

(RE)ACT For Change

a study case about
the reaction and proaction
of a creative hub
facing the challenges of C-19

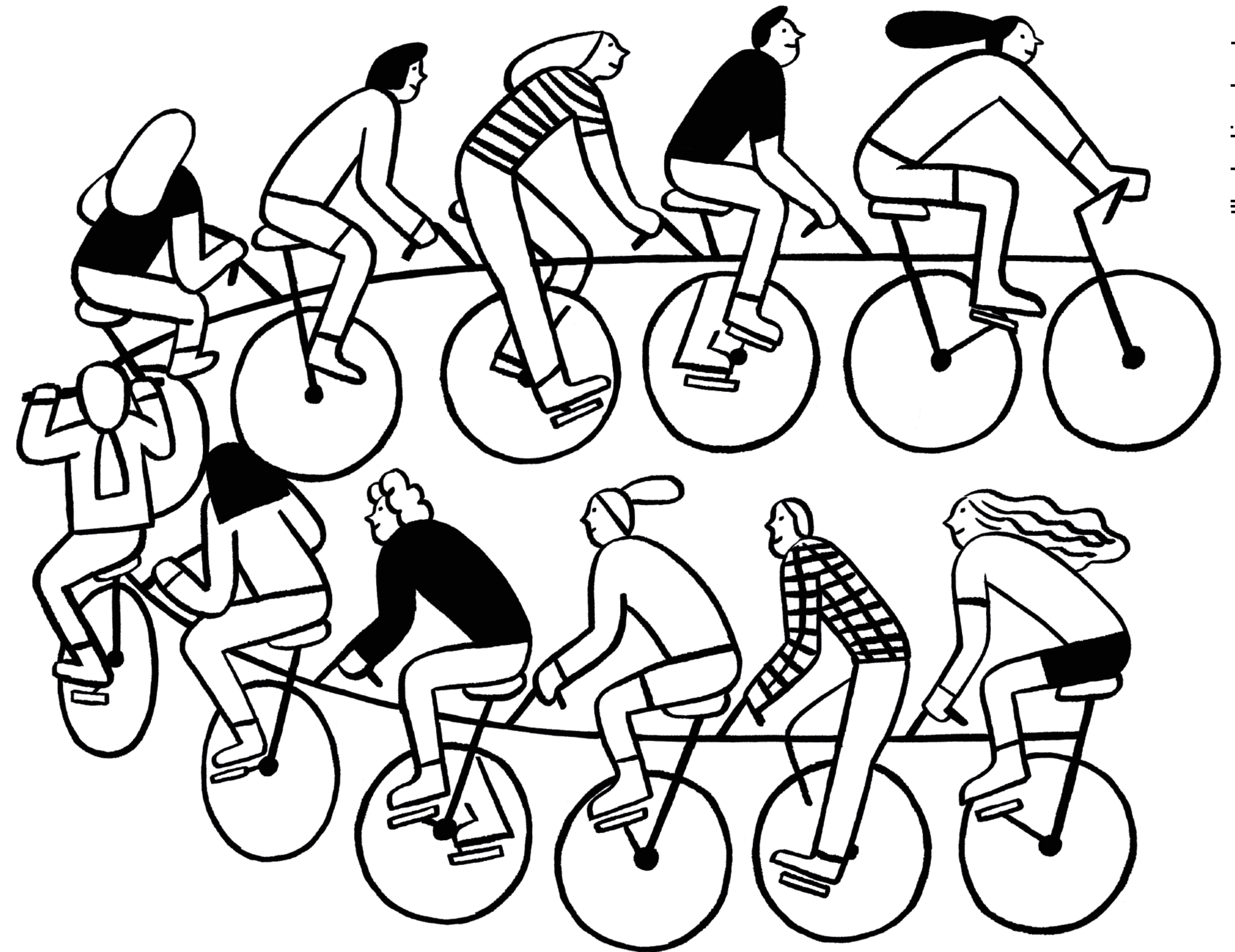


Illustration by Joana Estrela

creative hubs ambassadors of
change

CTU
creative hub

creative
FLIP
Finance
Learning
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Patenting

P2P
Exchange
program

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Creative FLIP

Finance, Learning, Innovation and Patenting is a Pilot project co-funded by the EU whose main objective is to support healthy and sustainable ecosystems for Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) with respect to these four key policy areas.

