(Re)generative narrative approaches to urban changemaking. Lessons from Liepaja/Karosta

Future DiverCities

by
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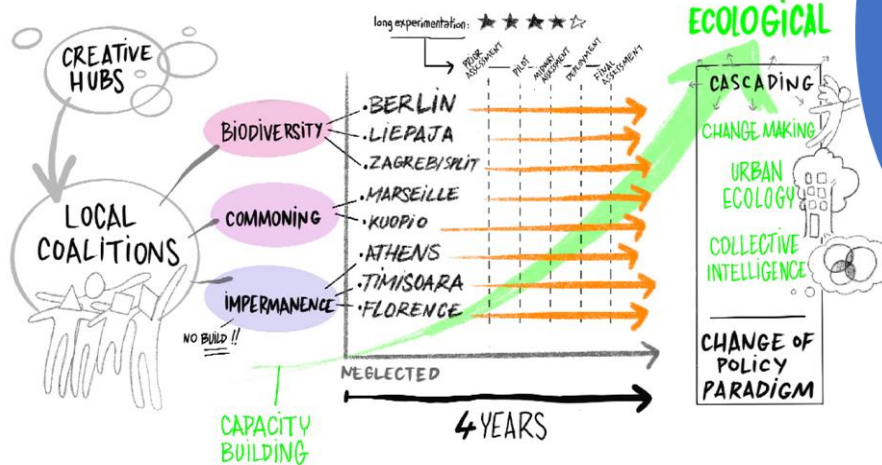Markus Raivio
Agita Auza, Olek Anikowski

Future DiverCities

Re-imagine culture-led regeneration of 9 urban empty spaces in an ecological way.

Changemakers' capacity

ecosystem intelligence	• cultural/policy transformations • lasting synergies with the environment/city spaces
project design	• multiskaholder coalition & team • social innovating in urban space
personal design	• self-direction and ethical fibre • radical self-care and empathy

Karosta bridge

Jindřich Běťák, File:Kalpaka tilts 1.JPG - Wikipedia

Awakening garden - Atmodas Dārzs

Karosta "prison" (military detention)

Tram to the beach, military concrete

Community-based research - design students

Students' brainstorming

Concepts how to connect the two shores

1st group concept (the bridge): life bridge growing between two trees (bioengineering)

2nd group concepts (alternative transport techniques): balloons, teleportation, magic carpet (Aladdin), jumping, balancing on the line in the air, cable car, air-raft - wooden lift

3rd group concept: teleportation of the water from wet side down to dry side up, teleportation of people to move from one side to another

Students' insights for integration of Karosta

Paradise of biodiversity

« Spooky place, which needs cleaning up »

« Best for escapes with close friends »

« Space abandoned »   « Land of creative opportunities »

« The way to get there is dirty, scary, rails before the Bridge are a real barrier »

« Once you get there you love the contrast of green freshness and military mess »

Working with the Liepaja FD coalition

Stakeholders - present and absent

Present

1. Agita Auza - foreign affairs and culture policy project manager, Liepaja (all days)
2. Madars Markus-Narvils - entrepreneur and cultural NGO representative of Karosta (all days)
3. Anna Priedola - Riga Technical University, Liepaja branch, director of New Media Art (two days)
4. Kristina Lieģeniece and Baiba Vigule - culture project managers, they work with few NGOs (all days)
5. Monta Krafte- representative of Karostas Cietums (prison), responsible for marketing (all days)
6. Elīna Saldovere- Liepaja Central administration, Community participation department, an expert in work with NGO's (two days)
7. Students: Anna Agape Lendele (from the lecture, one day);
8. Kaspars Lēvalds (one day), Jekaterina Jevdokimova (Russian background), students who made Karosta mappings

Absent, pointed out by participants

1. Representative of another city with ECOC experience
2. Person from social services (responsible for inclusion)
3. Head of the development department
4. Karosta influencers (Instagram, TikTok)
5. Newbie from Karosta
6. Military representative
7. PR manager
8. Local youngster from Karosta, who knows nice places in the district

Drama/RPG "Press conference 2027" 20.02

Questions

Seniors?

