

March 2020

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The Urban Lab of Europe !

The BRICK-BEACH project Journal N° 4

Project led by the City of Vélez-Málaga



**CIRCULAR
ECONOMY**



The **BRICK-BEACH** project

The **BRICK-BEACH** project seeks to use construction and demolition waste to regenerate a disappeared beach in Velez-Málaga through the development of a circular economy model. The project will create a debris treatment plant and will design an innovative process that will allow the output materials to have the granulometry and softness needed to regenerate damaged sandy beaches such as the Mezquitilla beach. Debris from local illegal dumps will be treated and used for the integral beach regeneration and its surroundings, as well for experimenting together with local businesses other innovative circular economy products. An integrated set of socio-economic and environmental restoration programmes will be implemented to complete the beach regeneration. The newly created urban space next to the regenerated beach will also be used as an opportunity to generate new tourism-related as well as environmental leisure services and activities.

Partnership:

- City of Velez-Málaga
- Spanish Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries, Food and Environment
- Andalusian Agency for water and environment
- University of Málaga - 1 higher education and research institute
- Aula del Mar de Málaga - NGO
- Andalusian Association of Business of Construction and Demolition Waste recovery (AGRECA)

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This fourth Journal of BRICK-BEACH project, reports on the advancement of the project till March 2020, and focuses on the activities realised in different areas, main challenges and findings.

At the time of writing this Journal, the coronavirus pandemic is hitting the vast majority of countries. In the case of Spain, in a particularly virulent manner. The emergency measures adopted by the government are affecting all economic activity, including the BRICK-BEACH project. Under these circumstances, a reflection on what measures should be taken is necessary in order to mitigate the negative impact of this health and economic crisis on the implementation of BRICK-BEACH.

The project continues its trajectory as concerns the administrative aspects and environmental authorizations. Everything seems to indicate that shortly the authorization regarding the recycling plant will be issued and, therefore, the work procurement process may begin. However, doubts regarding support within the government of the municipality of Vélez-Málaga about the location of the said plant continue to exist. In relation to this last aspect, although in recent months the debate on the location of the plant has decreased, it is possible that once the environmental authorization is issued, this aspect may arise again.

The preparation and submission of the project related to the works on the beach, including the levees below the water level, was completed and presented to the relevant authorities for their analysis and pertinent environmental authorization in November

2019. It is estimated that the time required for this analysis can reach six months from its presentation, which adds more pressure to the BRICK-BEACH project from the point of view of its implementation timeframe.

Regarding the works in the area adjacent to the Mezquitilla beach, the situation has improved substantially in recent months. The environmental authorization will be issued very soon, only pending the approval of the authority in charge of the Public Hydraulic Domain, since there is a small area considered a flood zone. Thus, the corresponding tender may be launched in the near future. All this would contribute, in an important way, to make visible to the citizens and users of the area the reality of the project and to lessen the concern expressed by some groups in this regard.

The dissemination and communication tasks of the BRICK-BEACH project have continued at a sustained rhythm, putting paying special attention to the students in primary and secondary education level. The contest for the design of the project mascot was also launched. The level of knowledge, as well as support for the BRICK-BEACH project, is high and very diverse. However, as already mentioned in the previous Journal, it is essential to start the works as soon as possible in any of the areas of the project. In other words, the recycling plant, the area adjacent to the beach and / or on the Mezquitilla beach itself. The risk that the support will turn into frustration when no progress in the implementation of the project is found is relatively high.

In conclusion, the BRICK-BEACH project is still at a critical moment. Despite some progress in obtaining environmental authorizations, the project's time frame makes extremely difficult to complete its execution in time. In this sense, it

would be wise, given these circumstances, as well as the problems arising from the coronavirus, to analyse the possibility of an extension of the project.

2. BRICK-BEACH: GENERAL CONTEXT

As outlined in the previous Journals, BRICK-BEACH is a highly innovative circular economy project that intends the recovering of a beach that disappeared several decades ago, due to the effect of the tides and human activity through the treatment of construction waste to obtain gravel similar to the sand on the beaches. This implies, among other activities, the construction of a recycling plant for construction materials deposited, basically, in illegal warehouses.

