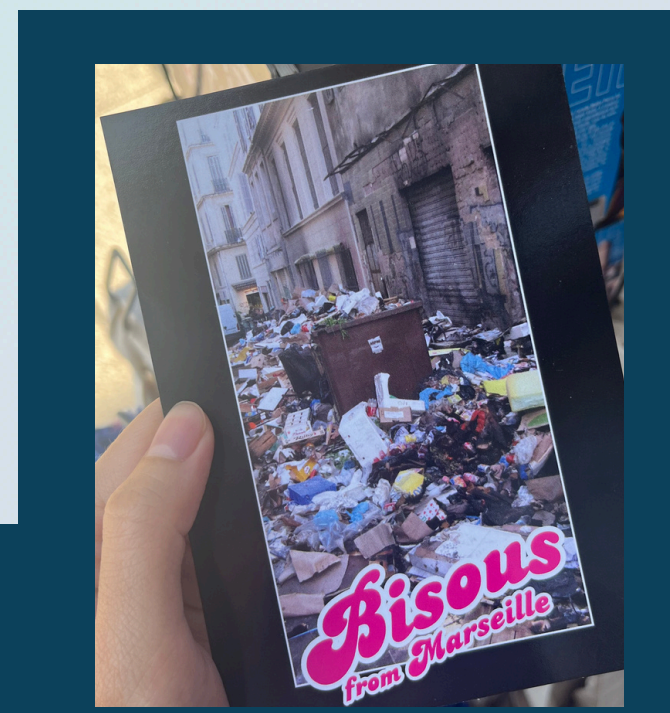


Preserving Sea Biodiversity in Marseille, France

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School of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science
Central Leadership-in-Action Project: makesense re_action for impact



Challenges

In my 6-week Leadership-in-Action project, I joined the central project organised by **makesense: re_action for impact** program in Marseille, France, to fight against diffuse abandoned waste and **preserve sea biodiversity** with a local NGO, The MerTerre Association (MotherEarth in English).

1. Litter in Marseille

Litter is one of the most significant issues in Marseille, France, impacting the city and its coasts, due to high waste generation and poor waste management. Microplastics heavily pollute the coasts of Marseille, rendering the water quality unsafe for bathing and having detrimental effects on marine and coastal biodiversity.

2. Challenges of the MerTerre and the Project

MerTerre, like other NGOs, faces issues with inconsistent engagement with its partners, low visibility, and difficulty in securing funding. An 8-man team runs the NGO and is facing issues due to the lack of manpower. The proposed solutions in this project need to prioritise non-paid actions on top of the limited time and language barrier.

About MERTERRE OBJECTIF ZÉRO DÉCHET MARIN

The MerTerre Association is an NGO founded in 2000 that is combating diffuse abandoned waste in the sea, which is defined as small wastes that are easily dispersed but have not entered conventional waste management systems. The organisation adopts a data-centric approach, with its waste characterisation and data collection system, Zéro Déchet Sauvage, now used by NGOs to record clean-up data all over France. MerTerre aims to address legal, organisational, financial and psychosocial issues related to aquatic waste by centralising information. The organisation also raises awareness and promotes community participation by running a collaborative citizen science program and large-scale clean-up of the Calanque National Park.

Methodology



The Team

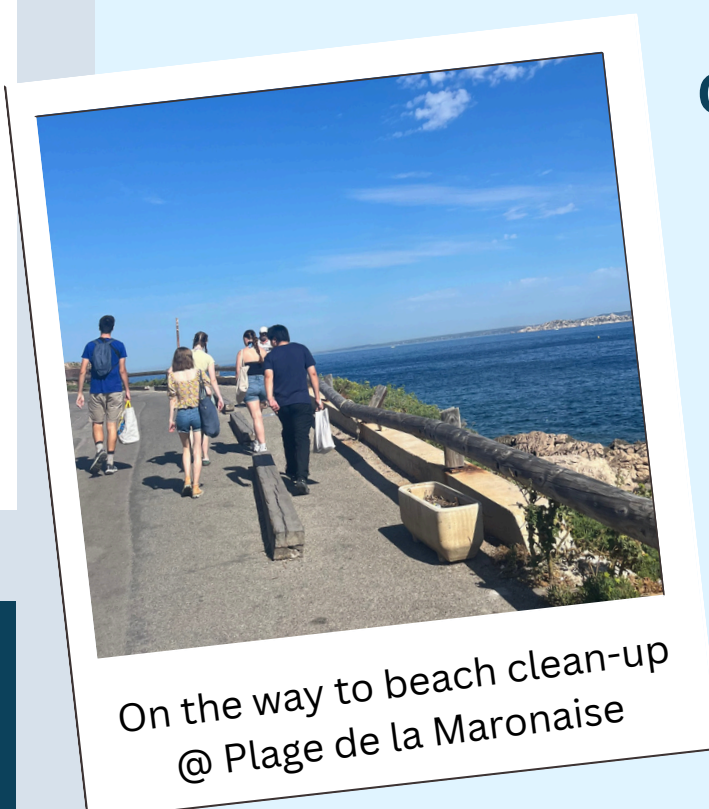
- 3 Laidlaw scholars: Lau Wei Sin, Elise (me), Ethan McDowell (Brown) & Jemma Stubington (Trinity)
- Makesense France staff: Emma Lempereur & Jade Thiebaut
- MerTerre staff: Teo Juričev

