



A social lab in Favoriten, Vienna.

LIEBES KRETA is a social lab located at the interface of OBJEKT 19 and the people living and working in the surroundings.

1 The starting point

OBJEKT 19 is situated at the cultural area BROTFABRIK WIEN: Starting in 2009, the former, abandoned factory buildings of the Viennese bakery ANKERBROT were renovated and transformed into galleries, studios, offices and lofts. A new cultural hotspot of Vienna was developed under the label of BROTFABRIK WIEN. Other than usual cultural hotspots it is not situated within the city center but in an outlying district in a rather underprivileged area. There is a high risk of BROTFABRIK WIEN becoming an alien satellite visited by middle-class Viennese and tourists with no connection at all to the rather poor surroundings. The former factory used to play an important role within the district. Ignoring these facts and transforming BROTFABRIK WIEN into an attractive place for people who do not live in the district and not offering BROTFABRIK WIEN to the local residents does not fit into a sustainable, considerate city development. Therefore, Caritas Vienna decided together with the developers of BROTFABRIK WIEN to rent one of the buildings and transform this one part of the area into a place dedicated to the local residents: the so-called OBJEKT 19. In the run of the previous years different projects moved in into OBJEKT 19.

The district OBJEKT 19 is situated at (called Favoriten) faces different social challenges: With more than 190.000 inhabitants Favoriten is the biggest district of Vienna. About 43 % of its inhabitants are people with migrant background. About 20.000 inhabitants are unemployed. In comparison with other districts of Vienna the average income as well as the average pension are rather low. Household size, however, is above average. During the election in 2015 almost 40 % of the voters casted their votes for a right wing party. Intolerance, xenophobia and a tendency of separation rather than of merging seem to be gaining momentum within the district. The stories collected by LIEBES KRETA showed that diversity is not perceived as a gift by the residents but rather as a threat. Questions about identity and loss of identifiers respectively arise. People of Favoriten live in a disadvantaged area of Vienna suffering from a lack of social infrastructure, lack of job and education opportunities, creating tensions between neighbors, social conflicts as well as stigmatization and negative image (and interiorisation of that image) of the district itself and by association of the inhabitants.

OBJEKT 19 concentrates exactly on the multiple social challenges, tensions and segregation and aims at empowering local residents in order for them to enhance their living conditions by creating opportunities for people living in the surroundings of the old factory to live and work together inclusively. The goal is increased social cohesion among the residents and a well connected neighborhood.

So far, two initiatives situated at OBJEKT 19 have already been working successfully with the communities surrounding BROTFABRIK WIEN. However, OBJEKT 19 in general is not well connected to the neighborhood yet. That is why in April 2016 the idea of a temporary lab was developed to reflect and experiment at the crossing between OBJEKT 19 and the neighborhood.

2 The social lab: phases, team and finances

In April 2016, the Dutch Think-and-do-tank Kennisland presented the FEED FORWARD-method, with which they already had experimented. Thanks to this facilitation, LIEBES KRETA was developed as a temporary lab, to reflect and experiment at the crossing between OBJEKT 19 and the neighborhood. The name LIEBES KRETA references the area surrounding the factory and its century old, yet informal nickname "Kreta". The lab consists of 4 phases:

1. learning about the lives, needs and resources of the local residents by collecting their life stories
2. collective evaluation to generate insights and to identify action opportunities together with residents
3. prototyping possible interventions
4. creating a sustainable infrastructure in which new initiatives can continue to thrive

The goal of the lab is to foster social cohesion within the population living in the surroundings of OBJEKT 19 and develop OBJEKT 19 further into a place where community meets, engages, cocreates and becomes heard.

The team consists of local team members based in Vienna and Kennisland as well as Remko Berkhout who are based in Amsterdam and Graz respectively. Weekly video conferences are used to update each other, and focused sprints every few weeks together with the facilitators provide us with the time and space to work efficiently on the prototypes.

The social lab is financed by Caritas as well as a private foundation. However, the sustainable development of the few prototypes which will come out of the various testing phases additional funds are needed.

3 What has been done so far

The multidisciplinary team collected about 40 stories within the neighborhood. First, we built up relationships with people we met on the streets, in shops etc. We listened to their stories and wrote them down. Subsequently, we asked them to take a look at them to check whether we got everything correctly. Cosima Terrasse, the artist and social designer involved in LIEBES KRETA additionally asked all the storytellers for their dreams and wishes. Based on the well known ship in a bottle Cosima Terrasse produced one bottle for each storyteller containing their individual impossible wishes. Together with the stories they were presented for some weeks and visitors were asked to share their insights, thoughts and emotions with us by writing on the story posters. We integrated them into the process of analyzing the stories. We identified the challenges as well as the potentials mentioned in the stories and came up with different ideas for prototypes. We are now in the phase of testing the prototypes and developing them together with the neighborhood.

4 Socially innovative solutions to societal challenges - the criteria

Innovation in project idea - novelty

- Whereas the method of FEED FORWARD is innovative by its approach, we also think of the prototypes as being innovative answers to challenges within the neighborhood.

- The focus of the social lab is not on problems only, but on the potentials within the neighborhood likewise. This way of looking at challenges helps in finding solutions which adequately fit to the local context.
- Everyone has his/her own life story. Therefore our target group was completely unlimited within the neighborhood. We took time to gain and offer the trust to and of people who might otherwise not participate in projects or share their insights.
- Residents often face various challenges in their lives. Although these are regularly intertwined, the different administrative units of the city cannot counter them adequately in their complexity since administration is sectorally divided. Multidimensional challenges, however, need multidimensional solutions. LIEBES KRETA tries to overcome these shortcomings by looking at identified needs among the neighborhood in their complexity.

Innovation in accessing target groups - involvement

- The residents are involved in each phase of the social lab. Storytellers become prototypers. The storytellers themselves act as multipliers within their own networks. Therefore, people who have not shared their stories are yet involved in the process of prototyping. Residents are not only seen and acknowledged but the space is given for them to participate actively and realize their own ideas.
- The social lab aims at empowering the residents living in the surroundings of OBJEKT 19, and empowering OBJEKT 19, by activating individual and collective capabilities/capacities as well as strengthening local structures and networks.

Innovation in the realisation of the project - effectiveness

- At the start of the social lab no one knew how the interventions would develop.
- In the run of the collective evaluation as well as during the first feedback loops of the prototype development people started to interact with each other who otherwise would not have done so.
- By permanently adapting the prototypes to the local context and the insights gained by realizing experimental interventions in order to test the prototype, the project is changing according to the needs.
- The project team is a multidisciplinary one. Besides that, a cooperation with the department SOCIAL DESIGN AS URBAN INNOVATION of the University of Applied Arts has begun.

Innovation in public perception - serving as an example

- From the start of the lab onwards we started updating the different players in the field of community work within the district of Favoriten on LIEBES KRETA.
- LIEBES KRETA is very much interested in a constructive dialogue with all stakeholders in the surroundings and in connecting the different players and initiatives with each other. The prototypes are not supposed to offer something which has already been there, but rather to fill the potential gaps.
- When it comes to rolling out the prototypes we are dependent on the cooperation with different institutions.
- The Viennese broadcaster W24 accompanied this first part of the social lab and produced a documentary which will be shown soon.
- One class of social design students of the University of Applied Arts is developing prototypes at LIEBES KRETA.