

YOUTH
IN
THE
CITY

YOUTH IN THE CITY: LA NOSTRA PRATO

A TEACHER'S GUIDE ON HOW TO
EXPLORE THE CITY OF PRATO WITH
YOUR STUDENTS THROUGH A DIGITAL
STORYTELLING JOURNEY.

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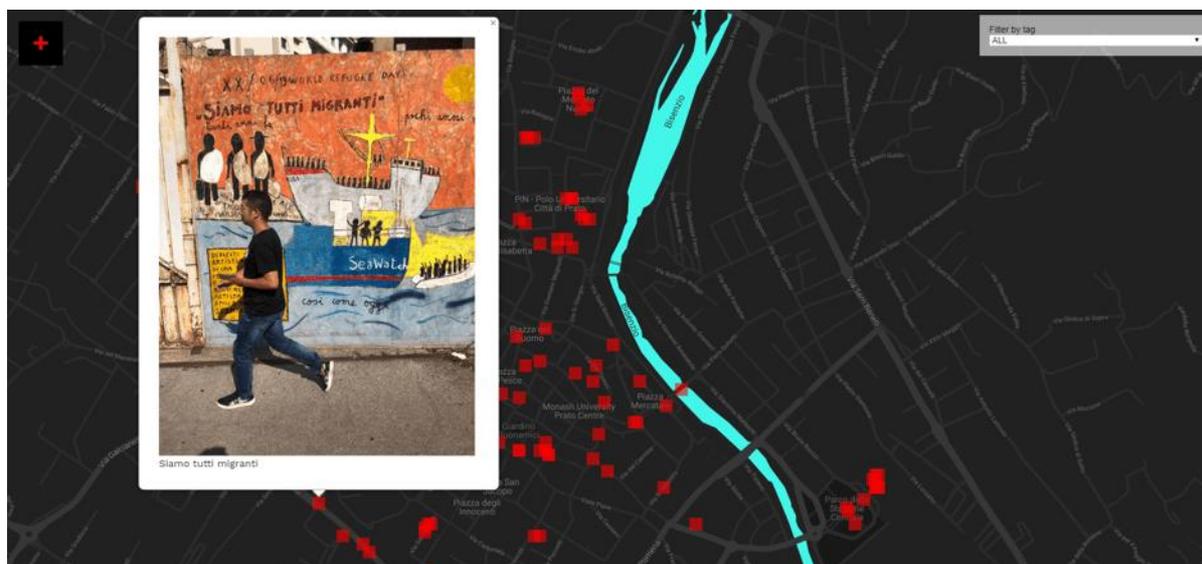
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OVERVIEW

La Nostra Prato is a digital storytelling experience that provides an original interpretation of the Italian city of Prato from the many perspectives of its multicultural youth. Produced as part of the *Youth in the City* research initiative, it features geo-localised stories, photographs, videos and testimonies created by the 48 young urban explorers who joined our participatory digital workshops in October 2019.

This document presents guidelines on how to use *La Nostra Prato* in the classroom, offering advice to educators on how to make the most of the digital storytelling experience through a series of in-class activities tailored for students from age fourteen onwards.

The guide first provides background information on the *Youth in the City* research initiative and on the city of Prato that can be used to introduce the activity or to answer students' questions throughout. It then delves into the materials and set-up needed to best organise the learning experience for students. It presents the three key modules that make up *La Nostra Prato*, offering detailed instructions on how to approach them through in-class activities for each module. Finally, the guide provides information on how to run a debriefing session and on how to replicate the experience by running your own workshop with students.

