential to shift the culture of university classrooms by placing relational awareness at the center of educational quality. By making dialogue, emotional climate, and collective agency visible and discussable, the tool supports a move from hierarchical, content-driven instruction toward collaborative, caring, and co-created learning environments. Over time, this can normalize shared reflection, reduce perception gaps, and strengthen students' emotional well-being and engagement.

At a structural level, CO-LAB introduces relational metrics that institutions could adopt alongside conventional forms of evaluation. Its scalability becomes especially powerful when integrated directly into Blackboard, the digital platform used at IE University. Embedding the form, dashboard access, and class-by-class relational summaries within Blackboard would streamline participation, embed relational reflection into existing routines, and make the system widely accessible across courses and programs.

Culturally, CO-LAB fosters a paradigm shift where professors and students see themselves not as separate roles but as co-authors of the learning ecosystem. If expanded across the university, it could inform faculty development, course design, and institutional feedback processes—demonstrating that quality education begins with the quality of relationships and that these relationships can be intentionally cultivated through simple, continuous, and participatory practices.

Impact Metrics

To evaluate the evolution and effectiveness of CO-LAB, we propose a set of relational impact metrics that combine quantitative indicators with qualitative insights:

1. **Dialogue Balance Score**
Measures improvement in the distribution of voice across sessions. An increase indicates more equitable participation and reduced hierarchical dynamics.
2. **Emotional Climate Index**
Tracks changes in emotional safety, belonging, and overall class mood. Higher stability or growth reflects healthier relational environments.
3. **Collective Agency Score**
Observes the emergence of student-led initiatives and shared decision-making. Rising scores show stronger interdependence and collaborative autonomy.
4. **Perception Gap Reduction**
Compares teacher and student ratings over time. Smaller gaps reveal improved mutual understanding and alignment.
5. **Engagement Continuity**
Measures consistency in form submissions and participation in reflection moments. Sustained involvement signals cultural adoption of relational practices.

Together, these metrics help monitor CO-LAB's relational impact and guide ongoing refinement of the tool.

The background of the page features a low-angle shot of a modern, dark glass skyscraper with the letters 'ie' visible near the top. In the foreground, a young person with brown hair and bangs is smiling, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white t-shirt and carrying a dark backpack. Lush green trees are visible between the person and the building.

IMMIGRATION IN MADRID

Visa issues for university student

Obtaining a work visa after graduating in Madrid for students with South American passports is complex, bureaucratic, and inaccessible.

Team:

Ella Beeckmans
Julia Cronenbold
Marina Mizrahi
Philippine Jacquet

Abstract

With 16% of Spain's 1.26 million immigrants living in Madrid, and 32,000 being undergraduate students in 2022, many from Latin America, the decision to remain in Madrid comes with considerable pressure. At IE University alone, 44% of non-Spanish graduates in 2024 chose to stay in Spain to work, confronting the complex process of obtaining a work visa. This reflects a systemically disadvantaged group facing barriers shaped by legal, economic, cultural and institutional forces. These overlapping structures reinforce inefficiencies in the immigration process, generating stress, uncertainty, and exclusion, and signalling the need for coordinated intervention.

This project seeks to address two systemic challenges. The first is structural, focused on simplifying and clarifying the visa process and its communication. The second is relational, aimed at strengthening coordination between key actors, particularly IE University and its international students, to reduce the burden of navigating the system alone.

The systemic gap can be expressed through the following problem statement: obtaining a work visa after graduating in Madrid for students with South American passports is complex, bureaucratic, and inaccessible. The overarching goal is to shift from a fragmented process to one that is transparent and supportive for non-EU graduates hoping to remain in Madrid. Strengthening these partnerships is systematically important because the immigration process is spread across actors who currently operate with limited coordination.



Foundations

SDG Relevance

“It was really concerning and had me really anxious to think the job market was tough enough and the additional limitation of needing a visa which made it so much harder.”

This project is primarily centered on SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals, localized in the Madrid context to highlight the need for stronger coordination between universities, employers and public institutions.

Targets 17.G, 17.H and 17.I are especially relevant, as the challenge of obtaining a work visa exposes gaps in multi-stakeholder collaboration and effectiveness, limited access to reliable information, and insufficient mechanisms to share knowledge and support international graduates.

Strengthening these partnerships is systematically important because the immigration process is spread across actors who currently operate with limited coordination.



The issue also relates to SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 16: Peace, justice, and Strong Institutions. Localizing these SDGs in Madrid means acknowledging that immigration policies significantly shape and often restrict students' economic opportunities in the labour market. Making visa pathways clearer and more accessible directly supports fair access to employment for international students. The problem also reveals the need for more transparent, consistent, and efficient institutional procedures. Improving coherence in processes and communication can strengthen institutional trust and reduce systemic exclusion.

These SDGs are interdependent: stronger partnerships (SDG 17) enable more transparent institutions (SDG 16) and more equitable access to decent work (SDG 8), reinforcing the systemic relevance of this project.

Context Of Research

The research looks at non-EU students in Madrid who want to stay and work after graduation. Spain hosted about 183,000 foreign university students in 2023, and about 16% were in Madrid. With 44% of these students coming from Latin America, they became the focus of the conducted research.

Key public actors are the Ministry of Inclusion (Extranjería) and the Comunidad de Madrid (regarding NIE/TIE, appointments, requirements). Other key actors exist within educational institutions, including IE Student Services and Talent & Careers. Finally, lawyers are key actors, acting as external support systems. Core infrastructures within the system are cita previa booking, online portals, blogs, and private platforms. Information is spread across different sites, official or not, updates are uneven, and students often rely on peers or forums to fill gaps, especially under tight deadlines.

The determined constraints included unclear step-by-step paths on official sites, scarce appointments, legalistic language, and financial barriers. Inside IE, it was also hard to navigate: the line between Student Services and Talent & Careers is blurry. They draw from the same information pool, but are in charge of different events and responsibilities, which makes it unclear who does what at key moments, and creates confusion for students.

Overall, the starting point of the research began with general international students in Spain. Through desk research, interviews and key decision points, it was narrowed down to non-EU, IE students in their last year. The aim is to work with Student Services and Talent & Careers at IE, to improve the existing system flows, and maximize their impact.

We position design as a strategic and empathetic tool to navigate complex systems, grounded in reflexivity and collaboration.



Research



Sofia Barba Montalvo
Data Driven Process Transformation & Excellence | Celonis

Background & career goals:

1. **What is your nationality?**
Bolivia

2. **What degree or field of study did you complete in Spain?**
BBA

3. **Did you plan to stay in Madrid/Spain to work after your studies? Why or why not?**
Yes, I really loved being here and knew I wanted to stay there.

4. **What type of job or sector were you hoping to work in after finishing your studies?**
The business sector, jobs in data

Job Search Experience:

1. **Do you require a visa to work in Spain? If yes, how familiar are you with the visa process (describe it)?**
Yes, I did require a visa to work in Spain. I was familiar with the process and it was basically you had to, well you had more than two options, but at that time I thought I had two options. First one was getting an internship agreement and signing it through my university to help myself 6 months of time but after that I would have to get a sponsorship and transition to a working visa. For that, it depends on if the company can sponsor you or not. In case you don't get the traditional working visa there are other options that are not necessarily reliant on a working visa. Getting a permit to look for a job which I think gave you up to a year to get a job but in this time you cannot engage in any activities that give you income. You could also sign up to an online course to extend your student visa until to give you time to find a job as well.

2. **How easy or difficult was it to find job opportunities in Madrid? Describe the job search process.**
Job opportunities were easy to find in the sense that there were a lot of openings however when it came to the actual response rate it was really hard because the second you put you need a visa sponsorship you are immediately filtered out and didn't even get to pass the first stage where not even a computer look at your CV or a recruiter either. So the easiest way to find job opportunities was through career events or company events in which I could directly speak to whoever was recruiting so they could see my profile and that I require a visa but if you are a strong candidate, they could consider it. But in terms of applying through direct websites and career portals it was very limited for international students because you have to put that you require a visa sponsorship.

3. **Which platforms, networks, or resources did you use to look for jobs (e.g., LinkedIn, university career services, referrals)?**
LinkedIn, B career portal, career platforms, my network, looked at separate companies I was interested in like McKinsey and applied directly through their website. Went to career fairs hosted by B or those outside of B that are hosted by companies. I also researched companies I had friends or family working in to try and get a referral.

