

Case study ID

CY_05

ULLOI AGLANTZIA

CASE STUDY SHORT SUMMARY REPORT

Authors

Dr. Byron Ioannou, Dr. Lora Nicolaou,
Dr. Gregoris Kalnis, Agni Gregoriou

Name of the institution

Frederick University

Gianni Freiderikou 7, Nicosia 1036
Cyprus

ULLOI AGLANTZIA

Case Study at a Glance

ULLOI Aglantzia is a civic-academic initiative developed by the Society and Urban Form Research Lab (SURF) at the University of Cyprus as part of the Erasmus+ PS-U-GO project. Implemented in collaboration with the Municipality of Aglantzia, the Youth Board of Cyprus, and the Cyprus Youth Council, the project aimed to address spatial and social challenges in the area through participatory urban design. Key issues included inactive public spaces, weak community ties, and a lack of youth engagement. The project unfolded in three phases—design, implementation, and evaluation—engaging students, residents, and local stakeholders through workshops, mapping, exhibitions, and small-scale design-build interventions. Notable outcomes included improved public spaces, such as a mural and seating structure, enhanced student learning, and stronger civic partnerships. Despite challenges in maintaining long-term engagement and coordinating among diverse actors, the initiative demonstrated the value of hands-on, inclusive approaches to neighborhood resilience. It also provided a replicable model for integrating academic learning with civic participation in real-world urban contexts..

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Case Study Profile

Topic

- ☐ Community Gardening & Urban Agriculture
- ☒ Community Hubs & Cultural Activities
- ☒ Urban Design & Planning Processes
- ☒ Public Space Development & Management
- ☐ Local Economic Development
- ☒ Urban Regeneration & Rehabilitation

Scale

- ☐ Metropolitan / city region
- ☒ City scale
- ☒ Neighbourhood scale
- ☒ Block scale
- ☐ Building scale

Resilience Challenge

- ☐ Environmental and ecological resilience
- ☒ social & cultural resilience
- ☐ Infrastructure and technological resilience
- ☐ Economic & livelihood resilience

Duration

- ☐ Immediate (less than 1 month)
- ☒ Project-Based (1–12 months)
- ☒ Programme-Based (1–3 years)
- ☐ Strategic (3–5 years)
- ☐ Structural / Transformative (more than 5 years)

Stakeholders

- ☒ Community members
- ☒ Local government
- ☒ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- ☐ Private sector
- ☒ Academic and research institutions

Type of Civic Engagement Supporting Neighborhood Resilience

- ☒ Resident-led and grassroots initiatives
- ☐ Collaborative planning projects or processes
- ☒ Advocacy and capacity building
- ☒ Volunteer and community service projects
- ☒ Short-term, more flexible project-based engagement
- ☒ Long-term, more institutionalized engagement (development of stable structures, etc.)
- ☐ Protest and resistance mobilization
- ☒ Art-and culture-based civic Engagement

Level of Civic Participation

- ☐ Information
- ☒ Involvement or participation
- ☐ Collaboration or co-creation
- ☒ Empowerment
- ☐ Resistance and protest-based empowerment

Empirical Basis and Methodological Approach

The ULLOI AGLANTZIA case study was developed through a civic-academic and participatory research methodology grounded in co-creation and experiential learning. Empirical material included semi-structured interviews, participatory workshops, collaborative mapping activities, design-build interventions, public exhibitions, and reflective evaluation exercises conducted throughout the project. Additional material was gathered from project documentation and dissemination outputs produced within the Erasmus+ PS-U-GO framework. The methodological approach focused on examining how Urban Living Labs can support neighborhood resilience through inclusive design practices, youth engagement, and collaborative spatial experimentation. The study further explored the role of universities as mediators between local communities, public institutions, and civic actors in urban transformation processes.

Compendious summary

Introduction

ULLot Aglantzia is a civic-academic initiative led by the Society and Urban Form Research Lab (SURF) at the University of Cyprus. As one of four Urban Living Labs (ULLs) developed under the Erasmus+ project PS-U-GO: Participatory Skills for Sustainable Urban Governance, the initiative sought to address real-world urban challenges through participatory design, community engagement, and applied research. What sets this case apart is its embedded, place-based methodology, which actively involved university students, local residents, municipal actors, and youth organizations in a shared process of inquiry and transformation.

