

CIRCUITO: ARTS & TECH FOSTERING SOCIETAL CHANGE



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
3. CULTURE AND EDUCATION
4. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCUSION
7. CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE
8. CULTURE, INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

**SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, EMPOWERMENT, EDUCATION,
INNOVATION, CREATIVITY, YOUTH, TECHNOLOGY, ACCESSIBILITY,
EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES**



1. Braga and culture

With 193 333 inhabitants, Braga faces the challenge of a fast-paced urbanisation based on economic growth, which took a toll on citizens' quality of life. It is also undergoing a fast multicultural change, largely spurred by a significant number of Brazilian citizens that arrive in the city and the increase of new international residents and students.

The Braga UNESCO Creative City program in Media Arts, particularly its educational branch, CIRCUITO, holds a central position in Braga's Cultural Strategy 2030. Stemming from extensive consultation and collaboration, the Braga 2030 Cultural Strategy not only identifies culture as one of the pillars of the city's sustainable development – following the principles of the Agenda 21 for Culture, but also as the driving force of a multi sectoral approach addressing social, economic, and environmental issues faced by Braga..

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

CIRCUITO's mission is all about connecting art, technology, and the community. Although being based at gnration (a cultural hub for artistic creation and Start-Ups) CIRCUITO operates beyond its physical space, encouraging participants to take ownership of the city.

CIRCUITO aims to include everyone in artistic fruition and creation, sharing knowledge, and listening to each other's perspectives, while encouraging creativity, critical thinking and make culture a key part of building a better future. It organizes events and programs that blend art and learning, and aims to plant seeds of change that will keep on growing, making our communities more vibrant and connected for years to come. Its specific objectives are:



- » Empowering Creativity
- » Fostering Collaboration
- » Facilitating Interactions between artists, amateurs, professionals, and audiences
- » Technological Integration
- » Community Engagement
- » Nurturing Aesthetic Sensitivity among children and young people
- » Reimagining Heritage
- » Encouraging Interdisciplinary Collaboration
- » Promoting accessibility

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AND THE COMMUNITY.**


2.2. Development of the project

Celebrating five years of dynamic engagement, CIRCUITO stands as a beacon of creative exploration and community empowerment. As an educational and mediation initiative, CIRCUITO operates across multiple dimensions, fostering intersections between spectators, learners, and creators. Its programming, spanning from performances to co-creation workshops, aims not only to enrich educational experiences but also to cultivate a sense of ownership and belonging within our communities.

While CIRCUITO aspires to engage a diverse audience, our primary focus has been on school-aged children, young people, and individuals distanced from cultural fruition, including those with specific needs. Our activities include performances, workshops, and community projects, fluctuating across the domains of watching, learning, and making. These diverse experiences resonate with a wide range of audiences, providing varied and engaging interactions.

Our annual programming unfolds aligning with the school calendar, which facilitates seamless integration with educational institutions. Some flagship projects are:

- » **Todos Vivemos a mesma viagem de maneiras diferentes** (“We All experience the Same Journey in Different Ways”): This project, aimed at fostering connections between communities, particularly those with disabilities, embodies our philosophy of inclusivity and collaboration. Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, we adapted our approach, conducting creation workshops in social solidarity institutions’ spaces. The culmination of these workshops was showcased in public spaces during the city’s annual Book Fair, accompanied by guided tours led by community members themselves.
- » **Mini Mapa Sonoro** (Mini Sound Map): This project, initially conducted in school settings, underwent adaptation in response to the pandemic, shifting to students’ homes. In recent years, it has been done in heritage sites of the city or in partnership with other cities around the world. Through an exploration of soundscapes and active listening exercises, students are empowered to create sound and visual maps, fostering connections between intangible heritage and contemporary experiences.
- » **Youth 4 Bauhaus**: A collaborative effort funded by the Erasmus+ program, this project fosters cross-cultural dialogue and creativity among young people (with and without disabilities) from Ghent (Belgium), Kosice (Slovakia), Bucharest (Romania), and Braga (Portugal). Throughout a week, a series of exercises are facilitated to engage the participants of the four countries in experiencing the hosting city; exploring themes of accessibility, sustainability, and aesthetics, and creatively thinking, through technology, on how to create a more beautiful, inclusive, and sustainable city for all.