Reflection:

1. **What worries do you have concerning finding a job after uni?**
I was really worried when finding a job especially because I wanted to stay in Spain and I felt it was not even a matter of whether I had the qualifications to take the job but more so as taking whatever to extend my stay here and then find something I like better. It was really concerning and had me really anxious to think the job market was tough enough and the additional limitation of needing a visa which made it so much harder.

Support & resources:

1. **Did your university provide support for transitioning into the job market?**
In my job search I received really good support from my job advisor, director, the helped sending career events and different companies I could check out based on my profile.

2. **Did you rely on immigrant networks, community groups, or professional associations to find work?**
I consulted with an immigrant lawyer what my different options were. As I needed a visa to stay in Spain, she explained to me what were the different available visas in case I didn't get a "normal" work visa in time.

3. **Did you ever use an immigration lawyer or consultancy for help with work permits?**
In my process I did not use a personal expertise lawyer. That all of my paperwork in place and not today to be it a company which sponsored my working visa, and in that case, the company's lawyer took care of submitting the paperwork and doing the extra requests on my behalf.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 1) thought the only had 2 options at start of process (internship agreement or sponsorship visa through jobs)
- 2) Other options she found: get permit to look for a job (no income allowed during this time) or online course to extend student visa
- 3) Easy to find job openings but hard to bypass the visa required stage -- relied on career fairs / events (B and non-B) to connect with recruiters, referrals / networking to get past initial application stages
- 4) Worked with an immigration lawyer to get through the process

Qualitative Interviews helped us get valuable insights.

Insights And Key Findings

After graduation, many students feel "invisible" and depend on informal sources to move forward until they get stuck and have to reach out to agents and lawyers. Information feels scattered and inconsistent, students have to jump between many sites to find the right direction, then follow an intensive process under tight deadlines. Therefore, they rely on intermediaries to reduce uncertainty.

Students are proactive, supposedly well guided by official pages and IE resources, yet report a confusing and frustrating path. They seek more human touchpoints, and a more seamless, trustworthy process.

Getting help from intermediaries such as lawyers can speed up the process, but also creates a shadow system that is not accessible or affordable to everyone.

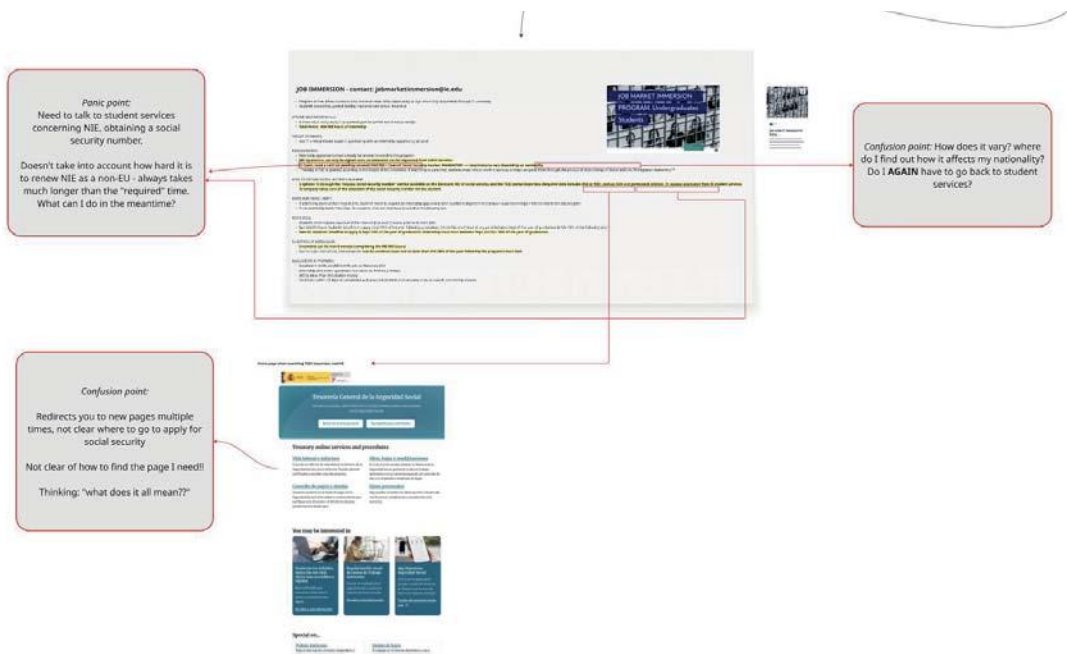
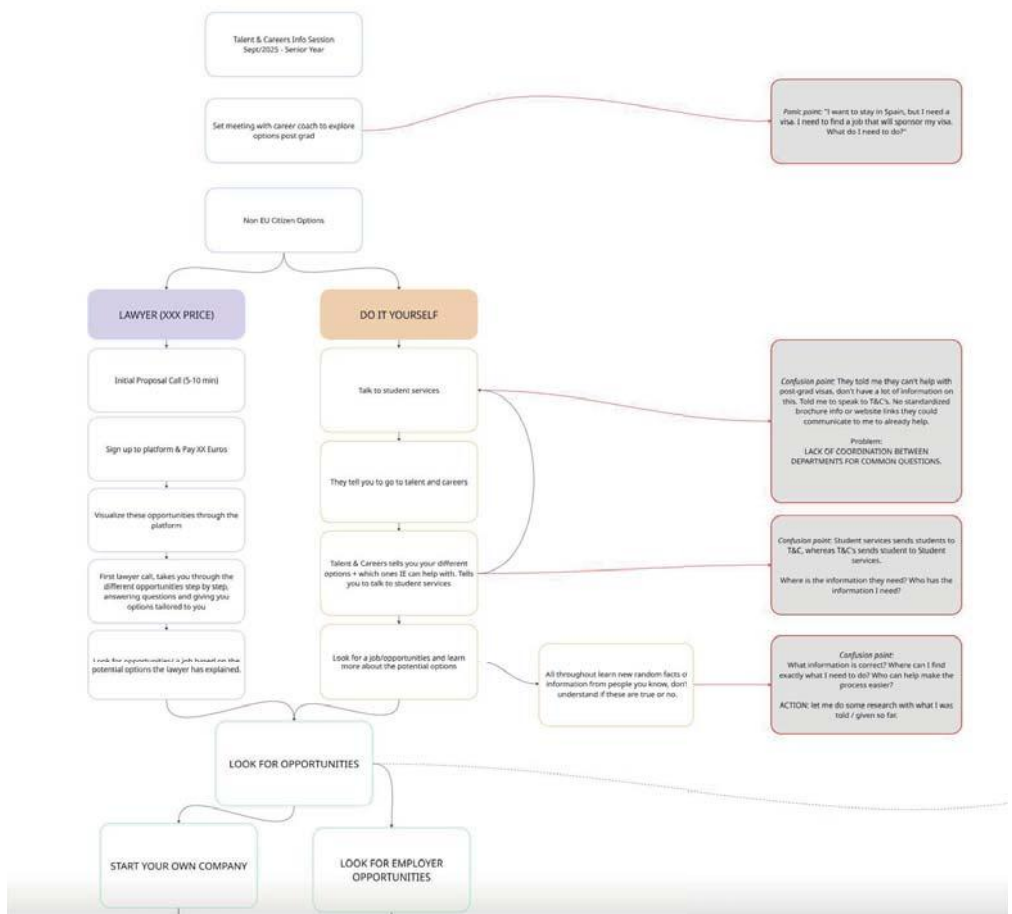
Fragmented information is clearly noticeable across different actors. They use separate portals, paths and vocabularies, creating conflicting signals and confusing instructions for students, leading to inefficiencies and repetitive steps.

The process is a difficult and unclearly defined one, at a critical moment in a student's career path:

NIE's are expiring, and guidance to obtain a work visa is scarce. By relying on intermediaries which concentrate power, it raises costs and widens the inequality gap around accessibility.

Before graduation is the key moment to help students since they are about to switch their status. They trust official directions given by their universities, and can be easily reached out to. Therefore, providing a clear, centralized and personalized guidance with simple checklists, and reminders at decisive moments would prevent mistakes from happening as well as unnecessary panic or extra costs.