BRICK-BEACH circular economy project, during the period under review, continues its complex path, especially concerning the **environmental authorizations** and the execution times of project milestones. Recently, one of the pending authorizations has been unlocked. Specifically, the one that refers to the area adjacent to the Mezquitilla beach, which, in a relatively short period, could continue with the works related to the facilities and activities planned in the project and which was widely explained in Journal 2. Unfortunately, the situation regarding the construction of the recycling plant is not so positive. Although it has also experienced remarkable progress about the process of approval of its environmental authorization, it is still awaiting its issuance by the relevant authorities. As regards the dikes / reefs planned in the interior of the sea, the project was presented to the relevant authorities in November 2019 and, taking into account the complexity of the works to be carried out, it will be necessary to wait at least five months to obtain the relevant environmental authorization.

In summary, although administrative procedures have progressed substantially from Journal

number 3, it still represents a relevant challenge for the implementation of BRICK-BEACH project in the established time frame. In this context, the effective implementation of the works of BRICK-BEACH project is still waiting, despite the effort made by the technical team and the project partners, and the awareness of the financial implications that a delay of this magnitude can be in BRICK-BEACH.

The problems of internal **leadership** of the municipality of Vélez-Málaga mentioned in Journal 3, although less evident in the period under review, are still latent, and we will have to wait for the course of events in the coming months to determine its real impact on the development of the actions and works of BRICK-BEACH. Awareness activities within the top political leaders of Vélez-Málaga City Council on what a circular economy project financed by the European Union represents, must continue to be a priority, especially as regards the construction of the plant of recycling of waste building materials. The discrepancies regarding the location of the plant are not completely solved, which represents a real challenge for the project. Bearing in mind that once the environmental authorizations become a reality, and that the relevant public tenders for the construction of the recycling plant and the rest of the BRICK-BEACH works must be carried out, such activities must be developed with clear support and without reservations by the high officials and political representatives of the municipality of Vélez-Málaga.

The general context of BRICK-BEACH continues, in the period under analysis, being worrying from the pending activities and the timing established

for its implementation. Of all this, the BRICK-BEACH partners are perfectly aware and, to the

extent possible, relevant measures have been taken to solve the aforementioned problems.

3. PROJECT UPDATE

The previous Journal number 3 covered the period from April till the end of October 2019, while the present one (Journal 4) covers the period from November 2019 till the end of March 2020. In this Journal, the focus is put on the status and

activities carried out in relation to the recycling plant project, the activities realised around the Mezquitilla beach and the new communication activities with civil society as a whole.

3.1 The operation and management of the Waste Recycling Plant and its location

Once the project for the construction of the **recycling plant** has been submitted to the relevant authorities to obtain the corresponding environmental permit before the bidding of the work, despite certain advances in the process of examining the said project, the truth is that it is still waiting for the environmental authorization. Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is also true that BRICK-BEACH has continued to work on the management model of the recycling plant once it is in operation.

This model is crucial for the proper functioning of the plant as it will address aspects, such as 1) the management programme, work processes and catalogue of recycling products; 2) the evaluation of potential users of the plant, taking into consideration the volume of CDW generated in the geographical area of influence; 3) the estimation of income from the treatment of CDW products and all potential incomes; 4) the proposal fees that will be charged for the treatment of CDW and the possibility of having discounts for the cleaning of illegal landfills. In short, at the present time, it is expected that as regard the use of the plant, it will be used by all the companies producing CDW materials in the area and paying the fees determined by the Municipality of Vélez-Málaga. As concern the management, a private

company will be in charge of the plant after a long-term contractual arrangement following a public procurement process. Of course, both aspects will take into consideration the specific requirements of BRICK-BEACH project. Mainly, the need of using the final products after treatment for the regeneration of the Mezquitilla beach; and the norms, certification test, etc. legally required.