Design Thinking Approach

- Designing practical, creative solutions with a focus on empathy and its users.
- 3 key principles: **Empathy, Observation and Questioning**

Empathy & Questioning

- To gather local views on communication, prevention, and engagement.
- Surveys given to residents of Marseille
- Interview with MerTerre's employees, Julie Gomez, the coordinator of the Zero Déchet Sauvage (ZDS) platform and Teo Juričev, data and collaborative platforms project manager, to understand MerTerre's needs



On the way to beach clean-up @ Plage de la Maronaise

Observation: Field Work

- Beach clean-up @ Plage de la Maronaise, Les Goudes (Calanque National Park) and Frioul Island
- Waste Characterisation and recording data into the Zéro Déchet Sauvage website.

Workshops with Makesense

- Leadership Skills and Intercultural Leadership
- Ideation Workshops
- Community Building
- Weekly group coaching

Objectives

- Find out what initiatives already exist and work to fight wild waste and engage local communities in the long run
- Synthesise knowledge on the impact of waste on health and biodiversity to better inform the public
- Increase the impact of MerTerre and strengthen ties with local communities.
- Design a strategy to strengthen the engagement of its members, gain new members and create long-term mobilisation around the fight against abandoned waste

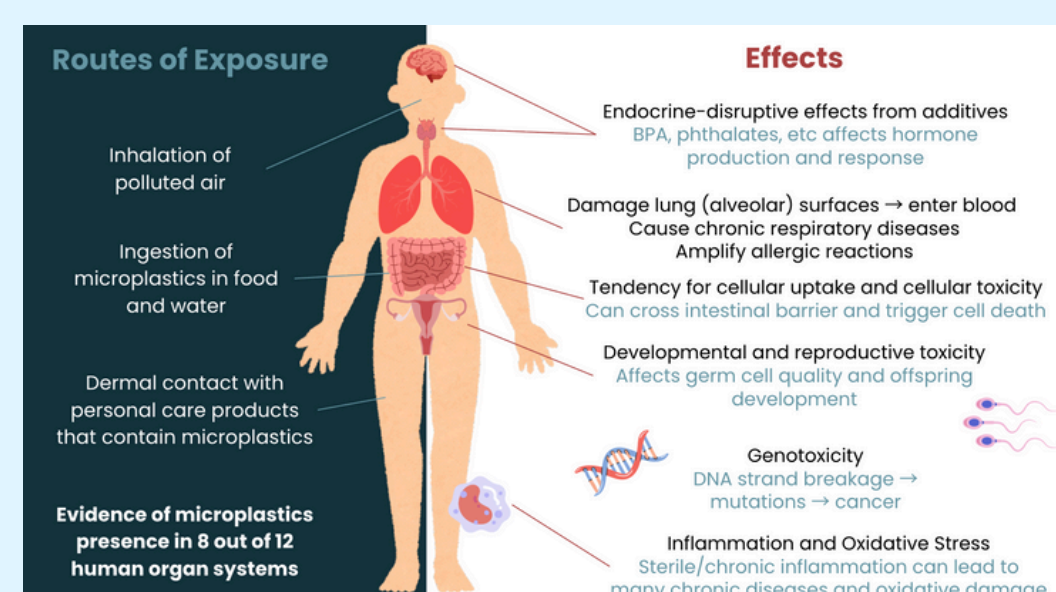
Deliverables

- 1 Benchmark reports of projects, research and legislation.**
 - "International Benchmark of Projects: Research & Analysis of Initiatives Fighting Against Abandoned Waste" by Jemma Stubington
 - **"Impact of Plastic Pollution on Human Health and Biodiversity" by Lau Wei Sin**
 - "From Gaps to Governance: A Global Legislative Review on Diffuse Abandoned Waste" by Ethan McDowell
- 2 Proposal Report for Sustainable Engagement and Long-term Mobilisation of MerTerre**
 - Proposed strategies to enhance long-term engagement of MerTerre and its partners
 - Potential partnerships
 - Community Building
 - Social Media and Publicity
 - Implementation plan & successful case studies
 - Methodology and results of field survey
- 3 Pitch Deck**
 - Summary of deliverables
 - Key takeaways of the program

Scan to see full deliverables



Plastic Pollution



- Impacts all biodiversity and all aquatic organisms
- Risk of losing genetic biodiversity, interfering with the natural course of ecological evolution and loss of biodiversity
- Ecological and biological toxicity
- Disrupts nutrient cycles in all habitats
- Microplastic concentration threshold already exceeded in 4 seas.

Learnings

- Marine pollution is irreversible and very intertwined with our daily lives
- Volunteer journey - how NGOs can keep volunteers
- Viable ideas are the best ideas
- Leadership does not necessarily mean delegating tasks or commanding people
- Collaboration, empathy and supporting each other through personal difficulties were the ultimate keys to getting this project done.