

**Intercultural, intergenerational, interspecies, and interdisciplinary
work at the community level:
New European Bauhaus preparatory arrangements in Oeiras and Sintra, Portugal**

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ABSTRACT: Local communities represent the basis for a balanced wellbeing since they are the place and space for living. As dynamic spheres entangling a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures, aspirations, behaviours, beliefs, and resources, their comprehension is crucial to inform collective decisions at the local, regional, and national level. At the international level, Europe is implementing the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative that holds a promise to achieve a sustainable, inclusive and beautiful future. One of its Lighthouse projects is the Bauhaus of the Seas (BoS) that pilots intercultural, intergenerational and interspecies projects that are locally-grounded, reconnecting coastal communities to their aquatic ecosystems. In this paper we analyse the preparatory arrangements for achieving the NEB values in Oeiras (BoS city), and in Rio de Mouro (Sintra), where participatory, intercultural, intergenerational and interdisciplinary projects are under development. Throughout this work it is argued that operating at the local levels with the support of the local actors, as seen in Oeiras and Sintra, is paramount to achieve the NEB goals and transform the livelihoods of urban and peri-urban communities.

KEYWORDS: Intercultural, Intergenerational, Interspecies, Interdisciplinary, Local communities, Codesign, More-than-humans

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1. Introduction

We live in communities. Communities happen in spaces that connect people and structures that allow the flow of movement, information, and resources. The way communities appear, develop and are nurtured are dynamic and hold a power relationship between different stakeholders. The current lifestyle poses several questions to how communities are formed, happen, and perpetuate, namely on the stress put on nature due to the generalised consumerism habits as communities grow. Current sustainable behaviors and managerial policies tend to focus on minimising harm or couple the management of resources instead of conceptualising the restoration of the human connections and the human-nature dualism. Thus, it is necessary to rethink the role between and within communities to critically address their social dynamics and progress.

The fact is that technological and urban progress has also potentiated the gentrification of certain places and communities, creating a gap between and within urban areas (Taffe 2005, Baibarac and Petrescu 2019), extending the disconnection between people and the more-than-humans (Akama et al 2020). The concept of the more-than-humans extends to non-humans, to all entities that can be entangled with human life. These are other-than-human lifeforms, the built and natural environment, social dynamics and traditions, and beliefs and cosmologies. The disconnection between humans and more-than-humans is not trivial and resembles a multitude of entanglements that have been reshaped due to modern lifestyles, more associated with a Westernised and consumerism lifestyle and less coupled with the natural pace and flow. Therefore addressing this gap is crucial to develop a better future where humans and more-than-humans collaborate and co-habit, promoting a path that deviates from anthropocentric humane exceptionalism to a more ecologically-aware behaviour.

In terms of connecting local communities in urban neighbourhoods a participatory process, a multi-level engagement and a transdisciplinary approach are necessary (Sanders and Stappers 2008). However, the efforts must follow a more fluid knowledge share, capacity building, and access to resources to give power to local communities, where they can do more than give opinions. This more inclusive approach has the intention to avoid a brief consultation of the local stakeholders, whilst they are deemed accessory and not truly as part of the decision-making process. So, the intention is to give a feeling of being present, creating the conditions to co-develop, and self-govern the proposed initiatives. Approaching local communities as part of the project team,

potentially with equal decision rights may reduce the feeling of being neglected or only necessary in particular stages. Addressing a meaningful enrolment of local communities deserves critical consideration and proper methodologies. They must hold the necessary time to build trust, and constant and confident participation, alleviate tensions coming from the power dynamics in place, potentiate negotiations between local actors, allow an easy navigation of bureaucratic and legal issues, and empower a bottom-up transfer of power (Hurtig 2023).

One of such methodologies relies on codesign as a process for bringing together many stakeholders to design together new solutions (Sanders and Stappers 2008). The codesign purpose relies on the openness and transparency of the consulting, development, and decision-making processes to everyone, allowing a more diversified, resilient, robust, awareness, and acceptance from all the people directly and indirectly impacted by the project (Lee 2008, Sanders and Stappers 2008, Pedersen 2016). More than a collective creativity, codesign permeates the interests of people and organisations and mixes the agendas. In general, this means that the more powerful participants tend to ease their power when intervening, creating a balanced venue for diversified contributions. In particular, it means that more people are invited to get access to the power present in decisions-making. Such a process requires settings that form an ethical, confident, and safe space to participate. As more people get experience with the codesign approach, a generalised empowerment enters the discourse which constitutes a mark for several people and communities that are normally neglected, underrepresented, oppressed, or mistreated by the norms and systems in power. Knowing that a more inclusive and balanced participation might not always be the case, the role of the facilitator is to convey the right power dynamics, setting the appropriate time and space for all to participate. Only with a frequent participation in projects and decisions that really matter for the territory can build the confidence, resilience, and the feeling that local voices are heard and taken seriously for the common good (Cretney 2014).

