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EUROCITIES CRITICAL FRIEND REVIEW ON 'DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE INTEGRATED CITY PLAN FOR ROMA INCLUSION'

24-26 September 2019, Braga
Braga's approach to Roma inclusion

(Re)Write our neighbourhood

The Integrated Plan of Action for Disadvantaged Communities (PAICD) of the Municipality of Braga, the leading entity of the partnership, was approved within the scope of its Strategic Urban Development Plan (PEDU), considering as its top priority three of the city's social neighbourhoods: "Santa Tecla" neighbourhood, "Enguardas" social neighbourhood and the housing complex of "Picoto".

These are three publicly managed neighbourhoods: the Municipality of Braga and Bragahabit are responsible for both in regard to the buildings and to public space. The selection of these three Neighbourhoods respects the priority given and assumed by the municipality of Braga to the urban and environmental regeneration of disqualified residential areas, namely to the social neighbourhoods and, in this context, to the rehabilitation of buildings, to the qualification of the public space and of the collective equipment, as main interventions for the improvement of the population's living conditions and for the effectiveness of social inclusion processes.

Thus, in articulation with the interventions foreseen in the PAICD, the city of Braga outlined the "(Re)Write our neighbourhood" operation because we intend to promote social inclusion initiatives, in the social neighbourhoods defined in the PEDU, in order to articulate immaterial interventions with the target locations of the urban intervention. In addition to the urban rehabilitation, a concern stemming from an effective inclusion of these communities arises, through the creation of an action that enhances the sense of identity and belonging, allowing the reconstruction "with" the residents and not only "for" the residents.

We intend not only to give new life to these neighbourhoods with the renovation of infrastructures, but also to fill gaps in the social integration, in the employment and in the training of local leaderships with a set of activities defined under this operation. These activities end up being defined as integrative proposals for the active inclusion, with innovative programmes of social experimentation and of territorial, pedagogic, social and artistic animation, promoting entrepreneurship and jobs in these communities.

Details on the social housing neighbourhoods

- 'Enguardas' social neighbourhood

Built between 1976 and 1978 for residents that lived in precarious conditions in various places of the city in the 60s. Comprises a total of 85 flats divided in 11 blocks of 4 floors.

- 'Santa Tecla' social neighbourhood

Built in 1979 in the "Quinta of Santa Tecla" in Braga. Comprised of 4 blocks, and houses around 450 people in a total of 182 flats, thus constituting the biggest social neighbourhood of the Municipality of Braga.

- Housing Complex of 'Picoto'

Built between 1997 and 1998 in the hillside of the Picoto Hill, in order to rehouse the Roma community that was living in shacks based in the "Parque da Ponte" (Bridge Park) (or in the



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Forest) in Braga. Comprised of 50 flats.

Over the course of three years, the project aggregates 8 integrative proposals for the active inclusion, with innovative programmes of social experimentation and of territorial, pedagogic, social and artistic animation, promoting entrepreneurship and jobs in these communities.

Participatory Actions

In this action, it is proposed the creation of a set of artistic and cultural activities, with an interventionist scope, in order to fight the stigmas and the misconceptions associated to the social neighbourhood's image and in order to activate social inclusion mechanisms and mediation between its residents and the existing structures in Braga (public entities and local agents), which are not only an opportunity for sociocultural integration, but also a moment to create and make visible other logics and ways of looking at these places in a light capable of catalysing a change towards a more promising future.

Through work carried out in the field and with its residents, it is intended to transcribe a new history for these neighbourhoods. This activity will be developed over the course of the first year of the project and it will be divided into a set of 6 participatory and multidisciplinary artistic activities:

- "You tell Me": Social-spatial stories;
- "The monuments of my neighbourhood": Photographs in the Neighbourhood;
- "Building my neighbourhood": Collective scale models;
- "Close your Eyes and See": Sounds in the Neighbourhood;
- "Documenting my Neighbourhood": Participatory Archive;
- International "Summer School"

These activities aim at recognising the realities and lifestyles of these neighbourhoods, exposing them to the city of Braga; develop mediation mechanisms between residents and local agents, identifying existing and potential problems; enable residents of the neighbourhoods (with a higher incidence in children and young people) to learn arts such as photography, constructions of scale models, sound recording and the use of social networks as an archive of phenomenon. These 6 activities will end with a group exhibition, a debate forum and with the publication of a book that will reveal the results obtained during the activities.

