



Urban INC

OPEN HOUSE Workbook

Open House was a series of workshops we ran in 2016 as placemaking sessions at the former Cotton Industry factory in Bucharest, together with our partners La Firul Ierbii (Grassroots). We settled here starting June 2016, with the aim to open up a space open for those who are interested in cities and improving quality of life in cities.

The space has a surface of 230 square meters which includes office space, seminar and meeting room as well as a library. We ran the workshops with the aim to better understand the needs of its users, how might we go about better responding to them and to prototype quick improvements.



Defining the challenge

Why >>> How

We started off with the why and what how. We wanted to identify the main problems and dreams, things we could do better

- **Accessibility:** how might we improve the experience of our users? How to make it easier for bikers to reach us and improve safety of cycle parking? How to improve safety of the pedestrian crossing in front?
- **Community involvement:** what can we offer local community members to use the space?
- **Storytelling:** mapping out local resources - the local shops, the entrepreneurs. Storyline of the neighbourhood that can be "read" while accessing the space
- **Placemaking and design:** pop up garden in the unused space in front, open for use. Introducing upcycling and recycling in our daily activity, landscape ideas.



Discovery

User >>> Need >>> Insight

To better understand the needs and aspirations of our users, we decided to run a series of Open House workshops, where we would invite users, community members and interested peers to ask questions with us and challenge the answers. We ran the first Open House session as a design thinking session focused on user experience.

We used the empathy map method to get better insights into our users.

- >>> Andrei, 31, workshop participant
- >>> Lucian, 33, local community member
- >>> Alina, 25, interested in renting the space
- >>> Sanziana, 28, Urban Talks participant

Each participant played at least 2 roles and wrote down their observations by trying to relate to the user's needs and immediate interactions.



Interpretation

Storytelling >>> Meaning >>> Framing

After all participants were well into their roles, we came together in groups to put things together. We pulled out our main narratives (each participant told a story from their user's experience) used flipcharts to compare experiences. We used post-its to pull out key threads.



Ideation

Brainstorm >>> Prioritize >>> Select

We finally brought all groups back together to work on the existing suggestions to pull main ideas and prioritize. We re-grouped all suggestions that were lingering from the previous session in a few categories:

- >>> Getting here
- >>> Information about the space
- >>> Entrance / coffee break area
- >>> Using the space
- >>> Accessibility

We used a voting system to do our reality check and decide which ideas would be prototyped in the following session.



Experiment

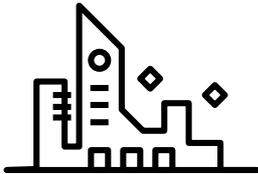
Prototype

In the following session, we invited our peers in order to implement some of the proposed solutions. This included producing a panel with the description of the place for users, producing signage and stencils.





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