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Our journey at CIRCUITO has been enriched by diverse partnerships – local, national, and international. From local schools, universities and museums to social solidarity institutions, private companies and artistic collectives.

Annually, CIRCUITO allocates approximately €87,000 towards programming and production. Over five years, CIRCUITO has facilitated approximately 250 activities, directly engaging over 13,500 individuals. Given that most activities involve a significant degree of co-creation, CIRCUITO is a flexible organism able to address the challenges of the territory in which it operates.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

We all live the same journey in different ways is a collaboration between three institutions serving those with cognitive disabilities and an autism association, emphasizing the authentic integration of their voices and ideas. The project facilitated a meaningful connection between artist mediators and participants, enhancing motivation



and ownership. Participants engaged with the public through tours, activities, and exhibition planning, marking significant strides in inclusion and empowerment.

Since 2018, Mini Mapa Sonoro has engaged 13 school groups from Braga, reaching about 2300 students from 33 schools, and expanded to include cities from the UNESCO Creative Cities network, inviting global student participation. It thrives on low-tech, high-replicability principles, enabling easy setup anywhere.

Youth4Bauhaus, embodying the New European Bauhaus's ideals, empowers youth through innovative participatory methods in urban public space co-creation. Engaging around 80 youths, teachers and cultural organizations including those with disabilities, the project has developed and tested a new methodology, now available in various languages. These guides ensure easy adoption, promoting widespread, community-led urban development.

3.2. Evaluation

We are now building a new methodology to collect evidence of the short, mid and long-term impacts of the programme and assess the role of cultural participation as a source of well-being, personal growth and empowerment. We are exploring diverse digital tools, collecting baseline dataset and have developed new impact indicators, including:

- » Increased levels of subjective well-being and mental health of participants;
- » N. of events and initiatives encouraging active engagement and providing opportunities for different levels of participation;
- » Increased citizens' participation and engagement in multicultural projects;
- » Increased participation of schools in cultural programmes;
- » N. and profile of people and organisations participating in capacity-building initiatives;
- » N. of cultural professionals trained and using audience engagement methods in everyday work.
- » To feed this process, various tools will be used, from questionnaire surveys to other instruments of a participatory and collaborative nature.



3.3. Key factors

The project is unique in the region, offering a mediation and educational program focused specifically on the relations between art and technology. The fact that this program has a dedicated team and budget is a pledge not to treat it as a secondary part of a larger program but as a standalone program.

Secondly, CIRCUITO's approach, centred on fostering artistic experimentation and community involvement, emphasizes collaboration and co-creation, encouraging active participation. CIRCUITO celebrates freedom and encourages risk-taking and experimentation. Artists and the communities involved are empowered to explore new ideas and approaches, knowing they have the support to push creative boundaries.

At the heart of this program is a commitment to placing culture and people at the forefront. Collaboration and co-creation are key to our approach. We facilitate partnerships between artists, communities, and organizations to create meaningful projects together. By fostering autonomy, originality, and inclusivity, the program transcends traditional educational paradigms.

FLAGSHIP PROJECTS ARE: WE ALL EXPERIENCE THE SAME JOURNEY IN DIFFERENT WAYS, MINI SOUND MAP AND YOUTH 4 BAUHAUS.

3.4. Continuity

To ensure continuity of the project and its replicability, it's imperative to have a committed team deeply connected with the city and highly open to adaptation, a dedicated budget, robust communication channels, and strong ties with local territory and institutions. Maintaining an open dialogue and fostering collaborations with other entities is vital. Long-term sustainability relies on aligning strategies with stable public policies for local culture, such as the 2030 strategy. Sustaining the co-creation methodology ensures continued success in engaging communities and fostering innovation.

Supporting documents have also been developed to aid in project monitoring and facilitating implementation, which could be of interest for other agents invested in adopting similar practices. Additionally, CIRCUITO has consistently demonstrated its willingness to share its practices and accumulated knowledge with both national and international partners.

4. Further information

Braga was a candidate for the sixth UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award (November 2023 – March 2024). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June 2024, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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