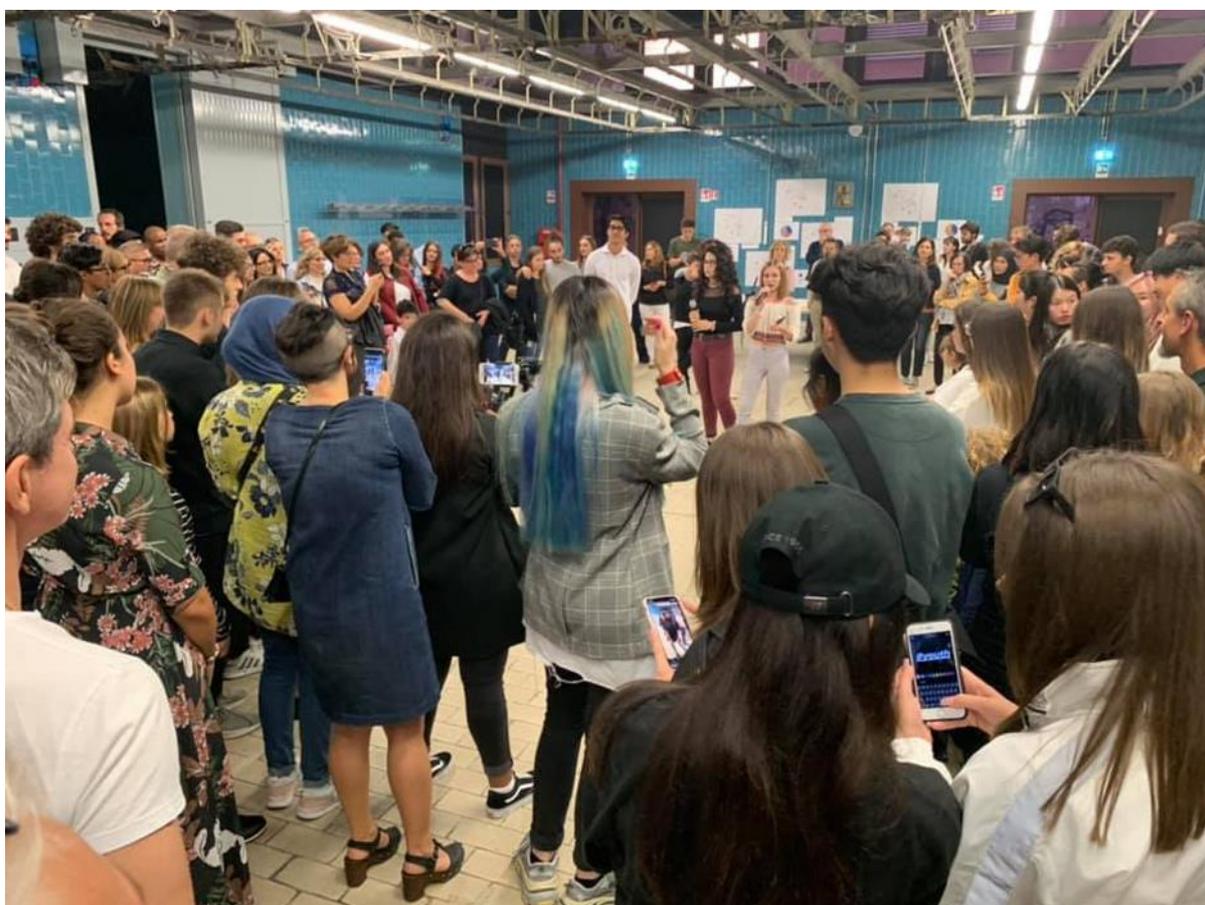


Siamo tutti migranti/We are all migrants: Photo from the digital map produced by students who attended the Youth in the City workshops in Prato.

WHAT IS YOUTH IN THE CITY?

Youth in the City is an international research initiative led by Monash University that promotes digital participatory action research with multicultural and migrant youth as an effective response to the xenophobic contents that readily spread on social media and in public discourse. We work with young people across the world to reclaim urban space and imagine shared transcultural futures through participatory mapping, co-designed creative interventions and digital storytelling.

In 2019, we conducted our first project in Prato, one of the most multicultural cities in Italy. [Youth in the city: La Nostra Prato](#) was designed and run by Rita Wilson, Francesco Ricatti and Matteo Dutto (Monash University), Luca Simeone, Pieter Overgoor and Yu-Chun Li (Aalborg University), Salvatore Iaconesi and Oriana Persico (Human Ecosystems Relazioni). We applied our expertise in transcultural studies, intercultural communication, interaction design, participatory mapping and digital storytelling, to develop collaborative work with the teachers running the [Intercultural Program](#) of Prato's high-school network, and eight local high-schools. This pilot project was funded by the [National Geographic Society](#) (NGS-56467E-19), the [Scanlon Foundation](#) and the [City Council of Prato](#)



Students involved in the 'Youth in the City' project launch the pop-up exhibition at Officine Giovani, Prato, Italy on 5 October 2019.