One of the aspects that the initiative must deal carefully is the landfill from which CDW will be collected for the recycling plant, among other sources. It is well known that due to the construction activity in the zone and especially on the coast, legal dumps and illegal landfills are spread in the area. However, it is crucial at that time to prepare an updated map of these dumps –the Provincial Council of Málaga developed the last landfills map in 2012-. In accordance with the Spanish Law, the owner of the land where the debris lies is responsible for cleaning them and the Municipality can force them to do so. The purpose should be not only to use this debris for the recycling plant but also to restore the landfills solving their environmental and landscape impact. This is a relevant step of BRICK-BEACH Initiative since one of the main characteristics of the circular economy is the inter-relationship of environmental problems

and solutions with a common objective. On the other hand, although it might seem an easy activity, the number of landfills and owners, its location, the type of debris and its transport are quite complex issues that represent a challenge for the fulfilment of the activity.

With respect to the issue of the **location** of the recycling plant, at least from a political point of view, little has changed from the previous Journal 3. As a reminder, the problem of the location of the recycling plant arose within of the government team of the municipality of Vélez-Málaga, leader of BRICK-BEACH project, considering that the proposed location negatively affected its neighbours due to supposed environmental impacts (noise, dust, etc.). Despite various

attempts to solve this problem, the truth is that, as of the current date, the positions remain the same and the final result is unknown. It goes without saying that this situation affects the project significantly. At the same time, given that this problem has been reflected in the media, different neighbourhood associations have taken a stand in favour and against the selected location, causing a feeling of insecurity regarding the final location of the plant.

However, despite all the above, it is expected that once the environmental authorization for the recycling plant becomes a reality, a political agreement will be reached within the government of the municipality of Vélez-Málaga that finally puts a final point to this problem.

3.2 More test for the beach sand

Undoubtedly, the part of the BRICK-BEACH project with the greatest impact on the perception of citizens is the recovery of the Mezquitilla beach, and the aspect of the sand to be used for its regeneration. In this sense, the University the Málaga (UMA) continued to make different analysis and laboratory tests to improve the quality and roundness of the bricks and concrete, which will be the basic materials to be used in the recycling plant.

From the last two tests, it is concluded that the ceramic materials comply as an inert one and that the concrete and mixed materials are as well perfectly inert. Thus, from the point of view of the material to be used in the beach regeneration,

it can be considered that the project has accomplished one of the most important steps.

It is important to mention, and citizens should know, that the beach that will result from the regeneration works will be a “unique” beach. This beach will not look exactly like another beach on the coast. The need to carefully explain this circumstance to citizens, associations, neighbours and, in general, to all potential beach users, is crucial and urgent. In this sense, the best remedy is to increase the communication to those stakeholders promoting the “singularity” of the new beach, and transforming it in a potential attraction for users and tourists.

3.3 Economic activities for the beach and surroundings

Once the plan for the environmental regeneration for the adjacent plot to the “Mezquitilla” beach elaborated –the detail explanation of it was presented in Journal 3-, which at present is waiting for the unified environmental authorisation,

BRICK-BEACH must initiate the preparation of the economic model to be developed in this zone. Different meetings were held in previous months with entrepreneurial organisations and business associations to get relevant information

and proposals. The final target of this activity will be the development of a programme to support the establishment of business initiatives and companies in the tourism, sport and leisure services sectors based on high-quality environmental criteria. The support to these initiatives will be under the form of training, mentoring, hosting in the municipal facilities and infrastructures or concessions in the public space. In any case, no direct grants will be given to those business initiatives.

The BRICK-BEACH project envisages the implementation of a sustainable and innovative production model based on the circular economy. One of the initiatives to be launched is the creation of an experimental aquaculture centre.

This Experimental Aquaculture Centre on the coast of the municipality will complement the

important fishing activity of the port of “La Caleta”, through the study and fry of commercial species and the use of its distribution channels, offering a sustainable employment alternative to the fishing sector. The use of recirculating water systems for aquaculture will allow considerable nutrient savings and a reduction in the volume of discharges, in line with the approaches of the circular economy.

Regional and national administrations must approve this project. The definition of the project proposal to be elaborated will contain the descriptive memory, annexes, plans and estimated budget of the planned facilities (including offshore if necessary), market and biological, technical and economic feasibility studies, as well as a production plan and a cultivation process description.