The project unfolded not just as an academic exercise, but as an opportunity to test how urban learning and co-creation can intersect with institutional structures, community needs, and youth agency. Our research approach included semi-structured interviews, participatory workshops, mapping, design-build interventions, and experiential learning assessments. From the outset, the intention was to build a process that was both inclusive and experimental—capable of revealing insights not only about space, but about relationships, trust, and collective authorship in urban change.

Neighborhood challenge

Aglantzia is a peri-urban district in the Nicosia metropolitan area characterized by low-density development, fragmented land uses, and a lack of vibrant public or civic spaces. Despite its potential—given its proximity to academic institutions and active youth networks—several resilience-related issues emerged during the initial analysis. These included weak neighborhood identity, low levels of youth engagement, underutilized open spaces, and the absence of basic social infrastructure such as shaded seating or gathering points.

Through our site visits and conversations with residents and local actors, it became evident that the physical barriers in the built environment reflected broader patterns of social detachment. The urban morphology, marked by privatized plots and discontinuous sidewalks, discouraged spontaneous encounters and excluded young people from the spatial narrative of the neighborhood. Yet, we also identified latent opportunities: leftover plots, private courtyards, and informal green spaces that could be reimagined as connectors rather than voids.

Response to the challenge

To address these gaps, the SURF Lab launched ULLot Aglantzia through its Co-creation Studio, framing the project around three interconnected phases: design and initiation, operational implementation, and reflection/evaluation. From the beginning, we emphasized shared ownership of the process. Students, residents, youth councils, and municipal staff were invited to co-define the challenges, explore alternatives, and test ideas on the ground.

The design phase focused on identifying intervention sites through collaborative mapping and experiential walks. The operational phase translated ideas into action: students worked alongside residents to construct a public seating structure and co-create a mural at a previously neglected **site**.

Evaluation activities ran concurrently, enabling continuous feedback and adjustment. These moments of hands-on engagement proved essential for building trust and stimulating participation.

In practice, we found that the rhythm of co-creation rarely matched institutional timelines. Academic calendars, municipal procedures, and community routines each operated on their own logic. Flexibility became a vital design principle—not only for physical interventions, but for the process itself. In retrospect, one of the most important insights was the challenge of synchronizing academic schedules with civic needs, which required constant negotiation and adaptive planning.

Mechanisms of civic engagement

Citizen participation formed the backbone of the ULL methodology, even when it was partial or uneven. Engagement took multiple forms: informal design workshops, collective mapping, storytelling sessions, public exhibitions, and feedback loops. Institutional partners—the Municipality of Aglantzia, the Youth Board of Cyprus (ONEK), and the Cyprus Youth Council—played a pivotal role in legitimizing and supporting the process, but much of the energy came from students and residents themselves.

Notably, participation increased after the first visible results appeared in public space. The installation of the seating structure, in particular, became a symbolic anchor for the initiative—something people could point to, sit on, and talk about. This underscored a valuable lesson: tangible, low-cost interventions can activate intangible dynamics like trust, pride, and curiosity.

At the same time, we faced challenges. Open calls often yielded low turnout, and marginalized voices remained hard to reach. Efforts to involve youth were sometimes constrained by timing, competing responsibilities, or institutional silos. Moving forward, we believe that deeper forms of engagement require not just better communication, but new infrastructures of participation—such as neighborhood ambassadors, school liaisons, or embedded social design programs.

Case study findings and lessons learned

ULLo1 Aglantzia demonstrates how civic-academic partnerships can act as catalysts for neighborhood resilience—not through grand transformations, but through small, intentional acts of collective making. Among the most concrete outcomes were improvements to the public realm, the strengthening of local partnerships, and the deepening of student learning. Students reported gains in design confidence, communication skills, and civic sensitivity. Municipal and community actors, in turn, expressed appreciation for the project's responsiveness and accessibility.

From our perspective, the real value of the initiative lies in the relationships it helped forge. While the physical interventions may be modest, the social infrastructure built through repeated interactions—learning together, building together, reflecting together—offers a more durable form of impact. These relationships can serve as the foundation for future projects, and as evidence that inclusive, situated design can work even in contexts of limited resources.

One of the most powerful insights was the recognition that co-creation is as much about timing, trust, and presence as it is about design. Participatory processes cannot be rushed or outsourced. They require

patience, attentiveness, and the willingness to be surprised. They also benefit from anchoring in education—not just as content, but as pedagogy and practice.