PRATO AT A GLANCE

In this section you can find more information on the city of Prato and on its history. You can use this to introduce the lesson to students, to prepare new activities or to provide additional elements of reflection during the discussion.



Postcard produced by workshop participants to represent the many languages of Prato.

Known over the years as the “city of rags”, the “Manchester of Tuscany” and the “factory-city” Prato has always been a transnational and productive crossroad of people, languages, ideas and goods. Situated just 17 km northwest of Florence, Prato is the second largest city of Tuscany, Italy’s most multicultural city and Europe’s largest textile district. Most importantly, this industrious and multifaceted city is a privileged window into the future of Italy and Europe, where we can witness first-hand the positive impact of migration on the social, economic and cultural ecosystem of a city (Ricatti, Dutto, and Wilson 2019).

According to the 2019 report of the national statistical agency (ISTAT) Italy's population has fallen for the first time in 90 years to about 55 million. Driven by a steady decline in birth rates, the number of residents decreased by 677,000 between 2014 and 2018. According to a recent United Nations report the total population growth rate is set to decline even further in the next decades (United Nations 2019). Italy remains the second oldest country in the world after Japan, with almost 170 people aged 65 and over per 100 people between 0 and 14 years. 2018 marked a slowdown in GDP volume, which went down to +0.9% compared to 2017's +1.7%. Strong inequality in wealthfare conditions persists, tied not only to regional differences, gender and instruction levels, but also to age. The absolute index of

poverty has grown more sharply for people under the age of 34 (Istituto nazionale di statistica 2019).

While Italy experienced a negative growth of population of about -2 per 1000 residents, the province of Prato has grown in 2018 of about 6.52 units per 1000 residents, making it the only Tuscan province to experience growth. The steady population growth that Prato experienced since the post WW2 years has been driven largely by internal and external migration. As of 31 December 2018, foreign residents represent 20.83% of the total population, making Prato the most multicultural city in Italy. Chinese represent 54% of documented migrants with a presence of 20,695, followed by Albanians (11%), Romanians (9%), Pakistanis (5%) and Moroccans (4%). Overall, 124 of the 198 different nationalities currently living in Italy are present in the city (Ufficio di Statistica 2019).



The 'best kebab' of Prato speaks Italian and Chinese

The Italian economy has experienced significant difficulties in overcoming the 2009 global economic crisis and it's still struggling to reach the level of growth of other European countries. Driven by its textile district, with over 7000 companies operating in the fashion sector and exporting goods for 2 billion euro each year, Prato was able to emerge from the crisis by diversifying its offer, investing in innovation and drawing strength from the diversity of the people that call it home. Prato is today the Italian city with the highest number of companies owned by foreign entrepreneurs with 46.9% of the total number of companies owned (CENSIS 2019). Driven by the Chinese companies operating in the fast fashion sector, foreign-owned companies in Prato are diversifying their offer and are today more

stable and integrated in the local economy. More interestingly, women are 15% more likely to hold managerial positions than in Italian owned companies and foreign entrepreneurs under the age of 30 are double the amount of Italians.

The way in which encounters between different cultures shape the present and futures of modern cities is perhaps most visible in its youngest citizens. In the school year 2017/2018 young migrants and children of migrants aged between 6 and 19 accounted for 27.94% of primary and secondary level school students in the city of Prato. The number of students who don't have Italian citizenship enrolled in Prato's schools is almost three times that of the national average across Italy and 73.96% of the foreign residents aged between 0 and 17 were born in Prato (FIL Formazione Innovazione Lavoro Srl and Ufficio di Statistica del Comune di Prato 2019).



A group of high-school students from Prato who took part in the Youth in the City workshop.