Fulfilling a crucial task for the overall economy and society, CCIs are facing considerable problems in their ecosystems, with important framework conditions and systemic factors preventing them from unfolding their full growth potential. Through different activities, such as research, stakeholders consultation, preparing and testing guidelines, the consortium aims to improve the finance and patenting ecosystem in order to strengthen CCIs' capacities for growth and development through improved access to finance and value recognition, as well as their capacities to capture value from IP.

Ambassadors of Change

'Creative Hubs - Ambassadors of Change' represents the third round of knowledge exchange between peers, focused on new and innovative creative practices, programs or methods, created and tested to respond to the new conditions brought about by the pandemic by creative hubs.

For that, it was created a dedicated platform as a tool that facilitates the showcasing of 14 selected tested methods who are available to share their insights and knowledge through learning tools and booked mentoring sessions.

About CRU

Mission

to offer the best conditions to keep our community active, prosperous and international, while enhancing the individual potential of each freelancer and solopreneur in the different cultural and creative industries. for this, we offer space and services at an affordable cost, in an environment suitable for artistic creation, productivity, networking and collaboration, contributing to the well-being and friendship of all those who are part of our community.

Amenities

in one place, we combine a coworking space aimed at creative activities, a design shop, a coffee bar and roastery, an area for art exhibitions and studios for digital production.

Foundation & Location

2012, Porto, Portugal

Team & Community

Tânia Santos - founder & director

Miguel Ferreira - co-founder / community and recording studio manager

Virgínia França - store & coffee bar manager

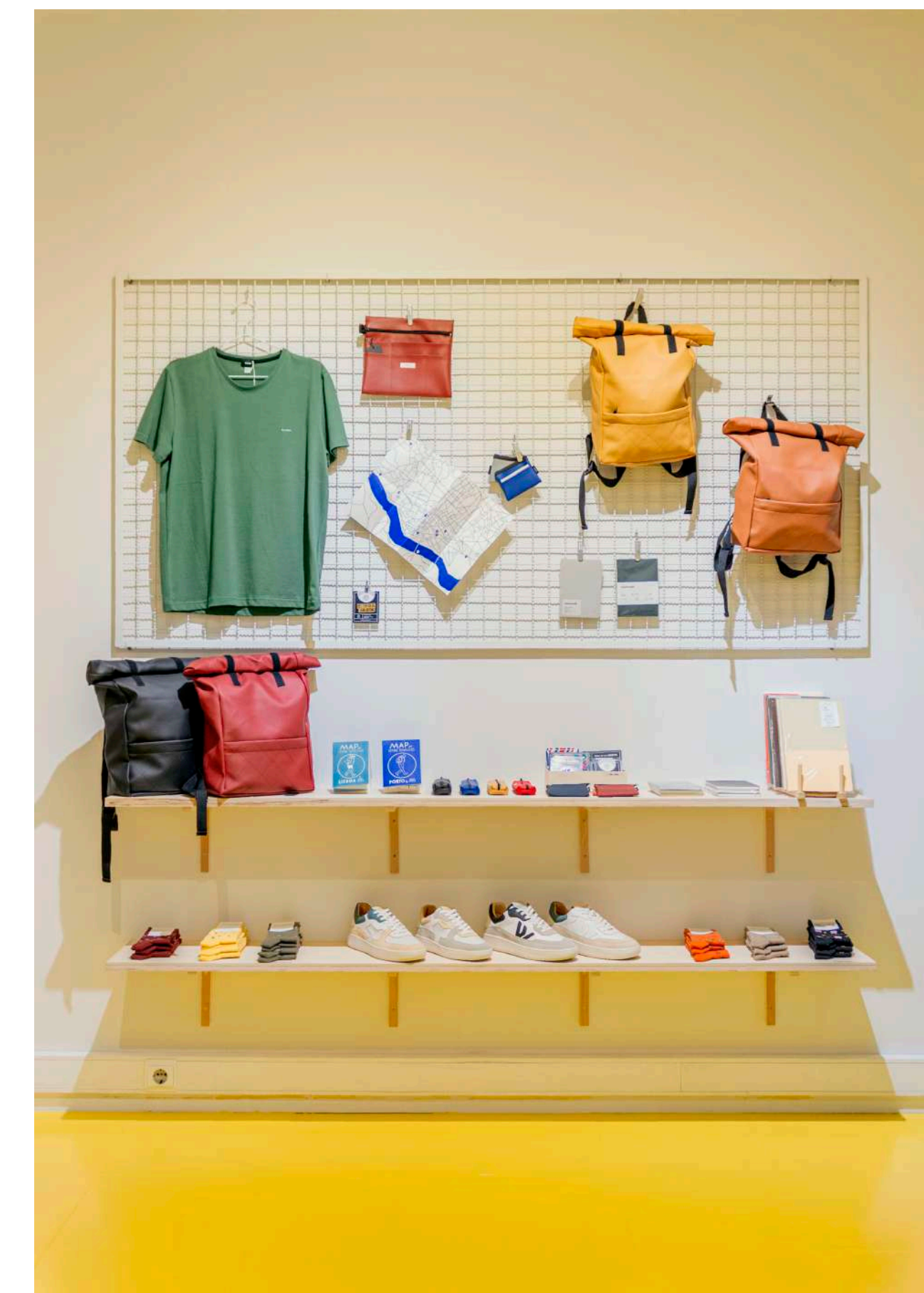
Rossana Fonseca - gallery curator | head of communication