More than individual resilience to cope with everyday challenges, there is the discourse of community-based resilience, which refers to how societies adapt to external factors (Joseph 2013). The tendency of living in bigger cities is increasing, and people are abandoning rural and less urbanised areas to live, work, and leisure in cities than in other geographies. So the current trend is that the urban and peripheral areas are defined by their multicultural landscape, including different languages, traditions, and

behaviours, which constitute an additional challenge to agree on common activities, methods, and decisions to happen in the territory (Lewis and Conaty 2012, Baibarac and Petrescu 2019). This means that the human/non-human entanglements differ according to the geographies. Where peripheral areas offer a more multicultural social dynamic, constituting an evolving melting pot, urban areas are more structured offering a higher number of places and spaces to host the cultural diversity. On the contrary, rural areas are deemed as crystalised, constituting a challenge to accommodate the cultural and fast change seen in urban and peri-urban areas.

Therefore, it is believed that codesign triggers the local ownership and promotes the bottom-up decision-making process by including the usual neglected voices and interests, including the more-than-humans' voices inside the process (Akama et al 2020). So codesign can be applied to empower local communities irrespectively of their geographies and structured norms. Still, the question remains, that is if a more participatory decision-making process at the community-level would increase the wellbeing of all. The alternative scenario is that there is a risk that codesign offers only a partial shift to the power structures without changing the decision-making process. The ideal scenario is that codesign guides a more inclusive process, mitigating the barriers between experts and non-experts, expanding the access for knowledge and other resources. Additionally, two main questions arise:

How is it possible to represent all the cultures living in a place without compromising their own rights to express themselves according to their heritage?

What format a common legacy would take if it is hard to compromise and negotiate the equal and just expressions of ongoing multiculturalisms?

Exploring codesign approaches can be an answer and so the facilitator has gained a pivotal role on leading the process in a way that respects all voices, interests, heritages, and hurdles. Hence, the facilitator has to be competent enough to represent the whole combination of values with such care that no one feels neglected, obstructed, misguided, unheard, or isolated, while incentivising a wide contribution.

Coupling codesign with the more-than-humans constitute a complementary route to add a criticality to the representation, discussion, and comprehension of the human/non-human entanglements happening throughout the local community. More-than-human approaches have been proposing pathways to overcome chronic dualisms between

humans, nature, and culture, as seen by scholars such as Stengers (2010), Haraway (2016), and Latour (2018). These perspectives highlight the need for relational, non-anthropocentric scenarios and approaches for equitable and effective responses that could attenuate and eventually solve the mentioned gap (Good and Thorpe 2020, Ergene and Calás 2023). As more people live in cities than ever and rural and peri-urban areas are being continuously underserved with cultural, social, and economic infrastructure, the codesign approaches complemented with more-than-humans' perspectives can help to mitigate the needs for a more natural lifestyle. Even in stressful and fast-paced environments such as seen in overcrowded cities, codesign can be seen as an approach to facilitate the inclusion of more voices for the decision-making that extends beyond mere consultation at the early stages of the process.

In this article we follow the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative and the ambition inscribed in the Bauhaus of the Seas (BoS) European Lighthouse project for achieving a prosperous wellbeing at the territorial level. Then, we followed the practicality of approaching the intergenerational, intercultural, and interspecies multitudes by developing communities of care using the Zoöp model, which is a learning model that takes into consideration the interest of the more-than-human. Lastly, we extend the analysis to two territories where the NEB and BoS values are being tried, Oeiras (a municipality in Portugal), and Rio de Mouro (a parish in Sintra, Portugal).

2. New European Bauhaus (NEB) and the Bauhaus of the Seas (BoS)

The NEB initiative represents a way through which the European Commission aims to implement the European Green Deal, relying on an interdisciplinary approach containing the values of sustainability, ecosystem regeneration, social inclusion, and aesthetics (Schellnhuber et al. 2022) The BoS is an European NEB Lighthouse project that focuses on the relational experience between coastal communities and their water bodies. As a Lighthouse project under the NEB initiative, it attempts to research and pilot activities happening in seven different European coastal cities spanning different aquatic ecosystems:

- Tagus River estuary - Lisbon and Oeiras, Portugal
- Lagoon of Venice - Venice, Italy
- Gulf of Genova - Genova, Italy

- Rhine-Schedlt delta - Rotterdam, the Netherlands
- Øresund strait - Malmö, Sweden
- Elbe River - Hamburg, Germany

In these cities, BoS is piloting projects that are radical in their proposition, implementing approaches termed ‘drops’². Amongst the drop typologies there are activities like:

- Interspecies assemblies - leveraging cooperation between humans and non-humans for discussion and decision-making;
- Regenerative menus - developing food options that promote the wellbeing of the local aquatic ecosystem;
- Blue makerspaces - creating spaces that serve as innovative laboratories that integrate the marine-based materials and residues into urban designs; and
- Inclusive ocean literacy programs - including technologies such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality into the extensive local and scientific marine knowledge.

