

CREATIVE CITIES AND TERRITORIES. THE CASE OF THE QUADRILATERAL ASSOCIATION IN NORTHERN PORTUGAL, A RELATIONSHIP UNDER CONSTRUCTION

CIDADES E TERRITÓRIOS CRIATIVOS. O CASO DA ASSOCIAÇÃO QUADRILÁTERO DO NORTE DE PORTUGAL, UMA RELAÇÃO EM CONSTRUÇÃO

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative work between cities is pointed out to confer dimension and competitiveness to cities or territories that cooperate in networks. Despite some discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of investing in creative cities and territories, there are numerous examples where this investment is associated with sustainable and inclusive development. The purpose of this article is to present the journey of Quadrilateral Association as a reflection on how the implementation of creative cities and territories can lead to greater territorial cohesion and a regional commitment to innovation and creativity as development factors. First, it is referred the origins of the Urban Quadrilateral Association for Competitiveness, Innovation, and Internationalization in the North of Portugal and the territorial context in which it is located. Afterwards, the article addresses the work carried out in the four municipalities that constitute it, Barcelos, Braga, Famalicão, and Guimarães. Finally, it ends with an overview of the challenges that remain.

Keywords: Creative cities. Urban Quadrilateral Association. Northern Portugal. Development.

RESUMO

O trabalho colaborativo entre cidades é apontado como uma forma de conferir dimensão e competitividade às cidades ou territórios que cooperam em rede. Apesar de alguma discussão sobre as vantagens e desvantagens de investir em cidades e territórios criativos, há inúmeros exemplos em que este investimento está associado a um desenvolvimento sustentável e inclusivo. O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar o percurso da Associação Quadrilátero como uma reflexão sobre como a implementação de cidades e territórios criativos pode conduzir a uma maior coesão territorial e a um compromisso regional com a inovação e a criatividade como fatores de desenvolvimento. Em primeiro lugar, são referidas as origens da Associação Quadrilátero Urbano para a Competitividade, Inovação e Internacionalização no Norte de Portugal e o contexto territorial em que se situa. Em seguida, o artigo aborda o trabalho realizado nos quatro concelhos que a constituem: Barcelos, Braga, Famalicão e Guimarães. Finalmente, termina com uma abordagem dos desafios que ainda se colocam.

Palavras-chave: Cidades criativas. Associação Quadrilátero Urbano. Norte de Portugal. Desenvolvimento.



1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization is associated with glocalization in the promotion and valorization of territorial competitiveness to open new frontiers in the diffusion of regions and countries on the international scene. This capacity for implementation is linked to the cultural, economic, and even moral characteristics of each territory (PORTER, 1993). Public administration should “show the reality and diversity of municipalities” (Almeida, p. 15), to ensure the interests of citizens by meeting their concrete problems, and proposing solutions (SANTOS, 1987).

To boost regional and urban valorization projects, the formation of networks has been an option. Urban networks can be seen as cities that collaborate with each other in an articulated manner and with common goals (ALBRECHTS; LIEVOIS, 2002). This allows “adding scale effects, through the strengthening of both physical and functional articulation and interinstitutional cooperation” (FONSECA, 2011b, p. 2), being fundamental that the synergies developed are perceived as favorable by the parties involved (BASTOS; RIBEIRO, 2014) to overcome limitations and costs.

The designation Creative City, linked to Charles Landry, has been the subject of many articles, not always consensual. According to the author, for a city to be creative (Table 1), it must “identify, nurture, attract, and sustain talent, so it is able to mobilize ideas, talents, and creative organizations to keep their young and gifted” (LANDRY, 2005, p. 3).

Table 1 - Definition of a creative city: characteristics to be considered

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -networking -diversity and cultural wealth -innovative and competitive urban tools -symbolic perception and ecological awareness -creating the conditions for inhabitants to be the builders of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - well-defined but flexible strategies - strong governance, with the capacity to take risks - change of mentality, new approaches and business concepts - an environment conducive to innovation and creativity
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Source: Landry, 2005

A creative city encompasses a series of challenges that include the ability to change mentalities, redefine organizations, and their operations to boost the flow of ideas from individuals and communities. UNESCO recognizes Creative Cities as those “that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of sustainable development as regards economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects” (UNESCO, 2017).

