Margem Sul – feminists paths in the Lisbon Area

(Margem Sul – trajetos feministas na Grande Lisboa)

Report

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* Description

The IO5 workshop, of the DiverCity Project, was held in Seixal, a city in the outskistrs of Lisbon, in 2016. This workshop was held following the IO3, where we visited and held educational activities (based on museological methodologies) at the National Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon.

This workshop was held with the same group of young Roma women who participated in the IO3 workshop in Lisbon. Unfortunately, we had to cope with some dropouts, leaving a final group of eight participants, as there were family incompatibilities (such as motherhood). The project was carried out with 8 young people from 19 to 28 years old. These young women are currently unemployed or in the business of street sales.

The workshops were held in April and May 2016 (day 6, 13, 20 of April and 4, 11 and 18 of May) within a total of 6 days, 5 hours per day.

The framework of our workshop consisted of group gender mainstreaming, diversity and interculturalism considering the feelings and aspects of identity and roma culture.

In the project we counted with the collaboration of a local association, AMUCIP, Association for the Development of Portuguese Roma Women, in the mediation between the group and the organization REDE de Jovens para a Igualdade. Our cultural mediator was essential for the good course of the project.

We chose the area of ​​Seixal, as this is a residential area where a lot of Roma Communities reside in, as well as characterized by being extremely multicultural. Our young people are mostly coming from this region, hence the relevance for them and for the project.

It is also characterized as 'the bedroom', because it explains the phenomenon of people working in Lisbon, but can not afford to reside in Lisbon, so they have to travel each day to the outskirts of the big city. This fact, although not descriptive of our young participants is true for most of the resident population in this area. The Portuguese participants live and work mainly in this area, since, like most of the Roma community, their work still consists of street and market sales - hence, the constant movement from place to place.

These features have made the urban design not consistent and really disruptive, so much so, that this geographical area is regarded as ugly and not pleasant, even by the young participants and people who reside here.

The methodology was based on non-formal education where different methods captives were applied.

* Objectives

In this workshop IO5 ‘Margem Sul - feminist paths in the Lisbon Area' our goals were to:

1. Address and embrace diversity in the metropolitan area of ​​Seixal;

2. Educate and re-educate for a perspective of gender mainstreaming in the city;

3. Apply contents that were learnt in the museum, on the itinerary;

4. Conduct a feminist path, based on storytelling of the young Roma women;

5. Earn identity awareness of the neighborhood;

We performed the evaluation of workshops, day by day, where we used this technique in Compass Manual, dynamic assessment 'End Game' characterized by reviewing the training session to ask the participants (and mediator) that sit in a circle and share their opinions ending certain phrases. In this case, the sentences were chosen:

* The best thing was the activity ... and the worst was ...
* What cost me the most was ... and what I liked most was ...
* Would have liked more .. and less than ...
* What I’ve learned ...

We make a round where each participant completes the sentence above presented. The feedback was very positive 'eye - opening' since most of the activities were new to the participants.

* Experience/s during the workshop most appreciated

The most positive experiences consisted of two activities. The first, a discussion roundtable, about gender issues. These proved to be emerging and different when we consider the group in the "before and after" the workshops. It was particularly important and appreciated because these young Roma women are mothers and wives. The mentor Alzinda Carmelo, strengthened a reference model for participants, making these workshop in reflection and self-questioning, particularly the essence of Gypsy culture, from the perspective of the participants as young women, mostly mothers and wives. The participants have been working to provide a different future for themselves and their descendants. It was achieved that the young women become aware of their various roles such as gender, as well as the steps that they had to take to become empowered women (they are still on this path).

At this point, we made the bridge with the piece of art that was referenced by the young participants, in the National Museum of Ancient Art, the piece 'Bruna'[[1]](#footnote-1) (the name given by the youngsters).

The discovery of this piece in the Ancient Art Museum was inside of the Activity ’Discovering the Museum’ were the participants had to walk around and register art pieces that caught their eye the most, ant then explain why.

The name Bruna doesn’t have any particular meaning in portuguese, but it had a lot of meaning to the participants.

From storytelling methodology, each young woman told the route and history of Bruna, the girl who carried wood in the frame. This piece was much discussed due to input given by all the young participants. The goal was to realize the connection between them and the picture because both show extreme signs of poverty and discrimination from society (as said by participants).

