

# Rhizome Cities



Funded by  
the European Union

**October, 2023**  
**RIZOMA CITIES**  
**PUBLIC INVITATION AND DECLARATION**

Our cities believe diversity enriches our societies, our economies, our cultures and our lives. We believe that cities can be democratic spaces in which people from diverse origins live together, and can create new forms of solidarity and connections across the world.

In order for these things to happen, we believe that city administrations have a responsibility for promoting social, political and cultural participation, understanding and exchange.

We are founding Rizoma Cities to establish a permanent network of cities from across Europe and Africa which promotes a holistic and networked municipal approach to the movement of people and cultural diversity.

Crucially, this includes acknowledging and addressing the historical legacies of colonialism and the inequalities these legacies still produce. These legacies persist in too many public spaces, in museums, in administrative bodies, in educational practices, in practices of remembrance, and in unequal relations between people. In recent years, cultural, artistic and civil society actors have been crucial in highlighting these effects, calling for restitution and a reconsideration of the damaging effects of colonialism. We believe including these actors and spheres of society in addressing these issues is essential.

We are committed to empowering the various social agents and citizens in the field of intercultural competencies as a tool for the acceptance and valorisation of diversity, while empowering migrants to be key participatory actors in the co-design of all public policies.

Through the circulation of knowledge, cultures and experiences we believe that networked cities can promote better understanding of the past, share best practices for addressing contemporary injustices, and can facilitate the participation of our citizens to jointly create a more equal future across borders.

FONDAZIONE STUDIO RIZOMA  
Cod. Fisc. 91344240378

uno spazio per la sperimentazione culturale e politica nel cuore del mediterraneo

Rizoma Cities invites to join the network all cities in Europe and Africa which share our vision of cities taking a lead in creating an inclusive, creative and vibrant society in which difference, diversity and solidarity are the seeds for a better world.

A declaration by:



Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf  
Büro Oberbürgermeister

**STADTMANNHEIM**<sup>2</sup>

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## Appendix

### RIZOMA CITIES: PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

Implementing an intercultural approach in European and African cities requires a context-specific understanding of the local dynamics, challenges, and opportunities. It involves creating platforms for dialogue, investing in education and cultural exchange programs, and developing policies and practices that embrace diversity, foster social cohesion, and promote the rights and well-being of all residents.

Promoting an intercultural approach to meet decolonial processes between European cities and African cities involves acknowledging historical power imbalances and working towards equitable relationships.

The Rizoma cities network works in these directions, based on the following principles:

- Recognition of colonial histories: Both European and African cities have colonial legacies that have shaped their current dynamics. Recognizing and addressing these histories is essential for an intercultural and decolonial approach. This includes acknowledging the impacts of colonisation, colonial violence, and the ongoing effects of colonial structures on cultural, social and economic disparities.
- Co-creation and shared decision-making: An intercultural and decolonial approach requires moving away from top-down approaches and embracing collaborative decision-making processes. This entails involving diverse stakeholders from European and African cities in planning, policy-making, and implementation processes. It promotes co-creation and joint ownership of initiatives that address historical injustices and foster mutual respect and understanding.
- Redistributing resources and opportunities: Colonial legacies have resulted in unequal distribution of resources and opportunities between and within cities. An intercultural and decolonial approach calls for actively addressing these disparities. This may involve initiatives such as equitable trade relationships, fair resource allocation, and investments in education, infrastructure, and economic development in marginalised communities.
- Knowledge exchange and dialogue: Encouraging knowledge exchange and dialogue between European and African cities is crucial. This can be facilitated through platforms for cultural exchange, academic collaborations, and partnerships between local organisations and institutions. It promotes the sharing of experiences, expertise, and best practices, allowing for mutual learning and understanding between the two contexts.
- Cultural preservation and revitalization: An intercultural and decolonial approach recognizes the importance of preserving and revitalising indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. This involves supporting efforts to reclaim and celebrate cultural heritage, languages, and traditional practices. It also requires challenging cultural appropriation and promoting cultural diversity as a source of strength and resilience.
- Addressing systemic inequalities: An intercultural and decolonial approach necessitates addressing systemic inequalities embedded in social, economic, and political structures. This includes combating racism, discrimination, and marginalisation within and between European and African cities. It involves advocating for policies and practices that promote social justice, equality, and inclusivity.