Conclusion

ULLoι Aglantzia offers a grounded example of how universities can serve as civic platforms and design education can be reoriented toward the everyday challenges of cities. By mobilizing academic, municipal, and community capacities, the initiative fostered a model of collaboration that was both structured and open-ended—rigorous in its intent, but responsive in its methods.

For future efforts, we recommend stronger continuity mechanisms, such as the integration of Living Labs into municipal budgets or the development of standing civic-academic councils. We also believe that more attention should be given to youth as co-creators of urban space—not only as “beneficiaries” of planning, but as drivers of imagination and change.

The ULLoι Aglantzia project may have concluded, but its effects continue—in new student projects, ongoing partnerships, and the evolving conversations about how public space can become more inclusive, more alive, and more meaningful. We see this initiative as a replicable model for other neighborhoods in Cyprus and beyond, where civic learning and spatial justice remain intertwined ambitions.

Attachments

References

<https://www.psugo.eu/urban-living-lab/>

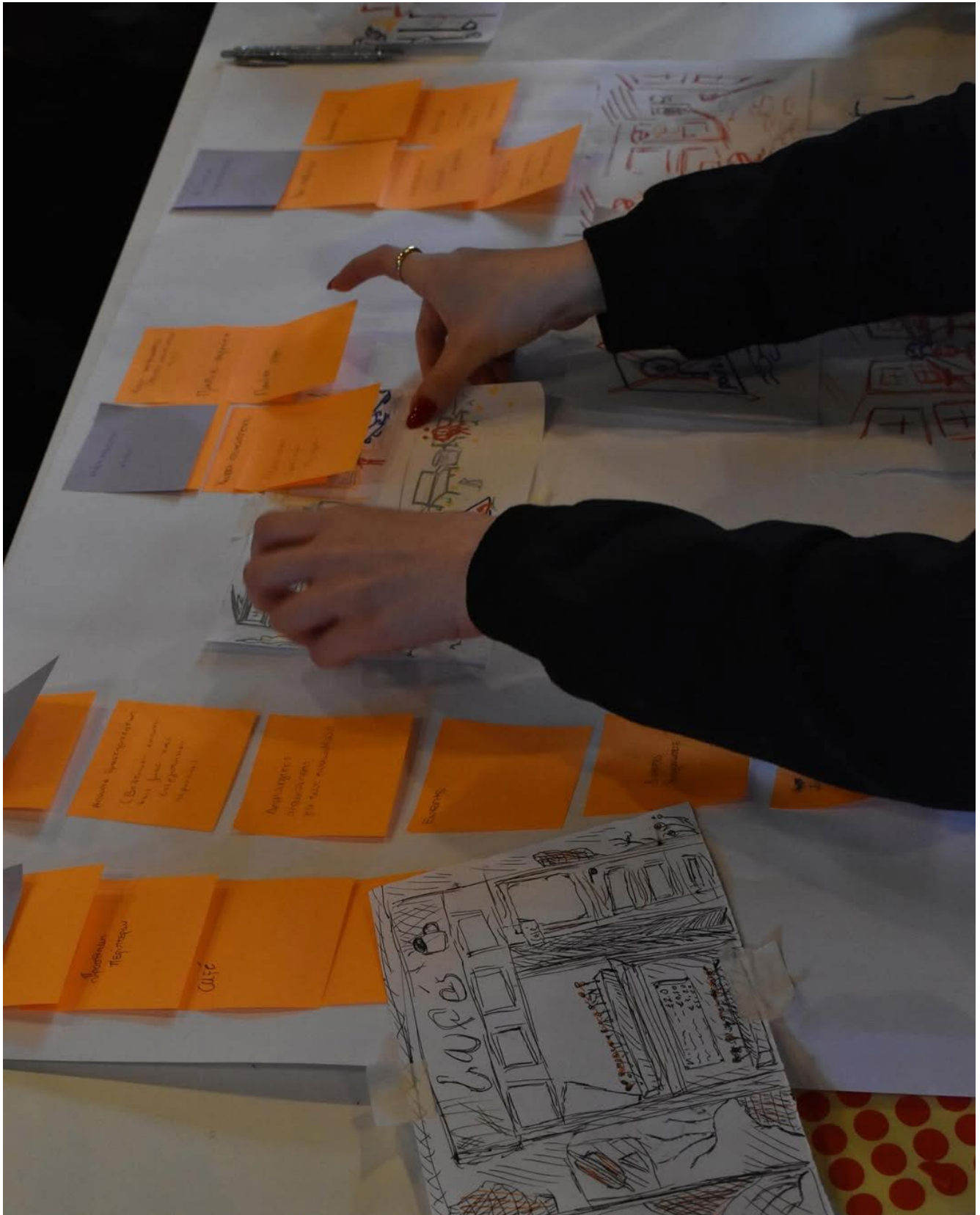
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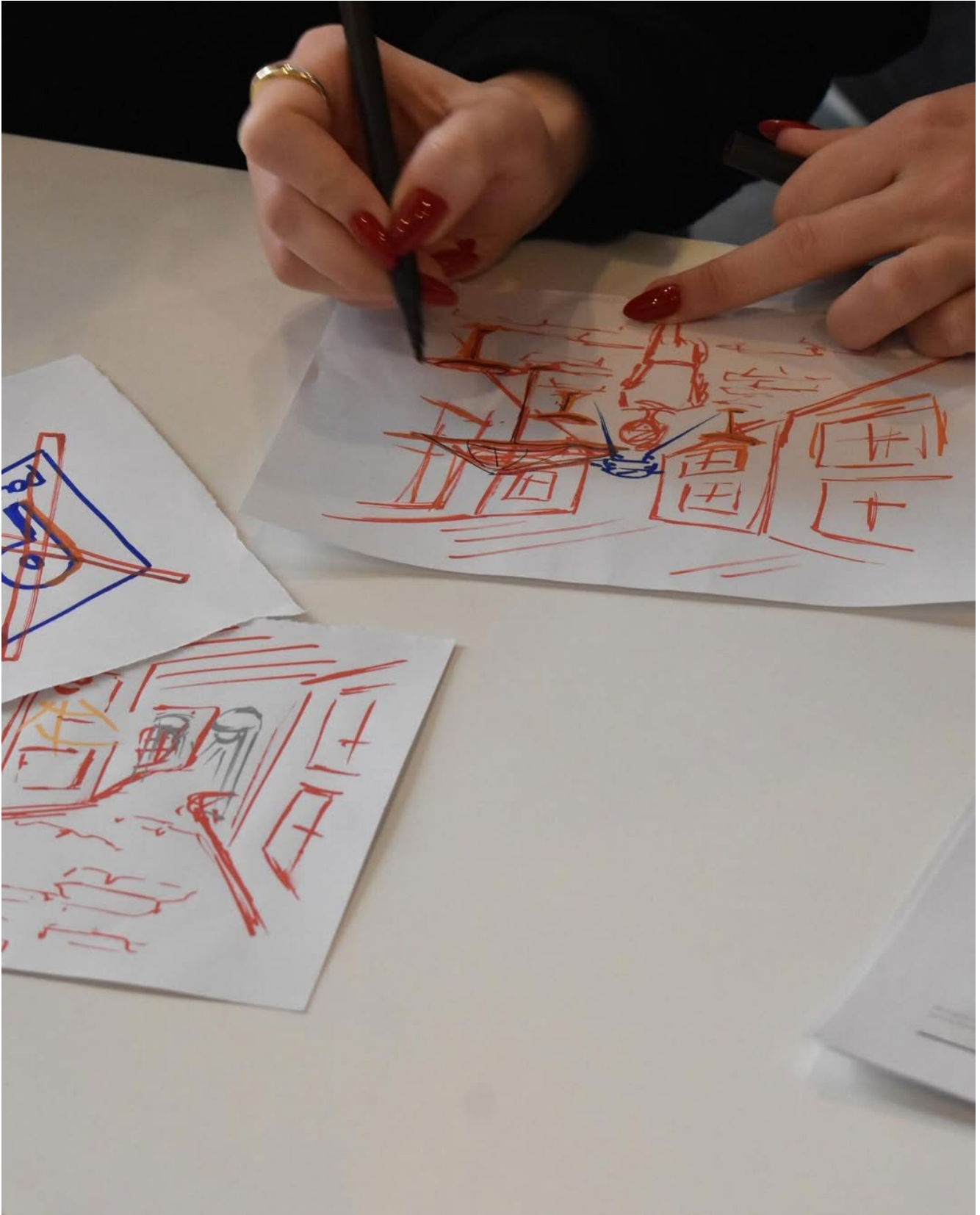
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Photos









UPRUN was cofunded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Erasmus+ National Agency for Higher Education (German Academic Exchange Service). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



This project has received funding under ERASMUS+ Cooperation Partnerships programme. Project No 2023-1-DE01-KA220-HED-000167004.

