

Observatory Case update

Largo Residências, Lisbon, Portugal

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Largo Residências

Largo Residências was a hostel, artist-in-residence, and café located in a building built in the late 19th century in Lisbon's fast-changing Intendente neighborhood. The building was originally a ceramic factory and had been used as a pension and brothel until the owner lost it in court. In 2011, the establishment of Largo was assisted by the Lisbon Municipality's BIP/ZIP program, supporting some events inside the building. Largo Residências was run by a cooperative that aims at connecting the area's past and future: it served as a community hub for many of the area's residents and initiatives. It developed projects to support the cultural and social inclusion of the neighbourhoods' precarious inhabitants. Largo faced the danger of gentrification as there was an increasing pressure on the tenants from the owner's side to end their contract and sell the building to be converted into another high-end hotel in Central Lisbon. Their contract ended in 2021 and was not prolonged anymore.

During the first months of COVID-19 pandemic, Largo offered its rooms to the Central Hospitals of Lisbon to host people in need, and suspended all of their activities. Since they had to continue to pay their employees' salaries they started to struggle financially. This situation resulted in difficulties sustaining their projects and made them lose various investments and savings for the future project. Nevertheless, Largo Residências was lucky enough to already negotiating its future place, a former military barrack, 500 metres far from Intendente. It opened, temporarily, with the neighbourhood festival **Bairro em Festa**, attracting many people from all around the city and engaging loads of artists and creators. At the same time, due to the pandemic, the city hall decided to transform some of the buildings in this area into a temporary shelter for homeless people, resulting in a backlash from the neighbourhood as they did not think the neighbourhood needed more homeless people.

Largo tried to find ways to sustain the rest of its projects during this transitional period by partnering with other organizations to carry out cultural and social activities on the site. They worked on improving the artistic residence program while developing a program for refugees with the idea of integrating diverse groups of artists, creators, refugees, homeless people and neighbours. Even though it's planned that the military barrack will become an affordable residence project, Largo Residências, with other local organizations, are now using the space/buildings until the start of the construction works and will probably be included in the future project.