The Serraglio Playground in Prato

Prato's multicultural youth has multiple sites of encounter across the city, but the one that perhaps best encapsulates the informal and spontaneous ways in which local youth negotiate their sense of belonging through multiple and dynamic practices of belonging is the basketball court located behind the Serraglio train station. This informal space of encounter and exchange is perhaps the one that gives us a better idea of what the future of Prato holds.

Prato is an example of the inextricable and generative ties between migration and innovation. A historically productive city always open to the exchange of ideas, goods, people and languages, Prato has over time become one of Europe's most multilingual, transcultural and innovative urban environments.

PLANNING THE JOURNEY ACROSS PRATO



The landing page of the digital storytelling experience

La Nostra Prato is structured in three modules: Past, 2019 and Futures. This digital storytelling experience is tailored for students aged fourteen onwards. It targets the development of intercultural and plurilingual competencies through experiential and relational activities that will require students to conduct research and use their critical analysis skills. In doing so, it answers to the objectives outlined by the Council of Europe in its 2010's Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural education, offering an effective tool to foster inclusion and social cohesion and encouraging students to engage with the diversity of languages and cultures that characterise our contemporary cities and societies.

La Nostra Prato can easily be experienced as part of a history, geography, civics education or language class. These guidelines provide suggested activities for each module, which can be run in-class or assigned as homework. Each step of the journey should take approximately 50/60 minutes to run, allowing you to guide your students through the full experience across three sessions. You can easily tailor the experience to your own needs, if you wish to spend more or less time on each module.

OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The digital storytelling experience is meant to take users on a journey through the multicultural history of a superdiverse city across the years. Over the course of this activity you and your students will discover Prato through the senses, emotions and hopes of 48 young urban explorers, exploring the urban reality they live in and learning how they imagine a different and better future for their city.

By the end of the experience students will:

- Learn more about how migration shaped the history of the cities we live in. In doing so they will develop a deeper understanding of how migration creates spaces of productive encounters and reciprocal exchanges between different cultures;

- Engage and interact with a wide variety of stories created by their peers. This will allow them to experience first-hand how the multicultural youth of Prato interacts with their city, stimulating reflections on their own relationships with the city they live in and allowing students to further develop intercultural competencies;
- Experience how a group of 48 students created a public exhibition in less than a week, reclaiming a public space for self-representation. This will stimulate reflections of their own agency and can be followed-up by replicating the experience on a smaller scale (see our Educational Guidelines on replicability for more information).

MATERIALS AND SET UP

The digital storytelling experience can be accessed on computers and on mobile devices, allowing students to experience it on their own as well as in small groups. In order to capture everyone’s attention for the duration of the activity and facilitate students’ engagement we recommend the following:

- Set up one computer connected to a projector or to a large screen. Since the digital experience features also video and audio make sure to connect it to a portable speaker. This is what you will use to navigate the class throughout the experience;
- Ensure that all students have an active internet connection and can use their own computers, tablets or mobile phones to access the digital experience;
- Set up a shared Google Map layer centred on the city of Prato and one centred on your own city. You can then share the links with students and work together on the maps to facilitate discussion and note-taking. You can find more detailed instructions on how to create this [here](#).
- Divide students in working groups of 5/6 students each to ensure active listening and stimulate collaboration and discussions throughout the whole activity;
- Provide pen and paper for everyone to take notes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The digital storytelling experience is self-contained and provides users with all the information needed to achieve the learning outcomes set above. If you wish to expand upon it or provide students with more resources, we suggest integrating materials from the following websites:

[Historical Images](#) - Photographic Archive of Tuscany (AFT)

The website of the AFT contains hundreds of historical photos of Prato. This can be useful in case students wish to find out more about the history of the city or if you want to set up a research activity.

[Demographic Data](#) - Prato’s Bureau of Statistics.