Richard Florida emerges as a defender of the idea of a creative class, including people who, through their skills, creativity, and innovation, are creators of value. This includes scientists, teachers, architects, engineers, artists, people involved in new ideas, new technologies and creative content, and



design. Since the end of the last century, interest in creative territories has increased because of their connection to creativity and the cultural and creative economy, which is linked to the focus of local policies on creative classes and creative cities (DEBROUX, 2013). The creative territory can be defined as a space in which different knowledge areas (scientific, industrial, and symbolic) are created, favoring individuals, communities, and organizations that benefit from the territory's development (DECHAMP, SZOSTAK, 2016). The support of policy options has proven to be important for cultural and creative enterprises, as it enhances the use of culture "as a regional identifying element and a factor on territorial base competitive differentiation" (EMMENDOERFER; FIORAVANTE; ARAÚJO, 2018, p. 418).

2 METHODOLOGY

To achieve the main objective of this article, the characterisation of the case of the Quadrilateral Association in Northern Portugal, a relationship under construction, the descriptive-analytical method was decided as the main research method. A qualitative approach was mainly used, resorting to bibliographical research. Thus, a survey of the published bibliography was carried out, both in books, magazines, and written publications, either in physical form or on the Internet, to get to know the existing material on the subject, serving as an aid in strengthening knowledge and choosing the path to follow. Initially, the objective of the article was defined and the direction to be followed was outlined, proceeding to collect existing material and selecting appropriate information.

A quantitative approach was also used in this part. To this purpose, data was collected from official organisms, namely Statistics Portugal (INE), the Norte Portugal Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR-N) and the Municipal Councils involved in the Quadrilateral.

Statistics Portugal is recognized as an independent and trustworthy statistical authority, which develops methodological advanced statistical processes, resorts to technological innovation, and data science, and integrates multiple sources for statistical purposes. With all due respect to citizens and entities confidentiality, it delivers valuable statistics to society for better knowledge, research, and decision-making. The Mission of Statistics Portugal is to produce, in an independent manner, high-quality official statistical information, relevant for the society, while promoting the coordination, the analysis, the innovation and the dissemination of the national statistical activity and ensuring integrated data storage.

The Norte Portugal Regional Coordination and Development Commission is a public institution that works towards the integrated and sustainable development of the Norte Region of Portugal, contributing to the country's competitiveness and cohesion.



Tasked with implementing environmental, city and land planning and regional development policies in the Norte Region (NUTS II), CCDR-N is also responsible for promoting the coordinated actions of decentralised services at a regional level and provide technical support for local authorities and their associations. Among its various attributions, highlight goes to the management of the Alto Douro Wine Region, classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. CCDR-N is also responsible for managing Community programmes based on funds allocated to Portugal by the European Union, as well as other financing instruments intended to promote regional development.

The Quadrilateral Association's mission is to design internationally the urban network constituted by the cities of Barcelos, Braga, Guimarães and Vila Nova de Famalicão, positioning it as the third urban and knowledge concentration of the country. In this sense, and more specifically, the entity aims to implement the Strategic Cooperation Program (SGP), as well as to implement the projects envisaged therein, within the framework of the project "Urban Quadrupled for Competitiveness, Innovation and Internationalization", framed in the measure "Cities Policy – Urban Networks for Competitiveness and Innovation", funded by the Northern Regional Operational Program, QREN 2007-2013.

Contacts were also established with the Quadrilateral Association, which provided data and information on activities carried out. This allowed the validation of the data and information collected to ensure the quality of the research process. The gathering of the work carried out allows monitoring the bet of the four municipalities and the synergies developed. After an approach to the work carried out, the remaining challenges were pointed out at the end.

3 ORIGIN OF THE URBAN QUADRILATERAL

In 2008, the cities of Braga, Famalicão, Barcelos, and Guimarães signed a *PACT FOR COMPETITIVENESS, INNOVATION, AND INTERNATIONALIZATION*, which led to the creation, in 2010, of the Association of Municipalities with Specific Purposes Urban Quadrilateral. The formation of this association was possible because it was one of the five projects chosen at national level under the program co-financed by the Central Administration "City Policy - Polis XXI", inserted in the measure Urban Networks for Competitiveness and Innovation. This program stimulates the networking between cities with the potential for attracting innovative activities and a new collaborative vision between urban centers with the critical capacity to develop and apply strategies that strengthen competitiveness.