Filipa Moredo - head of marketing

Size

400m2 | up to 42 coworkers | 50 design brands

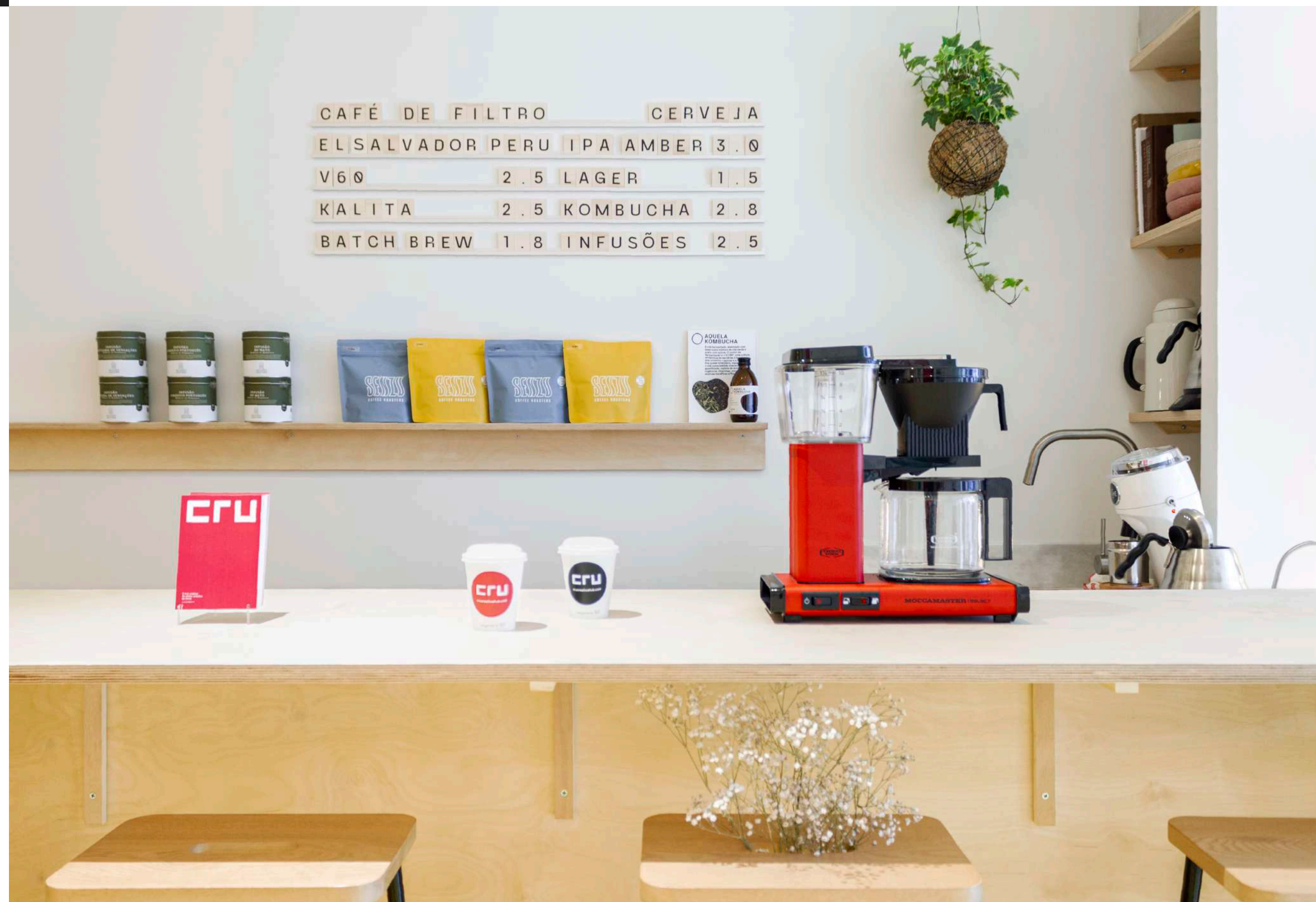