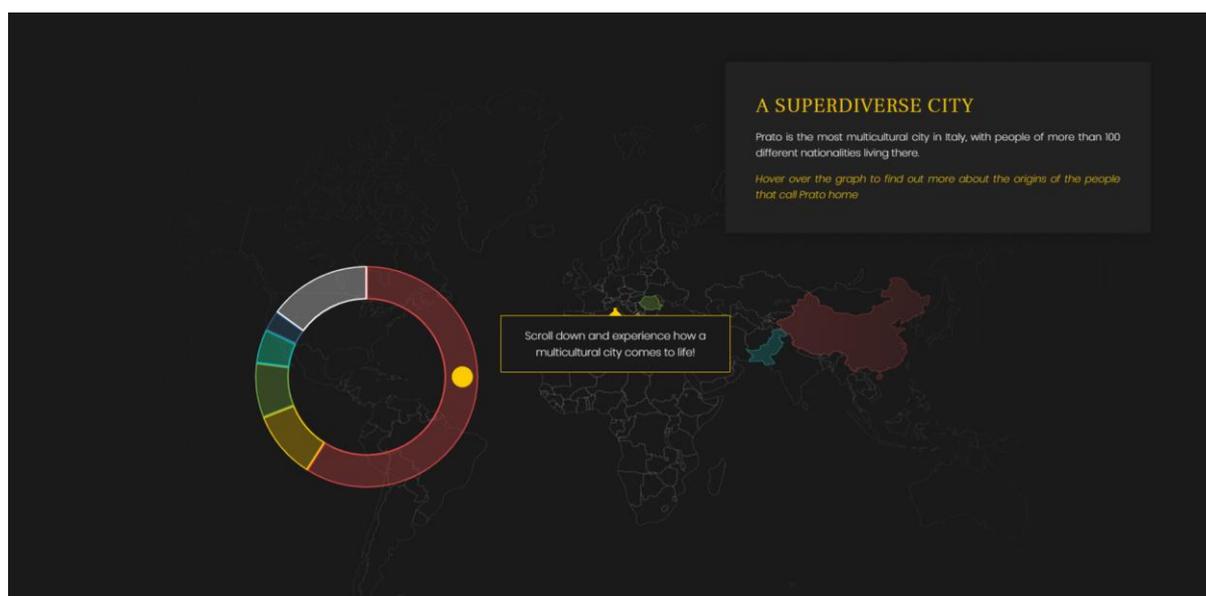
The local Bureau of Statistics offers in-depth information about the population of Prato. These demographic and socio-economic indicators can be useful to set up in-class research activities or for personal research projects.

[History, Culture and Future](#) - Città di Prato website.

Created by the City Council of Prato, this website offers additional insights into the city’s history, traditions, places and plans for its future development.

INTRODUCING THE JOURNEY AND GETTING STARTED

The first part of *La Nostra Prato* was designed as an introduction to the city and to the overall themes that you will be experiencing with your students throughout the journey. This is the perfect occasion for you to introduce the learning objectives of the activity and to have students reflect on the social, cultural and demographic complexity of urban areas with a high presence of migrants.



La Nostra Prato - Mapping a superdiverse city

Introductory Activity – Superdiverse Cities (5 to 10 minutes open discussion).

After students have spent a few minutes on the two introductory narrative blocks (A Superdiverse City and Industrious Threads), ask them the following open questions:

- What is, in your opinion, a superdiverse city?
- Which is the most diverse neighbourhood in your hometown?
- Identify the links between the industrial/commercial development of Prato and migration?

To guide students' discussion, you can ask them to reflect on their backgrounds and stories. The concept of superdiversity and its relevance can be introduced by showing students the first two minutes of this [video](#).

SECTION 1 – PAST

This section of the digital storytelling experience will take you on a journey from the Middle Ages to the present, showcasing how the city of Prato has become what it is today through seven centuries of exchange of ideas, goods, entrepreneurs and workers.

You can navigate this section with your students, having groups read aloud each block in turns and then leaving them enough time to interact with the map and with the images. This section and its main activity should take around 15 minutes to experience. You can add more activities if you wish and we included some tips and suggestions below.



Textile trade routes in the 14th Century

Activity 1 – Prato Across the Years (10 minutes + 5 minutes discussion)

After navigating across the whole section assign to each group one of the following periods:

- Middle Ages and Renaissance
- 18th and 19th Century
- 1900 – 1980
- 1980 – Present

In case you have more groups working on the same period you can either have them join forces or ask them to work separately. Students will have 10 minutes to find information and resources on the following questions and 5 minutes to present their answers to the rest of the class.

