

#### Festival HabiTACTION! We are home, neighborhood, city!

Lisbon, September 2019

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this festival had the support of Guerrilla Foundation



www.habitaccaofestival.tumblr.com www.facebook.com/habitaccao www.instagram.com/accaopelahabitacao www.twitter.com/habitaccao

# Combate o desALojamento totAL.

HabitAcção! 29set

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# Mass tourism, Massive evictions. LEAVE like a local!

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#### Habitaction! WE are home, NEIGHBORHOOD, CITY!

#### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FESTIVAL

During the month of September the Festival HabitACTION! occupied streets, avenues, squares and cultural associations with almost 60 events self-organized by artists, researchers, filmmakers, musicians, activists and social movements from the metropolitan Lisbon area.

A month before the national elections and feeling the urgency to put the right to housing and the city in the center of the civic and political discussion, we impulsively launched an open call in August for artistic and political activity proposals. Surprisingly we received many applications which resulted in an ambitious cultural program: from political debates and film projections, to artistic installations, theater performances and concerts, with the essential stop at "gentrificatours" (tours around the gentrified city center mapping the stories of resistance of locals in the face of real estate speculation).

the real change begins when the call is collective.

By occupying the public space in a permanent dialogue with residents, artists and activists we attempted to create new collective narratives around the theme of housing and city which challenged people to think and act against the speculative housing market and reclaim the right to the city.

The festival was not only a great opportunity

to think of new political approaches to address the current housing crisis but also to strengthen the ties between different social movements that refuse to give up and keep on fighting for the people.

We proved that we can organize ourselves horizontally based on direct participation while also using artistic interventions to reclaim our houses, neighborhoods and cities.

On the last day of the festival more than 500 people gathered in one of the main avenues of Lisbon to make a diverse and participated popular assembly where it was decided to take the streets again on March 28th 2020 where we will join in solidarity dozens of other European cities on the international Housing Action Day.

Website:

www.habitaccaofestival.tumblr.com/

## THE URGENCY TO MAKE A FESTIVAL FOR THE RIGHT TO HOUSING & THE CITY

WHY IN LISBON, WHY NOW?

Most Lisbon travel guides invite their readers to leave their AirBnBs and hotel rooms behind and adventure through the busy streets of the historic city center packed with souvenir shops and tourist catered restaurants while taking the time to take pictures of the very #instagramable historical building facades coated in beautiful azulejos tiles.

traveling in Portugal is like walking into an open air neverending museum of azulejo tile art.

Over the course of September, the city center neighborhood of Anjos witnessed the appearance of a very different kind of azulejos that did not reflect the charismatic Lisbon advertised on travel guides. Designed by the urban geographer Claraluz, the workshop "I lost my home: evictions with azulejos", brought the traditional art of telling stories through tiles to the context of what has been called "the New Lisbon" by travel platforms.

With dozens of participants, these tiles brought to public the hidden stories of eviction and displacement from homes and neighborhoods. It was now local residents that found great interest in #instagraming these azulejos that were strategically placed in building facades, at the front door of short-term rentals, metro stations and shops. It appeared that finally



someone was telling the real story about this "new Lisbon", a victim of gentrification, touristification and housing speculation.

the story of a city under the attack of a speculative fever.

For its originality and connection with a popular rooted imagery, this workshop turned out to be one of the most successful and popularised events of the festival captivating the interest of mainstream press with a powerful narrative based on first-hand local residents stories which face an increased lack of work and housing security along with forced displacement from their communities.

A month before national elections, HabitACTION! took the city stage and made it impossible for politicians to ignore the housing crisis, the increasing occupation of public space by private interests, and the exploitation of the residents and workers.

With yellow as our flag, a color that typically stands for sounding the alarm against an imminent danger, we raised awareness on the injustices produced by the commodification of our homes, neighborhoods and cities, by distributing flags that were hung in several windows with a simple message: "raise wages, lower rents stop evictions!".

