



## The role of a community bicycle shop in cycling policies: the case of Lisbon

Tiago Carvalho<sup>1</sup>, Gonçalo Santos<sup>2</sup>, Rosa Félix<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa, <sup>2</sup>IST - Universidade Técnica de Lisboa

[tbmcarvalho@yahoo.com](mailto:tbmcarvalho@yahoo.com), [ggduartasantos@gmail.com](mailto:ggduartasantos@gmail.com), [rosamfelix@ist.utl.pt](mailto:rosamfelix@ist.utl.pt)

Phone number: 00 351 963645937

### Abstract

This paper presents a Lisbon bicycle collective, "Cicloficina dos Anjos", which has been operating for two years, fostering voluntary bicycle repair, maintenance and community involvement. Its main features, principles and results are outlined and related to the broader context of the lately sustainable mobility policies, issues and initiatives that have been affecting Lisbon's blooming bicycle community. Albeit bicycle sheds and collectives are an internationally known phenomenon, particularly in cities with a bicycle commuting population, this paper pretends to expose this unique approach to bicycle advocacy

In a recent series of articles, Pucher *et al.* have assessed which public interventions are correlated with an increase in bicycling, in several cities. Through the evaluation of interventions as infrastructure, integration with public transport, education and marketing programs, bicycle access programs, and legal issues, the authors concluded that it is risky to propose a single measure as universally effective; the coordination of various of these policies and its mutual influence seem to be the most reasonable way of promoting a more bicycle-friendly city.

Since this multifaceted set of interventions is not completely covered by Lisbon's municipality agenda, "Cicloficina dos Anjos" had the chance to develop its own strategy, thus favoring a more grass-root and participatory project. In Pucher *et al.* categorization, its activities fall under the "Education/Training", "Promotional" and other bicycle access programs (loaner programs, fleet programs, and service and repair programs) which are led by local community organizations in each city. The authors recognize that although there aren't sound evaluations of their impact in bicycling, these programs hint at the importance of acquiring skills and confidence in bicycle ownership and use.

Drawing on Illich's concept of conviviality as a quality of technologies and institutions that increase human power and autonomy in a total sense, the paper details how the guiding philosophy at "Cicloficina dos Anjos" amounts not to increasing the number of bicycles commuters *tout court*, but how bicycle maintenance and a meeting point for exchange experiences can work as a solid community empowering activity, based on the simplicity of bicycle mechanics.

Each session is based on three core principles: 1) free transfer of repairing knowledge and experiences, with the goal of asserting each commuter's



participation in the present and future maintenance processes; this points to a bounding of things and persons beyond simple monetary consumption; 2) recycling and revaluing abandoned bicycle parts and frames as ways of achieving financial and material self-sufficiency; this reverses the concept of "garbage" as synonymous with a product's uselessness, prolonging and safekeeping its life cycle, and therefore improving overall efficiency and reducing environmental and social costs; 3) open bicycle promotion and advocacy; every session functions also as a weekly rendezvous point for all the community, where one can discuss, for instance, the choice of the most adequate bicycle and route or which improvements can be made in the managing of "Cicloficina dos Anjos". Finally, some media cover, institutional contacts and number of assisted commuters will be noticed, whilst underscoring the importance of a bottom-up social participation in bicycling advocacy.

**Keywords:** Bicycle collective, Cycling promotion, Sustainability, Educational training, Lisbon.

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### 1. What is a *Cicloficina*?

*Cicloficina dos Anjos* (CdA) is a community bicycle shop, a collective project runned by a group of volunteers that gives free technical support for bicycle maintenance and repairs. The headquarters are inside Associação Recreativa dos Anjos, located at Regueirão dos Anjos, number 69, in Lisbon, Portugal. The service to the community is held every wednesdays at the end of the day, since March 2011, already counting more than one hundred sessions.

The broad general goal of CdA is to contribute to the growth of Lisbon cycling community, in order to increase the significance and visibility of cycling into the eyes of population and public administration. There is a need for the bicycle to be seen as a viable option when choosing a transportation mode in the LMA. Using the bicycle for commuting trips represents a win-win situation, since it has advantages for the individual user and also for society; namely, as it reduces travel costs and helps one by improving health through exercise<sup>1</sup>, reducing stress, connecting to the spatial surroundings, and, at the same time, allowing a reduction on the transportation footprint (noise, GHG emissions and resource exploration linked to new vehicles), thus improving the livability of urban areas (development of local stores, restaurants, cafes, etc).