It was also interesting to observe that the participants made the conection between their social position, in the Roma comunity, by the painting, realizing themselves, the not equivalent distribution of power between them, and for example, their husbands.

It is traditional known, in the roma community, that women are subjagated by men, due to its high level of social hierarchy. Considering just our participants, they feel that they don’t really have a voice, no power and have no freedom of choice (only in household chores and the childcare).

This activity was really interesting because the first stage started by them telling the story of Bruna, all of them together, adding details, and the second one where they identified the conections between them and Bruna.

The most welcomed activity and that surprised us the most was the 'You see the route' because the first contact that the young women had with a map was from the visit made to the National Museum of Ancient Art, where Rede concluded that the conception of physical space was very limited. When they could recognize where they were in the 'map' was quite decisive for their self-realization.

*Activity* 'You see the route'

This activity consisted of finding the location of each particpante on the map and, step by step, on planet earth. Seven maps were presented (each with a different scale) to each participant. The following list shows the different maps used:

1. Training location - where we were at the time;
2. Geographical area of ​​Seixal;
3. Greater Region Lisbon in Portugal;
4. Portugal;
5. Portugal and Spain;
6. European continent;
7. World Map.

The activity was carried out in stages. First, the map which showed where the training was taking place was presented. The most fascinating aspects passed first through the idealization of a two dimension map; then, naming the locations they recognized, through various elements around the area that felt familiar in the site.

The process was repeated along each map, having the young women identifying the maximum possible locations in each map displayed.

Although the immediate results demonstrated a lack of global knowledge, not only in viewing what was on the map, but in the geographical sense itself, this activity allowed the young participants to motivate themselves in the DiverCity project.

*Activity* 'My Map'

This activity consisted of the participants to find their daily lifes in their own neighborhood.

It was asked to each participant to draw:

1. The place where they live;
2. The stores where they shop;
3. Their kids schools;
4. Their work places (this was really hard, because they travel around from market to market);
5. Training location - where we were at the time;
6. Other things they would like to add;

One thing that was instantly added was the ’cult church’ (as the particpants called it)

After the presentation of the facilitators example (suggestion) of the map, we go, one by one, of the partcipants to each and every single one of them to share their experiences and maps.

The activity showed that most of the women don’t actually get out the house that much – the stories that were presented happen mostly on childhood, an the day-today life from the participants was based on the religious praying (the participants attend every day) and also the visiting of family in the surroundings. Most of the activities are always made with company (wether is the husband, the sister, cousin, ect.) and for that reason much stories were crossed between the participants.

* **Difficulties found in the development. How to solve them in future Workshops.**

The most challenging aspects of training were based on the self-perception of Roma young participants.

Participants have showed some difficulty in turning the capabilities they hold in skills for practical life, in particular, with the comprehension: what is culture, outside the Roma community. The purpose of investing in their professional life also affected the perception of the lack of need for education and cultural awareness - that is, the diversity of concepts and multiculturalism were difficult to absorb.

Unfortunately, the fragile knowledge of Portuguese is a big limitation at the level of "learning to learn". This limitation makes participants to auto-exclude themselves of their own learning process, calling itself "incapable". This framework awakened us to the need to include ever new inputs and new training approaches.

We found ourselves obliged to strengthen and encourage self-esteem activities in each workshop in order to facilitate observation and awareness of the positive and negative aspects of their own participants and aspects of the personality of each and personality of others group elements.

Here are some of the activities that were developped:

***Activity*** 'Would you take the hat of this person?'[[2]](#footnote-2)

Objective: stimulate self-esteem.

For material you have to have a hat and a mirror (mirror should remain stuck at the bottom of the hat). The facilitator chooses a person in the group and asks her to look for the hat background, asking if the participant would take off the hat to the person that she/he is allegedly seeing. The participant who sees the hat, with the alleged photo, is actually seeing her’s/hi’s reflection on the mirror. Without ever saying the name of the reflection. It is possible that the participants become a little blocked at the time, since they will be faced with themselves.

The other participants will be thinking that the participant with the hat is describing someone in the group. Before you call the next participant, pretend you are changing the picture in the hat.

***Activity*** "The Stage" (by Sabina Manes)

Objective: To become aware of the position that is assumed in life, the ability to expose and own inhibitions.