The Association of Municipalities for Specific Purposes Urban Quadrilateral is based in Braga and is currently headed by the Mayor of Guimarães. According to the statutes, the presidency of the Council is assumed annually in rotation by the president of one of the four municipalities. The cities of Braga,



Barcelos, Guimarães, and Famalicão are part of it (Figure 1), whose perimeters border each other and are connected using transport that facilitates rapid movement between them, although there are still shortcomings, particularly in terms of supply.

Figure 1 - Quadrilateral territory and main communication routes



Source: Fonseca, Ramos, 2011b, p. 8

The partner entities are the Centro Tecnológico das Indústrias Têxteis e do Vestuário de Portugal (CITEVE), in Famalicão, and the Universidade do Minho (UM), based in Braga and Guimarães. The Industrial Association of Minho (AIMinho), also a partner at the beginning, has since been extinguished.

For simplification, the Urban Quadrilateral Association for Competitiveness, Innovation, and Internationalization will be referred to in this article as *Association* or *Quadrilateral*. This entity assumes the commitment to be a center of entrepreneurial and urban innovation to enhance the competitiveness and the affirmation of the region as a reference of excellence in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, promoting urban innovation and industrial progress to make the territory competitive at a national level, bringing it closer to the nucleus formed by the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Porto. To this end, it encourages cooperation between scientific, technological, business, local administration, and final beneficiaries to stimulate an economy based on knowledge, fostering creativity, innovation, and research. It also bets on the integration of international networks. "As the region and the country cannot compete on price, it must compete on the uniqueness, quality and sophistication of the products and services it offers." (RIBEIRO; BASTOS, p. 4).



The Association is based on principles of partnership and networking that stimulate cooperation and the development of the territory in question. Furthermore, it is also based on rotation and parity, since the presidency of the Executive Council rotates among the Municipalities; the seat of the association is assumed as the administrative headquarters, with each city having the rotating seat of the Quadrilateral, at the time and during the period in which the presidency of the Executive Council is held by the mayor of that city.

It is intended, since its beginning, the affirmation at the national and international level of the territory it encompasses. Quadrilateral aims to promote cross-border cooperation between the North of Portugal and Galicia, in Spain, and its influence is increasingly recognized in the Atlantic Axis.

The main aspiration of Quadrilateral is to attract resources to enable the development and application of projects that promote innovation, research, and creativity in association with the business world and the cities within the Association. Through institutional cooperation of the municipalities concerned, the emergence of the third largest urban nucleus in the country, after Lisbon and Porto, to assert itself as an urban pole of multi-sectorial competitiveness sustained by the added value of urban assets, with a dynamic and internationalized base and a concentration of knowledge centers.

The activity developed aims to implement a polycentric urban model in which the urban nuclei it includes are configured as drivers of a development that is increasingly competitive and innovative, converging to the increase of internationalization from the technological, scientific, and business development. This is possible using European Union funds, namely the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) program.

4 CHARACTERIZATION OF THE URBAN QUADRILATERAL

The municipalities that integrate the Quadrilateral agglomerate different poles linked to higher education with about 2000 PhDs and a public university of national renown and international affirmation, the University of Minho. The knowledge capacities it possesses, allied to creativity and innovation, which are projected at the level of technological, entrepreneurial, and industrial development, make this region attractive to investment, specifically foreign investment.

Table 2 presents the population in the municipalities of the Quadrilateral. Data is from the 2021 Census conducted by Statistics Portugal.