Misalignments are perceived in several areas including: graduates have short legal windows that can clash with job offers, university calendars do not match immigration timelines, and appointment capacities peak only after students require them. Constant invisible knowledge asymmetries exist, creating the need for intermediaries to understand the full process, as students cannot.



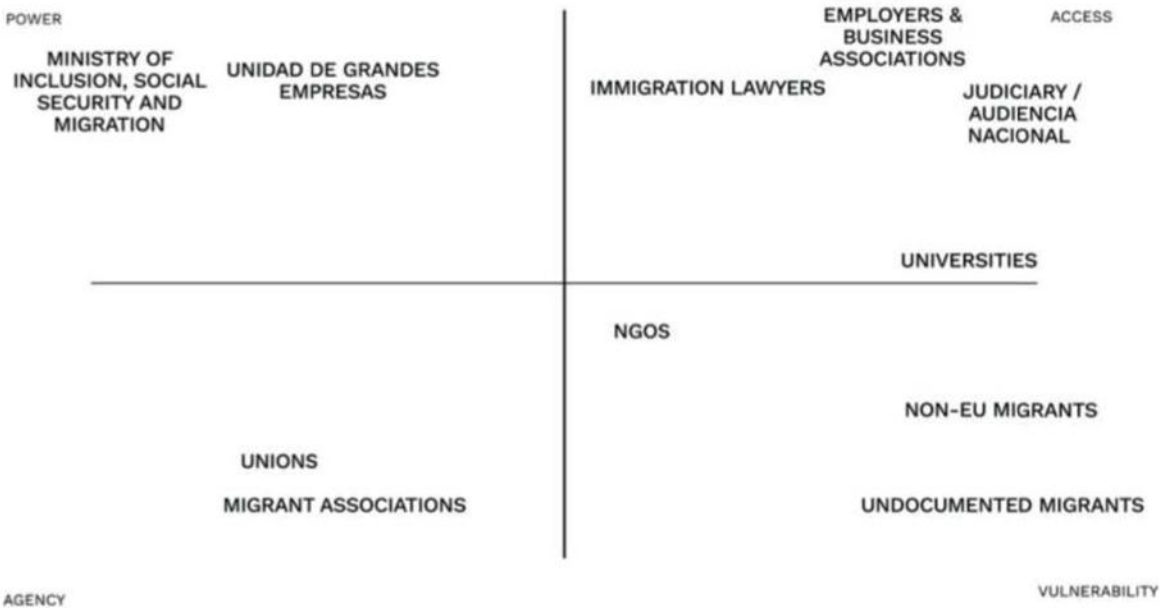
- a. Use the Standard Normal table to find $P(Z > 1.96)$.
- b. Add values from step a and divide by 2.
- c. Take the square root of the result.
- d. "Plug that in back into your" formula to solve for σ .
- e. Add the square of σ to the square of the distance between the two values.
- f. Take the square root.



Futures & Interventions

Inputs

Key collaborations for our intervention include IE Student Services, IE Talent & Careers, and IE students. Strengthening partnerships between these three groups will ensure the intervention is both complete and feasible. We will use Blackboard as our central platform, as this infrastructure is familiar to students and already contains information related to our problem. We will also leverage IE University’s existing partnerships with lawyers to ensure that all guidance is accurate and consistently updated. Our goal is to improve how information is communicated and enhance students’ ability to access it by simplifying navigation. To achieve this, we will optimize and adapt IE’s existing infrastructure and systems, improving its clarity, usability, and overall effectiveness.



Leverage Points

1. One clear database

Starting with a single intake and shared database will reshape the flow of information and access to the right resources. This replaces scattered info with one centralized area to identify who needs help, when, and for what specifically.

3. Clear roles

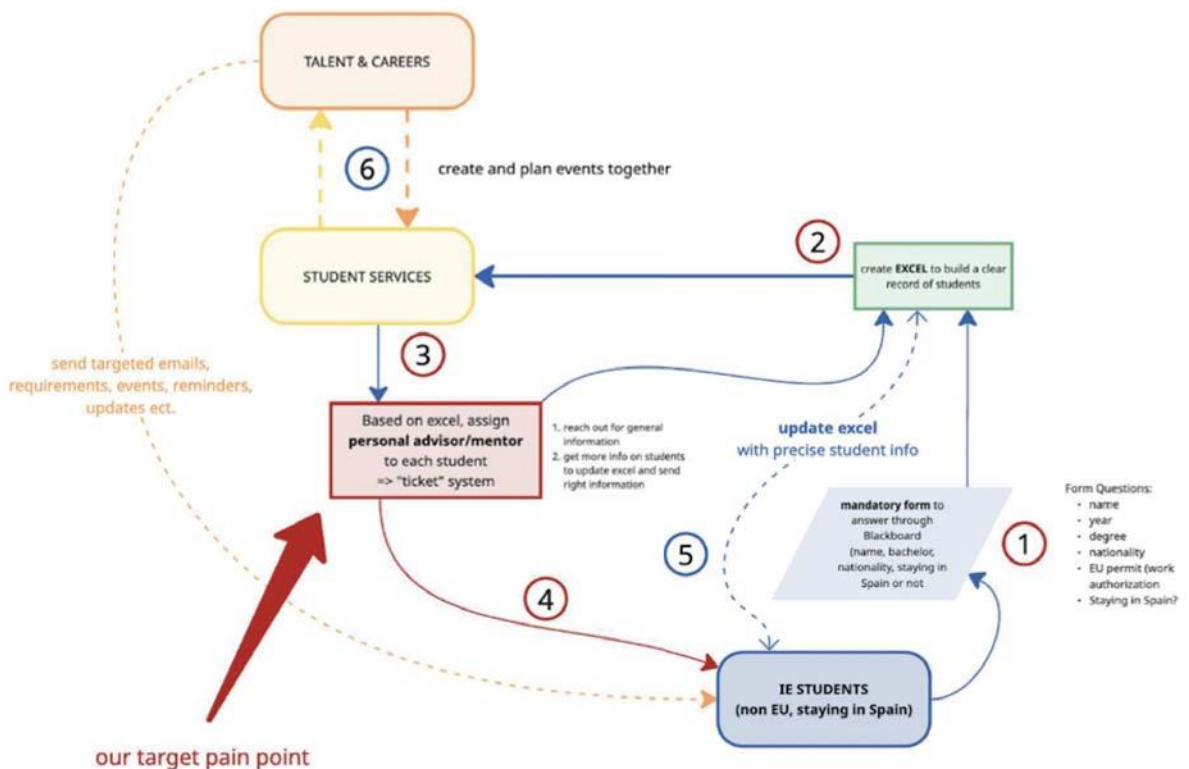
Each team knows who does what (Student Services, Talent & Careers, advisors, lawyers). It reduces duplication, mistakes and prevents last-minute emergencies.

2. Faster feedback

With basic students profiles, personal advising, and an effective process from within IE, this creates a quick loop: spot students => reach out => update content => provide guidance & resources => get feedback, repeat