Another strategic and particular goal to CdA is to instruct users in bicycle maintenance, providing them some repairing skills and clews, and thereby developing individual autonomy. The repairing service is free, but the user is actively prompted to assist to all the procedures put in course by the volunteer mechanic. Anyone can join CdA as a volunteer, accordingly to their

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pucher 2009: S106-S107.

**Lisbon, Portugal  
15 - 17 May 2013**

proficiency in bicycle mechanics. Usually, there is a recognition of each session to be an opportunity to gain more practice on these topics, and so one starts coming more often, somehow helping the volunteers in their work. After a short time, there is an informal acquaintance with the CdA procedures, and one will begin to receive users by himself; if any doubt comes by, there is usually a brainstorm with all the more experienced mechanics to search for a solution.

During the two years of the project, many clients have become volunteer mechanics themselves, while improving their initial expertise. This allowed to maintain but also to boost the project's ambition, by providing new mechanics to replace the ones that, for some reason, could not continue to give their availability to CdA. In this perspective, CdA has been like an organism with its inherent metabolism and concomitant capacity to heal itself. Volunteers come and go, and the project continues, like nothing happened, and some identity is preserved as long as the core principles structure prevails.

In this framework, CdA has been informally welcoming any bicycle user for fixing their own bicycle or to simply interact with other urban cyclists; since most volunteers know English, this has been valuable in connecting with people from other nationalities, who feel comfortable using CdA services, making each Wednesday a multinational event, bringing forth experiences from other more cyclable cities in Europe and other bicycle shops akin to CdA. Although CdA emphasizes that its space is not to be used or seen as bicycle selling shop or a storage garage, one regularly stressed policy is not fix bicycles without the presence of the bicycle user, emphasizing a participatory approach; users also need to show a minimum interest in what and why volunteers are adhering to this project.

## **2. The origin of the project**

Other community bicycle shop projects started in many European and American cities, in the early 2000's. In Portugal, the project *Cicloficina* was borned in Lisbon, and initially it was a project where people gathered monthly in weekend, to make minor repairs on bicycles. *Cicloficina* was also emerging in other Portuguese cities, like Porto and other peripheral Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) suburbs, like Barreiro, Setúbal, Seixal and Linda-a-Velha. At some point in Lisbon, the tools and some bicycle parts were stored on a small room of a cultural association, but that phase did not last long; for a client, waiting one month for repairing his bicycle was too long to wait, eventually resorting to other commercial services. Although the ability to fix and assemble bicycles was clearly limited by the transportation requirement of tools and parts, and also by unfavourable weather conditions, there were glimpses of a potential community assisted bicycle project.

Later on March 2011, a group of friends with some bicycle mechanics knowledge, decided to start another *Cicloficina* in Associação Recreativa dos Anjos, but this time with access to a free-of-charge chamber for storing tools, parts and other bicycle related materials, and therefore providing more stability to the project through the association with a physical space. This was a rare opportunity, as the real estate market in central Lisbon does not favour renting



**Lisbon, Portugal  
15 - 17 May 2013**

or leasing at affordable prices, and hence there are not many easy available spaces for collective voluntary activities, such as CdA, which are not profit-oriented and that therefore are not organized up to a degree that could manage to assure monthly bills.

With some contributions from local bicycle shops and with a weekly frequency, CdA earned some potential that a *Cicloficina* project never had before: with the vacant space it was now possible to relate an activity to a concrete, identifiable place, and specially to calmly repair or build an entire bicycle from scratch in about two sessions, through assembling used bicycle parts provided by a constant appeal to donations. As the affluence of visitors increased, the management and financial organization have also been responsible by providing the space with additional rules that turned CdA into a more serious project (e.g.: control the access and limit the number of persons inside the shop; mechanics access only to the more specific tools to prevent serious damage from misuse; provide a sign in list with a simple diagnostic to better serve clients; database registration of bicycles donated and loaned by CdA; restriction to leave the bicycle inside the shop for long periods).

