

THE MUTIRÃO: ORGANISING COMMUNITY JOINT ACTION FOR URBAN RENEWAL

Consider the following slightly modified version of the feature that the Extra newspaper publicised before the joint action promoted by CUFA in a favela.

“This Saturday at 8am the favela of Vila Kennedy in Bangu will make a joint effort to revitalise the theatre Mario Lago, one of the spaces for local culture, which has been closed since February last year. The action is a partnership between CUFA, local artists and producers. When residents had the idea of reopening the theatre, Celso Athayde, founder of CUFA, met with local leaders and, together, they decided to do the mutirão.

The activity will start with a ‘hug’ of the theatre, when everyone holds hands and makes a circle or ‘hug’ around the building. Then volunteers, including residents and local artists, will cleanse the building. Once opened, the space will feature several workshops, including theatre, graffiti and music.” (Extra, 8th May 2014)

Now consider how a similar action could take place in your community. Here are some points to take forward:

- **Planning.** In the example above, it was community residents who identified the need for joint action for the renewal of a public space. The community is always the best source of information when it comes to what they need or want. Points to take forward for joint action normally arise during neighbourhood or community meetings, which is why it is important to be organised, to meet frequently and to discuss.
- **Promotion.** It is important to spread the word in the community about the planned joint action. Social media channels are very effective for this, as are community magazines (see the case of *Jornal Voz das Comunidades*). Door-to-door invitations and posting notices on the street are also good ways to reach out.
- **The actual event.** Consider dividing up the tasks and assigning micro-projects to different groups. Be mindful of democratisation of tasks and avoid reproducing hierarchies in the community, but always respecting cultural codes (e.g. gender separation, allowing elders to focus on some tasks of their choosing, if pertinent).
- **Celebrating achievements.** Once the *mutirão* has achieved its aim, consider an inauguration in which community members celebrate what they have done. Plan for refreshments by the end of the *mutirão* (people who cannot attend the *mutirão* can contribute by preparing these refreshments). Remember to publicise the community’s achievement in communal meetings and/or newspapers.