3.4 Network awareness and dissemination

During the reporting period, activities aimed at disseminating the project’s objectives among stakeholders, as well as the socio-economic promotion of the area and its actors, have continued. In this period, the emphasis was placed on disseminating the reality of the BRICK-BEACH project among neighbourhood associations, as well as in education through the involvement of the youngest, with the following activities:

- **BRICK-BEACH Project-Presentation Day**

In order to publicize and raise awareness among citizens and neighbourhood organizations in the

area about the project and its implications, on November 30, 2019, an information day was organized in which, with extensive assistance, the future location was visited from the recycling plant. Likewise, the pertinent environmental measures were explained in order to minimize possible negative impacts and a presentation was made of the recycling processes and their final products for the regeneration of the Mezquitilla beach. The partners of the project, as well as the head of the project attended the information day.



- **Meetings with the schools**

As mentioned in previous magazines, one of the communication activities that presents the best results is, without a doubt, those aimed at primary and secondary school students. The interest and response of the students and the support of the heads of the educational centres can be described as excellent. In this sense, during the analysed period, the outreach activities of the BRICK-BEACH project were carried out in a set of centres from Vélez-Málaga, Torre del Mar, Caleta de Vélez, Almayate, Valle-Niza, Triana and Benajarafe.

- **Mezquitilla Beach Mascot Design Contest**

During the period under report, the organization of a contest has begun, among the students of the educational centres located in the aforementioned municipalities, for the design of the future mascot of the Mezquitilla beach that meets the essential characteristics of the BRICK-BEACH project. That is, the recycling of construction waste and a regenerated beach with the final product obtained from the recycling plant. More specifically, the students have to design a mascot that serves as an identifying image of the project and submit it to a contest, the prize of which will be to participate in a Conference Environmental in the Alborania museum of the Aula del Mar.

3.5 BRICK-BEACH management

Concerning the management of the BRICK-BEACH project, the monthly meetings of the heads of the participating institutions have continued to take place. Undoubtedly, the established meeting system and the decision-making process constitute one of the key elements of the progress experienced in the project. Also worth noting is the commitment and professionalism of the project's administrative managers. All this, in the widely mentioned context of the general delay in the implementation of the project activities.

As for the communication area, a specialized company is in charge of the communication strategy with all relevant levels and this represents key support in the implementation of the project. BRICK-BEACH will also be a success to the extent that society as a whole identifies with and supports it. At this point it is important to mention, once again, the risk of creating expectations among citizens that, for the reasons repeatedly mentioned, cannot be fulfilled, creating an effect totally contrary to the one sought.



4. REPEATED CHALLENGES AND TIME CONSTRAINT

The BRICK-BEACH project continues to face, virtually, the same challenges and problems as in the previous Journal. Despite the efforts of those most directly responsible for its management

and implementation, there are still a series of obstacles that significantly hinder its correct implementation and which are described below.

4.1 Procurement for the recycling plant and final solution for location?

The problems mentioned in the previous Journal regarding obtaining the Unified Environmental Authorization before launching the tender for the construction of the recycling plant, in the period under analysis, have experienced some progress towards their solution. After several steps before the relevant authorities, everything seems to indicate that the environmental authorisation will be issued in the coming weeks and, at least, the uncertainty regarding its own emission will be resolved. Logically, this does not mean that said authorization does not imply certain conditions that would have to be resolved.

The problem within the government team of the Vélez-Málaga city council regarding the location of the plant continues in practically the same situation as in the previous reporting period.

There does not seem to be, at the time of writing this Journal, a change in the opposing positions in the government team that could mean the solution to the aforementioned problem. The environmental and administrative problems raised by the government group that opposes the planned location of the plant must be resolved as soon as possible and, in this sense, it is expected that the environmental authorization, once obtained, can contribute to the solution of this problem.

In conclusion, unfortunately, the biggest problem that the BRICK-BEACH project faces is the lack of time for its execution. It does not seem reasonable to expect that in the time frame until the end of the execution period it is feasible to complete the project as designed.