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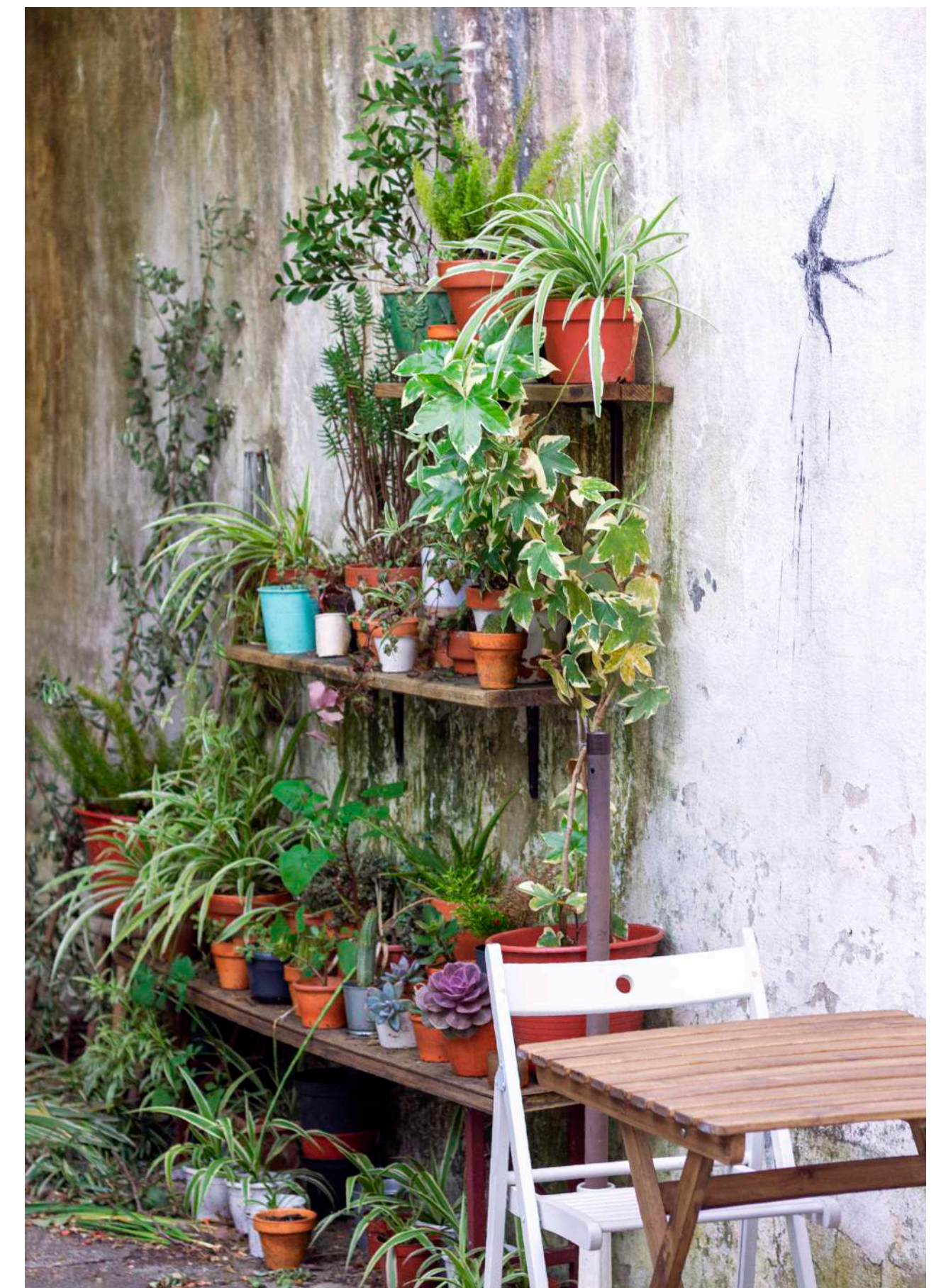
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01 Reaction Phase

