

QUINTA DO MOCHO PUBLIC ART GALLERY



INCLUSION **CULTURAL** REGENERATION
COMMUNITY **DEMOCRACY** PARTICIPATION
CREATIVITY PUBLIC SPACE SECURITY **SOCIAL**

1. Context

Loures is a Portuguese municipality bordering the capital city of Lisbon. Despite being one of the most populated cities within the country, its territory is widely diverse and asymmetric, with a primarily urban and populous eastern zone and a northern area marked by rurality and low demography. It is also a suburban territory with a large share of disadvantaged population, often related to migration phenomena, and where poverty, unemployment and exclusion are on the rise.

Determined to consider its diversity as a potential development factor, the municipality made a true commitment to achieve social cohesion, respect for the individual and human rights throughout its daily word, as advocated in the main documents and international conventions that Portugal ratified as a nation.

Quinta do Mocho is one of the city's marginalized suburban territories. This rehousing neighborhood, socially and economically disadvantaged, is mostly composed of second-generation immigrants.

This led Loures to seek effective, concerted and participatory solutions to its social problems, relying on existing networks and structures that promote integration and social inclusion, and observing the good examples that come from abroad territories facing similar problems.

BEYOND SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES TAKING PLACE IN “MARGINALIZED NEIGHBOURHOODS, THE QUINTA DO MOCHO PUBLIC ART GALLERY (GAP) IS PART OF A WIDER STRATEGY LEANING TOWARDS THE DEMOCRATISATION OF ARTS, THAT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED ALL OVER LOURES TERRITORY.

2. Loures and culture

Many municipalities are nowadays seeing graffiti and other forms of mural painting as a vehicle to rehabilitate buildings and to value specific areas. Loures, putting urban art as one of the hallmarks for many years, has been in the first row of this paradigm.

The Quinta do Mocho Public Art Gallery (GAP) is an expression of a philosophy of action that has been growing in Loures in recent years, focusing on art and its various forms of expression, as an instrument to promote social integration and inclusion. In Loures, this has been achieved through theatre, dance, music, sculpture and, more recently, through a focus on urban art, especially mural painting. In 2013, a first experiment was held in a social neighbourhood in Loures, on several social housing buildings.

The GAP project originated mainly from two projects, both financed by European funds, implemented in 2011 and 2014 – “Territórios Invisíveis” (2011) and “Festival o Bairro i o Mundo” (2014). These two projects shared some of their overall goals: to contribute, through art, to the integration and social inclusion of marginalized and excluded groups and territories; to give visibility to unknown territories, demystifying myths and preconceived ideas about them and those who live there ; increase residents' self-esteem and confidence, giving them tools to change their perception of themselves and their place of residence.

The GAP was a creation of the 2014 festival, initially under the format of a Public Gallery with 25 paintings and an artistic residence. Yet, the success and the demand was so overwhelming that rapidly the GAP grew, breaking with the format initially planned: starting from 2015, it started to release new paintings, to organise guided visits (by seven young residents of the neighbourhood who received adequate training) and the holding of community assemblies with local residents.

By the end of 2017, the GAP gathered 82 works, painted by 75 artists of 11 different nationalities. From its inception (2015), 152 guided tours had been carried out and around 6400 visitors participated in these visits.



3. Goals and project implementation

1.1. Main aim and specific goals

The Quinta do Mocho Public Art Gallery has, by design, three main objectives: i) Social Inclusion and Integration; ii) Urban requalification; iii) promotion of urban art and of its artists. These three objectives complement each other and enable the municipality to develop cross-cutting actions.

Specific goals include:

- Improving good neighbourly relations;
- Promoting peaceful coexistence between different communities;
- Decreasing crime levels;
- Changing social image of the neighbourhood;
- Opening the neighbourhood to other people;
- Improving opportunities for local businesses;
- Democratization of art;
- Better recognition and opportunities given to local artists;
- Promoting the relationships between artists and the community;
- Raising artists' awareness regarding their important role in the social transformation of marginalized communities.

1.2. Development of the project

Main actions carried out

The success of the two projects above-mentioned funded through European funds have left opened a window of opportunity in Loures to extend municipal intervention over time, which materialized with the creation of the Gallery of Public Art of the Mocho (GAP). With more than 80 works of great dimensions scattered throughout the neighbourhood (with titles such as Astro, Bordalo II, Mar, MTO, Noman, VHILS, RAM or Zabou), and more than three dozen of artists having applied to the program, the Mocho GAP is now one of Europe's best public art galleries. The artists, of which many are coming

from abroad, are working for free, with free access to materials, and are invited to sensitize the audience to the importance of inclusion in the art world, and its relevance in terms of social intervention.

The beneficiary population was first composed mainly of residents from the multicultural community of Quinta do Mocho, a territory formerly associated with delinquency and crime and stigmatized for many years. The relocated population has a significant incidence of natives from African countries corresponding to former Portuguese colonies (Angola, Cabo Verde, Guiné Bissau, Moçambique and S. Tomé e Príncipe). Despite some mistrust from the population at the beginning, the project was then largely discussed throughout several community assemblies, and the residents progressively became actively involved in the project.