Table 2 - Population in the municipalities of the Quadrilateral

Resident population in 2021 (Census)				
	Total	H	M	variation/2011
Portugal	10 344 802	4 921 170	5 423 632	-2,10%
North	3 587 074	1 708 873	1 879 001	-2,00%
Braga	193 349	92 122	101 227	6,5%
Barcelos	116 766	56 226	60 540	-3,0%
Guimarães	156 849	75 833	81 016	-0,8%
Famalicão	133 574	64 469	69 105	-0,2%

Source: Statistics Portugal

The four municipalities in question have a total of 600 538 inhabitants. The increase in the number of residents in Braga stands out, contrary to the decrease in the other municipalities, both in the region (North) and nationally (Portugal). This increase can be explained by several factors: the political options that promote the economic attractiveness and internationalization of the municipality, the dynamism of the UM, by the investment in the INL (International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory), and the growing implementation of Bosch in that city, attracting a qualified and young workforce. Moreover, the North of Portugal stands out as a region with an exporting industry, particularly to Germany, through Continental Mabor, in Famalicão, and Bosch, in Braga, the two largest exporting companies in Northwest Portugal (FERRÃO; RIBEIRO, 2014, p. 308). The data on exports of goods for 2019 (Table 3) was collected from the Norte Portugal Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR-N) and it was found that the four municipalities totalled more than €5 billion in exports in 2019. The municipality of Famalicão ranks third nationwide among the most exporting municipalities.

Table 3 - Merchandise Exports from the municipalities of the Quadrilateral

Merchandise Exports (thousand €)		
	2019	2020
Portugal	59 902 810	53 790 320
North	22 929 154	20 607 223
Braga	1 737 323	1 538 423
Barcelos	840 274	801 243
Guimarães	1 411 098	1 271 149
Famalicão	2 029 890	1 751 328

Source: CCDR-N



The region covered by the Quadrilateral is also distinguished by the existing heritage and the cultural events it develops, stimulating tourism, namely religious tourism, much of which comes from the North of Spain. Among the different priorities of the Quadrilateral, the networked valorization of the natural and cultural heritage of the four municipalities stands out to promote the region (Table 4), which allows the development of the local economy by stimulating cultural tourism.

Table 4 - Cultural and natural heritage of the four municipalities

Municipality	Heritage
Barcelos	Castrejo da Pena Grande, Campo da Feira, Capela do Facho, da Boa Fé and other chapels, Castro and Castelo de Faria, the Historical Center and its gardens, Largo da Porta Nova Fountain, São Salvador de Vilar de Frades Convent and Calvário, Escadório da Paixão, several churches, Museums such as the Pottery Museum, the Chocolate Museum, the Ethnographic Museum, the Necropolis of Mondim, the Dukes of Barcelos Palace, Bridges (Medieval, Eiffel and others), Sanctuaries, Teatro Gil Vicente, Medieval Tower, Perelhal, Caíde and Enxate lakes, Monte da Franqueira and Monte do Facho, banks of the Cávado river and Neiva river.
Braga	Bom Jesus do Monte Sanctuary (UNESCO World Heritage), Santa Madalena da Falperra and Sameiro Sanctuaries, Pillory, Convertidas' Recolhimento, Mouzinho de Albuquerque Square, several churches, especially Tibães Church and Monastery, Convent, College and Church of Congregates, Bom Jesus do Monte Elevator, Museum of Biscainhos, Raio's Palace, several chapels, Braga's Cathedral and Museum, Porta Nova Arch, Roman Ruins, Castros, Teatro Circo, Image Museum, Casa dos Crivos, Nogueira da Silva Museum, Costume Museum, D. Diogo da Sousa Archaeology Museum, Parks (da Ponte, da Mamôa), Monte de S. Gregório, de São Filipe, Miradouro de Santa Marta.
Famalicão	Parks, Gardens of the Town Hall and Gardens D. Maria II, Churches, Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora do Carmo, Arnoso de Santa Eulália Monastery, Gravateira and Lagoncinha Bridges, Textile Industry Museum, Lousado Railway Museum, Camilo Castelo Branco House-Museum, Monastery of Santa Maria de Landim and Santa Maria das Oliveiras, Bernardino Machado Museum, Cupertino de Miranda Foundation, Portuguese Surrealism Center, Museum of Holy Art.
Guimarães	Historical Center - UNESCO World Heritage: St James's Square, Largo da Oliveira, Walls and Adarve, Streets and Squares, Castle, Paço dos Duques, São Miguel Church, Penha Mountain and Sanctuary, Taipas Hot Springs, International Arts Center, Martins Sarmento Archaeological Museum, Guimarães Memory House, Alberto Sampaio Museum, Agriculture Museum, Castreja Culture Museum, Citânia de Briteiros.

