

From creation to cocreation: Culture for All Bragança

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Introduction

“Culture for All Bragança” was a large-scale ambitious project designed by the Municipality of Bragança (with funding from the European Social Fund) that was conducted by the IPB. It focused on 5 of the city’s cultural venues – Graça Morais’ Contemporary Art Centre, Georges Dussaud’s Photography Centre, National Railway Museum of Bragança, Iberian Museum of the Mask and Costume and the City Theatre.

The project encompassed **7 actions**:

1. initial diagnosis of the 5 cultural venues and questionnaire to people with impairments in the 9 councils of the CIM-TTM
2. accessibility for people with hearing impairment
3. accessibility for people with visual impairment
4. accessibility for people with intellectual/ cognitive impairment
5. accessibility in live events – music and theatre performances
6. construction of 3D materials
7. communication and dissemination.

The underlying methodology was a **participatory and cocreative approach** with people with and without impairments. Therefore, in this poster, we aim to present two resources designed by and for people with intellectual/ cognitive that offer easy language. We will detail the cocreative process from the moment we visited the exhibition with our collaborators and consultants to the moment when the respective texts were recorded in studio and later made available on the Youtube channel.

Methodology

A team of **professors-researchers** (5), **junior researchers** (11) and **collaborators with impairments** (4) was in charge of creating a accessible resources for mediating visits to the 5 buildings mentioned above. The resources encompassed visits for the exhibitions and information texts for the buildings available with audiodescription (AD), in Portuguese Sign Language (PSL) and in easy language, as well as live AD, subtitling and PSL interpreting in live performances at the City Theatre.

In the work that preceded this project, particularly at the Graça Morais’ Contemporary Art Centre (cf. Martins & Freitas, 2019), we approached cultural accessibility from a traditional access provision, an ad-hoc, a posteriori approach. This can be defined as exclusive, neutral, non-author and 3rd party (Fryer & Cavalo, 2021) or, as Greco (2018) [3] puts it, as “particularist”, focused on the maker who is usually a person without impairment and thus only triggers users’ reaction. However, the “accessibility revolution” upheld by Greco (2018) implies that accessibility should be universalist (i.e. for all), user-centred and proactive. Informed by this paradigm change, we sought to embrace a **participatory approach** with people with impairments: one that would involve them from the outset of the process of design and creation rather than at the end, and would enable them to have a **voice** and a say at all stages of this process (cf. Searle et al., 2022). This is by nature an **iterative process** that also implies an **action-research** approach (Tanabe, Pearce & Krause, 2018) and an **ethnographic research** (namely microethnographics – cf. Risku et al., 2022).

The work methodology included these stages: 1) determining the consultants and facilitators for the sessions; 2) defining work instructions and procedures; 3) observing the sessions with, e.g., live note-taking, recording, interaction; 4) developing post-session work – merging notes, cross-checking recordings with additions/omissions; 5) tests and validations; 6) assessment of the process and 7) production of the final product – recording in the studio, editing and uploading onto the YT channel.

Results

The exhibitions we chose were Nicolás Müller’s photos at the Photography Centre and Alex Dorici’s installation display at the Graça Morais’ Centre. At their visit, we asked our consultants with intellectual/cognitive impairments to go around the exhibitions and choose a set of photos or their favourite piece in each room. They are asked their thoughts about each piece or what it reminded them of. There was no intervention of the remaining team except for the leading questions. We made a number of observations, among which: 1) they showed initial shyness and difficulty in understanding the visits’ purpose; 2) they enjoyed the autonomy of choosing their favourite pieces; 3) they hesitated in discussing the pieces they chose, but once they felt comfortable, these were a way to retrieve, e.g., past or family memories; 4) some of them even went as far as interpreting and creating stories around some pieces; 5) they ended up bonding well with the members of the other institution and with the core team. Despite the fact that Dorici’s display was contemporary, they were able to explore it physically and was one of their all-time favourites.