- What was the main innovation introduced in this period? Where did it come from?
- How did the city of Prato grow and adapt in response to these historical changes?

Students should be encouraged to seek additional information from the one presented in the digital story map. You can point them to the digital resources presented earlier in these guidelines or ask them to conduct their own research. Alternatively, you can restructure this activity as homework and ask each group to conduct a more in-depth research on the assigned periods and to prepare a 5 minutes presentation on the topic.

Activity 2 – Heritage, Tradition and Tourism (20 to 30 minutes)

In this activity students will have the chance to research, present and discuss how the city of Prato's present and its history are presented to national and international tourists. Working in their assigned groups students will need to:

- Find promotional tourism materials on Prato
- Discuss the following questions:
- What part of the heritage and tradition of Prato do these materials promote?
- What are the main landmarks included in the city's map?
- What kind of historical narrative do these promotional materials create?
- Do they match Prato's rich history of exchange and migration or not?
- Select and present to the other groups one landmark that they would add to tourists maps of Prato and discuss its relevance to the city's history.

This activity can also be assigned as homework to each group if you prefer them to spend more time researching materials and coming up with creative ways of creating their own tourist map.

Activity 3 - Discover the Threads of Your Own City (homework)

Building on the experience of the previous two activities you can ask each group to conduct research on the historical threads that connect their own city to the rest of the world through stories of migration. This activity requires students to spend more time conducting research on their own and is thus best suited as a group homework. In order to run this you will need to:

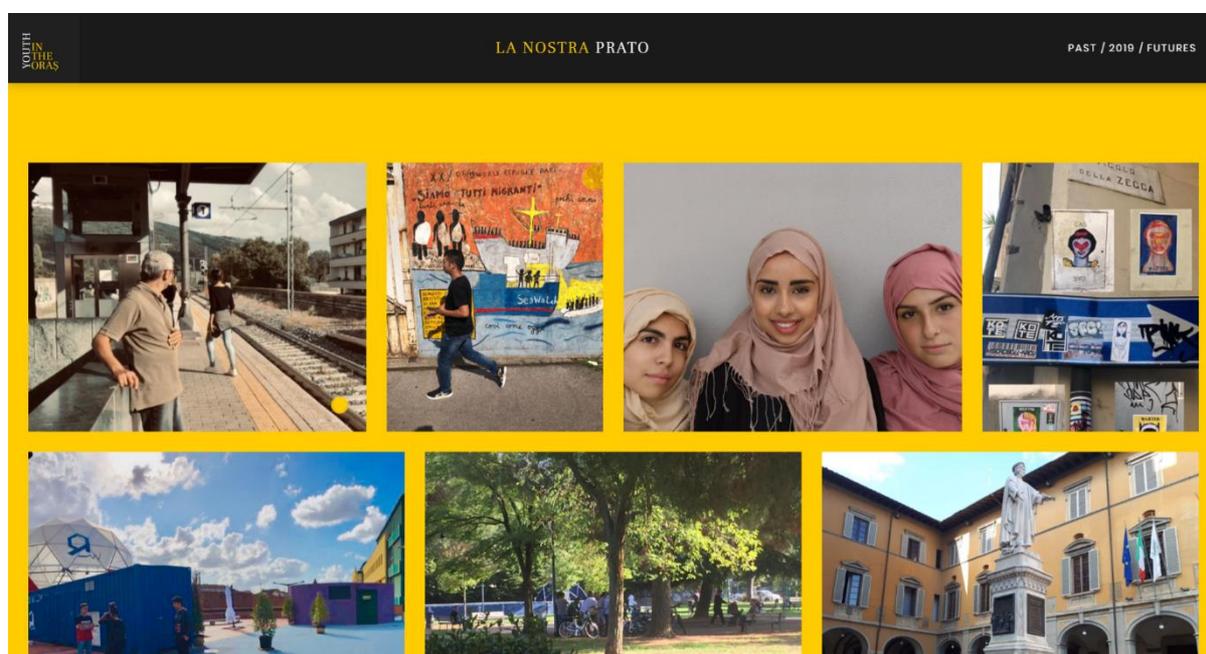
- Identify a number of historical periods in which migration played a key role in the development of the city you are running this activity in;
- Assign to each group of students a historical period, providing each with a starting point for their research;
- Provide them with a clear set of questions to answer. You can use the same question of Activity 1 or come up with more detailed ones depending on how much time you wish students to spend on this activity;
- Provide students with clear instructions for their in-class presentation. How much time will the presentation need to run? What materials can they use? Should they prepare for a Q&A with the rest of the class or not?

