

## **Tactical Urbanism Goes Rural:** co-creating water Heritage in the public space surrounding the Neiva River's 'Minante'

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FCIC'24 | FAUP | University of Porto | Porto, Portugal  
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## Minante: Prototyping a Natural and Cultural Experience. **The Project**

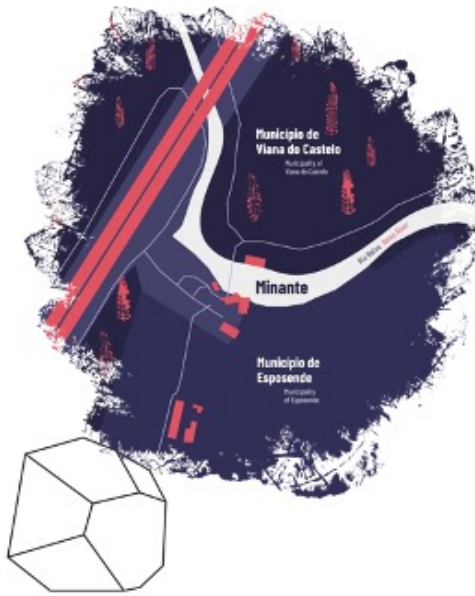


Photo from archive of António Azevedo, from approx. 1950

Minante: Prototyping a Natural and Cultural Experience is a project, now nearing completion, led by Rio Neiva NGO. The Minante project emerged from wishes expressed by the local population during a previous project, *Stories from Both Sides* (2021), about the construction of a collective vision and narrative about the Neiva river mouth.

The Minante project aimed at exploring possibilities for safeguarding as well as «re-activating» the cultural and natural heritage surrounding this mill, the Minante Mill at the river Neiva between Esposende and Viana do Castelo.

The mill was historically used for flour production, but also linen for example. But the river itself also meant people learned how to swim there, and the surrounding nature helped to create an environment where people liked to have romantic encounters. The bridge was a significant place for crossing two municipalities – Esposende and Viana do Castelo and bringing together communities from different places.

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Photo by Clara Roberti, 2023



The mill is now abandoned, and though there is a walking trail that many people like to walk along, and some people still go to the bridge to take their wedding photos for example, there is a threat that the local heritage will be lost as time goes on and the place has less significance for younger generations (or if the mill is turned into an airbnb, for example).

The project sought to give more attention to this and explore multiple and transdisciplinary as well as transgenerational ways this heritage could be safeguarded, also through “co-creation”.

	2023	
Launch Event + 'Minante Identity' Workshop	28 July	
Sharing and Collection of Memories and Stories Workshop	10 August	
'Margins of Production' Workshop	9 September	
'New European Bauhaus' Experience Sharing Event	26 September	
Scientific Event 'Public Spaces as Knowledge Places'	28 September	
Celebration Event + 3-Play for 'Rivante' Workshop	30 September	
Immersive Visit by the Santa Maria Maior' School Group	17 October	
Immersive Visit by the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo	22 November	
Intervention by the António Rodrigues Sampaio' School Group	29 November	
Immersive Visit by the 'Monte do Oit' School Group	30 November	
Collaborative workshop on wood self-construction experiments for activating a communal space.	3 December	
Immersive Visit by the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo.	16 December	
	2024	
Artistic residency of the FEIPE Collective in collaboration with 'Purlama' for exhibition and artistic structures.	8 to 12 January	
Final celebration event and presentation of all results	7 February	





Photo by Clara Roberti, 2023



The Project ended up triggering a large number of initiatives, by various local artists and artist collectives, local schools (from both municipalities), by the University of Porto's CITCEM, and the local Rio Neiva NGO,

and with the participation of varied groups of society, including the older generations that attach many memories to this place, their children and friends, but also children and adolescents from schools in the area who had never been to the Minante, and artists who had varied degrees of knowledge about the place, as well as a few people who simply saw the flyers for the event.

Here you see a moment of sharing at the Memories Workshop conducted for sharing of diverse memories, at which mostly older generations shared many of their memories with the younger generations that were present.



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Scientific Event 'Public Spaces as Knowledge Places'	28 September		
Celebration Event + 'A Flag for Minante' Workshop	30 September		
Immersive Visit by the Santa Maria Maior School Group	17 October		
Immersive Visit by the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo	22 November		
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Photos by Clara Roberti, 2023



The Project included many hands-on actions, in which, for instance, local construction materials were re-used to make an irrigation path highlighting a path that used to be used in relation to farming activities in the area. This helped the participants of various generations to connect to the history of the location as well as imagine its future and create new memories at the same time.

Other actions included the making of this modular wooden structure, and a school project to make an artistic colourful cover for a trash bin, so that people would recognize and use the bin more, rather than leaving trash in the area – all of which engaged various participants in valorizing the area in their own way, for themselves through their participation as well as for other visitors who would see and use what they make.

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Artistic residency of the FÉBRE Collective as/in collaboration with Purisilva for exhibition and artistic structures.	8 to 12 January
Final celebration event and presentation of all results	7 February





Photos by Clara Roberti, 2023



Here are two other examples of a school who made a sign for the location, and a workshop at which people of all ages contributed to a “flag” of the Minante, capturing the various values and memories attached to the location.