Figure 1. QR code for Alex Dorici’s visit in Easy Language



Figure 2. QR code for Nicolás Müller’s visit in Easy Language

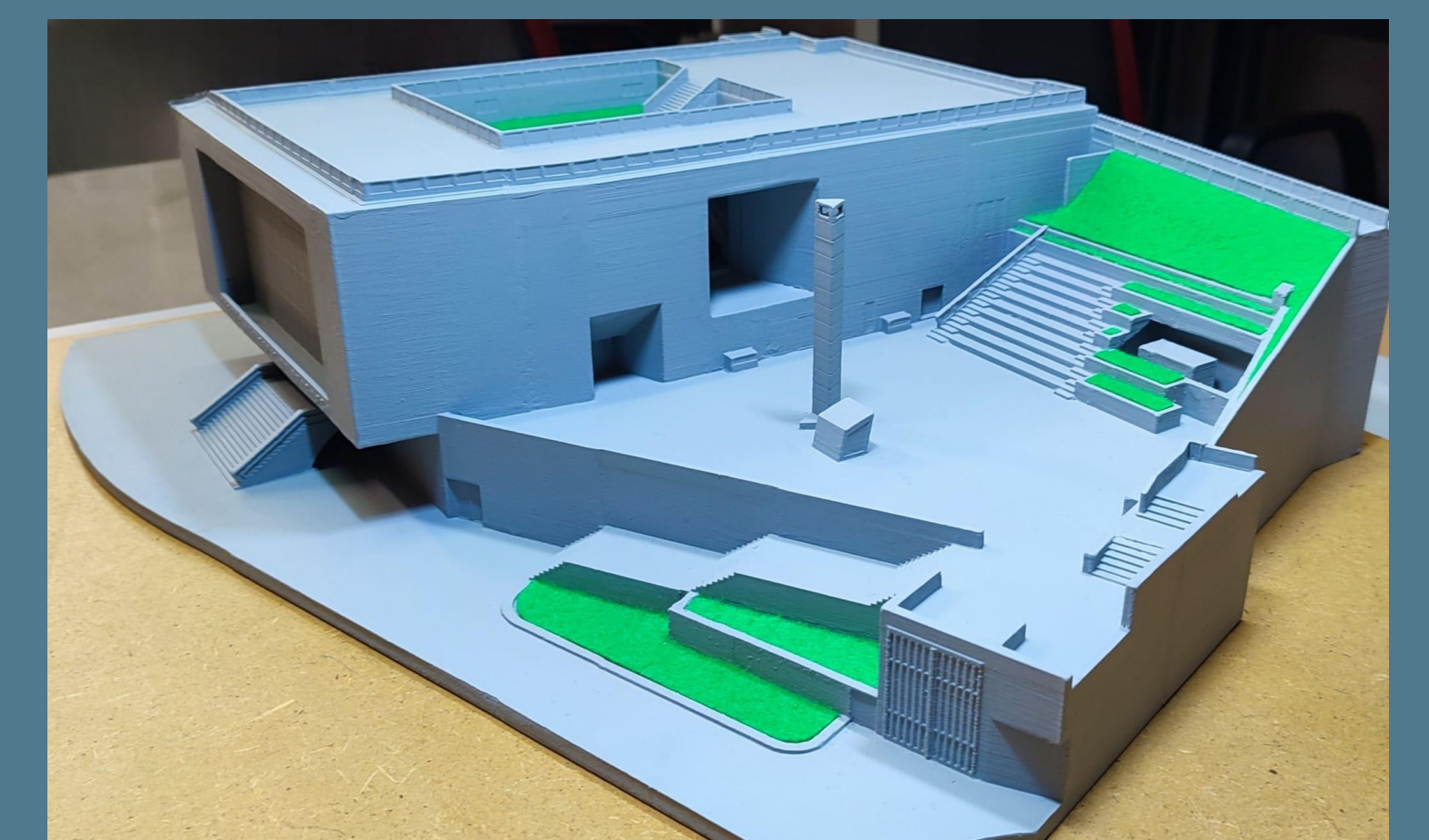


Figure 3. The model for the City Theatre (Jorge Santos, 2013)

“Cultura para Todos Bragança” produced a considerable number of resources, most of which are available on the project’s Youtube channel **@culturaparatodosbraganca2121**. Some of the activities developed were disseminated on social media, through **@acessibilidade** on insta and FB. Finally, in terms of the actions within the project, **428 resources** were produced on the whole: action 1 – 6; action 2 – 82; action 3 – 117; action 4 – 96; action 5 – 25; action 6 – 35; and action 7 – 68.

Conclusion

“Culture para Todos Bragança” enabled a considerable part of the city’s cultural venues to become more accessible to visitors with or without impairments. Among the many resources, we should point out the provision of information with audiodescription and in braille, in easy language, and in PSL and plain language. The resources are in a variety of formats, namely in audio, video and paper. All of these were translated into English and Spanish to enable also mediation for foreign visitors.

All in all, Bragança is now a more accessible city owing to the material capital it amassed with this project. It is undeniable that Bragança can provide for visitors’ diverse needs and achieved what Hayhoe (2014) names **active inclusion**.

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Special attention was paid to ethical issues, namely Ethics Committee of the IPB, voluntary collaboration over 18, informed consents, co-authorship and financial compensation.