Once you have finished explaining the activity, allow students some time to workshop ideas and divide the work between them while still in class. This will also allow them to ask you any question they might come up with.

SECTION 2 – 2019

This section introduces you to Prato through the senses and emotions of the 48 young urban explorers who joined us in October 2019 to remap their city. Here you will learn more about how a group of high-school students lives in the city of Prato and makes it their own. A selection of the videos produced by participants is used to introduce the process and methodology that guided their urban exploration. We then move on to an interactive media grid that will allow you to experience the city through their own stories and images, delving deeper into the sensorial and emotional landscapes of Prato’s multicultural youth.

This section can be experienced either by allowing each group to navigate across the introductory section and media grid on their own or by having them take turns reading each story. In both cases you should allow at least 15 minutes for students to experience this section before moving on to the main activity.



La Nostra Prato – The Media Grid featuring the images and stories created by the young urban explorers

Activity 1 – Prato’s Sensorial and Emotional Landscapes (15 minutes + 5 minutes discussion)

Divide the class in two main groups. The activity focuses on the materials contained in the media grid, with one group working on the sensorial exploration of Prato, and the other on the emotional landscapes produced by the 48 urban explorers. Give each group 15 minutes to answer the questions below and ask them to identify each place they refer to in their answers on a digital map of the city (using either Google Maps or Open Street Maps). Once each group has finished their task they report back to the rest of the classroom.

Group A - Senses and the City

Your peers in Prato explored their city, the spaces they live in and the paths they cross every day through some of their senses (the nose, the eyes, the mouths, the ears). Identify stories and images in the media grid that relate to these senses.

For each story and image, you will need first to reflect on how these places are connected to the rich multicultural history and heritage of Prato.

Once you have done this try identifying each place on a digital map of the city.

SECTION 3 - FUTURES

This section focuses on how multicultural youth can have an impact on their city, working together to have their voices heard and imagine new futures. It starts with a short video that takes you to the pop-up exhibition that closed the *La Nostra Prato* workshops. It then presents the vision for the future of Prato of participants across 4 postcards. Each one introduces different aspects of their plans for the city, outlining the different futures of ‘their Prato’.

This section can be experienced in 15 minutes, watching the short video together and then allowing each group time to navigate through each postcard on their own.



DANCING IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Students designed striking postcards for the exhibition. This one illustrates their desire to turn Prato's Castle into a music club over the summer.

[Click on the postcard to discover their other creative ideas](#)

The postcards designed by students allow you to navigate across the many futures of Prato

Activity 1 – The Future of Prato (15 minutes + 5 minutes discussion)

After each group has finished navigating through the four postcards outlining the urban explorers’ plans for the future of Prato, ask them to work together to answer the following questions.

- What are the key areas of improvement highlighted by your peers?
- What are the connections between sustainability, exchange between cultures and languages and movement that emerge from their plans?
- Thinking back on what we learnt about Prato’s history, draw the new routes that will connect Prato to the rest of the world. What are these new connections? What instead builds on existing links?

Once each group has tackled all these questions allow them to discuss their answers together. You can use Google Maps or Open Street Maps to draw their answers on a map and facilitate the plenary discussion.

Activity 2 – Building the future of our cities (15 minutes + 10 minutes discussion)

Working in the same groups as before, ask your students to come up with plans for the future of their own city. Ask what they would like to add to their city, what they want to improve and how they plan on doing so through their own interventions. You can use a print-out map of the city you are working on or work on the Google Map layer of your own city that you have set up for the activity.