In this dialogue between private and public, residents and tourists, people and elite, the festival HabitACTION! was launched at the beat of "Orientas-me uma renda" by Jhon Douglas & JungleBoys.

Workshop "I lost my home: evictions with azulejos" Instagram @perdiacasa

Jhon Douglas & JungleBoys: 'Orientas-me uma renda' https://youtu.be/j09Fvfw2NgU



## THE FESTIVAL AS A STARTING POINT FOR THE CREATION OF AN URBAN MOVEMENT

THE COLLECTIVE PROCESS OF ARTICULATION AMONG HOUSING, FEMINIST, CLIMATE AND MIGRANT ACTIVISTS

The core of our mission is to include and promote discussions between the ones that live the city, residents or workers, while reinforcing, promoting and articulating networks between movements and groups that have been fighting within the same urban environment. As such, our proposal was from its roots to establish a political festival for the right to housing and to the city that could gather forces to remind us that the right to housing can be a reality for all and that urban development can be made in a more democratic, direct and participative way.

Starting from very different perspectives, the organization of the festival itself became an important collective process which brought

together housing and city rights movements with feminist, climate, and migrant activists wether they were established as political movements, cultural associations or self-organized groups. To this process, active citizens also joined and participated in the collective construction of the festival.

in September we take to the streets, we occupy the public space, we build solidarity networks and we create a movement.



In a joint reflection, synergies were created around the topics of what should be a "worthy and decent life". One that should always include access to adequate housing, integrated in a city made by the people, with proper access to services, transportation and public spaces, never forgetting culture and art as a fundamental part of our cities and lives.

From this the name of the festival was chosen and the manifesto [see annex] was written, denouncing the logic of a city-profit, neighborhood-vitrine and house-investment that has been promoted by financial capital investors, a complacent elite of politicians and even a lenient mainstream press.

what happens is not inevitable, it is the result of policies promoted by the few who have a lot.

An open call for activities was launched and there was an overwhelming response from artists, researchers, collectives, and citizens which clearly reflected the need to be heard on the topics housing and city rights.

Taking many shapes but with a common protest - a critical overview of the exploitation process of the many by the few - the festival ended up with almost 60 events from political debates; art installations, performances and exhibitions; concerts and dance performances; screening of movies; workshops; and "gentrificatours".

Each movement, each collective, each artist, each participant brought their views around the theme of home, neighborhood and city.

From the feminist collectives it was clear that mothers with children are increasingly suffering from precarious working and housing conditions and have been disproportionately affected by forced evictions always under the threat of child services removing custody of their children.

The climate movements brought critical reflections on the "portuguese economic fairy tale" which largely relies on mass tourism regardless of the environmental impact of building a second airport or harbouring city sized cruise ships. And naturally the festival converged with the international climate strike



on September 27, in support of a different model of production, lifestyle and in support of an ecological city.

It was also clear from the beginning how migrants and minorities are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis and how their voice is barely heard by public authorities which have shown little to no real interest in their participation in the process of building the city. In this context, we promoted visits and conversations with residents of selfbuilt neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city which have suffered from or are in the process of demolition and forced displacement.

we resist and we stay! we stand up to them and decide our future collectively.

Understanding that housing financialization is an international and concerted effort to capitalize on every aspect of our life, we gathered in solidarity with the migrant refugees that took asylum in the self-managed squatted neighborhood of Exarcheia in Athens which has been under attack from the

Greek government and promoted a public conversation with two international tenants unions (London Renters Union from England and Sindicat de Llogaters from Barcelona).

Through these actions new synergies among social movements were created and alternative models of governance and city were shared and debated.

The result was a multi-vocal intersectional festival program of activities [see annex] which promoted a very clear anti-racist, anti-capitalist, feminist, ecologist vision of the city that we aspire for and for which we are ready to fight together.