These drops, combined in effect and frequency, will cause ripples that, potentially, provoke a wave of change that is simultaneously sustainable, beautiful and inclusive, achieving the NEB ambition. The intention is to foster a positive wave of change where a replication effect operates simultaneously to a scalability model that goes along the rationale of Moore et al (2015). In specific, such replication follows the concepts of scale up - “*impacting laws and policy*, changing institutions at the level of policy, rules and laws”; scale out - “*impacting greater numbers*, replication and dissemination, increasing number of people or communities impacted”; and scale deep - “*impacting cultural roots*, changing relationships, cultural values and beliefs, ‘hearts and minds’” (Moore et al 2015). This means that to scale does not necessarily mean to increase the resources in order to increase the desired and expected effect. It means that to replicate the knowledge and the achieved results there must be an evaluation to where to go next: directly to policy making and authorities to promote a change at the top level (scale up), iterate exactly what was positively achieved expecting to reach a wider audience (scale out), or go further in the relational, experiential, and entanglements that are occurring in the local communities, within its roots and beliefs, and operate on that level (scale deep).

² <https://bauhaus-seas.eu/>

Ultimately, the BoS can be interpreted as a way to decolonise design and top-down approaches, going beyond the initial Bauhaus movement from the 20th century, which combined art and architecture with industry and construction around a post-First World War social, economic, and political vision. Detailed in a manifesto (Nunes et al 2024), a vision for an intercultural, intergenerational, interspecies, and locally-grounded approach is conceptualised and attempted at the European-level. Anchored with regenerative ambitions which are inspired by nature and water bodies themselves, the codesign approach operates locally to enhance the participatory development of Executive Plans (EP) for every pilot project, thus pushing forward a multistakeholder agenda, including the more-than-humans. In possession of EP, each pilot team can deploy the project continuing the codesign mindset, by proceeding with the participation of locals actors. This continuous participatory process evolves from ideation, to strategic decisions, then to evaluation, and replication and long-term vision. By involving a broad range of stakeholders throughout the process it is envisioned that a greater sense of belonging and ownership is achieved, bridging the gap that is normally testified between local communities and their ruling authorities (Sanders and Stappers 2008), Hurtig 2023).

3. Intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies

Initiated in 2020 by the European Commission, the NEB initiative aims to achieve climate neutrality in the European continent by 2050 (Wolf et al. 2021). In practice NEB objectifies the need of regenerative approaches that incorporate creativity, art, culture, while embracing diversity. It does so by promoting a more inclusive access to spaces where the intercultural, interdisciplinary dialogue can happen. Spreading such dialogue will evoke a more relational sense between genders, life stages, ethnicities, and social strata, in a more “liquid” and modernised lifestyle, creating the basis for a better future for all (Bauman 2013, Schellnhuber et al. 2022).

As one of the six NEB European Lighthouse demonstrators, BoS proposes a perspective from the sea to the continent, claiming the need to rethink the relations to the bodies of water. More than 100 years after the original Bauhaus movement, this ambition may clash with modern technocentric perspectives, claiming for decolonial design and challenging controversial topics inherited from the NEB and the Bauhaus ideas (Torretta et al. 2024). So, there is a need to challenge the continuation of structures and established systems of thought, and give fuel to ethics, hope, and aspiration. Such a perspective

assumes that there is no way to achieve it without expanding the scope of design and managing projects for a full intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies approach(es). Arjun Appadurai (2013) claims that the ethics of possibility “can offer a more inclusive platform for improving the planetary equality of life and can accommodate a plurality of visions of the good life.”. In this sense, ethics of possibility are a basilar consequence of an informed, creative, and critical citizenship, which extends the collective hope creating the proper platform for hope and aspiration to occur (Torretta et al 2024). In other words, the criticality of performing for intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies projects requires a strong interdisciplinary agenda that breaks the disconnections stemmed by the systems and infrastructures in place, and advance the ground of possibility, iterating routines of fantasy, creativity, invention, and imagination (Munari, 1979). By fostering the imaginative capacity of local communities, through the empowerment and capacity-building of its members a stronger sense of ownership will be gained. It is not possible to live a happy life while enclosed in neighborhoods that were created to contain particular cultures in peripheral areas and implement subsystems that disconnect the necessary flow of information, resources, and people between peri-urban and urban areas. Only if those barriers are broken and people feel that they are part of a larger community, they can then exercise their right to imagine, fantasize, and be creative to invent possible and just futures (Sandford 2023, Myers et al 2024).

To be and perform intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies design we must critique, problematise, question, prototype, iterate, and replicate novel approaches and solutions for issues like: gender imbalance (Ruberg and Ruelos 2020), social exclusion (Schellnhuber et al. 2022), historical and modern colonialism (Torretta et al 2024), eurocentrism (Mota 2025), biodiversity loss (Ergene and Calás 2023), and anthropocentrism and technocentrism (Kopnina et al 2018). To ignore the depth of these main issues and develop a new framework for Europe may be seen as a contemporary extension of a biased concept of modernity that does not account for the interest of non-European heritage and legacy. Since multiculturalism is deeply rooted in Europe it is required to accommodate the intercultural perspectives to build better fitted infrastructure for all. Additionally, keeping neglecting different perspectives related to gender and social and economic dynamics, for instance associated with gentrification and the LGBTQ people (Binnie 2016, Ruberg and Ruelos 2020), will oppose the claim that designing a better future for all is a priority in the contemporary political agenda. Hence, it is urgent

to keep the NEB critique alive and increase and widen the discussion to other infrastructures and systems in place, like the ones happening in urban and peripheral neighborhoods where these more inclusive, sustainable, and just ideas can also have a great impact (Torretta et al 2024).