Who is afraid?

The activity "Who is afraid?" is born from the necessity of bringing together the Roma culture to the society/community where they are inserted, specifically to try to avoid the dropping out of school from this social group and to promote values and acceptance of others and of differences as one of the greatest pillars of humanity's heritage. Aimed at a group of 22 students of the Roma ethnic group, with paths of potential failure and risk of marginalisation, covering the level of education from the 5th to the 7th year, following them till the 9th year.

This action includes several artistic activities, with the aim of promoting attitudes of mutual respect for the difference. Thus, in a musicological context, three workshops will be developed through a non-formal education over the course of a three-year period - from 2017 to 2020 -, consisting of dancing, music and theatre, which are structuring and defining elements of this culture.

Community Workshop

The activity "Community Workshop" intends to create a space dedicated to the "Enguardas" social neighbourhood, in Braga, for the local support and the scheduling of cultural animation workshops, which are generators of social dynamics. With the implementation of this action, it is



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intended to provide a service capable of contributing to the development of educational and professional qualifications of young people and adults; to fight against social isolation; to promote spaces for sharing knowledge, experiences and cultures; to reduce the info-exclusion; to increase the users' self-esteem and to promote their integral development.

As a way to catalyse and boost this new service in the neighbourhood, it is proposed the development of the following activities between 2017 and 2019 in the "Community Workshop":

- activity 1. Technical Help On-site, where it is intended to provide technical assistance to the users of the Community Centre in order to support people in situations of dependence, whose health situations require the use of technical assistance, therefore mitigating mobility difficulties and offering an improvement in the care of this dependency, towards third parties.;
- Activity 2. Aesthetic Workshop, where it is intended to provide occasional aesthetic care by carrying out thematic workshops, with the goal of improving the users' self-esteem, by improving their image in order to promote success in the job search;
- Activity 3. Info-inclusion Space, where it is intended to provide a space with computers to promote info-inclusion. It should be noted that, after the end of the project it is expected to maintain or even increase the number of activities.

Chorus Instrumental Ensemble

The activity "Chorus and Instrumental Ensemble" emphasizes music as a facilitating instrument of social inclusion for Roma children and young people, through the musical choir and the practise of instruments. This action will be developed through 3 main activities. In the activity 1 the goal is to create a Chorus, composed of about 30 elements of infantile and juvenile population residing in the "Santa Tecla" neighbourhood. For this purpose, 2 sessions per week will be carried out over the course of the school year, during a total period of 3 years, between 2017 and 2020. In the activity, the plan is to create an Instrumental Ensemble, composed of about 15 elements of infantile and juvenile population residing in the "Santa Tecla" neighbourhood.

Instruments will be made available to the students for the artistic practice, which will be key to the teaching in group that will take place throughout the school year. Finally, in Activity 3 the plan is to present the Chorus and the Instrumental Ensemble in a concert, in isolated performances or integrated in shows of the Conservatory of Bomfim. By dignifying its participants and contributing to the intercultural appreciation, it is intended that these moments of greater visibility of the project will have an impact on the inclusion of Braga's community and, specifically, on its Roma community.

The repertoire of the Chorus and of the Ensemble will be diversified and it will include pieces with Roma influence and/or origin in addition to pieces from other cultures, therefore covering different periods of history and musical cultures. For the selection of the Chorus' repertoire, the pieces whose message represent an added value to the elements of the chorus and their families will be chosen.