Source: Authors

One may highlight, among other aspects, the Platform for Arts and Creativity in Guimarães, which houses the José de Guimarães International Center for the Arts and offers citizens the Emerging Creativity Support Ateliers and Creative Laboratories, in a bid to support innovation and entrepreneurial projectors; with the same purpose, there is the Made In space, in Famalicão, and the Startup Braga space, where young entrepreneurs find support to launch their ideas; The municipality of Barcelos has recently launched a free business promotion app for companies and the Ignition Program by Founders Founders to create



a new generation entrepreneurial ecosystem, supporting local entrepreneurs to develop their ideas and businesses with a technological and innovative base; in Braga, the Gnraton, was created in 2012, a space that favors the relationship between art and technology, assuming itself as an agglutinating pole of cultural and creative dynamics. Furthermore, the affirmation of the municipality as a creative city of media arts has placed it in a network of 246 cities that place creativity at the center of their social development.

Since 2018, Braga has been working in its application for European Capital of Culture in 2027, safeguarding and enhancing the inspirational aspects of its collective history. Working in partnership with communities, organisations, individuals, artists, cultural agents, activities linking community have been organised. The aim is to change Braga's cultural draw in a decade and become an unforgettable city at national and international level for its innovation and creativity and where culture is at the heart of its sustainable development. The challenge is to develop the skills and capacity building of the cultural fabric, and to promote the growth of the creative economy and the generation and dissemination of knowledge associated with the cultural and creative sector through the active involvement of various agents of the city and society. It should also be noted that the other three municipalities of the Quadrilateral have expressed their support for Braga's application to become the European Capital of Culture in 2027, a project that will also bring a positive return to Barcelos, Famalicão, and Guimarães. Within this scope, partnership agreements were signed between the municipal entities and the Association, which will contribute to increase the cultural dynamism of the territory.

Regarding culture events, as in previous years, the annual International Performing Arts Festival *Vaudeville Rendez-vous* takes place, focusing on circus and street performances in the four cities of the Quadrilateral urban network. The costs will be distributed among the municipalities concerned, the Quadrilateral Association and the Directorate-General for the Arts (DGArtes). The Directorate-General for The Arts is an organism of the Ministry of Culture of the Portuguese Republic that has as its mission the coordination and implementation of policies to support the arts in Portugal, with the priority of promoting and qualifying artistic creation, as well as ensuring the universality of its enjoyment.

5 ROUTE TRAVELLED AND AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Since the signing of the *PACT FOR COMPETITIVENESS, INNOVATION, AND INTERNATIONALIZATION* in 2008, the offer of the four municipalities in the cultural area and innovation and creativity with a view to sustainable and inclusive development has improved.

The Quadrilateral has implemented programs that aim to contribute to the increase in innovation and competitiveness of the urban network. To this end, an articulation of investments and actions of public



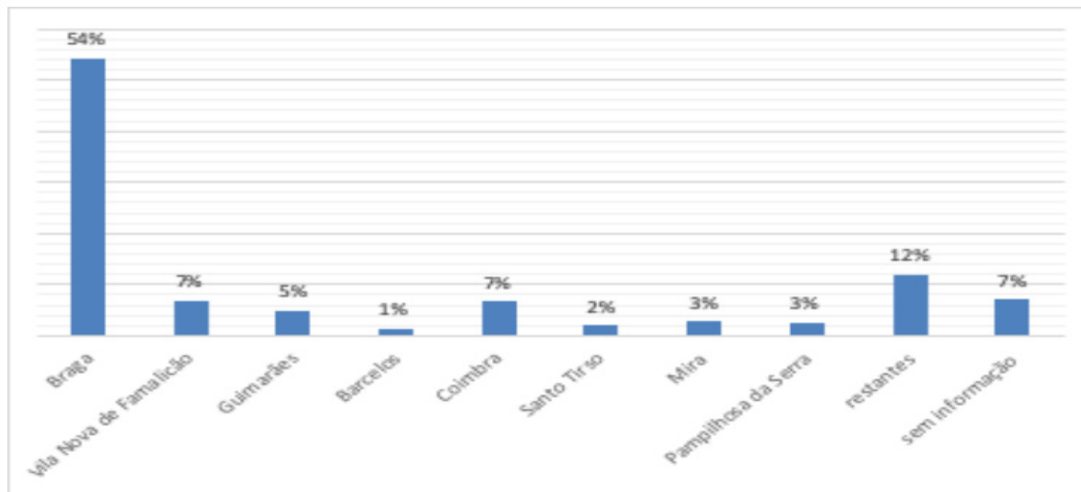
entities with inter-municipal and supra-municipal interests is made and joint work is promoted at the level of support programs for the development of the region, making strategic planning and management that enhances the development of the territory of the Quadrilateral. The cooperation between the four urban centers has resulted in the joint implementation of different initiatives, for example, the realization and dissemination in a network of different activities and programs, particularly the cultural ones. Quadrilateral promotes its activity in several branches, prioritizing the areas of mobility, culture and creativity, and territorial marketing.