Ultimately, to be sustainable is more than being in harmony with nature; to be inclusive is more than including opinions from local actors; and to be beautiful is more than to stand out aesthetically. However, and most importantly, it is questionable if the NEB should aim for “reach[ing] out further beyond European borders over time with the aim of spreading its principle of sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics globally”³. Thus, pushing for an intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies agenda relates to the development of reparative and just systems (Sandford 2023, Myers et al 2024). Including multiple voices in co-designing solutions decreases the unilateralism usually held by the power structures in place. This means that there will be less chance to influence the outcome of activities and projects. Fostering an approach more reliable on negotiating than imposition decreases the more authoritative positionality that comes along with expertise and knowledge, and moves the dynamics for participation rather than standard and restricted decisive power. Additionally, local associations and smaller organisations will be more active at the decision-making process in their region, claiming their space as transformational change makers for generating reparative and just futures (Sandford 2023, Myers et al 2024). These smaller organisations, either public or private, have the benefit of being closely in touch with the interests of locals, since they live and act in the same area on a daily basis. In the public sphere, associationism relies on a deep knowledge of the social dynamics occurring in a particular place and the routine of spending time within the community creates a proper trust that is crucial to develop meaningful projects. Those projects may not push forward any third-party agenda and stay strongly connected with the locals' interests, perspectives, and hurdles.

One hypothesis is that the post-NEB European initiative needs to decrease its tone on being an example for other countries and its ambition to expand an eurocentric perspective. Ideally, it would need to include more robust codesign approaches that respect the intercultural European landscape. If we take the migratory dynamics as an example, where people enter Europe in hope of having a better future, escaping more

³ [https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/system/files/2021-09/COM\(2021\)_573_EN_ACT.pdf](https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/system/files/2021-09/COM(2021)_573_EN_ACT.pdf)

problematic geographies, how can Europe include those heritages into the local and regional decision-making, namely in the creation, development, and nurturing of communities of care?

Departing from the literature related to *Communities That Care* (Hawkins et al 2008), which focus on prevention approaches for youth wellbeing, we assume that the only attunable goal for the intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies BoS ambition is to create, develop, nurture, and expand communities of care. These communities respect the local heritage and legacy irrespective of its origins and use them as starting points to co-create safe public and private spaces for co-designing anything, anytime, that could potentially be fully co-owned forever. This high level of social accountability takes into consideration the notions of decolonial design (Torretta et al 2024), multispecies justice (Celemajer et al 2022), and pushes the agenda towards a revitalised common good (Bryson et al 2021, Rockström et al 2023). These bold ambitions would potentially rebalance the discrepancies that are currently being felt between different urbanised areas, such as cities, peri-urban areas, and rural villages.

4. Local Sea Forums

The example that the BoS gives for piloting intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies projects is the formation of local interdisciplinary participatory forums. They are defined as the operative group that ensures locally grounding and provides information and resources to plan and evaluate together the future activities and their impact. Practicing codesign approaches, the Sea Forum is activated through local events facilitated by a designer and a pilot team that includes an academic institution, a cultural organisation, and the local authority. The Sea Forum is organised to challenge the assumption that experts are the unique holders of problem-solving capabilities. Within the participatory sessions, the designer's role is mainly to facilitate the participation where people are free and confident to address their level of awareness while providing a range of information and knowledge about the consequences of alternative choices, opinions, and contextual insights. The designer assumes a more diplomatic posture that eludes the power structures and mitigates the 'logic of war' between weaker and stronger groups (Pedersen 2016). Potentiated by the involvement of non-designers in the codesign process, the aspects of legitimacy and authority are attenuated, empowering participants

to transcend themselves beyond the behaviours of ‘win, loose, or retreat’, and shifting completely the situated power structure that may occur throughout the participatory sessions. Along the process the participatory experience increases and the capacity to imagine possible futures that include a wider interests’ range will be clearly observed, thus captivating the interest of the participants for the intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies perspectives.

Detaching from a user-centred design is challenging, but a more inclusive approach is necessary to allow a richer role in designing communities of care that are intercultural, intergenerational, and interspecies. To meet this end, emphasising the action of the local communities in decision making processes is paramount (Gregory 2003, Simonsen and Robertson 2012). Therefore, codesign offers an approach to deal with potential conflicts coming from different perspectives related to urban planning and legislation (Taffe 2005), that invites a more participative social dynamic that encompasses the people’s diverse people. Activating local forums that can account for a diverse, free, inclusive, and innovative participation requires a deviation from the standard way of deciding, distributing the power of making a decision to the local community. Taking this step may be challenging but it represents the next frontier for designing inclusive projects while accepting the dynamism around the local communities. Therefore, designing inclusive projects can be seen as a cornerstone for creating, developing, nurturing, and extending communities of care.