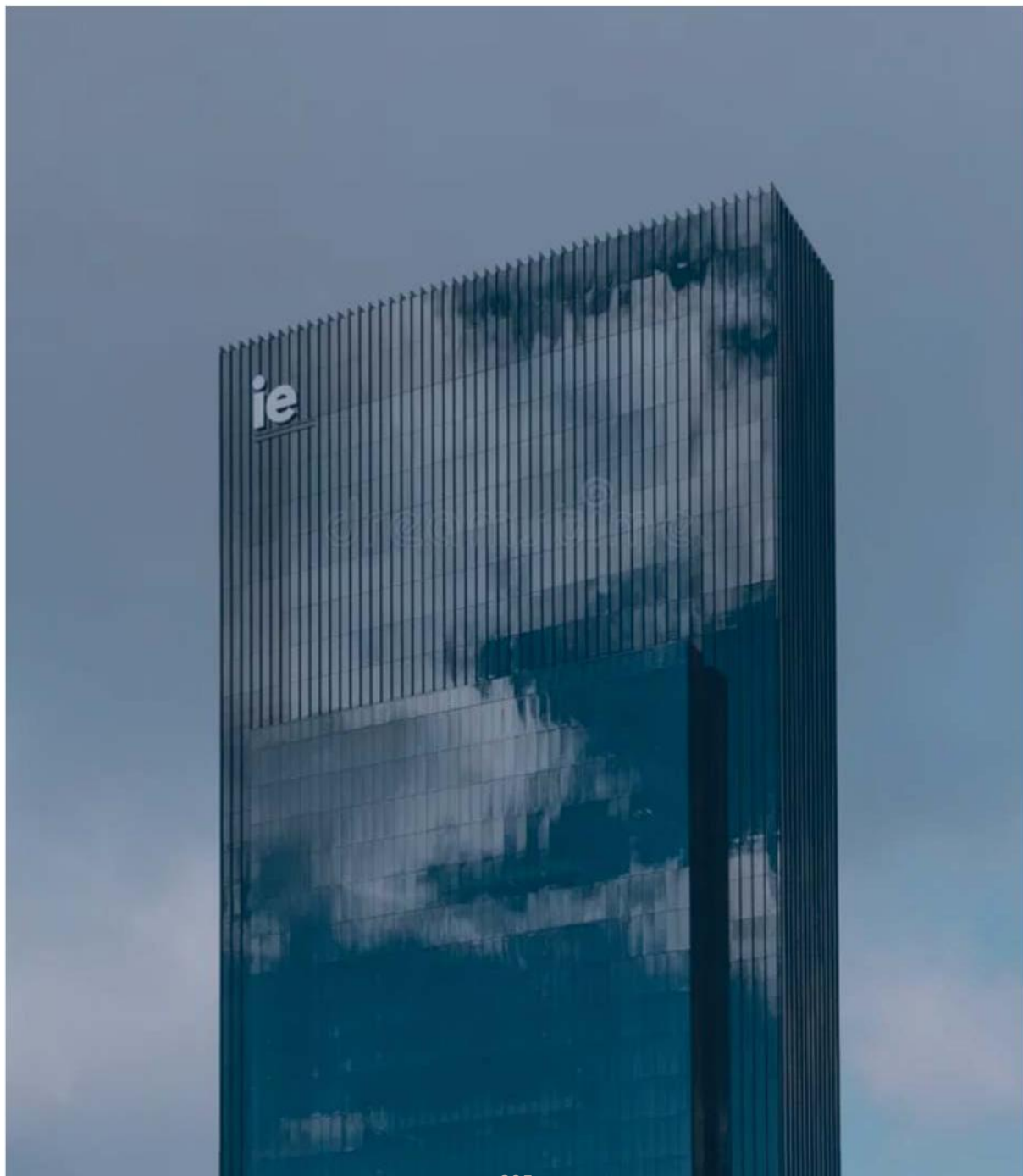
5. Shift the story

Non-EU graduates are perceived as new talents to keep, not just any applicants. This mindset pushes communication to be transparent and supportive, not gatekeeping.



What this changes

The system moves from fragmented and bureaucratic to connected and trustworthy. An up-to-date database unlocks advisor matching, distributes the right documents at the right time, enables quicker responses, and creates clearer internal ownership: therefore more students start their process on time, miss fewer deadlines, and feel guided rather than lost.



Consolidation

Outputs

Working with Talent & Careers, a mandatory Blackboard course with an intake quiz that requests basic information will be implemented (name, program, year, nationality, visa expiry, staying in Spain). This will create a clear database which Student Services will be able to use, to target students in need of advice. They will send personalized emails, sharing adequate documents (types of visas, deadlines, checklists, official links for appointments, IE contacts), events reminders, and an advising option. Students will be able to give feedback and share their satisfaction level to improve this service.

To keep the advising option efficient, each student requesting personal guidance will be assigned an advisor, who will get access to IE resources on this topic. They will be in charge of planning meetings, following up, and sending reminders of events or important deadlines.

There will be an improvement made to the IE Connect mentoring filters (non-EU, undergrad/postgrad) for students to look for peer advice, and ways to reach out.

Overall, the output is about facilitating the flow of information from IE (Student Services, Talent & Careers and co-actors like affiliated lawyers) to students in need of help, and centralizing the information to make it more accessible and easy to follow.



Outcomes

Students will stop jumping between sites and follow one clear path. They will be able to take action earlier, make fewer mistakes, and show up to appointments prepared.

Each student has a single point of contact, which will reduce the rumors and last-minute panic. Student Services and Talent & Careers work off the same data, and know what their responsibilities are to work efficiently together, which means faster outcomes, and clearer roles with lawyers and mentors. Information feels consistent, official, and personalized for each profile. Early signals we expect to notice: more on-time filings, fewer missed deadlines, quicker responses from advisors, and repeatable routines that improve each part of the process.

The outcomes are focused on making the process feel less bureaucratic, more transparent, and supportive.

Impact

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The outcomes are focused on making the process feel less bureaucratic, more transparent, and supportive.

Impact Metrics

To measure the evolution of our intervention, four indicators will be tracked, combining quantitative and qualitative data.

1. Student satisfaction score on intervention metrics (1–5):

Captures perceived clarity, usefulness, support, and trust. It signals whether information flows and user experience are improving or require refinement.

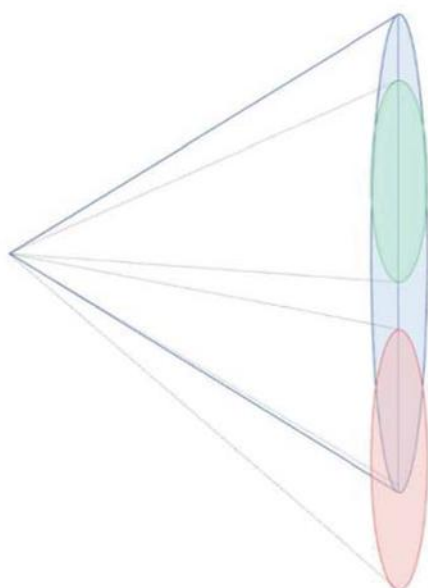
2. Advisor response time:

Reflects the efficiency of the new advising system and its ability to provide smooth, timely, personalized support.

3. Qualitative feedback from short interviews:

Surfaces unforeseen barriers, clarifies the reasons behind satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and highlights emerging issues not visible in numerical indicators.

Together, these indicators reveal whether the intervention is shifting the system toward a clearer, more coordinated, and more supportive process for graduates requiring work visas.



POSSIBLE = 18

- (18) "Employers hire without legal intermediaries" → feasible if processes simplify, but losing compliance support can raise risk for firms/students.

PROBABLE = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 20, 25

- (1–3) Appointment access/visibility from official sources → admin/process tweaks.
- (4–5, 17) Campus guidance & peer mentors → universities/NGOs can do now.
- (7–8) Scale slots in peak months & pre-graduation briefings → operational scheduling + outreach.
- (15–16) Milestone recognition & consolidated, version-controlled info → comms/product work.
- (20) Trusted guidance on channels students already use → content ops, not policy.
- (25) Live status tracking/ETA → basic case-tracking layer; tech + service design.

PREFERABLE (POSSIBLE) = 9, 10, 11, 13, 19, 21, 24

- (9) One application / no repeat filings → process consolidation across offices.
- (10) Core eligibility data carries across visa types → interoperability + regs.
- (11) Universities accountable for transition support → governance/MoUs.
- (13) Consulates as first-line advisors with shared case data → cross-ministry data sharing.
- (19) One end-to-end session to finish the case → "one-stop" service design + staffing.
- (21) Shared verified dataset (gov–uni–employers) → GDPR-compliant data infra + agreements.
- (24) Start work-authorization steps before graduation → regulatory windowing.