Manifesto:

www.habitaccaofestival.tumblr.com/tagged/manifesto

Events poster:

www.habitaccaofestival.tumblr.com/post/187574788967



## AGAINST SPECULATIVE FEVER AND ITS APPEALING IDEOLOGY

THE NEED TO BUILD A COUNTER HEGEMONIC NARRATIVE TO STRENGTHEN OUR POLITICAL ACTION

When the uneven and neoliberal development of our capitalist society started to increasingly redraw the role of housing into a commodity and arguably transformed residents into mere "investor's subjects" and "housing consumers" of "cities-users", the appealing ideology of house consumption strongly mediated dwelling practices and the aspiration to a home.

Not surprisingly however, the gap between such ideology of house consumption and the legit aspiration to a home became enormous and is progressively dramatic. Our political struggle situates precisely on this fracture. Between what is imagined and sponsored by the political and financial elites aided by mass media and the violent reality of the housing crisis underway.

Within a global capitalist context, Portugal has not been an exception. Over the course of the last decade, the promotion of speculative capital investment in the housing sector by the real estate market has largely relied on tempting narratives which promised a major economic growth and wellbeing for the overall society.

## our lives are more important than profit.

The entrepreneurial values and promises of success surrounding home-investment have been largely acclaimed in the aftermath of the economic crisis and politically sponsored by



the ruling government as a means to support the stability of the Portuguese economy, employment rate and low home-ownership interests.

In the wake of such promising developments that would have made Portugal "great again" media outlets have been equally liable for reproducing and promoting this edulcorate vision among the mass media public, thus contributing to manufacturing a distorted biased view of reality.

We are strongly convinced therefore that our struggle also consists of challenging these narratives by building a counter narrative, one closer to the people's reality. The occupation of both public and private space through various forms as was during the festival was a fundamental tool for this. They served our political struggle as it enabled us to dispute the hegemonic capitalist narrative, displaying its illegitimacy in the face of the growing inequalities it provokes.

While communication has been partially democratized due to social networks (these owned by the elites that produce the narratives we are attempting to dismantle) they have also and unsurprisingly reproduced the logic of

house consumption and city profit.

In response, we came out of the virtual world and went back to the roots of mass communication: the multiple surfaces of the city. With flags hanging from our windows, tiles on the building facades, occupation of public space and provocative stickers, we sounded the alarm to denounce the housing crisis and the ongoing privatization of the city.

### we must dream of other models for the city.

With Portugal's capital already transformed into a city of travelers, both tourists and dwellers, we highlighted what has been happening in the shadow of this "New Lisbon".

The plastic artist Aimée Predezert turned Largo do Carmo, one of the main squares of the city center and emblematic spot of the 1974 Portuguese Revolution, into a laundry room. Bringing to light the work of many portuguese and migrant women that work in precarious and underpaid conditions for the tourism sector.

The platform Stop Despejos Lisboa (Stop



Evictions) organized "gentrificatours" in two neighborhoods that are currently under the attack of AirBnB and speculative real estate interests.

By telling the stories of the homes, the neighborhoods and the city, the contradictions in which our community lives in became more clear than ever. Abandoned municipal buildings stand empty next to hotels and short-term rentals. Luxury apartments coexist with homelessness. And "blooming" tourism is concurrent with social injustice and evictions.

The strong collective process involved in the making of HabitACTION!, built with activists and locals, was strong enough to capture public attention. Consequently the mainstream media, cornered with testimonies, started to adapt its narrative. Finally, and weeks from the national elections, the activities of the festival and the topic of the housing crisis made it to the press.

#### Press articles: www.habitaccaofestival.tumblr.com/tagged/imprensa



## THE LAUNCH OF AN URBAN MOVEMENT

#### THE COLLECTIVE ASSEMBLY AND FURTHER ACTIONS

The festival culminated in a public assembly in Avenida da Liberdade, one of the main avenues of Lisbon famous for its luxury stores and hotels, to reclaim the right to affordable and adequate housing while demanding a halt to all evictions and to press public institutions to engage in participatory democracy.