4.1 Interspecies assemblies

Living towards a climate catastrophe permeates a provocation against the anthropocentric lifestyle that is widespread in several European countries. The growing concern that humanity deserves a paradigm shift to better allow a generalised wellbeing is mounting (Haraway 2016, Stengers 2010, Latour, 2018, Kopnina et al 2018, Gellers 2021). Humans are not central, they live amongst other species in shared ecosystems that have been almost completely humanised in urban areas. So, adopting more-than-human perspectives holds a route to disrupt human exceptionalism (Kopnina et al 2018). Based on the notion that collective decisions are agreed collectively, what if the voices of non-humans were also taken into consideration? What if we ask the flamingo, the whale, the rose, the bacterium, the river... what are their opinions in relation to certain topics that they may be directly or indirectly related to? One hypothesis under study is to form interspecies assemblies - collective forums for discussions between different species.

According to the multispecies ethnography approach (Locke 2018), more-than-humans cannot be neglected in sociocultural anthropology since they contribute to the understanding of humanity which does not occur in isolation. Firstly proposed by Kirksey and Helmreich (2010), the multispecies ethnography approach shifts anthropocentric thinking by recognising the agency of the more-than-humans. This agency is activated by the ecological, social, and historical integration of the more-than-humans in the comprehension of life and environments where humans and more-than-humans are entangled. It characterises “an epistemologically revised and ecologically attentive mode of writing and research exploring our manifold relations with non-human species” (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010). However, here it is stated that the more-than-humans’ concept must encompass more than the non-human life, allowing the comprehension, respect, and agency of the remaining dimensions: the natural environment, the built environment, the social dynamics and traditions, and the cosmologies and beliefs. For this reason, this work defends the urgent need to create, develop, nurture and extend communities of care. Such communities are based on the human/non-human interfaces and privilege the interactions between humans and more-than-humans in all their dimensions.

5. Incorporating the more-than-human interests: The Zoöp model

Being confronted with different perspectives presents discomfort and expansion simultaneously. As opposed they are, different perspectives offer routes to expand our vision of the world and challenge the perceptions and assumptions we might have. Similarly, to the effort of including different human perspectives into decision-making processes like those coming from migrant communities, black African diaspora, digital nomads, children, and the elderly, it is also needed to include the more-than-humans’.

The aim of incorporating the more-than-humans in the agenda is challenging. Since 2018 the Het Nieuwe Instituut (HNI) has been researching to meet this end, ultimately developing the Zoöp model. The Zoöp represents an organisational learning model that promotes regenerative relationships between humans and non-humans (Pedroso-Roussado et al. 2025). Its ambition focuses on interspecies collaboration within organisations, contributing to the development of reparative and just systems. The Zoöp model tracks the baseline impact of the organisation in its surroundings and requires the installment of a board seat for the more-than-humans’ representation. This person acts as the *Speaker for the Living* whose action is exclusively dedicated to represent the interests

of the non-humans in the organisation decision-making process. So, the Zoöp model offers a potential solution to achieve a more interspecies approach. It attempts the integration of all the beings involved in a particular ecosystem, including humans. The overarching goal is to foster ecological regeneration for all beings. Therefore, the Zoöp model adds the more-than-human's interests in organisational decision making. The Speaker for the Living will represent the more-than-human life throughout the daily life of the organisation. Such a process pushes forward a regenerative economy where humans do not assume sole proprietorship of a decision that impacts all the local surrounding ecosystem.

Operationally, the Zoöp model is allowed by the embedded action of the Zoöconomic Institute (the central support system coordinating the Zoöp network and shared knowledge and practices), the Zoöconomic Foundation (the legal entity supporting all the nuances around the Zoöp model), and the Speaker for the Living (the liaison between the more-than-humans and the organisation, selected collaboratively between the organisation and the Zoöconomic Foundation). The first step of the Zoöp model is to perform a baseline assessment of the organisation which outlines its current state and potential areas of intervention. The baseline assessment is performed yearly and is part of the zoöconomic annual cycle. As a learning process, the zoöconomic annual cycle offers five phases with specific questions to guide the regeneration economy path of the organisation. The phases are:

- 1) Identifying (what bodies form the Zoöp?;
- 2) Sensing & listening (what are the life-worlds of these bodies?)
- 3) Characterising (do these bodies form degenerative, regenerative, or neutral relations?)
- 4) Focusing (which of the clusters of relationships should be worked on this year to achieve a better regenerative landscape?); and
- 5) Intervening (what should be done to achieve regenerative relationships? When, where, how?).

Intentionally knowing the impact of an organisation in its surroundings constitute the basis for its sustainable operation. It requires a multitude of interconnected disciplines that range from ecology, architecture, management, engineering, sociology, and then the expertise related to the particular industry it is in. To coordinate interdisciplinary work in a setting that merges the ecological, economic, and social interests is an endeavour that

pushes the limits of organisation structures. Here, codesign approaches might be of benefit as well, for instance those embedded to the concept of multispecies justice (Celemajer et al 2022), or the steward-ownership model (Kavadis and Thomsen 2023) as recently implemented by Patagonia. Seen by Patagonia's example, 99% of the profits would be perpetually donated to nature – the unique shareholder – and managed by an independent Foundation (Holdfast Collective with the support of Patagonia Purpose Trust). This move implicates the separation of the bodies responsible for the purpose and the profit of the organisation. However, the steward-ownership model itself does not counteract the industrial extractivist mindset since it only dictates that profit and purpose are not in the same hands. This means that the interests of the more-than-humans are dependent on the strategic decision of the golden shareholder/ foundation board of directors.