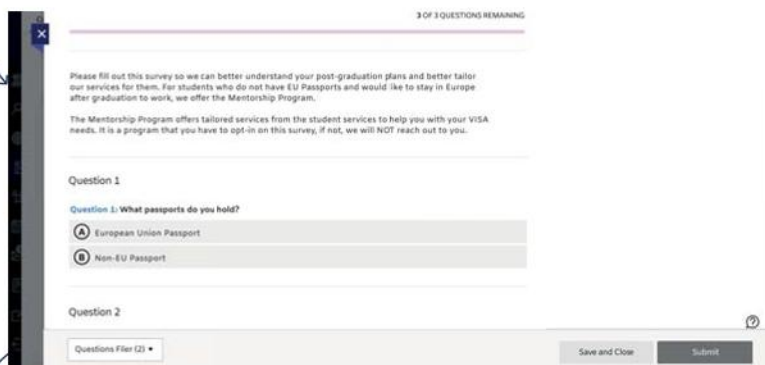
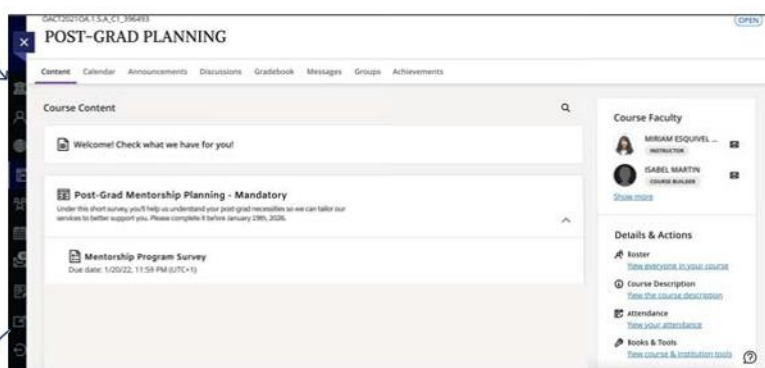
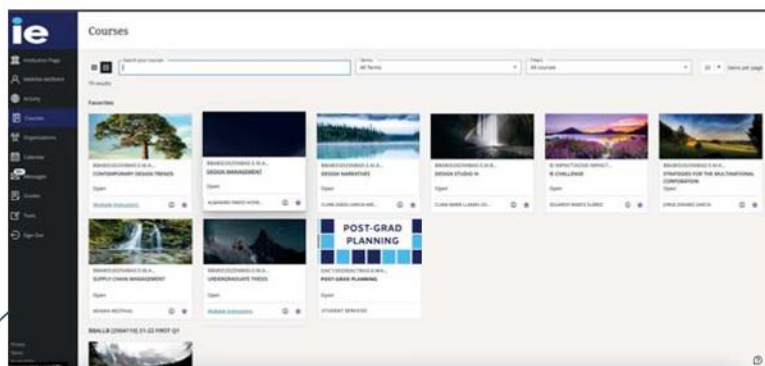
PREFERABLE (NOT POSSIBLE) = 6, 12, 14, 22, 23

- (6) "Remove uncertainty about timelines/outcomes" → full certainty isn't achievable [discretion, verifications; transparency can reduce, not eliminate].
- (12) Home-country authorities primarily coordinate post-study permission in Spain → sovereignty/jurisdiction conflict.
- (14) "No visa required to stay and work" → contradicts current immigration law.
- (22) Automatic conversion from student to work authorization after graduation → would require national legal reform.
- (23) Forcing companies to sponsor (or mandating who pays) → needs legislative change; not available under current framework.

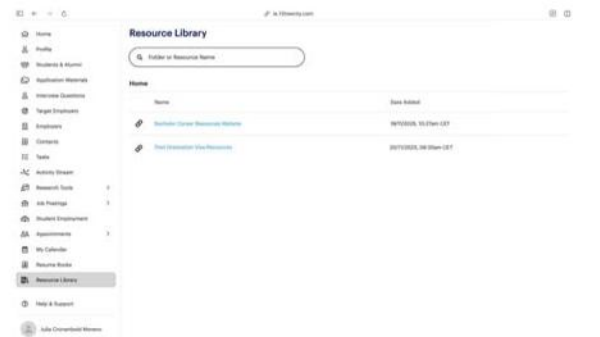
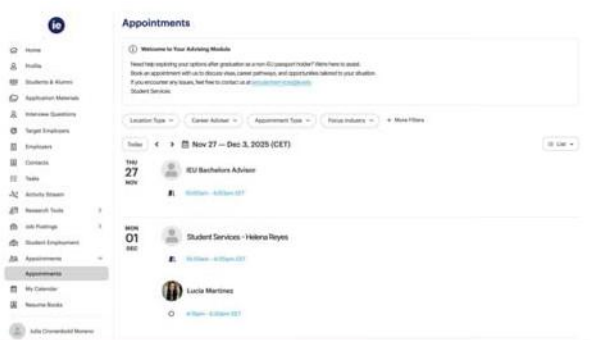
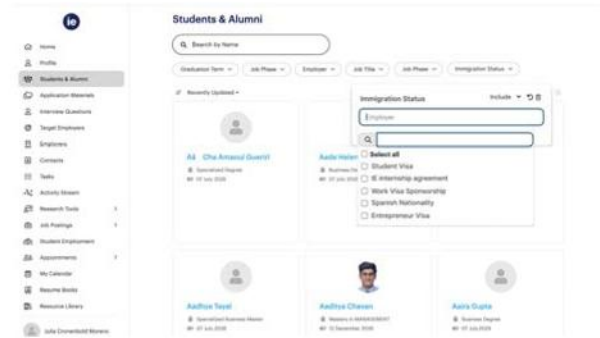
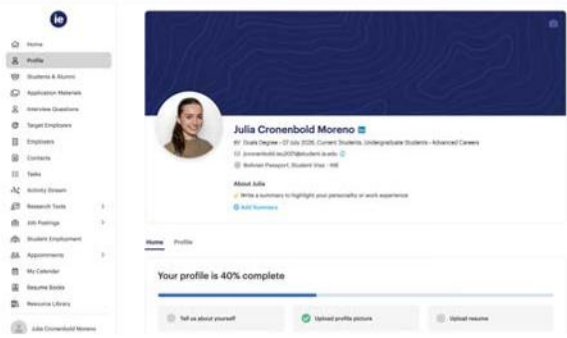
Prototypes

This is the **first phase** of our Post-Grad Mentorship Planning. The students will have a course folder, just like other classes, where they will find a **mandatory** survey that needs to be filled out.

We gather information on students passport/visa status, what are their plans after graduation, and whether they want to opt-in or out of the Mentorship Program.



This **second phase** of the mentorship program will be integrated into the Talents & Careers platform, where students can indicate their nationality, the countries they hope to work in, and track their immigration status. This allows them to connect with students and alumni who share similar backgrounds or visa journeys, making it easier to understand real experiences and next steps. The platform will also include a dedicated section for visa application materials, keeping all required documents in one place with guidance from student services. Students will be able to book one-on-one appointments directly through the platform, ensuring smoother support. Finally, a regularly updated resource library will centralize key visa information, official links, and essential documents.





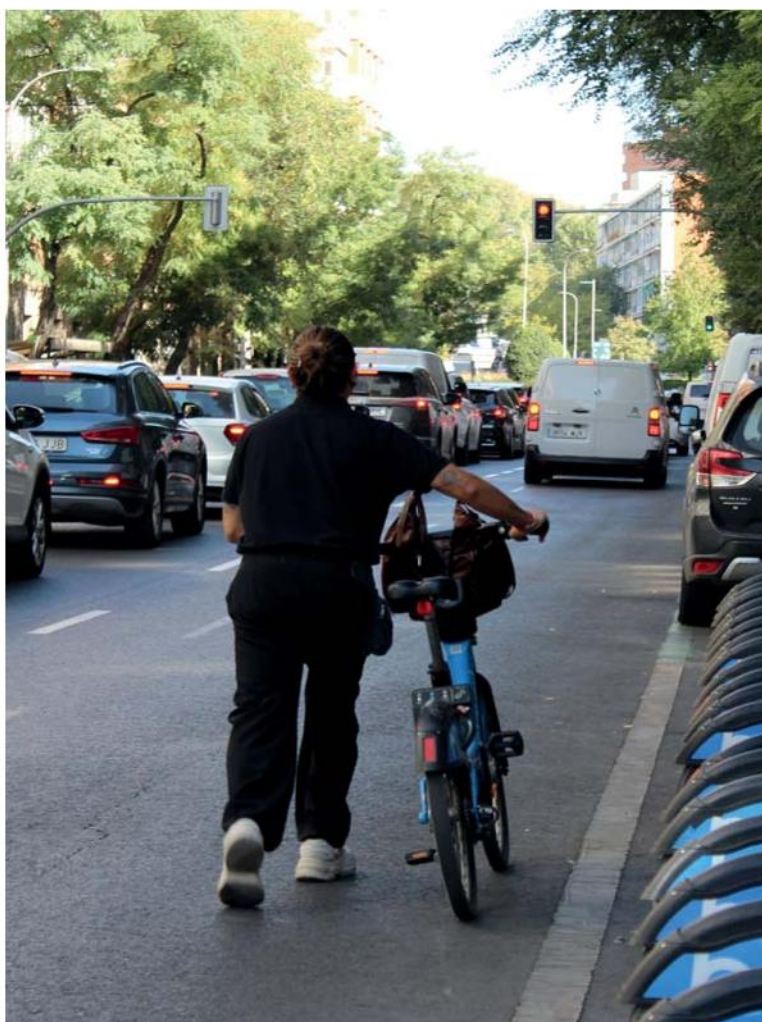
Madrid Sobre Ruedas

STRATEGIC INTERVENTION TO
TRANSFORM FEAR INTO
CONFIDENCE
AND INCREASE CYCLING
ADOPTION IN MADRID.