From the text of the HabitACTION! manifesto we encouraged the people to take it to the streets and demand change by using a word game between "change" and "moving" (which in portuguese is the same word):

If we are being expelled from the homes we live in, we will take it to the streets and bring all our furniture. If the eviction is collective, so is the change. Come! Bring your sofa. Your wardrobe. Your cardboard boxes. Let's occupy one of the most expensive streets of the

city. Bring furniture and strong arms to move towards change!

#### we claim the city!

Almost ironically, days before the public assembly, we found out that the municipality of Lisbon had changed an event titled "The street is yours" to the same day and place of the public assembly. The concurrent event worked out perfectly as it allowed the message to be spread to even more people and allowed us to engage with an unexpected and surprised audience.

A junction of the avenue was transformed into a proper giant living room with sofas, carpets, tables, bookshelves and lamps while over 500 people and 30 collectives gathered for three hours to discuss the different topics related



with the city on an open-mic. From personal testimonies to resistance stories, we were able to create collective strategies to fight against housing speculation, gentrification, touristification, demolitions and expulsions from our homes, neighbourhoods and cities.

From the speeches and interventions it was clear that there was a general agreement with the five core proposals of our manifesto: 1) The end of evictions and demolitions without adequeate alternatives; 2) The regulation of rents; 3) More quality public housing; 4) To take advantage of public space and social spaces; and 5) A radical change in the model of governance and development of cities

if we have a minimum wage, why not a maximum rent?

To close the assembly, we discussed further actions and agreed in organizing a demonstration on March 28th 2020 for the international Housing Action Day as a next step to keep in motion the urban movement launched by the festival and towards a new

concerted resistance for the right to housing and to the city.

Finally, in a display of humour and protest, we left the avenue junction and marched carrying all the furniture to the plaza of Martim Moniz - that was at risk of privatization at the time - where we gathered and danced for some more hours to the concerts that closed the festival HabitACTION!.

Video of the public assembly: www.vimeo.com/367550570



#### **'REFLEX GRANT'**

#### THE BUDGET

The Reflex Grant provided by Guerrilla Foundation was of 5.000,00€ of which 4.170,23€ were used during the course of the festival with the remaining 829.77€ to be used for the international Housing Action Day protest on March 28th, as decided in the public assembly.

As detailed on the following page, the grant money was allocated to buy or rent sound materials, printing of communication material, materials to supply the workshops and for the logistics associated with the last day of the festival and public assembly.

We would like to highlight that the financial support of Guerrilla Foundation has also directly contributed to demonstrations and protests following the festival of several movements in the Lisbon area. The acquisition of these quality sound materials, such as the soundsystem and portable stereo speaker, was an important decision that had invision

future needs of the social movement we started discussing during the festival.

Since, Habita! has lent these items to other movements, free of charge, in solidarity with their struggles. Namely for the demonstrations in support of the Chilean protests and Rojava people, and also other climate and feminist demonstrations. They have also been used for cultural events namely in the cultural association Sirigaita where Habita! holds its weekly internal meetings and bi-monthly public assemblies.

The sharing of this material has also contributed to the increased collaboration among movements and, indirectly, to be updated on the actions that are being taken all over the city concerning different struggles.

It is without saying that this festival would not have been possible without the financial support of Guerrilla Foundation and we are



thankful for the important contribution that the foundation has done for the social movements in Lisbon.

International Housing Action Day 2020: www.housingnotprofit.org/housing-action-day

Budget Festival HabitACTION!		
Sound Material	Soundsystem	1.634,30 €
	Tripods	64,93 €
	Portable stereo speaker	630,00€
	Rechargeable batteries	20,00€
Communication Materials	Posters and flyers	373,42€
	Stickers	156,50 €
	Stationary	92,35€
	Flags	361,78€
Workshops	Projector rental, tiles, and other	366,55 €
	Truck rental	301,15€
	Generator and gasoline	83,40 €
	Other materials (rope, straps, clamps)	85,85 €
TOTAL		4.170,23 €
REMAINING		829,77 €



#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### **EVALUATION AND CRITICAL ASPECTS**

The festival HabitACTION! was a crucial moment to advance the process of resistance and struggle for housing and city rights. With dozens of events and hundreds of participants it has made a real impact in the lives of those who fight everyday for these fundamental rights.