5.1 Oeiras NEB pilot as a Zoöp: preparatory arrangements

Part of the BoS consortium, Oeiras Municipality is implementing the Zoöp model. Since it does not constitute an organisation *per se*, the application of the model depends on the effort of adapting it to be applicable to a pilot project instead of an organisational structure. The Oeiras NEB pilot situates itself in the Ocean Literacy field and has the long-term operation within the future Tagus River Museum. Specifically, the pilot aims to develop a publicly open Academy that can demonstrate the NEB values throughout a locally-grounded educational outreach program. Combining art, science, and the local heritage (like the Oeiras' built military coastal patrimony), the Academy will give the Tagus River center stage, activating a wide discussion that will explore the river's inspiration and sense of awe. It is believed that potentiating education in such an inspired way through art and science will increase the effectiveness of the awareness raised throughout the program. Ultimately, the awe that sea provides will extend the already existing *Sea Appeal* felt by the Oeiras inhabitants whose culture closely relates to the sea.

The Oeiras NEB pilot operates within the NEB values and the BoS narrative and performs the preparatory arrangements to implement an interspecies assembly to guide the action plan. For the Zoöp model implementation, quantitative and qualitative knowledge was gathered and activated through a Sea Forum, respecting humans and non-humans and promoting decentralised decision-making for the pilot project's EP development. To form the Sea Forum, experts and representatives were gathered in such a way that nature, culture, and local interests were represented. Through the application

of codesign approaches and mediated by a pilot team consisting of representatives from Oeiras Municipality, Instituto Superior Técnico (University of Lisbon), and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, participatory sessions were held to define the pilot project action plan and timeline for 2024. Including the interests of the more-than-human in a bottom-up, intergenerational, intercultural, and interspecies in the decision-making process constitute a strong learning experience that can represent a shift in the usual practice of the organisations represented in the pilot team. In principle, a greater awareness of the interdisciplinary approach seen in discussions around inclusive design, interculturalism, and regenerative ecology is foundational to have a route for their practical application in future projects.

The preparatory arrangements for the Oeiras NEB intercultural, intergenerational, interspecies pilot occurred between May and October 2023 during 4 participatory sessions where the Sea Forum was gathered. Specifically during the last session, an exercise related to the interspecies assembly and the Zoöp model was developed. The invited Sea Forum participants were tasked to discuss and share ideas about the:

- Potential Speakers for the Living;
- Five most relevant more-than-humans acting in the vicinity of the Tagus River estuary, either biological, social (behaviour, tradition, or belief), or built;
- Most relevant relationships between the identified more-than-humans; and
- Tentative interventions to perpetuate, activate, or start the integrity and regeneration of those relationships.

5.2 Main considerations

Despite the interest in the importance of local biodiversity, it was challenging to execute the mentioned tasks. The Sea Forum participants were able to identify potential Speakers for the Living but they felt difficulties in defining the more-than-humans, their relationships and, consequently, the tentative interventions aiming to the local ecological integrity and regeneration. This occurred because there was insufficient information between the participants to inform the task, which reveals the discomfort in using speculation and imagination to surpass knowledge gaps (Munari 1979). Still, the more-than-humans identified were: i) Laje estuary, ii) Boga fish, iii) Tagus River margins, iv) Religious Sea procession, and v) Military fortifications. For the interactions between the more-than-humans, the forum participants were asked to call three types of interactions

between the more-than-humans: “support”, “ignore”, or “obstruct” (Table 1). In terms of the tentative pilot interventions, i.e, keep the supporting relationships, change the obstructions to support, and transform the ‘ignore’ relationships to ‘support’, the participants pointed activities related to rewilding, creation of an interpretation space, and use of aesthetics to enhance ongoing local religious activities (Table 1). In the end, the results were included in the pilot EP to be deployed during 2024.

More-than-humans interactive pairs	Interaction between other-than-humans pairs	Pilot intervention
Laje estuary vs Boga Fish	Support	Promoting fish repopulation
Laje estuary vs Tagus River margins	Support	Rewilding
Laje estuary vs Religious sea procession	Ignore	Not defined
Laje estuary vs Military fortifications	Ignore	Creation of an interpretation space
Boga fish vs Tagus River margins	Support	Rewilding
Boga fish vs Religious sea procession	Ignore	Put the aesthetics at the service of the ecosystem
Boga fish vs Military fortifications	Ignore	Limit the public access
Tagus River margins vs Religious sea procession	Support	Not defined
Tagus River Margins vs Military fortifications	Obstruct	Not defined
Religious sea procession vs Military fortifications	Ignore	Creation of an interpretation space

Table 1 - Oeiras BoS-Zoöp session outcomes during the co-design session

As ambitioned by the Academy of the Oeiras NEB pilot, this exercise constitutes a first step for a comprehensive knowledge base to be shared across a network of national and international actors. This collective effort is expected to showcase the feasibility and benefits of integrating the perspectives and needs of the more-than-humans into organisational and project decision-making processes. The initiative to implement the Zoöp model at the local project level, across diverse cultural contexts, is anticipated to significantly enhance its sustainability awareness and impact. This effort will not only benefit organisations and experts involved but also extend its influence to the broader public, promoting a more inclusive and sustainable approach to environmental stewardship and organisational and public governance.