Team:

1. Ana Sánchez
2. Alejandra Olaguíbel
3. Monica Ortiz
4. Sofía Montojo

Course: Design Studio IV – Strategic Design
Year: 2025 5th Year BBA-BID



Abstract

Our project addresses cycling adoption in Madrid within SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Through ethnography, systems thinking, and behavioural insights, we uncovered a systemic misalignment: objective data shows Madrid is one of the safest European capitals for cyclists, yet citizens report high subjective insecurity. This gap—what we call **FAKE FEAR**—prevents people from considering cycling as a mobility option. Madrid's systemic challenge is behavioural and cultural, not infrastructural.

Despite 200 km of low-speed routes, strong legal protection, and extremely low accident rates, cycling remains emotionally inaccessible for new riders.

Our intervention reframes safety through public communication, QR-based data visibility, and a first-time onboarding flow that offers a free BiciMAD trial and a calm Confidence Route starting in Moncloa.

Cycle Moncloa turns perception into possibility, guiding hesitant riders from awareness to action and supporting Madrid's long-term mobility transition.

Foundations

SDG 11 Relevance

Madrid's mobility system sits at the intersection of SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Urban congestion, pollution, and the demand for accessible alternatives make sustainable mobility an urgent priority. Cycling is, in theory, one of the simplest and most impactful modes to shift everyday movement patterns.

Yet in Madrid, cycling remains relatively rare compared to other major European cities. The expectation is that infrastructure and safety are the main obstacles, and public discourse often reinforces the idea that the city is "not ready" for bikes.

From an SDG perspective, this represents a crucial challenge: a sustainable mode exists, but adoption remains low.

SDG 11 asks us to create cities that support clean, inclusive, and safe mobility. In our early framing, it seemed obvious that Madrid lacked the necessary conditions for cycling to contribute meaningfully to this goal.

But as we moved deeper into the research, contradictions began to appear. The more we looked at the system, the more unclear the problem became. Cycling seemed both possible and impossible at the same time — present in the city, yet culturally marginal.

Understanding how this contradiction operates became foundational to our project.

Before addressing SDG 11 through solutions, we first had to understand why cycling feels inaccessible, and what sits beneath that perception.



Madrid is a city where mobility is shaped by density, strong public transport, and car-dominated rhythms. Cycling exists, but it is not yet part of the everyday mental model of movement. For many residents, the bicycle remains an exception rather than an option.

During our early fieldwork, this contradiction became visible everywhere. BiciMAD stations were full, yet the streets around them showed very few bikes in circulation. People walked, drove, or took the metro—even for distances perfectly suitable for cycling. The system was there; the behaviour wasn't.

This revealed something fundamental: access alone does not guarantee adoption. Our research in Moncloa, one of Madrid's busiest mobility hubs, reinforced this tension.

Thousands of young adults pass through the station every day, yet almost none consider cycling as part of their routine. Conversations, observations, and surveys showed that cycling felt possible but not for them.

This perception was not tied to infrastructure or legality but to something more subtle: a cultural hesitation. People described uncertainty, unfamiliarity, and a general sense that Madrid "is not a bike city," even before trying it.

Before identifying the problem, we had to understand this landscape: a city structurally prepared for sustainable mobility, yet emotionally distant from it.



Fieldwork And First Impressions

Our first fieldwork sessions immediately challenged our expectations.

We joined a night ride with more than 30 cyclists across El Retiro to understand how it feels to bike in Madrid from inside the system, not from outside assumptions.

What stood out was the contrast between perception and experience.

Before the ride, many of us expected tension, danger, and chaos.

Instead, we found calm coordination, mutual awareness between cyclists and drivers, and an environment far more navigable than we imagined.

This early experience didn't give us answers yet, but it opened a question that shaped the rest of the project:

If riding feels safer than expected, why do people still believe it's dangerous?

Alongside observations, we documented communication signals around the city.

Most mobility messaging in Madrid is either technical, bureaucratic, or invisible to young adults.

When we analysed the public narrative around cycling, we noticed a tone mismatch: the institutional voice was not reaching the people most likely to benefit from cycling—students, commuters, and first-time riders.

These early insights hinted at a cultural—not infrastructural—challenge.

People weren't lacking infrastructure; they were lacking reassurance, visibility, and guidance.

Observation

Moncloa became a key observation site for our research.

Thousands of young adults pass through it daily, yet almost none choose to cycle.

We began mapping behaviours: People looked at BiciMAD stations but didn't approach them. Many said cycling was "dangerous," even before considering trying it. Users who DID cycle moved with confidence and ease. This contrast revealed something important: fear exists before experience, not because of experience.

As we continued interviewing users on-site, a pattern began to repeat: people did not reject cycling because of infrastructure, but because of uncertainty—not knowing where to ride, how drivers behave, or whether they "belonged" in the lane. These insights pointed to a systemic contradiction: cycling is structurally possible in Madrid, yet emotionally unavailable. This unresolved tension led us to investigate deeper, comparing subjective narratives with objective data—a step that ultimately revealed the gap we later called Fake Fear. As we continued interviewing users on-site, a pattern began to repeat: people did not reject cycling

because of infrastructure, but because of uncertainty—not knowing where to ride, how drivers behave, or whether they "belonged" in the lane.



Research

Insights



Our research disrupted our initial assumptions about cycling in Madrid.

Through surveys, interviews, station observation and embodied inquiry, we uncovered a series of patterns that did not match the dominant public narrative.

Insight 1 — People fear cycling before they experience it

Most non-cyclists described strong fear and uncertainty, even though they had never tried riding in the city. Fear appeared as a pre-experience emotion, not a response to real incidents.

Insight 2 — New cyclists feel safe very quickly
People who DID ride, either alone or in our group ride, reported feeling unexpectedly safe and comfortable. The emotional barrier decreased almost immediately once they were on the bike.

Insight 3 — BiciMAD works extremely well

Across interviews and tests, users praised the e-bikes, the availability, and the ease of the system. The challenge was not usability—it was deciding to try.

Insight 4 — People don't know what to expect

Non-cyclists mentioned not knowing where to ride, how to position themselves, how drivers behave, or how fast traffic moves.

Uncertainty, not danger, was driving avoidance.

Insight 5 — Cycling is invisible in everyday life
BiciMAD is present in the streets but absent in people's mental models. Riding a bike is still seen as "not for me," especially among young commuters.

These insights signaled that the problem was not infrastructure.

The barriers were emotional, perceptual, and behavioural.

This set the foundation for the deeper contradiction we discovered next.



Data

When we compared our field observations with official mobility data, the contradiction became undeniable:

Madrid is objectively one of the safest European capitals for cyclists.

Yet this information is almost invisible in public communication.

Key facts:

- 0 cyclist deaths in 2021 (lowest per capita in the EU)
- Only 1 cyclist death in 2023, not caused by a car
- <1 serious injury per 100,000 residents per year

– 80% of BiciMAD users describe their rides as “safe or moderately safe”

– Roads offer better grip and stability than pavements (MDPI, 2021)

– Cars must legally keep 1.5 metres when overtaking cyclists

These numbers paint a picture radically different from the city’s cultural perception.



This disparity between data and belief became the pivot of our project.

It showed us that cycling in Madrid does not suffer from a physical barrier, but a perceptual one.

The problem wasn’t that Madrid lacked safety.

The problem was that citizens never see the safety that already exists.

This became the foundation of our core insight:

fear is not caused by experience—it is caused by absence of information.

Core Insight

Fake Fear: The Gap Between Data And Belief

Our research led us to a systemic contradiction at the heart of Madrid's mobility landscape: the perception of danger does not match the reality of cycling in the city.