What started with about 5 or 6 volunteers is now a project with more than 25 members. Volunteers comprehend several graduate students, engineers or teachers, all of them responsible and committed to offer their personal time for bicycle repair and maintenance during several hours in CdA, and also to the more back-office management tasks. Another rewarding consequence amidst rising national unemployment has been the training of several members in CdA on bicycle mechanic skills, which have helped some members securing a job.

CdA has been constantly contacting commercial stores and shops with the purpose of finding sets of used bicycle parts destined to be deposited in landfills, but that can nonetheless be helpful to some user. Municipal services have also been contacted in order to intercept the selective collection of municipal solid waste, alerting us whenever a bicycle appears among the garbage.

For all what has been said, CdA has plausibly been getting media coverage, ranging from daily newspapers to private broadcasting tv channels; exposed to such a large audience, this has been logically a favoured way of emphasizing the importance of bicycle donations - those, for example, that are constantly stowed at someone's house and are not used for years. Many individuals gave bicycles and hundreds of parts since the beginning of CdA, supporting the project and turning the space into a cycling hub. With these campaigns for bicycle and parts raising, CdA can afford to only buy new parts when it is extremely needed.

Another concern is to own good and reliable tools, not only the basic and general tools but also bicycle specific tools. For that, CdA applied for an Local Support Program, promoted by the Parish Council (Junta de Freguesia dos Anjos). The Chairman of the Parish Council appreciated the application and has personally visited CdA several times, announce that CdA would receive funding for the project, as has happened in the last two years. With these funds, CdA invested on sturdy and special tools, bicycle stands, countertops, and lighting system. Other funds come from the installed loan system for bicycles, which are borrowed in exchange for a deposit. As many bicycles have not been returned, these deposits allow CdA to purchase some

**Lisbon, Portugal  
15 - 17 May 2013**

consumable material as brake or gear cables, inner tube patches or lubricants. CdA also made some stickers, key rings and badges to offer in exchange for a donation. For now, CdA has managed to achieve a balanced budget, without losses or profits.

### **3. Philosophy and Purpose**

As was stated, each session of CdA is put to work accordingly to a set of core principles that are put into practice in a more or less weekly basis during five to six hours. These principles can now be put forward as 1) free of charge access to bicycle repair and assemblage tools and to the technical knowledge concerning their applicability, provided by the volunteer team; 2) effort on material and financial self-sufficiency through recycling, revaluing and reusing bicycle parts and components; 3) advocacy of the bicycle through the informal sharing of cycling experiences, and hence normalizing the everyday use of the bicycle in a community.

Every volunteer and contributor to CdA is thus more or less implicitly guiding his or her course of action through a shared common belief in the overall individual, social and environmental benefits of the bicycle as the most favourable adequate technology for urban mobility. Details about how the core principles and the CdA's practical goals mutually integrate will be briefly outlined and detailed below.

For this, some concepts existing in the thought of E.F. Schumacher and Ivan Illich have proven to be valuable and will assist this clarification<sup>2</sup>. Schumacher, for instances, considered that technologies have an implicit social-political agenda, and tried to build a set of criteria that could warrant what were appropriate technologies, capable of endorsing non-violence and a sound man-nature relationship. He considered these criteria to be affordability, small-scale applicability and a compatibility with man's creativity. Illich, in a similar way, considered some tools to have an intrinsic ethical value, while others were deprived of that quality, favouring industrial productivity and the parallel "amorphousness and meaningless that plague contemporary society". Illich's concept of conviviality pretends to underscore a quality of technologies and institutions that increase human power and autonomy in a total sense, opposing them to other that stultify man<sup>3</sup>.

Generally, and from a sociological point of view, CdA adequately purports to the description that author David J. Hess put forward about Technology and Product Oriented Movements (TPMs); these movements are granted to be "mobilizations of civil society organizations that are also generally connected to the activity of private sector firms", and for

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<sup>2</sup> The works used for this paper are *Small is Beautiful* (1973) and *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), respectively.

<sup>3</sup> "A convivial society would be the result of social arrangements that guarantee for each member the most ample and free access to the tools of the community and limit this freedom only in favor of another member's equal freedom." Cf. Illich 1973: 11.

**Lisbon, Portugal  
15 - 17 May 2013**

which "the target of social change is support for an alternative technology and/or product"<sup>4</sup>; other goals include concern about the policies linked to its promotion and the broader context of social movements within which they happen to be inserted and the related ethical values.