Mobility is, for the Association, a priority aspect as it allows the improvement and deepening of the relationships between Barcelos, Braga, Famalicão and Guimarães, but also the development of synergies at a regional, national, and international level. In this context, a study of the mobility and accessibility of the territory of the four municipalities was carried out, and the Integrated Mobility Plan was elaborated and promoted to find and apply the best solutions for inter-municipal mobility. Now, the Association is in the implementation phase of FEDER programs related to Integrated Ticketing and Real Time Information Systems (NORTE-05-1406-FEDER-000208; NORTE-05-1406-FEDER-000200 and CEF - Cooperative Streets), with improvements in mobility foreseen.

The Cultural and Creative strand results from a common vision of the relevance of culture. The focus was on networking, the dissemination of cultural and creative events, and the promotion of the region's cultural and natural heritage. The Electronic Ticketing Network and the Quadrilateral Card were implemented, mechanisms that allow greater visibility of the booked events at a national and international level. The aim is to increase cultural consumption and the loyalty of citizens of the territory of the four municipalities and the northwestern region of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the circulation of the public between the cultural structures involved. The Quadrilateral Card is a loyalty card that grants members preferential access to the Association equipment and cultural events (Casa das Artes and Teatro Narciso Ferreira, in Famalicão; Teatro Circo and Gnracion, in Braga; Centro Cultural Vila Flor, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães and Casa da Memória, in Guimarães; Teatro Gil Vicente, in Barcelos). During the pandemic, it has been of great importance for the rotating promotion and dissemination of events in the four municipalities. According to data provided by Quadrilateral, in 2021 there were 6 230 registered users in Quadrilateral's database. After 1571 cards were sold in 2019, in 2021 they totaled 946, certainly reflecting the effects of the pandemic. Nevertheless, it has been of great importance for the rotational promotion and dissemination of events in the four municipalities. It is curious to note that the users of the Quadrilateral Card are spread across different municipalities (Figure 2), some of which not belong to the territory covered by the Association.



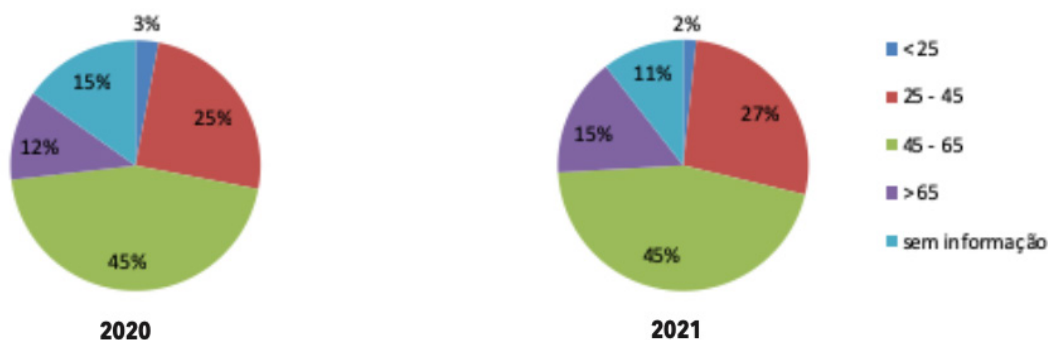
Figure 2 - Percentage of users of the Cultural Quadrilateral Card considering the cards acquired/renewed in 2021