Even with some of the lowest accident rates in Europe, people continue to describe cycling as chaotic, risky, or "not for them." The fear appears before any real experience, shaped by cultural narratives rather than by actual encounters on the road.

In practice, fear behaves like misinformation: it spreads quickly, sticks easily, and becomes part of everyday judgement.

We call this gap Fake Fear—a disconnection between what the system provides and what people believe the system provides. Fake Fear turns small uncertainties into absolute barriers. It discourages first-time riders, reduces the visibility of cycling in the city, and prevents BiciMAD from becoming a mainstream mobility option among young adults. Recognizing Fake Fear gave us the clarity needed to shift our project from infrastructure to communication, reassurance, and behavioural guidance.

**Lo peligroso no
es Madrid,
es el bulo que te
contaron sobre
ir en bici.**



System Analysis

How Fake Fear Operates In Madrid's Mobility System

Fake Fear is not an individual emotion but a systemic loop reinforced by culture, absence of information, and low visibility of cyclists.

Our system map reveals three interdependent dynamics:

1. Information Gap → Fear

Citizens rarely encounter real cycling data, so fear fills the void left by missing information.

2. Fear → Low Adoption

People avoid trying BiciMAD, which means they never test their assumptions.

3. Low Adoption → Low Visibility → More Fear

Few cyclists on the road makes cycling appear abnormal, reinforcing the idea that it is unsafe.

Breaking this loop requires intervening not in infrastructure, but in information flow, visibility, and first-ride support.



By mapping the relationships between behaviour, perception, and mobility systems, we identified a leverage point:

the exact moment when someone decides whether to ride or not.

This is where fear is strongest and data is weakest.

This is where cultural narratives override structural reality.

And this is where strategic communication can shift the system.

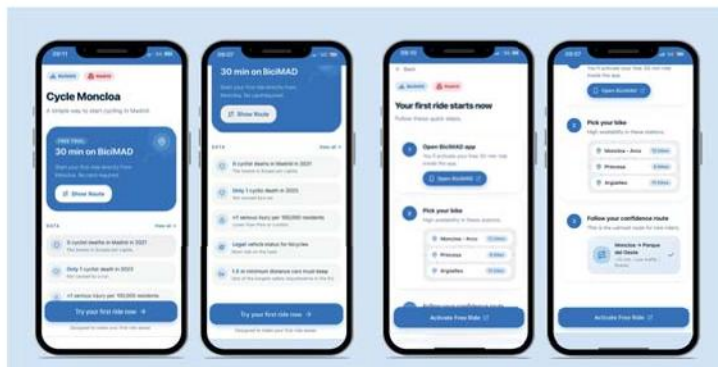
Cycle Moncloa operates precisely here—

interrupting Fake Fear with clarity, reassurance, and guided action.



Intervention Strategy

Why We Chose To Intervene Through Communication



After mapping the system, it became clear that Madrid does not lack cycling infrastructure — it lacks accessible, believable information that reaches people at the right moment.

Fake Fear is strengthened not by road conditions, but by the absence of visible cues that reassure new riders.

If people never see the data, never see cyclists, and never receive guidance, they default to avoidance. This insight pointed us toward a strategic decision: to intervene in perception, not in physical space.

Communication became our most powerful tool:

- It can correct misconceptions.
- It can normalize behaviour.
- It can guide first-time riders.
- And it can appear in places where decisions actually happen.

For this project, that place is Moncloa, a mobility hub full of young adults making daily transport choices.

Instead of proposing new lanes or redesigning streets — solutions outside our scope and unnecessary given Madrid's existing infrastructure — we focused on removing the psychological barriers that block cycling adoption.

Our intervention activates three behavioural levers:

Visibility, Simplicity, and Timing.

Visibility → making safety data impossible to ignore.

Simplicity → lowering cognitive load with a clear onboarding flow.

Timing → placing cues exactly where mobility decisions are made.

By reframing communication as an infrastructure in itself, we designed a system that supports hesitant riders before their first pedal stroke.

As we analysed the ecosystem, we noticed a disconnection between institutional messaging and the people most affected by Fake Fear — young adults.

Official cycling communication is often technical, neutral, or invisible.

It does not resonate emotionally, and it fails to compete with the city's noise.

To change behaviour, the message needs to be clear, immediate, and culturally relevant.

This led us to a natural partner: PutosModernos, a creative studio known for transforming complexity into humour, clarity, and cultural impact.

Their tone cuts through noise.

Their visuals are unmistakable.

And, most importantly, they speak the language of our audience.

PutosModernos allowed us to:

- Make safety data approachable
- Turn fear into irony instead of anxiety
- Generate high visibility in public space
- Reframe cycling as something normal, relatable, and even funny
- Create a “shared joke” that lowers the emotional barrier to trying BiciMAD

By combining strategic design with cultural design, our intervention reached young adults where institutional communication cannot. This partnership was not aesthetic — it was systemic.

It allowed information to flow where it was previously blocked.

Intervention

Making Safety Visible In Public Space

To interrupt Fake Fear at the moment where mobility decisions are made, we placed our communication system directly in Moncloa, one of Madrid's largest transit hubs.

The posters use bold, ironic language and factual safety data to reframe cycling from "dangerous" to normal, simple, and even faster than traffic.

Their purpose is not persuasion, but visibility:

to make the city's existing safety impossible to ignore.

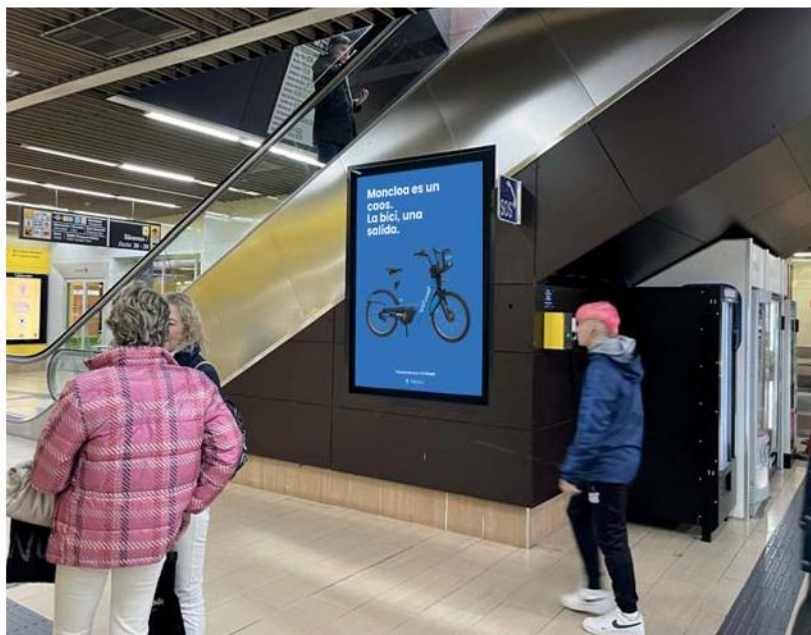
In a space dominated by cars, buses, and metro flows, the presence of a clear cycling message shifts expectations. It inserts the bicycle into the mental landscape of commuters who rarely consider it.

Each poster contains a QR code that triggers the second part of the intervention:

a guided digital onboarding into BiciMAD.

By combining humour, public placement, and real safety data, these posters act as systemic connectors.

They bridge institutional information with cultural recognition, reducing the emotional distance that keeps young adults from trying the bike. The intervention does not change infrastructure, it changes what people notice.



Once commuters scan the QR, they enter a mobile landing page designed to remove friction and fear from the first ride.

The page presents:

- Real safety data, reframed clearly
- A free 30-minute BiciMAD trial
- A 5-minute Confidence Route starting from Moncloa
- Simple, reassuring guidance for first-time cyclists

This onboarding transforms uncertainty into clarity.

It turns abstract safety into something concrete and usable.

The goal is not to "teach" cycling but to give people the smallest possible push toward trying it.

We learned that the biggest behavioural shift happens before the first pedal stroke.

The onboarding flow supports exactly that moment, the fragile hinge between fear and action. By restructuring the experience into predictable steps, the system reduces cognitive load and increases trust:

1. Open BiciMAD
2. Pick a bike nearby
3. Follow the Confidence Route
4. Enjoy the ride

This micro-intervention activates a larger loop:

more trials → more cyclists → more visibility → less Fake Fear.