## we must unite to claim the right to the spaces we live in.

While we are still waiting to see a real political change, we have achieved some victories.

The timing of the festival significantly contributed to raise awareness on the housing crisis by putting the topic on the political agenda right before the elections with multiple politicians emphasizing the right to housing and the need to rethink housing policies.

Mainstream media is increasingly talking about the housing crisis and the diffused discontent among the population. Some fiscal benefits that have massively contributed to the increase of real-estate speculation, such as the Golden Visas program, are currently being questioned. People are becoming more aware of the scope of the situation, both national and international, with portuguese press also writing about international experiences such as rent control in Berlin and regulation of the market in Barcelona.

Suddenly, the political elite is unable to sell us the idea that this is a temporary situation that is only happening in Lisbon or in Oporto as the capitalist plan to profit off of every part of our lives is becoming ever so more evident to the general public.

This progressive change of narrative would be unthinkable not so long ago. It is the result of many years of political struggles of which the



festival HabitACTION! has been an important piece of this puzzle we have been trying to assemble in order to create a strong, active and healthy urban movement that is able to articulate different collectives, struggles and individuals.

Nonetheless, we need to highlight that the festival events concentrated mainly in the Lisbon urban area has limited this process of articulation. The periphery of the city, where many of the city workers reside, is crucial and has been affected in different ways. There was not a conscious decision to exclude those areas but a time and space barrier that we have been slowly and progressively breaking.

We simply did not have sufficient "people power" and availability to do everything we wanted in such a short amount of time. Or even enough time and experience to predict everything that needed to be done.

In the aftermath of the festival we can confidently say that we have learned a lot from our shortcomings and feel more prepared for future collective actions. Meanwhile families continued to be evicted, tenants continued to be bullied, and the public space was under attack. At great cost, we managed to continue

our movement's daily work while actively contributing to the collective works of the festival.

Overall, we believe that the festival increased our sense of building civic capacities to think differently, to challenge assumptions and norms, and to articulate new ideas and visions between different groups and people. And since, we have continued the dialogue and collaboration despite facing multiple organizational and even ideological and political challenges. In this sense our mission was achieved as it has sparked conversation within the people and within the political and cultural movements in Lisbon.

As a result, the protest on March 28th that was decided in the public assembly, is being organized by the platform that came out of the HabitACTION! festival.

### houses for people, not for profit!

Follow our social media for more about the festival HabitACTION! and future actions: www.facebook.com/habitaccao www.instagram.com/accaopelahabitacao www.twitter.com/habitaccao



#### SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

#### TO ALL THE ARTISTS, ACTIVISTS, PARTICIPANTS AND SUPPORTERS

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Bruno Humberto Elena Sanmiguel Lá Tinha

Bruno Verdier Ernesto de Carvalho Left Hand Rotation

Casa da Achada - Centro Mário espacO Libertem o Adamastor

Eva Gonçalves London Renters Union

Extinction Rebellion Portugal Madalena Fragoso

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SourMilk

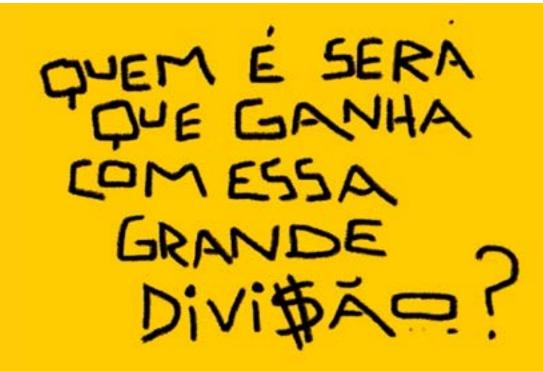
Stop Despejos

#### ANNEX

**FESTIVAL POSTER** 

**MANIFESTO** 

**EVENTS POSTER** 



01–30 facebook/twitter: @habitaccao instagram: festivalhabitaccao web: habitaccaofestival.tumbir.com CONCENTRAÇÃO SET 2019 FESTIVAL 29 SET