Source: Quadrilateral

Most users are in the 45-65 age group, followed by those in the 25-45 age group (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Age distribution of the users of the Cultural Quadrilateral Card (%)



Source: Quadrilateral

On the creative side, the creative industries of the municipalities were mapped to diagnose their needs and promote their dissemination. Activities such as the QMostra Theatre, QMostra Music, and QMostra Arts were implemented to stimulate contact and collaborative work between creative agents, producers, and distributors. Furthermore, the Creative Spaces Network was dynamized to encourage collaboration within the scope of the Quadrilateral, and creation centers were created co-financed by ON2/QREN through FEDER.



The focus has been reinforced on networking between the municipalities that make up the Association and on territorial marketing, with the dissemination of the added value of the municipalities, of what is unique and differentiating about each of them, increasing their notoriety to encourage new synergies with other entities and future investments.

Urban development is another area of work. In this field, the following was carried out: the study on *Urban Regeneration Practices in the urban centers of the quadrilateral*, with the work being monitored and disseminated. Barcelos (medieval tower for the Centro de Interpretação do Galo), Braga (Ala do Convento do Pópulo), Guimarães (part of Teatro Jordão for 2012 rehearsal rooms), and Famalicão (Antigo Colégio Camilo Castelo Branco for Casa da Juventude) are among the rehabilitation projects.

At the entrepreneurial level, activities promoted by CITEVE and AIMinho, partners of the Association, were developed, namely the installation of a High-Performance Center of I&DT in CITEVE and the development of a management model to promote the entrepreneurial hosting activities defined by Quadrilateral.

It is certainly not unrelated to all this work that Guimarães was chosen in 2012 as the European City of Culture. The main objectives of this organization were the "urban, social, and economic regeneration of the city, aspiring to increase the quality of life and access to the culture of the citizens and promoting the valorization of the territory and the material and immaterial collective heritage" (CASTRO, 2012, p. 12).

In economic terms, Guimarães 2012 contributed €85 million to the national GDP, being responsible for 2100 one-year jobs. Tax revenue amounted to €30.8 million, with public expenditure of €27 million, contributing to lessening the national economic crisis in the region (UM, 2013).

6 UNESCO CREATIVE CITY - BARCELOS AND BRAGA

Also noteworthy is the fact that Barcelos and Braga were recognized by UNESCO in 2017 as the Creative City of Crafts and Popular Arts and Creative City of Media Arts.

UNESCO launched the Creative Cities Network in 2004. It currently includes 180 cities from 72 countries. The purpose of this initiative is to stimulate cooperation between and with urban centers that see creativity and cultural industries as strategic factors for stimulating sustainable social, economic, environmental, and cultural development at local level. It also aims to boost international cooperation.

In Barcelos, craftwork is a transversal activity and a true cornerstone of the territory and its people. Here, one can find artisans, carpenters, basket makers, blacksmiths, embroiderers, weavers and, above all, "barristas" (clay artisans), who are recognised both nationally and internationally. This has contributed to the formation of the local social and cultural identity.



By joining the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, Barcelos has become part of an international network that allows it to provide continuity, encourage and legitimise a creative culture and invest in international networking to give sustainability to the local creative reality.

Among the actions carried out, the following can be highlighted the creation of incubation structures, creative hubs and informal structures to support artistic activity; the development of interface projects between diverse artistic and creative domains; the cooperation between R&D or creative production poles, namely with the promotion of Technical Courses in the region's higher education institutions; the involvement of the community in creative development and in the preservation and protection of arts and crafts through the sharing of knowledge, experiences and resources; the investment in the Education and Entertainment Service with the promotion of various educational projects; the development of Workshops with artisans to involve different national and foreign audiences, of different age groups, in various artistic domains; the promotion of Creative Tourism, in order to create new channels of product distribution and economic stimulation.