This is certainly truthful for CdA; there is in fact a "cooperative relationship" that emerged between an "advocacy organization that supports an alternative technology" and private-sector firms that develops them; it goes without saying that for the present case, the bicycle is the alternative technology in question, which, besides its intrinsically competitive mobility characteristics, is grounded above all on a relatively simple and accessible system of mechanics, in the inter-changeability of all its major components, even between several different types of bicycles, and in the small environmental impact of all the materials involved while compared to the automobile.

This cooperative relationship with private sector is led by a strong sustainability perspective: CdA relates in a harmonizing way with the already existing hardware and appliances storage houses in its demand for tools, and also with private bicycle selling shops, either they are product-oriented or the more generally sports oriented megastore; the approach is to establish a mutual partnership that helps the shops by jettisoning some objects from their precious space, while giving a possible new life to several used and in a first level rejected bicycle parts, such as tires, wheels, spokes, cables, cranksets, brakes, chains, derailleurs, pedals and specially old or rusty bicycle frames. Other useful commodities are lubricants and oils that are frequently used in every session, or other utilities such as lights and bottles, which make the experience of cycling safer and enjoyable. In this framework, the next step is to partition the donations and select those parts that although worn can nevertheless come back to a new life by being assembled to either visiting bicycles or other soon to be ready-to-go bicycles, belonging to CdA and lend at an affordable price; the hopeless parts are also sorted out in order for a more easy separation of waste in recycling or upcycling possibilities, like tires and tubes, which hence also involves other private sector firms or associations.

As illustrated, the principle here is not simply to correctly manage waste, but, through reuse and the concomitant reduction of consumption, to follow the underlying principles of an economy supported in the awareness of the importance of being integrated in an industrial ecology, whereby obsolescence is fought and materials are used as efficiently as possible, reducing the conceptual easiness with which they are considered "waste" or "garbage".

Hess's characterization of TPMs proves to be accurate also for the more general environment of social movements; most CdA members already knew each other from social happenings or movements linked to the awareness of bicycle as an urban transport, such as Critical Mass and other organizations like FPCUB and MUBi, and their related online discussion forums. Overall, this mobilization and affinity can be explained by the spontaneous upgrade in citizenship that bicycle commuters face while being daily confronted with their disempowered condition, acutely provided by all the discriminations and menaces to personal security that the

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Hess 2005: 516.

automobility system steadily delivers; the convergence in platforms for policy changes is just one of its symptoms.

Yet, one key feature that distinguishes CdA from the broader social movements in which it is inserted is the clear emphasis on the "building and diffusing alternative forms of material culture"<sup>5</sup> than in the politics and logistics of protest. Each session of CdA does not include discussions on the way public demonstrations or proposals ought to regard or consider features for either more traffic-calming or segregated infra-structure in Lisbon. The focus is more on the thoroughly concrete promotion of a specific technology, along with the chance for spreading and disseminating the know-how, the extension of the materials' life-cycle and in the free of charge services that surround it, and which expect to empower individuals to ways of being out of the seemingly inevitable and unethical production-consumption logic.

One of the many social-environmental factors that influence bicycle use is the cultural norms of a community<sup>6</sup>; if bicycles are to be largely adopted, there is also a need to a total openness to a community participatory approach, in order to warrant a change to transportation material culture and its nowadays institutional dependability. This is undoubtedly policy making, but one that accepts that many of the problematic social and environmental relations that we are presently dealing with have been precisely emerging from the hidden agenda of several technological artefacts that we commonly live with, namely automobiles; surpassing those problems is likewise based in promoting technological alternatives, as a radical acknowledgement of how politics and social engineering are embedded in the design of technological systems, and hence are an *a priori* condition for gradually shifting society into a more sustainable and respectful lifestyles and consumption patterns.

Like other several TPMs, CdA engages its participants in a questioning of the property relations that maintain or dominate the industrial satisfaction of an unavoidable human necessity: mobility; a weekly training therefore slowly exposes participants to a practical deconstruction of the institutional and corporate ownership of modern mobility as the need for consumption of automobility<sup>7</sup>. It should be underlined that the system being questioned is not only the car-object itself, but all the networks of specialized knowledge and production demands related to road and parking infrastructures and to the petroleum industry, along with all their negative economical externalities. Promotion of a bicycle oriented mobility system along with the knowledge on how to repair and assemble it in a community-based learning could turn away or alter the power, knowledge and property relations from car-manufacturers, oil companies and all the correlated institutions.