The main action carried out in the framework of the GAP was the creation of the Art Gallery itself in February 2015. Various artists from Portugal and abroad were present for the inauguration, and a group of local youth was trained to guide the visitors through the Gallery.

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE CREATION OF THE GAP, MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVES DECIDED TO CARRY OUT PUBLIC ART INITIATIVES OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS THROUGH THE ORGANISATION OF OTHER MAJOR YEARLY EVENTS : TWO PUBLIC ART FESTIVALS OVER PERIODS OF 10 DAYS, AND VARIOUS ARTISTIC EVENTS ON ARTS SUCH AS PHOTOGRAPHY AND SCULPTURE.

Although most visits have been organized by the Municipality, other joint entities have also entered the business, within the scope of their own objectives.

The project costs have been mostly born by the Municipality, with some support from the private sector, in particular major support from Robbialac, a paint factory, and Alugatudo, a crane company. The festivals also benefit from the support of Rodoviária de Lisboa, a transport company, and Plural Entertainment, an audiovisual production company.

Since its inception, the Gallery costs fall under the municipal budget for Loures Arte Pública (Loures Public Art) amounting to 100 000 EUR in 2016 and 2017.

4. Impacts

1.1. Direct impacts

Impacts on the local government

The Gallery was an opportunity for the local government to initiate participatory practices and community involvement in local decision-making.

Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

This project played a great role for urban rehabilitation, as well as greater responsibility for the conservation of houses by the residents.

Impact on the territory and population

This project has changed the way people see Quinta do Mocho. The coexistence of the community has become much more peaceful and today it is possible to visit the neighbourhood safely. The creation of the Art Gallery also attracted many visitors from all over the country and abroad.



Many of the myths and prejudices widely replicated by the national media regarding the neighbourhood and the people of the neighbourhood have disappeared and Quinta do Mocho enjoys a prestige never before imagined. The number of visitors exceeds that of museums and other cultural facilities, proving the adhesion and impact of this new art form.

There also is evidence of a slight improvement in local turnover (cafes, pastry shops, grills, grocery stores), investment in African gastronomy and street vending African food products, due to the increase of visitors.

THE EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS TAKEN SO FAR AS WELL AS THE BONDS INVOLVING NATIONAL AND FOREIGN ARTISTS, ALLOWED THE MUNICIPALITY TO BE RECOGNIZED BY THE ARTISTIC COMMUNITY AS A REFERENCE IN TERMS OF SUPPORT AND DISSEMINATION OF URBAN ART.

1.2. Evaluation

Initially, no evaluation was planned for this project. However, following the immediate success and adhesion to the GAP project both from artists and the general public, a brief questionnaire was quickly drawn up and distributed to the participants of the guided tours. Results obtained through this questionnaire show that:

- 55% of responders claim that the GAP was the main reason for their visit whereas 27% said that they went more to visit the neighborhood of Quinta do Mocho;
- 40% of responders claim that they got to know GAP through the Loures Municipality media;
- 96% stated that the duration of the visit is adequate, and 91% rated the performance of the Guides as "Good".
- 98% expressed their will to return to the GAP, and 99% would recommend this visit to friends.

1.3. Key factors

There are several factors that, simultaneously, explain the success and effectiveness of the GAP, including:

1. Its continuity: This project makes part of a wider, well-structured and participatory policy implemented in Loures that, some years, considers art as an important instrument to promote social integration and inclusion;
2. The assimilation and appropriation of the project by the local community, the artists, and also by the various entities (public and private) that have adhered this project (community assemblies in particular play a fundamental role).
3. An effective communication and dissemination plan, showing results of the work done in order to promote the growth of this project.
4. GAP's intervention aims, beyond the social dimension, to achieve a multiplicity of objectives (economic, human, urban, etc.), which are fundamental for the success of the project, for the involvement of several actors in this idea, as well as for the appropriation of the project's objectives.

1.4. Continuity

As part of a wider strategy that has been developed in recent years, the Quinta do Mocho Public Art Gallery is no longer being considered as a "project" but rather as a whole area of activity of Loures Municipality.

This is all the truer if we take in consideration the fact that the Public Art in Loures, of which GAP is part, has its own human resources and budget. Currently, 2 municipal technicians are permanently working in this area (this team can grow on specific occasions), and the municipal grant allocated for the Public Art in Loures (which includes the costs of GAP) reaches 87 000€.

Planned activities include the painting of new murals, inviting more artists from all over the world, the requalification of some of the oldest paintings, and the continuation of guided tours on the last Saturday of each month.

5. Further information

Loures was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 – May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by Carla Barra, Director – Social Cohesion and Housing Department, Loures, Portugal

Contact: carla_barra@cm-loures.pt

Website: www.cm-loures.pt