Training of Local Leaderships

In order to grant sustainability to the physical/material intervention carried out in territories through the involvement of local communities, it becomes essential to train mediators and local leaders in terms of creating processes of smart inclusion which involve the community in a direct, concrete and articulated manner. It is intended, with the activity "Training of Local Leaderships", to endow the communities covered by the physical interventions of local mediators (Neighbourhood Committees and Buildings Committees) validated by the partners and the local

population, facilitating institutional relationships processes between central entities and the populations, which may lead to processes of local involvement that support and sustain local development initiatives triggered either by the community itself, or by external institutional agents and, at the same time, the intention is to start endowing these risk communities with local agents of social mobilization which enhance an ecosystem that generates conciliatory solutions focused on smart inclusion, supported by existing social responses and by the enhancement of the informal proximity networks of the community itself.

This activity will be carried out through actions of Training of Energising Mentors for Smart Inclusion Communities, which focus its innovation in very concrete aspects: the use of the operational model of Symbolic Participatory Pedagogy Method, based on the synergies between Education, with Participatory Pedagogy and Education of Peers as a background, complemented by activities of mobility, youth association and volunteering projects and in constant interaction with the environment and the community.

Neighbourhood Tales

Ethnic heterogeneity is often experienced as an obstacle to social integration. In the case of social neighbourhoods that are going through a physical intervention under the Strategic Urban Development Plan, this is a problem that is felt exponentially since a great part of its residents belong to the Roma ethnicity, whose sociocultural values turn out to be very different in comparison to the remaining community of the city of Braga, therefore increasing the social discrimination and problematisation of these communities.

Based on the premise of cultural diversity and tolerance, it is intended, with the activity "Neighbourhood's Tales: create a children's book", to explore the themes of traditions and culture of the existing Roma community in the social neighbourhoods in Braga, through a creative and collaborative process with the children who live in these social neighbourhoods, in order to build a story that will result in the publication of an illustrated children's book.

Once published, it will be held a reading campaign, a presentation and distribution of the book in several primary schools in the city in order to raise awareness and fight social and ethnic discrimination among children.

+Closer: Paths to Employability

Portuguese Institute for Employment and Vocational Training

The activity "(+)Close: Paths to Employability" ambitions an in-depth intervention that promotes employability and the socio-professional integration of the population, through the creation of a local service (mobile service station) which will attend to the three social neighbourhoods of Braga in question, providing an itinerary suitable to each individual's qualification to ensure their socio-economic autonomy, from 2017 to 2020.

The intention is to create an innovative response of approximation to the communities, in the context of employability and socio-professional integration, consisting of technicians travelling to the neighbourhoods, through the creation of the mobile service station for the population in cooperation with the Portuguese Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, by adapting and reconfiguring a vehicle (bus) owned by Bragahabit, with a configuration adaptable for this effect, which it is intended to be equipped with computer equipment with an internet connection, where the technicians can rapidly carry out activities that aim to catalyse employability.

The personalized support and quality on the spot from this service of integrated logic, will be a



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facilitator element and an incentive for the acquisition of greater qualifications by the target population, closing the gap between the unemployed population and the services and the community's answers in terms of employability. The mobile service structure will allow to cover the social neighbourhoods, with timetables distributed by days of the week.

Active Group of Young People

We have found about 250 young people, in the 6 Roma communities of Braga, with low qualifications and few skills, mostly unoccupied and with great difficulties in accessing training and employment. Along with the low school and professional qualifications, we have identified in these young people a lack of self-confident and self-esteem and a withdrawing from the exercise of their citizenship.

Despite some efforts to integrate these young people in training and employment experiences, we have found difficulties of a technical and personal nature, concerning their insecurities given their contexts of life. The projects implemented so far were designed and executed by non-Roma technicians, creating, also for that reason, some remoteness and lack of confidence. With the activity "Active Group of Young People" the intention is to create an active group of young people between the ages of 16 and 30, of Roma ethnicity, counting with the support of other young people of Roma - mediators and facilitators - with experience in intervention projects and other similar initiatives taking place in other cities.

This activity is based on a participatory methodology, that values the diversity of perspectives and the needs present in the elements of the group and will be, therefore, geared towards the development of a multitude of methods, techniques, instruments and tools adjusted to individual dynamics.

More information:

- Portuguese Roma Communities Integration Strategy 2013-2020 [here](#).
- (Re)Write our neighbourhood website: <http://reescreveronossobairro.cm-braga.pt/EN>



This event has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information, please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>