Children

Youth

People from further away?

Russian speaking NGOs?

Who is the main audience?

Visitors from outside?

Does the army also take part in the show?

What about environment protection?

How can someone contribute by a day visit?

What inspires the idea?

The obstacles?

What is unique?

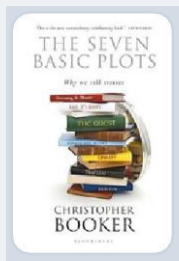Local production of food and snacks

What about safety ?

Winter weather?

Support to Box #4
of Narrative
Environment
Canvas

Story Archetypes

Which, if any, of the following archetypes, can be discerned in the narrative that currently dominates your environment?

Note your answer down into box 4 of your Narrative Environment Canvas.

One can think of multiple familiar story archetypes which don't have to be the same in different cultural contexts. What we can offer as the basis is the categorization of story archetypes by Christopher Booker who has written a book "The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories". After 34 years of studying different stories, he discerned seven most typical plots in the western culture:

Overcoming the Monster

The protagonist sets out to defeat an antagonistic force (often evil) which threatens the protagonist or protagonist's homeland. Think of Perseus, Beowulf or Star Wars.

Rags to Riches

The poor protagonist acquires power, wealth, or a mate, loses it all and gains it back, growing as a person as a result. Think of Cinderella, Jane Eyre.

Quest

The protagonist and companions set out to acquire an important object or to get to a location. They face temptations and other obstacles along the way. Homer's Iliad and the Lord of the Rings are our examples here.

Voyage and Return

The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses or learning important lessons, they return with experience. Think of Odissey, Gulliver's Travels or Peter Pan.

Comedy

A story that usually involves a light and humorous character with a happy or cheerful ending, the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion. Think of Shakespear's Midsummer Night's dream and the majority of romance films.

Tragedy

The protagonist is a hero with a major character flaw or great mistake which is ultimately their undoing. Their unfortunate end evokes pity at their folly and the fall of a fundamentally good character. Anna Karenina and Bonnie and Clyde could serve as examples.

Rebirth

An event forces the main character to change their ways and often become a better individual. Beauty and the Beast, and Pride and Prejudice illustrate this type.

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Using the narrative approach in Liepaja

Analysing values

VALUES:

PRIDE, AUTHENTICITY, CREATIVITY
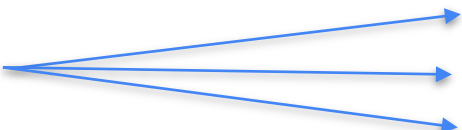
To do things they do, live their way, to be in,
Feel how you think where they live
Latvians - there is no flexibility

People from Liepaja and Karosta
{Adam's story about Palestinians}
Sensitive people, pride easy to offend
Traditions and beliefs
Fairness, Responsibility, Self-initiative

Collective resilience
Sense of belonging

for safety
for self-esteem
to preserve well-being

Narrative canvas and storytelling

Narrative Canva

→ Access to collaborative intent to do things together

Awakening
ELEVATE [added]

To know something, TRANSLATE IT TO THE STORY

Missing stakeholders stories, they and us as champions

PROTAGONIST
wants to do something
[stories types]

Imagination - co-creation - self-fulfilling prophecy

STRUCTURE

Few different stories. Help people to see the end of the story
[experience of being in control]

BIG NARRATIVES ⇔ SMALL NARRATIVES
less important   more important

non-violently
engage, include

re-writing a story
connecting things, which were not connected

Types of stories
Which type relates most?
Which story fits best?

Karosta story

REBIRTH narration

Story similar to **"The Beauty and the Beast"** based on returning to the beauty, to wellbeing

Beauty nature ↔ Beast concrete
Nature takes over, it's an inspiration, Karosta people are beasts, but there is a lot of beauty

Somatic: 90% of Karosta is Karosta prison STEREOTYPICALLY→ reshape → change narrative
Beauty was always there {ECOC struggle with Karosta]
Grassroots approach - people close to citizens; retrain tourists, guides,
CHANGE MINDSETS ↔ align with:

Karosta prison → human rights

- nice living area
- nature
- people willing to be engaged

good to everybody

Define target groups → rebirth types of stories shared → help them create new stories → change mindset and behaviors

! Remember different kinds of people (for example saboteurs), SHOW and SHAME officials !