This lobbying for a more appropriate technology usually fosters on the long run an accommodation of the prevailing system to each TPMs initial proposal, which usually should entail a change in material culture. Preference for an alternative technology is both a boycott for

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<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Handy, Xing, Buehlher 2010: 969

<sup>7</sup> *Automobility* amounts to the "combined impact of the motor vehicle, the automobile industry, and the highway plus the emotional connotations of this impact [...]" Cf. Flink 1976: 8.

the prevailing one but also a demonstration of its daily feasibility. The goal of achieving a larger bicycle culture for travels can nevertheless be somehow absorbed by the major industry that initially resisted an eccentric trend. At this point, one should question if the bicycle as a transport amounts only to materially unbalancing the current share in modal travelling or if it features a deeper questioning of the transportation system.

If we examine it in a more general level, the bicycle can be considered what Schumacher defined as a small-scale technology that appealed to "a new method of production and a new pattern of consumption"<sup>8</sup>, one that promoted a life-style related to permanence; labour-intensive work, as bicycle maintenance and repair are exemplified in CdA, can be utterly satisfying for the individual, as it gives him the pleasure of creatively engaging in the self-mastery of building more personal autonomy.

As it regards mobility, man can thus be in control of its personal universe and give meaning to it, instead of being dependable on outside forces which he cannot expect to know about<sup>9</sup>. This simple principle dissolves the dichotomy between work and play, or between a dull, monotonous and productivity oriented time frame and that of a bond-making, self-satisfactory knowledge sharing experience period. There is the assumption in CdA that every individual needs to invest some of his time in the making of his personal universe, to give it a personal touch in everything that surrounds him, from objects and tools to his clothing and dwelling.

If riding just a bicycle is based on its cheap price, only a community based approach as present in CdA can foster and complement all the three criteria advanced by Schumacher; the reason being that every individual is given the free opportunity to access tools and loosen bicycle parts and thus creatively engage on the assemblage and repair of a bicycle with the help of another individual, while exchanging perspectives on the experience of riding a bicycle in a car-centric society. He soon understands that the political and industrial network that has severed his capabilities<sup>10</sup> from personal self-moving and self-modifying, altering and repairing his own world is parallel to the consumption habits that expand his real needs to artificial ones<sup>11</sup>; in the end, because access to community-owned tools and to the knowledge held by that same community connects persons with what they possess, saving resources and going beyond a profit-oriented logic, it ends-up by prolonging the life-cycle of all the objects involved, giving pride, confidence and independence in the adoption and maintenance of the bicycle as an alternative technology.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Schumacher 1973: 9.

<sup>9</sup> "Tools are intrinsic to social relationships. An individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon. To the degree that he masters his tools, he can invest the world with his meaning; to the degree that he is mastered by his tools, the shape of the tool determines his own self-image." Cf. Illich 1973: 21.

<sup>10</sup> "The principal source of injustice in our epoch is political approval for the existence of tools that by their very nature restrict to a very few the liberty to use them in an autonomous way." Cf. Illich 1973: 43.

<sup>11</sup> "Radical monopoly imposes compulsory consumption and thereby restricts personal autonomy. It constitutes a special kind of social control because it is enforced by means of the imposed consumption of a standard product that only large institutions can provide." Cf. Illich 1973: 53.





#### **4. The outcome**

As there has not been any accurate log of all the attended cyclists since two years, it is therefore difficult to quantify the complete evolution of demand for CdA services. But this is only one coarse way of measuring the outcome of its activities. There are many other signs able to accurately document an overall growing affluence of bicycles and persons. This includes the increasing complexity that the management and organization contributors are faced with, as it is now necessary to have a updated list concerning the stock of all the materials, commodities and ready-to-go bicycles; additional regulations that control the queued access to the working chamber also had to be advanced, as it was the only way that could safeguard a minimum workspace for each mechanic.

