

# Mãos à Obra - Renewing Spaces

Andrea Costigliola

## Learnings Report

**Abstract**—This report has the objective to analyze and discuss the soft skills gained and the learning process that lead to them during the activity "Mãos à Obra", developed in the context of the Portfólio Pessoal IV (PPIV). During this report will be analyzed all the steps that were useful for the development and improvement of the quoted skills, from the beginning of the activity till the end, with emphasis on the problems encountered and the strategies used to solve them. The main focus will be on the social and personal skills, while the practical component will be only mentioned to introduce the main problems encountered during the activity.

**Index Terms**—Mãos à Obra, volunteering, social action, Instituto Superior Técnico, Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande, engineering, soft skills.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

THIS report is focused on the learning process and on the Soft Skills gained during the participation in the activity "Mãos à Obra", developed in the context of the Portfólio Pessoal IV (PPIV). The knowledge and skills, gained during the activity, were both social and personal.

Since the performed work had a strong practical component, I could improve my organization and team working skills. Anyway the activity itself involved practicality that I already had but I have got the chance to improve it. In this report I will focus on the skills that I think are the most relevant and, in particular, on the learning phases that allowed their development.

learn several things and in particular to understand the importance of solidarity centers on the territory. This first part of this section will be focused on the personal skills gained during the activity while the latter will be focused on the social skills.



## 2 SOFT SKILLS

The possibility to develop the activity in a place like the "Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande" [1], that is a reality that operates in social solidarity, gave me the opportunity to

Figure 1. Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande

figures MUST be referenced in Text

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### 2.1 Team Cooperation

Nowadays the ability to cooperate while performing a job is crucial. Cooperation is not

(1.0) Excellent	LEARNINGS					DOCUMENT							
(0.8) Very Good	Context × 2	Skills × 1	Reflect × 4	Summ × .5	Concl × .5	SCORE	Struct × .25	Ortog × .25	Exec × 4	Form × .25	Titles × .5	File × .5	SCORE
(0.6) Good	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.6		0.8	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.6	
(0.4) Fair													
(0.2) Weak													

an option when performing a task in an environment that involves other people or simply when the cooperation itself makes the task easier. The largest part of the work has been done in cooperation with several people.

Since the "Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande" is highly frequented during the whole week it was important to coordinate each phase of the work with all the people who work for the center, both volunteer and regular workers. The work itself was performed most of the time with a colleague from Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), Leonardo Natal, and it was important the organization and the coordination in every phase.

For instance, we had to divide the work to minimize the time required and increase the productivity, or in other cases, we had to perform the work in collaboration since none of us was able to do it alone with the same result.

Team working was at the same time, interesting and challenging, and I found really useful, for my personal skills development, the possibility to work as part of a team. Of course, working in team has also cons, especially when people working together have different ideas on how a work should be performed. This aspect is relevant for me, because I have a strong personality and usually I try to impose my ideas, but in this environment I learned to be more patient and to hear what my colleagues suggests in order to better perform the work.

Another important aspect, involves the social part of Team working, and it was the ability to make the work environment positive. In particular, I think that I and my colleagues succeeded in this aspect, and the work days flowed better, since we were working in a positive and friendly environment.

## 2.2 Time Management

As referred in the previous section the "Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande" is highly frequented during the week, and since the work involved the renewing of spaces that needed to be used in several days, it was necessary to schedule when the activities had to be performed.

To make the spaces always accessible, each

activity performed needed to be completed within the same day. For this reason, I needed to organize my time in order to work in the weekend for a large number of hours (between 5 and 9 hours in a day), and make sure to be able to complete the activity and make the space accessible again at the end of the day.

I have never been really good in organizing my time, but the experience gained during the activity will surely help me in time management in the future. When you work in a complex environment, with many people it is important to make compromises in order to allow everyone to perform their work in the best possible way. Also, the compromises made helped me to work better and with no interference.

## 2.3 Self Motivation and Initiative

Working as a volunteer is an experience that I would suggest everyone to try, but on the other hand, there are some inconveniences to deal with. In my case, was difficult to find someone that could tell me what I had to do, and the directives were inaccurate and not very helpful. From the first time I was in the center, I needed to understand which was my space, and what I could do and what I could not. For instance, I could not perform for all the period the activity that I choose (installation of wood protectors on the walls), because after the first day the material needed for that work ended and I had to do alternative works.