*Academically, we saw parallels with **tactical urbanism**...*

*...but these **questions** emerged:*

- does it matter that this is **rural**?
- how does tactical action interact with **heritage**?
- how do **ownership** and tactical action go together?

Refs on tactical urbanism: Brenner 2017; Lydon and Garcia 2015; Rosa and Weiland 2013; Silva 2016; VanHoose and Savini 2017; von Schönfeld 2024

Now, we can say for sure that this project had its impact in the community, among the participants. And we think this experience also has an academic value. Namely, we had come into the project with the idea that the actions to undertake would be rather like “tactical urbanism” – but they would not be in an urban setting.

“Tactical urbanism” refers to relatively radical forms of public participation in shaping public space, often arising from frustration with perceived inactivity or inadequacy on the side of politics or public administrations. Tactical urbanism or similar action often manifests itself in interventions like drawing bike-lanes onto streets, or making small parks in parking lots, or planting flowers randomly throughout the city.

We saw parallels with this in the activities planned for the Minante, but in a rural setting. How would tactical action be different in a rural setting? We also realized that questions of combining tactical action with heritage were quite important, as well as the question of how ownership and tactical action go together.



## urban versus rural Tactical Action



Photo by Clara Roberti, 2023



Foto [MAREK LUMI](#) on [UNSPASH](#) (Barcelona)



Refs on tactical action in rural contexts (uncommon): Gyimóthy 2019; Mattsoff 2021; Ng, Wong, and Santos 2022; Rofe 2013; Tietjen and Jørgensen 2023

In terms of the urban versus rural, these two pictures show one key difference, but it is biased – there is a lack of people in the urban space, right? Well, this might be because free pictures of tactical urbanism tend not to include people.

But there are other more significant differences – the amount of nature, and sound for instance. The type of community attachment to place, perhaps (though in some urban spaces this may also be there). The demographic trend in rural areas currently leads to rural areas concentrating more older adults and less younger people. A historically-bound sense of community also seems particularly strong in this rural area, which might also make the significance of the place (for older adults) stronger and the risk of losing it higher (because younger generations do not have these memories anymore)...

but overall, we came to the conclusion that what mattered here was less the urban – rural dichotomy, which did not appear so meaningful, but rather the tactical collaboration that was key for making the activities happen, which is probably needed in any context.

## heritage and Tactical Action



Photos by Clara Roberti, 2023,  
archive photo from António Azevedo



Refs on tactical action and co-creation in relation to heritage: Jeleński 2018; Rofe 2013; Salehi, Taheri, and Shabani 2023; Stegmeijer, Veldpaus, and Janssen 2021; von Schönfeld et al. 2023

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In terms of heritage, the project gave particularly useful insights, because it really demonstrated how interweaving old and new memories could have a powerful impact in reviving the area and making sure people would visit the location, create memories, remember the older memories, be more aware and respectful of what the place is and was.

The relationship is complex of course. The memories older generations shared were also of hardship, for example, which no-one wished to recreate, so much as show admiration for. How can one do that? And of course some voices might be heard more than others, some people might feel less represented than they think they should.

But, perhaps because the local NGO was already well known in the area and by many participants, and because the project idea had emerged at first from the local older generations themselves, there was wide willingness. The positive engagement with schools was also significant, and it was clear that incorporating this into the arts subject at schools was especially powerful – I am happy to discuss this more in a discussion perhaps.

## ownership and Tactical Action



Photo from archive of António Azevedo



Photos by Miguel Teodoro, 2023



Photo by Clara Roberti, 2023

Refs on tactical action and ownership: Ashfina, Garg, and Chani 2022; Nicholas et al. 2009; Sara, Jones, and Rice 2021; Skogheim et al. 2018; von Schönfeld et al. 2023; Woodham et al. 2017



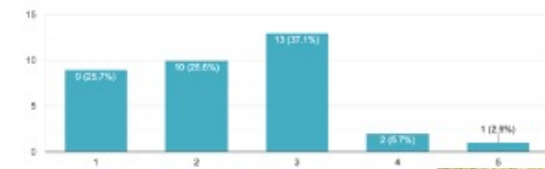
The question of ownership emerged from three angles: the physical ownership of the space and mill; the metaphysical ownership and sharing of memories and of the space in terms of also feeling responsibility for it; and the ownership of the installations by artists, schools, etc.





## practical lessons for **Co-Creating Water Heritage** through tactical action

1. O futuro do Minante devia ter um aspeto diferente ao que tem agora? (independentemente da intervenção que a escola fez)  
35 respostas



Excerpt from survey with schools



Photo by Clara Roberti, 2023



Image by Raquel Costa, 2023

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Overall, it was clear from the start and throughout the project that in a beautiful natural space, tactical action may need to be very careful in not disrupting the value and peace and meaning of the place, while at the same time being open to change. Valuing memories but at the same time not afraid of creating new ones.



**Thank you for your attention!**

**Join us on Saturday! →**

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