There is other data that warrants the raise in demand of CdA services, such as the current lack of time that mechanics dispose to do minor repairs in their own bicycles or the now somewhat normal presence of stress due to the increment in the chamber occupation; in the first months there was an informal waiting list and carelessness in the behaviour of users, but this has gradually shifted into a more arranged and strict frame, capable of coping with limits both in space and in time; this is undoubtedly one of the consequences of upgrading CdA through more stands, tripods but specially through the acquisition of capable and problem oriented specific tools (the problems presented by users are usually related to stuck parts due to rust or to breakable cheap bicycles) and finally to the availability of mechanics, which due to its reliability have in turn created more demand.

It is tempting to assume that such growth can be equated with a utter increase in the total number of bicycles users in Lisbon, but this analysis would lack depth and plausibility; the realistic interpretation points to the fact that an unpaid bicycle repair service and a free access to tools and parts is much attractive to either long-term employed bicycle users and to other more precarious workers or unemployed users, which probably are already using the bicycle due to its frugal and sparing qualities. With the overcharging complexity of the project, there is the recognizable risk that CdA is taken for just another store or commercial shop that happens to offer free-of-charge services; however, as long as the user is critically challenged by the volunteers in his or her passive misconceptions about the feasibility of self-starting a repair, or asking how to assemble, instead of waiting for the normal customer-client approach, or to just leave the bicycle and come back when it is repaired, CdA is likely to have a well-defined identity that grants the application and spreading of its goals related to the vindication of an appropriate technology.

In the last four months of CdA, though, it can be estimated that the number of repaired and assisted bicycles per week is above 25; that is more than 100 bicycles per month. This number already takes in account the extension of CdA to other week days, as to satisfy users availability to be present and to learn how to use tools, which happens almost every time that a volunteer is inside the chamber. During 2013 (from January to April) for example, 8 bicycles

were completely assembled by clients with the help of volunteers, starting from a frame and using parts available in the shop.

Lending bicycles (long-term renting) is another service of CdA, that started at the end of 2012. These bicycles are mainly built by volunteers, or arrive to CdA already complete, missing just some parts. These are specially looked for by students, as they are specially affordable. Today, CdA has around 30 rented bicycles riding in Lisbon.

CdA was initially advertised using posters, flyers and internet - blog<sup>12</sup> and facebook<sup>13</sup>. Its existence and activities rapidly spread through cycling community and population in general. This, added to the increasing number of urban cyclists in Lisbon, increased the interest of the national press. In terms of media coverage, CdA participated or was referred in about two radio programs<sup>14, 15</sup>, four national newspapers<sup>16, 17, 18, 19</sup>, 1 fashion magazine<sup>20</sup>, 3 reportages on national television<sup>21, 22, 23</sup>, not to mention the number of appearances in local press. The interest shown by community and press, increased the number of donations, namely complete bicycles, parts and frames. It also increased the number of people interested in the project and wanting to actively help in CdA activities.

The effort in promoting a better society was already recognized by the Local Parish council (Junta de Freguesia dos Anjos) and Portuguese Federation of Cyclotourism and Bicycle Users (FPCUB). In 2012 and 2013, the Parish of Anjos entitled CdA with a financial support. In 2012, FPCUB, a member of the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF), attributed the national sustainable mobility prize to CdA, in the category of Activism and Social Intervention. The prize was received in a ceremony with the presence of the Secretary of State in Transportation<sup>24</sup>.

Other institutions have recognized the importance of this project by addressing invitations for CdA to be present and promote free bicycle repairs during events (e.g.: Rock in Rio Lisboa, Ben & Jerry's Free Cone Day, or European Mobility Week promoted by Lisbon Municipality).

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<sup>12</sup> [cicloficina.blogspot.pt](http://cicloficina.blogspot.pt)

<sup>13</sup> [facebook.com/cicloficina.anjos](https://www.facebook.com/cicloficina.anjos)

<sup>14</sup> 02/2012, Antena 1, minute 36: <http://www.rtp.pt/programa/radio/p2756/c73764>

<sup>15</sup> 09/2012, Antena 1: <http://www.rtp.pt/play/p354/e91943/1-minuto-pela-terra>

<sup>16</sup> 06/2012, Público (national newspaper): <http://ciberjornalismo.com/pontomedia/nelia.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> 09/2012, Expresso (national newspaper): [http://mubi.org/free.com/Revista\\_Expresso\\_120908.pdf](http://mubi.org/free.com/Revista_Expresso_120908.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> 09/2012, Público (national newspaper): <http://p3.publico.pt/actualidade/ambiente/4654/cidades-portuguesas-renderam-se-cicloficinas>