The inhabitants of the city of Barcelos have a close relationship with handicrafts and ceramics, fostering a sustainable creative sector, spread across 40 companies, and providing employment for around 8% of the population. To support the new generation of artisans, responsible for the dynamism of the sector, the Pottery Museum and the Medieval Tower have been restored and have become creative spaces linked to culture. A handicraft and ceramics exhibition is also held every year, which is a showcase for local and national handicraft products. The municipality has invested in the Creative Attraction Program, which is responsible for certifying local products. Thus, the municipality has obtained three certified products: pottery, figurines, and sieve embroidery. It also bets on the promotion of local handicrafts in national and international events, as well as by supporting professionalization in handicrafts and ceramics. In 2019, it became part of the Creative Tourism Network and a Creative Friendly Destination. In the same year, it was considered a sustainable cultural tourism destination, having received an award from the European Culture Tourism Network.

The city of Braga accounts for half of the employment in the creative economy sector in the region and 40% of the companies. For the local administration, the media arts are an opportunity to create links between citizens and the city. Braga's goal as European City of Media Arts is to invest in learning and experimentation in Media Arts to develop knowledge, talent, and creativity in future generations. Braga has been working on the promotion of media art in several aspects. The following may be highlighted: the Braga Media Arts Educational Service; the International Biennial of Media Arts; the launching of a platform to welcome artists, students, researchers, and companies in this area; the use of technology to enhance the historical and cultural heritage of the city; the creation of opportunities for a qualified and talented



generation, with a Media Arts Center being planned, important for the development of common projects, namely research, attracting entrepreneurs who want to invest in the articulation between art, technology, and science; the investment in cooperation with other creative cities; the valorization of the city's memory and history; and the promotion of the production of cultural goods and services through the artistic use of technologies; and the holding of an International Media Arts Festival that allows the dissemination of local artists. Since 2012, there has been the Gnracion space, where the focus is on the creation and sampling of contemporary music and the relationship between art and technology, creating new audiences and bringing them closer to cosmopolitan artistic practices. In fact, the connection between art and technology is present at the Braga Semibreve Festival, an event that allows an immersive experience with world-renowned avant-garde artists of media arts and electronic music.

7 FUTURE CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

The Quadrilateral Association defines its vision as being the territorial competitiveness pole of excellence in the peninsular northwest, the third urban and knowledge concentration of Portugal, a reference as a laboratory of urban and business innovation, resulting from the cooperation between business, scientific and technological fabric, local administration, and end users, and integrated into international networks. Its mission is to boost the innovative ecosystem and the "Quadrilateral" brand by attracting resources for cooperation projects, promoting innovation, creativity, and research applied to companies and cities. With more than a decade of breaking new ground, much has been achieved and much remains to be done, both in national and international domains. Guimarães was European Capital of Culture (2012), Braga is in the short list for being European Capital of Culture in 2027, Barcelos and Braga are part of UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN). Nevertheless, in these years of challenging times at economic, social, and human levels, both with the pandemic and the problems triggered by the war in Ukraine, the focus on creativity and innovation may be relevant to strengthen the competitiveness of the territory included in the Quadrilateral Association.

As being a territory with many geographical, accessibility, institutional, economic, and demographic potentialities, it is important to continue the bet on mobility to allow greater proximity between the inhabitants, the companies, and the poles of knowledge, as this will imply greater economic growth and greater notoriety of the territory constituted by the four municipalities, to overcome the contingencies that the decentralization of the Lisbon macrocephaly still faces in Portugal, as well as the difficulties raised by the fact that the municipalities are inserted in different NUTS III (Cávado and Ave).



It would be important to make a greater effort in the dissemination of the activities of Quadrilateral in all its aspects, namely through a frequently updated website, where reports of activities are also made available. The use of billboards may also enable a closer relationship between the population of the four municipalities and the Association and the work being developed. It would also be important to carry out studies to better understand and monitor the work developed, which could serve as learning and inspiration for other networks and other territories.

The way cities and communities prepare themselves to become cultural and creative ecosystems and destinations is key to their success. The creative ecosystems help places to take advantage of their imagination, their culture, to innovate and develop, especially when combined with education, knowledge, R&D, and a smart incentives scheme. In this paper we have described Quadrilateral Association project and how the cities and communities that are a part of the Association have enabled creativity and culture, allowing to foster sustainable development based on innovation and creativity with the involvement of local communities.

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