- Solidarity and collective action: Building solidarities between European and African cities is crucial for an intercultural and decolonial approach. This can be fostered through networking initiatives, collaborative projects, and shared advocacy efforts. By recognizing shared struggles and supporting each other's movements for justice, European and African cities can work towards collective liberation and transformation.
- Implementing these solutions requires sustained commitment, collaboration, and ongoing dialogue between European and African cities: It is essential to engage diverse communities, including marginalised groups, and ensure their voices are heard and valued throughout the process. By centering intercultural understanding and decolonial principles, European and African cities can strive for more just, inclusive, and equitable relationships. Rizoma cities seeks to promote these developments, as a transnational network of cities open to all cities that share its principles, and ready to work in collaboration with other like-minded networks and initiatives.

## **BEST PRACTICES AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

Many of the cities of Rizoma cities network have been developing new approaches to migrant civic, cultural, economic and social participation over many years, and have thereby developed significant experience and practical knowledge. The Network seeks to promote these best-practice projects, to upscale and replicate them where appropriate, and to promote mentorship and learning between cities. Around these and other best practices, we plan to develop communities of practice which can share knowledge between cities.

Here below are three of the best practices from our cities:

### **From strangers to city-guides**

#### **Multaka Athens**

June 2022 – June 2023

In the Multaka Athens project, designed and implemented jointly by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the City of Athens, intercultural guides of migrant and refugee background give tours of archaeological sites and museums in different languages, sharing aspects of their own culture and experience. In this way, intercultural guides and participants identify common references and values through an intercultural exchange.

Over the course of the project, 115 intercultural tours took place, involving over 900 participants.

The project successfully built collaboration between different parts and levels of government and between institutions and volunteers.

*Multaka Athens is a best practice in finding value in the new perspectives that foreigners can bring to a city.*

### **Starting the path of openness to others at school**

#### **Bergamo: InConTra - Intercultural education path**

September 2022 - September 2023 and ongoing

The city of Bergamo is supporting schools to implement a new education model based on the approach of Cohen-Emerique, which gives young people the critical skills to recognize their own 'frames of reference' when meeting others. These frames of reference include assumptions and expectations about styles of life, family organization and life experiences which may not be accurate when meeting others. By becoming critically aware of her own assumptions, a student can have more successful dialogue with others who may be different.

80 students from 3 schools have benefitted from the program over the pilot year, and the project is continuing.

*As our cities diversify, Bergamo is leading the way to ensuring the next generation has the skills to make each encounter an opportunity for learning.*

### **Creating city spaces of mutual recognition and intercultural entrepreneurship**

#### **Braga: Uma Viagem Intercultural | Braga: An Intercultural Journey**

October 2018 - December 2022

Through a wide set of communications activities, the city of Braga promotes the integration of third-country nationals. These have included intercultural cafes, mentorships, anti-rumour campaigns, hundreds of podcasts, vodcasts, webinars and guides, and entrepreneurship bootcamps for third country nationals specifically.

The city-wide, online and offline and comprehensive nature of this communication ensures a wide awareness of the initiatives, and training and capacity building has been built into the approach to ensure sustainability.

*Situating interculturality as an opportunity for entrepreneurship, and branding Braga as a location of an intercultural journey, the practice positions the meeting of locals and migrants as a moment of possibility, creation and empowerment.*

### **Reinforcing literacy to ensure participation**

#### **Montpellier: LECTIO program**

December 2021 – ongoing

The city of Montpellier has been working with the regional centre for training to increase the literacy of migrant populations, to reinforce oral and written expression in French, calculating and mathematical reasoning skills, orientation in time and space, and in using digital tools. These fundamental skills reinforce the possibilities for migrants to access municipal services, to participate politically, professionally, socially and culturally in the life of the city.

Based on the success of the first year with 40 participants, the city is increasing the budget for the coming year. Investing in the fundamental skills of newcomers is a best practice of smart social investment, increasing the capacity of migrants to participate and live fully in their new home.

## **Showing how migration has always shaped our civilisations**

### **Marseille: Migrant objects – treasures under the influences**

April 2022 - October 2022

Through innovative exhibitions, school workshops, films and workshops in prisons, the 'Migrant Objects – treasures under the influences' project has shown to different audiences in Marseille how ideas and objects have always travelled throughout history, and have shaped our current cultures. Thinking about these objects, their journeys and meanings, is a way of excavating our present, understanding the layers of history and diversity of networks of connections that shape each place today.

Over 65,000 people experienced the exhibitions, with a majority of school students. At a time when migration, across the Mediterranean as well as in other regions, is a political topic, the project of Marseille is a best practice of showing how all of our cultures and identities are indebted to the ongoing movements of people, objects and ideas.