## ACORDAR PARA A VIDA, SAIR À RUA!





## HabitACÇÃO!

#### **MANIFESTO**

### Habitaction! WE ARE HOME, NEIGHBORHOOD, CITY!

Because they want to expel us from the houses and neighborhoods we live in, because they exclude us from the city: HabitAction!

We rise up to say that we do not accept the logic of the city-profit, the neighbourhood-vitrine and the house-investment. This is the logic of speculative investors, who try to convince us that profit is more important than our lives, and of our rulers, who are hostages of private interests, and tell us that there are no alternatives. Cities are being built for the rich, while thousands of people are being forced to abandon their homes, their streets, their livelihoods and their affective networks. We rise up to say that it cannot be their laws, the laws of the market, that tell us how and where we can live. We want houses that serve to live, neighborhoods where we can build our lives, and cities managed by those who live in them. They want to expel us. We resist and we stay! We stand up to them and decide our future collectively.

In September we take to the streets, we occupy the public space, we build solidarity networks and we create a movement. We want to live in our neighborhoods: we demand an end to evictions and we unite for a more just and fair city. We challenge the capitalist system, which destroys our planet and expels us from the spaces we inhabit. Our lives are more important than profit.

#### WE ARE HOME, NEIGHBORHOOD, CITY!

We want:

1. The end of evictions and demolitions without giving alternative

There are evictions because the lease was not renewed, there are evictions because the government decided to demolish our houses, there are evictions because we can't afford to pay such high rents, there are evictions because we can't pay the house to the bank... And there are no alternatives. We want to end this violence. We demand that there should be no more eviction without an alternative of decent housing.

#### 2. The regulation of rents

Rents are outrageous and wages are minimal. We want maximum rent ceilings and propose the indexation of the value of the rents to the national minimum wage. If we have a minimum wage, why not a maximum rent?

3. More quality public housing

The European countries that are better protected against property crises are the ones with the most public housing. Examples are the Netherlands, where 34% of housing is social, Austria, with 26%, and France, with 19%. In Portugal we have less than 3%. We want housing policies that reduce social inequalities and prevent ethnic-racial segregation. We know that it is possible to have more and better public housing for everyone.

#### 4. Take advantage of public space and social

There are squares, parks and avenues that are abandoned and many are left to private concessions. Associations and communities are being evicted from social spaces to make way for luxury hotels and residences. Local commerce is disappearing. We have the right to enjoy public space and we need social spaces where we can meet, build, and discuss our lives collectively. We want public space that is truly public, cared for and not commodified, and an end to the evictions of collective spaces and small businesses.

5. A radical change in the model of governance and development of cities

Cities have been planned and built for profit and not for the people who live there. We claim the city! We propose the effective decrease in the number of tourist apartments, the expropriation of real estate monsters such as Apollo, and the end of the Gold Visas and tax benefits for speculators and for luxury. No more empty houses for no reason! Our cities are not for sale!

This is a call.

We are people and collectives struggling for the right to use the spaces in which we live and we call everyone to action, participation, protest. What happens is not inevitable, it is the result of policies promoted by the few who have a lot.

We are more than them. We must unite to claim the right to the spaces we live in, to decide together on the city we want. We can and must dream of other models for the city.

For an end to speculation, gentrification, touristification, demolition and expulsion. For a city for and of everyone: HabitAction!

FESTIVAL SETEMBRO 2019

## HabitACÇÃO! SOMOS CASA, BAIRRO, CIDADE