4.2 Is there time for a new beach?

Finally, the project related to the works and levees on the Mezquitilla coast was presented to the relevant authorities in November 2019, which means that at least 6 months must elapse before obtaining the relevant environmental authorization. This represents that it will not be in a position to launch the tender until the end of 2020, in the best scenario.

Regarding the actions to be carried out in the adjacent area of the beach, the situation is significantly better since, everything seems to indicate that the authorization will be available soon, so that the tender could be launched in a short period of time.

Regarding the existence and accumulation of beach sand in the Mezquitilla from the recycling plant, it is difficult to predict when and in what quantity it will be available and visible. In any case, it does not seem reasonable to estimate that the regeneration of the Mezquitilla beach is a reality,

as the residents of the area are imagining it. Thus, a rethinking of the communication strategy towards the neighbours and potential users of the beach should be carried out in the right terms of time for implementation and features of the beach.

4.3 Leadership and latent political conflicts

The leadership problem mentioned repeatedly throughout this Journal and in previous ones remains latent and crystallizes in the decision about the location of the recycling plant. It does not seem either that it is going to have a solution

through a change of position clearly in favour of the proposed location. It is expected that the probably favourable environmental authorisation for the location of the recycling plant will solve this problem.

4.4 Communicating with target beneficiaries

Communication to neighbours and associations of all kinds has so far been one of the strengths of the BRICK-BEACH project. The work carried out in this area has been constant and directed at all sectors, with a special dedication in the educational sector. Young first and secondary students have been a group to which more attention has been devoted, considering it as one of the most sensitive and that can best help the sustainability of the project.

activities. Unlike, it is the translation into a clear, direct and realistic language of the objectives and expected results that, fundamentally, are reflected in a regenerated beach that did not exist before. Neighbours and potential users have an image -promoted also through the broadcast videos prepared for this purpose-, which hardly corresponds to what can be observed at the end of the BRICK-BEACH implementation period. In this sense, it is expected that the final image of the regenerated beach, although it will probably not be reached by the end of the BRICK-BEACH implementation period, is a reality beyond this implementation time.

The problem that the project faces at this point is the expectations generated through communication efforts. Communication is not something isolated or disconnected from other

4.5 Up-scaling and the Green Deal

The circular economy is one of the key elements of the Green Deal adopted by the European Commission last December. In March 2020, the Commission will adopt an EU industrial strategy to tackle the double challenge of green and digital transformation. Along with the industrial strategy, a new circular economy action plan will help modernize the EU economy and capitalize on the opportunities of the circular

economy at national and global level. A key objective of the new policy framework will be to stimulate the development of leading markets for climate neutral and circular products, in the EU and beyond.

In this context, the BRICK-BEACH project represents a unique example opportunity of a circular economy project that can and should disseminate its results at national and European

level. BRICK-BEACH continues to arouse great interest in other municipalities with similar problems, as well as at the regional and national level, where contacts have been maintained with these administrations with a view to learning about the experience of the project and its incorporation in the programming documents for the period. 2021-2027.

This chapter should also include the participation of BRICK-BEACH in the Porto 4th CITIES FORUM 2020 - "Together we shape a sustainable urban future" organised by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