Take aways and next steps

Quote:

Finding the missing leaf; looking at Karosta: treasures from the beast to the beauty

Grassroots organizations, newbies, local business

Agita (coordinator): conclusion of the Beauty and the Beast

Baiba (NGOs): we are on the same page, it's good, that community feel like a team, we can build on that

Madars (entrepreneur, Awakening Garden): got useful information, new ideas and strategy, challenging but also interesting (rebirth, Beauty and the Beast), let's make a synergy together

Monta Krafte (Karosta Prison): we don't see other businesses as competitors

Madars: video box people can share an experience in Karosta

Agita: write and project somewhere else

Monta Krafte: gasped the ideas and solution: make connections, make things together, change the mindset of the people

← Adam's suggestion: ask visitors about the stories that they could tell to the prisoners

Liepaja case study

We started a coalition of NGOs, business, cultural institutions, students

In the process, using narrative canvas, we came to the conclusion that the best story for Liepaja - Karosta will be the **REBIRTH** narration

It's **"The Beauty and the Beast"** kind of story, with nature and human-made structures opposition

The metaphor of the bridge and the tram to Karosta create ideas for the connection

Coalition members will create and share the stories with the local community to reshape the view on Karosta.

The Riga Technological University has a possible, important role in that process as it takes on the former Liepaja University with strong design faculty. It's activity in the scope of engaged university.

Deploying the New Narrative Across Audience Segments 3x3 Matrix

Please watch the video of Module #5 and brainstorm the activities that could help create a new effective narrative environment for your cause.

1. Individual Level

First, formulate the activities that can help you get people on board at the individual level.

Thinks of channels that do not necessarily require person's interaction with other people or systemic structures, for example, reading books and articles, watching certain movies, news, or TED talks online, looking up information in the internet, facing advertising, going through individual experiences or overcoming personal capacity limits on their own.

Finish this part by filling out the boxes at the individual level. Check yourself whether these activities really:

a. Make individuals aware at the individual level (awareness)
b. Make the undesirable desirable (willingness)
c. Help surpass personal limits (capacity)

2. Social Level

Next, explore how acquiring awareness on the issue, willingness to take action and capacity to do so can happen at the social level, as a result of interaction between people.

Becoming aware of something through a group experience, public event or peer conference. Becoming willing to embrace new thinking as a consequence of some shared experience, being exposed to social proof from peers and peer pressure. Becoming capable to implement new thinking and behavior thanks to having peer help, experience and resources available.

Finish this part by filling out the boxes at the social level. Check yourself whether these activities really:

a. Make different social groups aware (awareness);
b. Harness peer pressure (willingness)
c. Harness peer help & resources (capacity)

3. Structural Level

Finally, think about how becoming aware, willing and capable can be enabled by a thought-through environment and structural architecture that ensures a new way of thinking surrounds us and is embedded in systems.

People can become aware of the new way of thinking through their participation in the education system, systematically watching public broadcasting that raises a certain topic or following legislation that frames an issue in a new way. Willingness at the structural level is incentivized by certain accountability in a system manifested through positive and negative incentives, like rewards for embracing a new way of thinking and behavior, and fines for failing to do so. And on the capacity side, the systemic environment can be changed such that the system itself starts offering capacitation/ consulting to those willing to embrace new behavior.

Finish this part by filling out the boxes at the structural level. Check yourself whether these activities really:

a. Anchor knowledge in systems, make it common sense (awareness)
b. Demand accountability and design rewards (willingness)
c. Make the environment supportive (capacity)

	AWARENESS	WILLINGNESS	CAPACITY
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	Make individuals aware at the individual level	Make the undesirable desirable	Help surpass personal limits
SOCIAL LEVEL	Make different social groups aware	Harness peer pressure	Harness peer help & resources
STRUCTURAL LEVEL	Anchor knowledge in systems, make it common sense	Demand accountability and design rewards	Make the environment supportive

Mobilizing Your Base

Narrative Drivers

Here we invite you to think about what you and your colleagues can do to ensure that the amazing abundance of activities you listed in the previous prompt become a reality. What can you do to build a strong base for the social movement?