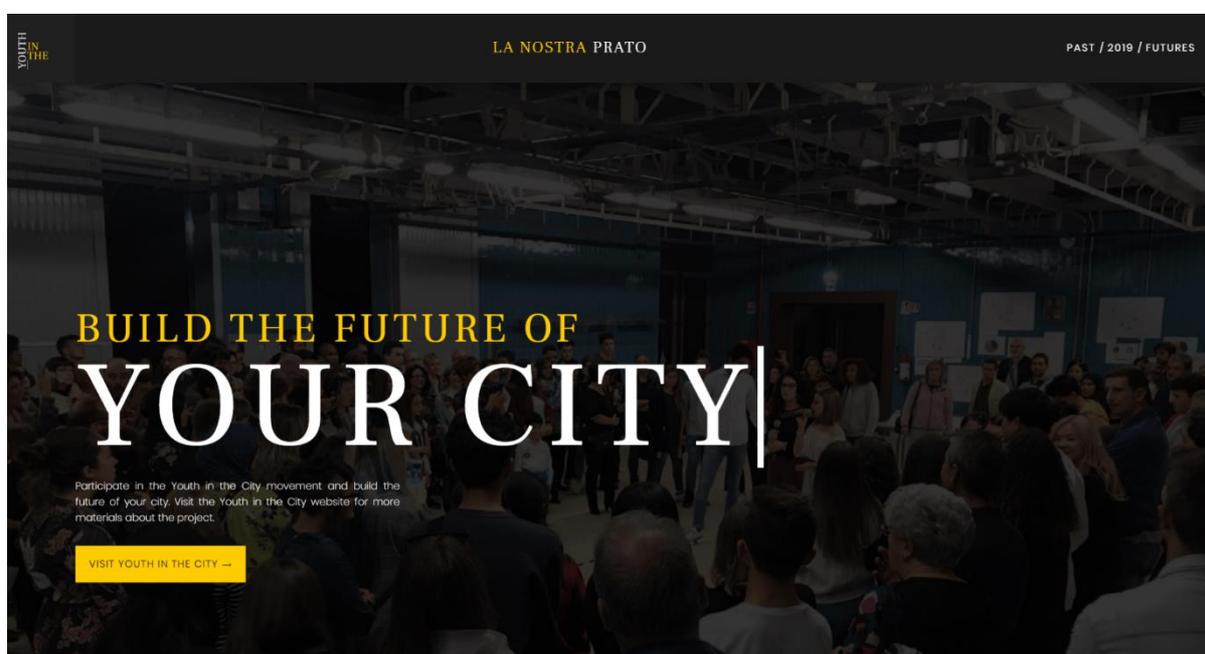
Once everyone has finished working on their proposals allow 10 minutes for plenary discussion.

WRAPPING UP AND NEXT STEPS

When you have concluded your journey across *La Nostra Prato* we recommend spending some more time with your students so that everyone can share their thoughts and opinions on the experience. You can do this immediately if you have the time, or in a follow-up session. As in previous activities, you can focus on how the different ideas and stories resonate with your students' personal experience. This debrief session will allow you to check whether the learning outcomes you have set out to achieve have been reached or whether there are areas that can still be delved into through additional activities.

If your students reacted positively to this digital storytelling experience, ask them if they wish to create their own journey, making their city their own through participatory mapping activities. You can refer to our guidelines on how to set up and replicate the *La Nostra Prato* workshops. If you need additional information or wish to get in touch with us just send us an email through the [contact form](#) on our website.

We hope you and your students will enjoy the *La Nostra Prato* experience and will join the *Youth in the City* initiative to re-imagine, re-map and re-claim your own city.



Our website offers additional resources to create your own workshops.

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CONTACT

Youth in the City is a participatory action research initiative led by Monash University, Australia. Our aim is to create an open and replicable interdisciplinary framework for the development of digital and participatory projects with migrant youth around the world.

Each project will see the participation of different teams according to the specific locations and aims of the project; we are keen to collaborate with academics, artists and designers around the world. For further information and initial contacts, visit our website youthinthecity

PARTNERS



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