MAPPING BRICK-BEACH AGAINST THE ESTABLISHED UIA CHALLENGES

| Challenge | Level | Observations |
|---|---------------|---|
| 1. Leadership for implementation | High | The leadership of the Vélez-Málaga City Council continues to be questioned within its own government team. Although in recent months the media virulence against and in favour of the location of the recycling plant has decreased considerably, there is no unique and favourable position within the consistory. This continues to place the criterion of leadership in a weak position. |
| 2. Public procurement | High | The procurement continues to be a real challenge for the project. Although progress has been noticed in obtaining the environmental authorizations, the truth is that, as of the writing of the Journal, no tender has yet been launched. This situation is really a problem when placed within the BRICK-BEACH implementation time frame. |
| 3. Integrated cross-departmental working | Low | Till present, the project is well integrated in the relevant departments and units of the municipality, at least at the level of knowledge. The participation of the different municipal departments, as well as those of the different project partners does not represent a challenge for the project. As already mentioned, the technical and administrative coordination is one of the strong aspects of BRICK-BEACH. |
| 4. Adopting a participative approach | Low | The level of participation and commitment of the different partners can be described as excellent. The monthly meeting system, as well as the established electronic documentation exchange, works properly, which representing an aspect to be highlighted. |
| 5. Monitoring and evaluation | High | The monitoring and evaluation of the project indicators, logically, are affected by the general delay in their implementation, which also implies an aspect to be taken into account and the need to adopt corrective measures as soon as possible, as already explained in the previous Journal. |
| 6. Communicating with target beneficiaries | Medium | Communication, in general terms, is one of the positive aspects of the project from the beginning of it. However, the risk of not achieving the expected results -especially with regard to the Mezquitilla beach- may provoke a negative feeling towards the project among residents and neighbours of the area, which must be prevented as soon as possible, through, among others measures, of a truthful and transparent communication on the state of implementation of the project. |
| 7. Up scaling | Medium | Based on the interest aroused from its origins among local, regional and national authorities, BRICK-BEACH has all the elements to be disseminated as an example of a successful circular economy project. However, attention should be paid to the elements that are hindering the implementation of the project in a timely manner, as well as the expressed leadership considerations, as aspects to take into account and lessons learned for future projects. |

5. LESSONS LEARNT

The lessons learned in relation to this Journal are practically the same as those expressed in previous journals. Nevertheless, it is possible to underline, even more, if possible, some aspects of interest.

The problem of the lack of agreement within the government team regarding the location of the plant is affecting the leadership criterion, as one of the key elements for the correct and successful implementation of BRICK-BEACH. The lesson that can be drawn from this situation is the need, for future similar initiatives, of a prior institutional declaration by the consistory, which would make the agreement with regard to its essential elements abundantly clear. This option has been proposed in Journal 3 and it should be taken into consideration even for BRICK-BEACH once the issue of the plant location is solved.

Another important lesson to be learned from BRICK-BEACH is that projects in which there are

a significant number of works or supply tenders, subject to prior environmental authorizations, must have a time frame for their implementation greater than three years. There is no point in all the efforts involved in the elaboration and development of an innovative project like the one in question, if it cannot be executed correctly due to somewhat arbitrary limitations in time.

In the field of communication, there are also lessons learned for this and future projects. BRICK-BEACH is a project that affects and concerns a high and varied number of citizens and interests. As it is an innovative project (which also involves risk and a significant impact on the lives of citizens), it requires, from the start of the project, a professional communication strategy that takes into account the different variables and, at the same time, makes it flexible and dynamic. Circumstances have made this not the case at BRICK-BEACH until recently.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions for this Journal 4 can be summarised as follows:

- The BRICK-BEACH project continues to be in a critical situation due to the accumulated delays in obtaining environmental authorizations that have a direct and negative impact on the time frame in which the project must be executed. Although the situation seems to have improved somewhat in recent months - the environmental authorizations for the recycling plant and for the works in the area adjacent to the Mezquitilla beach are expected soon - the time necessary to launch the tender, making the selection, executing the work and receiving it, makes it very difficult to imagine carrying out all the necessary steps in the remaining time until July 2021.
- All project partners, to the extent of their possibilities, have continued to work on the preparation of relevant studies and tests, such as the University of Malaga and the

Environment Water Agency (AMAYA), with the submission of the dikes project to the relevant authorities to its analysis and necessary environmental authorization. This last project was introduced in November 2019, which, given the current circumstances, it is not reasonable to expect the authorisation before July 2020.

- The dissemination activities of the project have continued at a good pace throughout the months reported in this journal. Special attention has been paid in the primary and secondary education fields and the contest for the design of the Mezquitilla beach mascot has been launched. The expectations and enthusiasm for the regeneration of said beach are very high and are present in all the presentations of the beach in schools and neighbourhood associations. If not carried out in the terms in which it is presented, frustration may be especially important.

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.



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