5.3 Sintra NEB pilot: an intercultural, intergenerational and interdisciplinary approach

The Linha de Sintra is a territory geographically characterised by the places connected by the rail line from Sintra to Lisbon. The Sintra Rail Line holds the following municipalities: Sintra, Amadora, Oeiras and Lisbon (Figure 1). Despite the economic, social, and cultural relevance of Linha de Sintra as a geographical territory, there is an absence of critical analyses and discussions about it. Tied to the frontiers between municipalities and to old-fashioned indicators that do not pay justice to the dynamic state of this peri-urban area, researchers and authorities struggle to assess the richness of such a multifaceted territory.

Sintra Municipality is the second most populous territory in Portugal, possessing 385 000 inhabitants, and the second with the highest number of foreigners with right to stay (47 607 inhabitants)⁴. The multicultural Linha de Sintra gathers people from different ancestries such as Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Angola, and Brazil in the peri-urban area. However, it is estimated that these numbers and nationalities do not reflect the real demographic panorama.

⁴ <https://cm-sintra.pt/institucional/sobre-o-concelho>

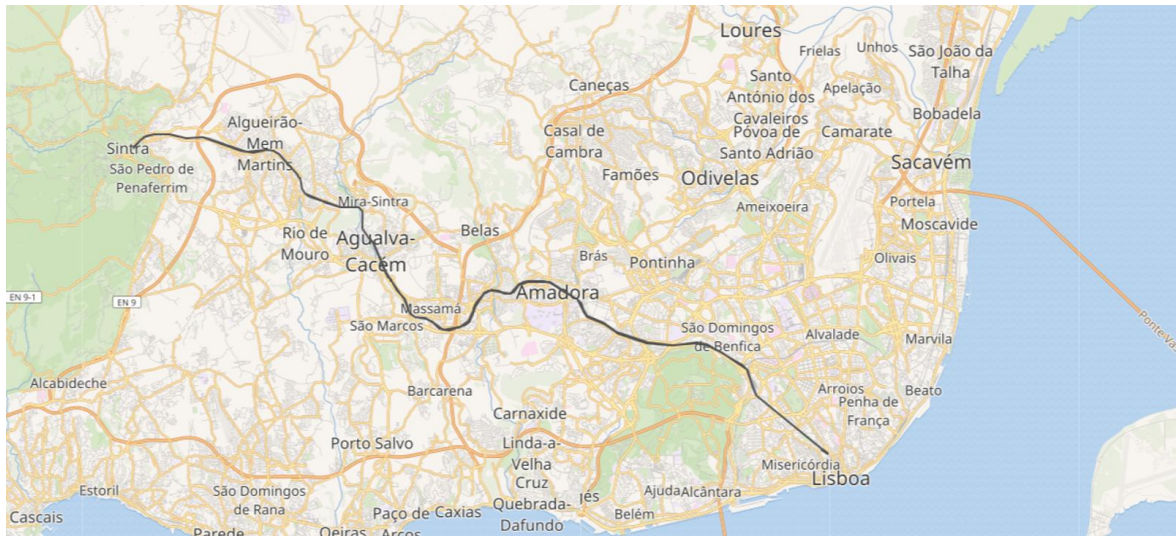


Figure 1: Line depicting the Linha de Sintra in a map sourced in Wikipedia; Wikimedia's geographical letters - cartographical data are property of the OpenStreetMap contributors.

The Linha de Sintra represents a cultural melting pot. The urbanistic expansion of this territory potentiated the creation of new undifferentiated residential spaces, but also caused the social demarcation inside Sintra and Amadora municipalities. Therefore, the privileged and the excluded residential sites are clearly observed. These peripheral sites can be seen as producers of imagetic representations associated with particular lifestyles and stigmas (Major and O'Brien 2005). Such realities are reproduced by the different stakeholders acting on the different territorial levels (González et al 2015). Consequences of this multi-level organisation affects thousands of people, who live in mischaracterised buildings, and are associated with the feeling of isolation, loneliness, and strangeness. Unknown and unbounded neighbours live apart from each other, ignoring one another. There is no sense of global community besides their family and inner cultural circle and so the expected solidarity that comes with connectedness is almost absent. The occurring relationships are superficial and stay on the basic daily greetings. Youngsters are faced with other cultures at school but they extend the ancestral culture and soon after leaving school they reflect the behaviors and lifestyles of the elderly.