Since no one told me what to do, I started visiting the center and whenever I found something that needed to be fixed up, I just started doing that. In the day 6th of June, in the center there will be a party (Arraial) and the terrace needed to be set up, so once I knew this information I started autonomously to do everything ~~was~~ needed for making that space better (polishing and painting chairs, cleaning the garden and the ground, transporting the waste in the lower floor).

I think that the people who currently work for the center, liked my (and my colleague's) self initiative, because they really needed a huge help to set up the classrooms and the external spaces for every kind of event that will take place in the center.

For me it was good to have such a liberty in performing my job, because I could work by following my own directives, and in the end the work turned out exactly as I wanted and in the end of the activity we received greetings from people that frequent the center.

Finally, even if in the beginning was a little frustrating the fact of having so few indications and directives, it turned out as an interesting opportunity of developing self motivation and initiative skills.



Figure 2. Interpersonal Relationship

## 2.4 Interpersonal Relationships

During the volunteer activity I had the opportunity of meeting many people: workers, volunteers and people who frequent the center. The possibility to spend many hours with my colleagues in an environment different from the IST, gave me the possibility to know them better, and to spend some good time with them. In particular, I establish an effective friendship with my colleague Leonardo Natal, since I spent most part of my work hours with him, and this helped me to cultivate this friendship. For me this represented a good chance to increase the number of friends I actually have here in Lisbon, especially because I am living here from October and with the study hours required at IST, it has been difficult for me to find many spare time to cultivate friendships. In addition to this, as already mentioned, I met new people and I enjoyed to work with them but especially to spend time with them. This will surely lead to the development of new effective relationships, and I think I will

continue to frequent the center for pursuing the activity of volunteer.

I had, the possibility of improving my Portuguese language and, since I can not yet write in Portuguese, i think that this experience was really helpful from this point of view.

I am a friendly person, but as discussed above the first period in Lisbon was difficult from this point of view, and the participation in this activity helped me to find new friends and to reinforce other friendships.

## 2.5 Practical Learning

As discussed in the introductory section, the activities had a strong practical component, and since this are not really soft skills, the application of those techniques in performing different tasks was really helpful and stimulated my practicality.

I had to deal with missing materials or with tools that were not really suitable for some of the purpose they were used for, but since the job had to be made I needed to adapt them, or in other cases to construct *ad-hoc* tools for performing the job. I found this part really important, because I could perform my tasks in a better way and in less time simply using my problem solving skills that my course in engineering already contributed to develop. The possibility to deal with practical issues increased my belief and my approach to solve any kind of problem.

## 3 CONCLUSIONS

I would like to close this section, writing about what I think of volunteering, and how important is doing volunteer work for people in needs, but also for who does volunteer work. It was the first time that I made volunteer work, and for me it was a new world. Even if, I did not have direct contact with many activities that are performed daily in the center, I had good feelings working for a such good scope. In the end, I think that my work, even if it was a little part of what usually happen in associations like the "Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande", was useful to make the center better and more likely to make the spaces that

the children use more functional and safer. The last aspect on which I want to put some emphasis is that there is a large part of people that dedicates themselves for nobles activities like helping the weakest part of society, but the World itself always needs people doing this. After I dedicated a little part of my time in this activity, I would suggest everyone to try this or similar experiences, because one hour of time spent in those activities is a valuable hour.

Bio ??

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all the people who worked with me during the activity "Mãos à Obra". Especially I would like to thank Maria Helena Presas for giving me the opportunity to work for the "Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande". I want to thank the keepers and the receptionist of the center for the help provided for the whole period I spent in the center. A special thank to all my colleagues that worked with me, and in particular to Leonardo Natal for being a great workmate. I want also to thank the IST and the Professor Rui Santos Cruz for giving me the opportunity to work on this project.

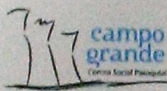

## REFERENCES

[1] C. S. P. do Campo Grande. (2015) WebPage portal paroquia.



## APPENDIX

### STATEMENTS OF EXECUTION

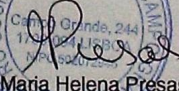
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DECLARAÇÃO

O Centro Social Paroquial do Campo Grande declara para os devidos efeitos que  
Andrea Costigliola, CC(E) AV 10363º fez  
voluntariado neste Centro no Projeto 'Mãos à obra', tendo realizado tarefas de requalificação de  
espaços, totalizando 20 horas.

A obra realizada permitiu requalificar espaços e foi de enorme utilidade para esta instituição.

Lisboa, 3 de Junho de 2015

Pela Direcção  
  
Maria Helena Presas



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