Note down activities that can help you locate and recruit your base to become the Narrative Drivers, enable them to gather, connect and build trust with each other, and build their capacity to speak out and spread the word of the new way of thinking.

Locate & Rectruit

How will you locate and recruit the most proactive elements of the Base, willing and capable to become part of the larger advocacy efforts. They can make great Narrative Drivers in the future.

Cultivate Trust

How will you enable your future Narrative Drivers to gather, connect and build trust with each other?

Build Capacity

How will you build capacity of your Narrative Drivers to speak out and spread the word of the new way of thinking and acting?

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Decisions We Want Decision-makers to Make

Upon watching the video of module #6, please answer the questions below on and the following three pages. If you feel you don't have enough information to give these answers and need more detailed guidance, consider taking our specialized online course on working with decision-makers in government (also relevant for working with decision-makers in business) with detailed guidance and elaborate case studies.

Let's start by pinpointing the decisions on structural changes that we ultimately want decision-makers to make. For this we need to clarify which structures in the system perpetuate the problem of our concern and further fuel the unhelpful way of thinking among people.

1 How clear are you about the changes that need to happen at the structural level?

min ○—○—○—○—○ max
1   2   3   4   5

2 What in the status quo concerns you and which specific structural change would you like to achieve?

If you are concerned with current regulations, laws, policies, government or business practices/services, consider what exactly is wrong with them –are they inexistent, existent but poorly designed or even harmful, underfunded or poorly implemented? And how exactly should things be different?

3 Which stakeholder in the system holds the critical power over the structural change of your concern?

Here we don't ask you to give specific titles or names, but to answer more at the meta-level. The two most obvious stakeholders here could be government (in its multiple manifestations) and (big) business, but other options are possible, too. Which stakeholder is it in your case?

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How Do We Know Our Work Had Effect

Sooner or later in your efforts to influence the way people think, you are likely to face a question whether your work achieves the desired effect. Impact tracking in this field won't be easy, given the complexity of narrative environments, multitude of factors in play, and the time gap between activities and effects, but it is doable. Have a look at some ideas of indicators below and the excellent material that will provide with a needed level of detail.

Changes we might want to track:
in the short-, mid- and long-term perspective*

7 Changes in the systemic structures
Changes in policies, institutional practices and power, including allocation of resources and shifts in engagement and representation in decision-making processes and structures could also manifest and be the result of significant changes in thinking across citizenship.

6 Social norms
Changes in social norms can be another important indicator of how effective our work has been, as they set standards for thinking and behavior at community and population levels.

5 People's behavior
Changes in people's behavior might be another indicator of our interest. While these changes cannot be attributed to the results of our work alone, if we notice tangible desired changes in people's behavior happening upon our work, it could be a sign that we are going in the right direction.

4 Attitudes and beliefs of people
Tracking changes in actual attitudes and beliefs of people about the topic of our concern can be the next important step. To have a representative enough sample here, you will need to use the survey data of or partner up with serious sociological institutions.

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3 Public Discourse
Next, we can explore whether there are changes in the public discourse on the topic of our concern. Here we might need to do content analysis of the news media, social media, and various forms of popular culture.

2 Reach of Our Stories
We can then proceed to indicators showcasing the reach of our new stories and narrative overall. Here let's keep in mind that the reach indicators will not show us the effect our new stories had on our audience's hearts and minds, and will only point at how many people have gotten in touch with our message.

1 Own Organizational Capacity
We can start at a very basic level by looking inwards to see whether we and our partners have actually devoted appropriate capacity (human and financial resources) to carry out the work to change the way people think effectively.

*Adapted from "Measuring Narrative Change: Understanding Progress and Navigating Complexity" by Nikki Kalra, Cecilia Borges Farfan, Leonor Robles, and Sarah Stachowiak. We highly recommend the publication for a deep dive into the topic of measuring narrative change, detailed indicators for it and helpful resources and partners for tracking them.