In this activity, it only needed chairs as materials. You begin the activity asking and encouraging the group to imagine that the room where they are is a theatre. All participants must put up with their own chairs in the back as if they were behind a stage. The facilitator places herself up to three-quarters of the room and, through gestures, shows the group that she is closing the imaginary cloth, behind which is the audience of the theater with the seats.

After, she shows the space of the stage, which is accessed up three steps (the animator makes gesture to show that she is climbing the stairs). The first step of the activity is to climb the three steps and do a gesture or an action, anything, on stage (without using any words). One by one, the participants exit the imaginary stage, on the opposite side where they entered. At the end of this first phase, the facilitator moves towards the cloth and makes a gesture to open it. From then on, whoever goes to the stage, must interect with the public (because the cloth is open, so the imaginary audience is watching) but they can not speak (they can dance, ow, send kisses, ect.) In the third phase, the participants can climb the 3 steps and interact with the audience with verbal language (poetry, songs, making a statemente, telling a story, ect.). At the end of the game the participants can express freely the emotions, feelings and cravings that they experienced during exercise. The observations of those who attended the performances (and not actively participated) will be much more useful to interpet.

This stage exercise will be a symbol of life itself (the difficulties in the way, the risk we run when we expose ourselves, etc.). It will be important to note the uncertainties, anxieties, the exhibitionism of some and inability of others to climb onto the stage. In the end, encourage the sharing of experiences on stage and comments from participants.

The need to adapt during the training was both a challenge and a blessing because it was an enormous surprise for the participants to receive acceptance and validation from the other group members. This time the session was particularly important because it contributed to the reconfiguration of the self-image and self-concept of these young women and, therefore, the self-esteem of the same.

The self esteem and confidence of the participants was of the most relevant issue to be developped since the itinerarie was not making any progress and for that reason only.

* How does the Workshop add a new way of thinking about the city? Innovative aspects.

No doubt, for the first time, applied the gender mainstreaming context of the city, in this particular group, in this specific region.

The concept of space appropriation was extremely importante with these young women participants because they were able to identify for the first time the city around it and as well the city viewed by a feminist perspective. It was the first (although most have been born and bred in this regional area).

Thinking about the city without the stereotypes lens, with the pedagogical methodology gained at the museum allowed na intersectional approach to a new way of thinking about the city.

It was also important to correlate the art of storytelling in the city, with the Roma culture in its oral aspect, which is a fundamental tool for the itineraries itself. Because roma community is so caracterized by the street and market sales, the negotiation abilities were really handy in the itinerary Conception. The challenge was to empower the young women to use those skills, in their homwetown, with the new added cultural competences and feminist views – wich was possible due to the self esteem and confidence Dynamics.

* Does our Workshops accomplish the indicators we managed in the first part of the Project? (see good practices and foundation Bricks)

Yes, definitely. Especially described below:

• Diversity as a main theme of the project;

• Themes: Gender equality and gender mainstreaming;

• Target group: Young women in a minority community (Roma), living in disadvantaged areas;

• Co-construction of the workshop dynamics with the target group;

• Interaction between museum and city;

• Recovery Area in the Large Lisbon.

• Construction of bridges, especially through mediation methodology, among minority groups and society in general.

* **Why do you think your Workshop adds diversity to the city? Diversity aspects.**

Working in an area that is typically multicultural, young women choose a common location to all (even each living in different neighborhoods within the Seixal).

This local was chosen from their religious beliefs (place of praying), participation in the project (training location) and also from the participants everyday life (their living spaces).

With that said, it has reached the goal of making your space, from the moment where they saw their own community transformation - by accepting the presence and coexistence of young roma people in space. This was allowed because of the guided tour where roma and non roma people attended, and the audience could see the itinerary through our participants eyes.

* Open Concepts that the Workshop has oponed and can be applied onwards, in future Workshops on the city.

Participation of the whole local community in activities that aloow some experience with media mechanisms (strange to young people, such as vídeo cameras, photographs machines, dictaphones) and the possibility of working with the Roma culture.

*For more information, see also the sheet description of the Itineraries.*

1. The painting showed a young girl, carrying wood at her head, and it was from an unknown author and dind’t have a title. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Portuguese saying - ‘É de se lhe tirar o chapéu!’. If you would take off the hat of a person it means that you respect what she/he is doing and also admire her/him as a person. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)