To accomplish an intercultural, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary project in such a territory is to test the NEB hypothesis. Throughout the 2025-26 two-year period the UMA SÓ PALAVRAS⁵ project will develop a plan to activate culture as a vector of

⁵ <https://shorturl.at/gVJxW>

social cohesion. Situated in Rio de Mouro (Sintra, Portugal), the project will take advantage of the strong multicultural identity happening in the community and organise a series of proximity actions, artistic workshops, an oral history cycle, artistic residencies, and a regional and national showcase of the generated creative and artistic outputs. In possession of an intercultural, interdisciplinary, and gender-balanced team deeply rooted within the territory, the project extends the local identities throughout the shared oral history, encompassing thematic such as black heritage, decolonial design, afrofuturism, and sustainable urban planning (Taffe 2005).

Devoid of political and private agendas, the project operates independently and attempts to initiate an intercultural participatory movement in three neighborhoods: Serra das Minas, Rinchoa, and Tabaqueira, in close relationship with local actors also represented in the project team. To permeate the empowerment of the participants and locals, the sessions are being held using a combination of codesign methods, non-directive teaching (Rogers 1957), and unstructured planning (Shelly and Troyer 2001). These methodologies increase the ownership feeling of the participants and aim to create a trustful and safe platform for participation, allowing an intercultural bonding that can be expanded in other neighborhoods in Linha de Sintra.

6. Main considerations

In brief, the UMA SÓ PALAVRAS project addresses the local identities, aiming at their unique expression. In the multicultural Linha de Sintra, the objective is to promote the intercultural dialogue and potentiate the artistic expression, valuing the local talent in the artistic creation and consolidation. We believe that a more artistic fruition is a reflection of a healthy local culture, that can connect people from diverse backgrounds and social strata. Such a dialogue will be promoted by several activities in which the focus is not collecting nor managing data but to develop and nurture safe spaces to share and co-create whatever results from the intersection of ancestry - incentivising the appearance, development, and nurture of communities of care.

One of our ambitions is also to provoke the local authorities to upgrade the effort on data collection to better reflect the socio demographic landscape characteristics of this area. Our provocation is followed by an attempt to address it. The UMA SÓ PALAVRAS will test a proximity model in Rio de Mouro (Sintra, Portugal). In this model the focus will stay on the heritage and legacy of the resident local communities in the three

neighbourhoods (Serra das Minas, Rinchoa, and Tabaqueira). Throughout the project the plan is to foster the connectedness within and between these neighborhoods and widen the participation of the local actors exploring art as a value for social cohesion.

Throughout the first 6 months of the project, it was identified major concerns that can help guide the future activities, namely the oral history cycle and the artistic residencies:

- The social media communication strategy is working (around 20 thousand people reached per month), but it is not reasonably converted in real participants in the activities;
- The interculturality felt in Rio de Mouro needs to be properly assessed when organising activities to allow a more relational experience and confident participation;
- More collaborations with local actors and organisations must be formed to allow the network effect across the three neighbourhoods of the project;
- A more frequent contact with the local authorities such as Rio de Mouro parish and Sintra City Hall is required to improve the reach of the intercultural dialogue ambition;
- The dependence on third-party organisations removes the local communities' capacity to gain the necessary resilience to withstand the daily life challenges. A more empowered approach that is predominantly bottom-up is necessary to foster the autonomy of individuals and organisations at the local level.

Despite its early stages, the UMA SÓ PALAVRAS holds an example that the knowledge and capacity to develop intercultural, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary projects are dependent on onsite mental and physical infrastructures that do not quite fit the local communities' interests. Thus, it is necessary to disintermediate those arrangements, and allow more appropriate dynamics to occur, in a manner that more resembles the NEB ambition and proposal.

Conclusions

Researchers and practitioners have to work together with local actors and authorities to mitigate the ideological and systematic gaps occurring between people, and between people and nature. A truly inclusive and cooperative paradigm is necessary. The change should start from the assumption that all people are born equal, and that the infrastructure and systems on the ground allow a respectful and just lifestyle. We conclude that the Oeiras NEB's and Sintra's Pilots are necessary but not sufficient to implement a wide, inclusive, participative dialogue. One major challenge relates to (peri-) urban mobility. It is a neglected issue since the access to public transportation is limited between territories, uses fixed routes that do not reflect the social dynamics, and the traffic is frequently intense (Taffe 2005, Baibarac and Petrescu 2019). This issue constitutes a border. Present everywhere (in buildings, backyards, streets, roads, neighborhoods, municipalities, cities, metropolitan areas, etc), borders are having a detrimental effect, stimulating the "aversion of otherness" (Fletcher et al 2005). Therefore, operating at the local level has been constantly overlooked, giving few opportunities to truly empower local communities in time. This is felt by a disproportionate policy strategy as seen in NEB that contributes to a change in awareness that may not be accompanied by the appropriate mechanisms and resources on the ground.

Ultimately it is believed that only with maximum contact between different actors, a more inclusive world is possible, allowing a more respectful, impactful, meaningful, and valuable way of living. Therefore, extending this provocation to the NEB initiative is necessary, challenging it to go beyond the "call on all Europeans to imagine and build together a sustainable and inclusive future that is beautiful for our eyes, minds, and souls". Sustainable for whom? Inclusive for whom? People's eyes, minds, and souls are different, experience differently, and change. The work being implemented and tested in the Oeiras and Sintra NEB pilots aim to walk this path.

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