<sup>19</sup> 04/2013, JN (national newspaper): <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/->

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<sup>20</sup> 10/2012, Timeout Lisboa: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/->

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<sup>21</sup> 07/2012, TVI (national TV): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2moN64PgH-I>

<sup>22</sup> 10/2012, RTP (national TV): <http://www.rtp.pt/programa/tv/p29452/e6>

<sup>23</sup> 03/2013, SIC (national TV):

<http://sicnoticias.sapo.pt/programas/economiaverde/2013/03/06/mecanicos-de-bicicletas-voluntarios>

<sup>24</sup> FPCUB bicycle mobility prize ceremony 2012, minute 38:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQtyFmiOtc>



## **5. Conclusions**

Everything started as a monthly outdoor event, each time held at a different location around Lisbon. Volunteers used basic tools, most of the times their own, to fix other people bicycles. This was the experimental version of a bicycle shop event. Rapidly it was understood that more benefits could arise from a more common event.

The decision to held a weekly event at a fixed location led to the start of CdA in March 2011. At the beginning it was based with funds gathered among volunteers; some tools were bought, others were borrowed.

In September 2012, the spread in the affluence of users during the previous Spring and Summer led to an upgrade in CdA. The indoor layout changed and an investment in new stands and tools destined to improve the work efficiency of the mechanics took place.

Nowadays, there is the need to sign in a list; opening for five to six hours a week as been admittedly not enough. One possibility in the short term might be to publicly open CdA twice a week, which will require more organization betwixt volunteers. Informally, there is already one unofficial alternative day, by having volunteers on Sundays doing some work that is impossible to perform on Wednesdays' events (e.g.: building bicycles). Other clients take advantage of this and go to CdA to have their bicycles fixed. Receiving a client on Sundays or any other day has been an option for volunteers. Another likeable option would be the progressively birth of more akin projects in Lisbon.

The future of CdA is somehow dependable on the support of local administration and the will of the volunteers to go further. The space is getting shorter for the demand and so there is the need for a decision on how big is big enough. Having the responsibility of paying a rent can increase the pressure for gathering money and demands a better organization, increasing the responsibility and the time demand of volunteers. Voluntary work would need to go even more beyond just fixing bicycles.

CdA has demonstrated to have a important role for the growth of the cycling community in Lisbon, albeit this cannot be precisely quantified. Perhaps the importance is related to the assumption that there is a social and political agenda particular to the bicycle that is able to convivial draw people into affective and functional encounters. The number of bicycles repaired, some of them stowed for decades, is undoubtedly an indicator of the importance of CdA's activity, but one should not resume its approach just to this measurable impact. Maybe the next step needs to be taken in the medium term. CdA needs to assert its expansion and influence, but never at the cost of its core principles and their dissemination to every user that comes by. Space restriction cannot limit its instructive awareness about the connection between technology and social relations, which thus has to be continuously favoured and should not disappear if there is a righteous pretension to have more choice conscious citizens.



<i>Beginning</i>	<b>“Cicloficina” (beta)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Monthly event;</li><li>- Outdoor;</li><li>- Different locations;</li><li>- Basic tools.</li></ul>
<i>March 2011</i>	<b>CdA 1.0</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Weekly event (Wednesdays only);</li><li>- Outdoor (most of the times);</li><li>- Fixed location;</li><li>- Basic tools and one stand;</li><li>- covered space to store materials;</li><li>- Parts to replace.</li></ul>
<i>September 2012</i>	<b>CdA 2.0</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Weekly event for general public (Wednesdays);</li><li>- Other days of the week only for volunteers;</li><li>- More specific and professional tools;</li><li>- Bicycles to borrow and Parts to replace;</li><li>- Indoor space with an efficient layout.</li></ul>
<b>timeline</b>	
<i>Future</i>	<b>CdA medium/long term</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Opened every day for general public;</li><li>- A bigger indoor space;</li><li>- Promote workshops;</li><li>- Teach how to ride a bicycle (to all ages);</li><li>- Promote group bicycle rides around the city;</li><li>- Promote social events (parties, round table discussions, movie projections, etc).</li></ul>