

# **KEYS OF THE SOCIAL INNOVATION MODEL OF THE ULIA NEIGHBORHOOD, DONOSTIA**

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## CLAVES DEL MODELO DE INNOVACIÓN SOCIAL EN EL BARRIO DE ULIA, DONOSTIA

**La asociación Uliako Lore Baratzak, nos ilustra con un modelo idóneo para el intercambio de conocimiento, integración y crecimiento sostenible**

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At the foothills of Mount Ulia in Donostia-San Sebastián, it is located in the heart of the emblematic Ategorrieta street (which connects the city with Pasaia and where where Arzak's restaurant is located) **a space self-managed by the community** in which numerous activities for the exchange of knowledge and healthy lifestyles are carried out. Until 2008, the farm housed the nurseries that supplied the colorful capital of Gipuzkoa with flowers, the year in which they transferred their activity and the farm was fearful of seeing a cemented future come.

The urban limitation of San Sebastián is determined by the **abruptness** of its orography and makes its **urban growth on consolidated land** a necessity. That is why a farm in the middle of Ategorrieta street is a succulent attraction for many people. It is there where the **Ulia Neighborhood Society** appears, embodying a communal feeling for the protection of a space of great value for their neighborhood and for the city **holding back the constructive desire** of many agents.

In a first intervention, the Ulia Neighborhood Society managed to stop the demolition works of the old **city water tanks** that are located under the ground on this plot. As a result of this citizen awakening, the deposits were determined as historical heritage, and today they are protected under the umbrella of the **Special Plan for Built Urban Heritage** (PEPPUC).

This first victory in defense of the water tanks strengthened the community in its determination to take advantage of the plot of nurseries. Thus, in 2013, the Uliako Lore Baratzak project was submitted to the city council competition, which handed over custody of the park to the Ulia Neighborhood Society. The project would take its first steps in 2015 after the resolution of the contest, to finally, two years later, create the [Uliako Lore Environmental Association -Baratzak](#).

The Environmental Association is a non-profit entity that in its statutes includes the objectives for

which it was created and those it pursues. These objectives are the following:

- Safeguard the Ulia Nursery Park and open it up for the use and enjoyment of all citizens
- Implement participatory dynamics of social and cultural inclusion, for the neighborhood and for the city of Donostia.
- Provide a meeting point for people, neighborhood associations and other organizations sensitive to ecology and specifically to the preservation of Mount Ulia.
- Work on urban agroecology, in its definition and concretization in the Viveros de Ulía Park, revitalizing the community garden, collective terraces and school gardens in the park.
- Consolidate a neighborhood composting system on the premises and raise awareness in the community about recycling and reuse.
- Assume Urban Custody as a method of managing this public space, to revalue its social and environmental uses.

The **association started from an advantageous situation** since the land had the ideal infrastructure to undertake the activities that were proposed from the beginning. The nurseries, drawers, green spaces, irrigation system, electricity, present on the plot only needed the push of a



group of **committed people** with sufficient **leadership** to transmit the potential of a self-managed environment that immediately knew how to articulate an attractive mechanism for the community. Thus, an **open and collaborative space** was formed that included a multitude of **public and private agents to exploit the socio-cultural and ecological benefits of a dynamic space**.

Another of the most successful initiatives are the "Txiki-Foxes" which consists of allocating every Thursday to make **children protagonists**. A "Txiki Foxes" club has been formed, made up of a group of scouts with the aim of promoting the attachment to nature among the little ones. A magazine is also prepared for members with information on the events held, administrative efforts, the agenda for the coming days, and calls for participation and awareness.

At this time, a campaign has been closed to receive support signatures to prevent the destruction of this park to build 70 homes. The campaign, carried out at [change.org](https://change.org), managed to gather **4,443 signatures with which it paralyzed, for the moment, the building > of endowment housing in this area**.

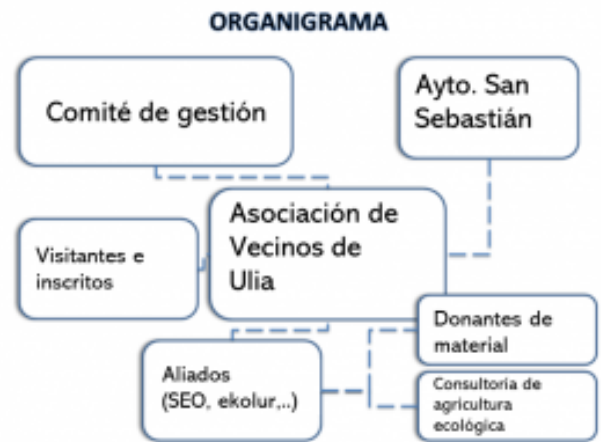
The importance of **safeguarding the old nursery** is multidimensional. On the one hand, because it belongs to a natural enclave such as Mount Ulia, where species protected by the Habitats Directive are found, such as the webbed newt and the common midwife toad. The cultivation history of the area has also been preserved in its seeds and in the biodiversity of plant species that can be consulted on a website for [wildlife inventory of the area](#).

**Social innovation** also has intangible relevance but is highly beneficial for the community. The people, groups and agents who approach and form part of this open, supportive, inclusive and participatory community find a group of people who have **common shared objectives**, where eco-

responsibility and awareness are promoted. , education and awareness, in a society that advocates for the common good. The eco-responsible practices are didactic and aimed at different groups, and despite the fact that the gardens are managed by only 8 families, they are open to voluntary community work by other people, involving the majority of the population. Such has been the repercussion that the **Basque Government gave the Uliá Neighborhood Association a well-deserved recognition** for its involvement and commitment to society through the [elkarlan awards](#).

**Uliako Lore Baratzak is an example of good work** , of a battle that is gaining followers and balancing its future in favor of the eco-social park, necessary in increasingly urbanized and socially alienated environments where the good Doing community exercises a necessary social good. Unfortunately, this example has not penetrated the city's strategies and, despite the fact that there are some community gardens, they are located on the outskirts of the city and have no impact on the social fabric as they only favor families who They manage the orchard.

Uliako Lore Baratzak is something more, and should **be established as a model for the neighborhoods** of the city that have green spaces capable of hosting this kind of urban agriculture and social inclusion initiatives. Given the good work, the successes and the repercussion that this initiative is gaining, it seems to us an **successful example** of models of social action, eco-responsibility and inclusion in all the neighborhoods of the city.



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