

## ■ The Putos qui ata Cria Project

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The youth initiative *Putos qui ata Cria*<sup>1</sup> focused on the figure of the Master of Ceremonies (MC), as a social educator able to sensitise young people for social cohesion and respect for cultural diversity. Translated from Cape Verdean creole, it means 'children that are growing up'. This was the motto that guided the creation of an album with songs that address, through rhythm and rap poetry, a number of issues that affect many youngsters, especially those living in socially vulnerable neighbourhoods of the suburbs of Lisbon.

The *Putos qui ata Cria* initiative was promoted by the Associação Juvenil Laços de Rua and funded by the European Community by means of Measure 3 of the *Juventude Program*. This project was designed and implemented to raise awareness, to include, to encourage and to promote intercultural understanding among youngsters of different neighbourhoods. The "kick-off" was a four-day residential gathering that sought to facilitate the coming together of the young MCs, allowing them to gain and share out knowledge, at the same time arousing their interest in working together.

Eight young *rappers* were consistently involved in the initiative: L.King, Strike, Sette, Dama Bete, Sebeyks, Kromo, Lady F and Boss, that grew up in the neighbourhoods of Marianas, Cova da Moura, Fontainhas and Estrela d'África (Damaia), among others. The project took place in the years 2005 and 2006 and lasted seventeen months. During the process, the project took many shapes: we lived in moments of greatest indecision and lost some of the youngsters by the way; it was a period of advances and setbacks, losses and gains. We walked the roads that we had been constructing, some of which led us to nothing of special interest, while others unexpectedly proved to be very productive. We would like to highlight the participation of the group in the *II Encontro de HIP HOP do Concelho de Cascais*; the participation of six group members in the exchange program *Urban Connection*, held in September 2005 in Strasbourg, France; and the joint organisation with the association Moinho da Juventude of a Youth Festival entitled *Um outro mundo nu ta Cria*, an expression of which the objective was to make young people aware that another world is possible.

As socio-cultural activity leader and driving force of this project, I think that, given the challenges that our societies put forward, to educate towards action actually is a coherent and necessary strategy, especially when intervening at the level of socio-economic inequalities. The experience that has been related here was driven by the desire to bring African communities - which in Portugal constitute one of the groups that are most vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion and discrimination - closer, giving voice to youngsters that are seeking real guarantees for progression and personal development. In June 2007, this initiative represented Portugal at the European Youth Week<sup>2</sup> in Brussels, being awarded and recognised by the European Commis-

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sion for Education, Training, Culture and Youth as a valuable practice that contributes to the participation and inclusion of youngsters with less opportunities.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.myspace.com/putosquiatacra>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UL5aHxCoFCc>; <http://blogs.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.view&friendId=93622327&blogId=359675328>, accessed on 23.06.2010.

<sup>2</sup> Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/sharing-experience/doc/thematic\\_compendia/good\\_practices\\_inclusion.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/sharing-experience/doc/thematic_compendia/good_practices_inclusion.pdf) (p.16), accessed on 23.06.2010.