Outcomes

The intervention produced clear shifts in how people perceive cycling in Madrid.

Through poster placement, QR interactions, and informal testing with young commuters, we observed three early outcomes:

1. Increased attention and curiosity
People stopped to read the posters, scanned the QR codes, and asked questions about BiciMAD.

The visibility of the message activated conversations that previously did not exist.

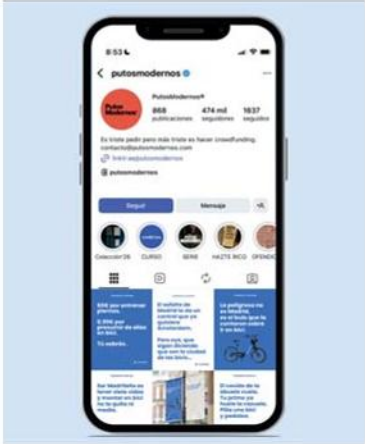
2. A reframed understanding of safety
Participants expressed surprise when seeing real data:

that Madrid has extremely low accident rates, strong legal protection, and stable cycling conditions.

Several described the data as “something I had never seen before.”

3. Higher willingness to try BiciMAD
When paired with a free trial and a Confidence Route, hesitant riders showed interest in taking their first ride.

The combination of humour, clarity, and guidance reduced the emotional barrier that Fake Fear reinforces. These outcomes demonstrate that behaviour can shift when communication reaches people at the right moment, not through new infrastructure, but through strategic visibility, reassurance, and simplicity.



BITÁCORA:

A strategic companion to the studio

Alongside the collective project work presented in this book, each student developed an individual Strategic Bitácora—a reflective journal created throughout the semester as a parallel inquiry into their own learning, positioning, and practice as emerging strategic designers.

If the main assignment challenged students to question the X and limitations of the SDGs, to work with communities, and to engage with complex systems, the Bitácora asked them to examine the effects of that process on themselves. It was never intended as a decorative notebook or a retrospective summary. Instead, it functioned as a working tool: a place to articulate uncertainties, record insights from the field, connect theory with practice, and trace the evolution of their thinking over time.



The assignment recognized something essential about strategic design: that developing interventions for complex systems also requires developing a self-aware and critically grounded designer. The Bitácora made this explicit. Students documented not only what they produced, but how they interpreted the methods, frameworks, tensions, and ethical dilemmas encountered across the four modules of the course.

Because these journals are extensive, personal, and often written for an audience of one, this book does not reproduce them in full. Instead, we include selected excerpts and quotes—fragments that reveal how students made sense of their research, how they navigated ambiguity, and how their understanding of strategic design shifted during the term.

These excerpts offer a glimpse into the interior dimension of the studio:

- where systems thinking meets self-reflection,
- where fieldwork becomes insight, and where the role of the designer is continuously negotiated.

Taken together, the Bitácoras remind us that strategic design is not only about mapping external complexity, but also about cultivating the reflective capacity to act within it—responsibly, critically, and with awareness of one's place in the system.

“You will work with people, not personas. With uncertainty, not checklists.”

“I started the Bitacora late because I genuinely didn’t know what I was supposed to document. Two weeks in, I realized the confusion is part of the process.”

“I hate Bitácora. Maybe there’s something meaningful hiding in that frustration. Maybe the fact that I’m annoyed means I’m actually engaging with the process, even if it’s not in the most glamorous way. Maybe the repetition is just my mind trying to process the resistance I feel toward having to reflect on command”

“Ultimately, if design is the production of meaning, then strategic design is the practice of ensuring that meaning doesn’t get lost as everything accelerates”

“Resistir el impulso de resolver. Quizás quedarse con el problema no sea una cuestión de método, sino de humildad. De aceptar que todavía no lo entendemos del todo, y que eso está bien. Hay algo honesto en no saber. Y algo creativo en quedarse ahí, justo antes de tener “razón””

“Strategic design pushed me to zoom out. To see the garment as a node in multiple overlapping systems. To ask not just “what am I making?” but “what relationships am I entering? what patterns am I reinforcing or disrupting? whose futures am I designing toward?”

“After this course, and after writing all these Bitácora entries, I think I finally understand that strategic design isn’t really about designing things, when you think about it. It’s about understanding everything around “the thing”. It’s messy, systemic, uncomfortable, and way less glamorous than expected.”

“A lot of the frameworks and tools we’ve been given don’t help us control the complexities of a system but to move through them. Design is a process of continuous iteration and reframing, and I see these as valuable principles to apply to myself as a designer and as a person”

“Designing is not about producing objects or generating brilliant solutions; it is about creating mental frameworks capable of revealing needs, contradictions, and opportunities that did not exist before being observed.”

“I love frameworks. I think they help structure thinking. In design, BBA, whatever it is. We should use them more”

“Most of the work happens in understanding what already exists before trying to change anything.”

“A veces el mejor framework no es el que dibujas antes de empezar, sino el que descubres sin querer cuando vuelves a ver lo que ya habías hecho”

The Tools --> Methods --> Mindset --> Culture --> Worldview diagram made me understand that design isn’t only about using tools, it’s about how those tools eventually shape the way we think and interpret the world.

“Research is not a prologue; it is a structure that, if well-designed, determines which questions are worthwhile, which data matters, and which truths remain hidden if we don’t know how to find them”.

“This semester taught me that impact isn’t always about creating change. Sometimes it’s about recognizing when you shouldn’t. Strategic design isn’t always about intervening. Sometimes it’s about stepping back.”

“Unlearning that all knowledge is designable: SOME INSIGHTS ARE MEANT TO INFORM BEING, NOT DOING, RESPECT OPACITY.”

“Intentionality is what transforms the research process into a creative act, because choosing how to look is, in itself, a form of design”

“Creo que un buen diseñador no es el que imagina más, sino el que comprueba más. El que no se enamora de su primera idea. El que entiende que la humildad no es debilidad, sino claridad”

“Designing with has given me my brief for the way I want to look at my life and work career.”

“Designing “for” often starts with assumptions, a set of expectations about who people are and what they might need. It’s efficient, structured, and directional. But designing “with” invites conversation, co-creation, and a certain kind of humility. It means letting go of control and allowing others to shape the outcome with you.”

“Having to constantly work in groups makes me want to see collaboration as something deeper than group work, and more like shared authorship. Sometimes I feel pressure to be the ‘expert.’ It’s nice to read something that reframes the designer as a facilitator, not a savior”

“I want to be the kind of designer who doesn’t just make things for the world, but makes the world feel again”

“Coherence between my values and actions. I think this course has made me more courageous to implement my values into design”

“I’ve been stuck in academic validation patterns for too long, need to push institutions to the limit.”

“A veces mis emociones señalaban tensiones antes de que yo las pudiera nombrar. Otras veces revelaban qué partes del proyecto me importaban de verdad y por qué. Lo que al principio parecía “ser demasiado sensible” se convirtió en una herramienta activa para navegar un tema que exige humanidad, y también una herramienta para navegarme a mí misma dentro de él.”

“The world loves categories. Nature doesn’t. Why two sexes? Why not three, four, ten? Maybe because counting gets harder that way. Humans have always been lazy thinkers. We cut, divide, label — then call it order. Biology feels like an administrative shortcut.”

“Our generation doesn’t have the privilege of designing purely as criticism or as function. We must develop a radical change-based, critical, adaptable, democratic, dynamic, self-regulating, honest and functional methodology or system of design, with the goal being to solve the immediate problems, or barriers to these solutions, that we don’t have the privilege of ignoring or leaving in the realm of speculation.”

“This project made me challenge life and opened my mind to a new reality. This is either a blessing or a curse.”

“Doing this degree has been like being in one of those reality TV shows where you are given a brief, you have to run to get a group, find materials, research, prototype, create, and then submit to the judges. There is laughter, blood, and tears, but there are also new relationships that develop here. This has been an amazing journey, demanding but extremely gratifying.”

“This is no longer just a design project; it has become a framework that honors local memory, advocates community capabilities, and proposes new ways of living, producing, and caring for the territory.”

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Printed by:

Imprenta Sánchez Álamo

Content:
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Printed in Madrid, 2026.
First edition.

Design Studio IV
BID - BBABID
2025