In times of crisis, it is easy to fall into the trap of wanting to help others without looking at ourselves and our own resilience... However, as suggested in the famous flight instructions of all airlines, “in case of depressurisation, please put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others.”

In other words, a hub, as a supporting structure for dozens or hundreds of professionals in the creative sector, should try to ensure its own resilience in the face of adversity.

And for that, we must not forget that we can rely on the community we once built.

Reaction Phase

Quick adaptation to ensure survival:

- Ensuring short-term financial sustainability and responding to emerging needs
- Making work spaces safe and supporting the community
- Building alliances and a collective intelligence with our peers

Ensuring short-term financial sustainability and responding to emerging needs

Fellowships during lockdown

ACTION

The first lockdown in Portugal lasted almost 2 months, from 14 March to 5 May.

During this period we created a “**Coworking From Home**” program, adapted to the circumstances, and launched a new modality/monthly fee, as a **fellowship**, that would temporarily replace any coworking subscription.

OUTCOMES

This strategy, at the end of 2 months, meant :

- *that we had maintained a non-profitable but sustainable activity for 2 months,
- *we had reactivated the hub's cowork space with around 90% of its residents;
- *our community had remained united and stable, with a reinforced sense of social responsibility.
- *The success of this initiative led us to consider permanently creating a Fellowship system for the wider community, even after the pandemic.

Ensuring short-term financial sustainability and responding to emerging needs

Fellowships during lockdown

For the creation of this symbolic monthly fee charged to coworkers for the closing period, we took into account these criteria:

- * the fee would be a symbolic value for the coworkers, so that they would have the financial capacity to support it even if they had their activity suspended,
- * the fee would be sufficient to cover the basic operating expenses of the hub, when multiplied by the number of individuals in the community,
- * communication would be constituted by a clear message of cohesion and solidarity, so that the community would not abandon its working spots, disperse or lose interaction with each other.

Ensuring short-term financial sustainability and responding to emerging needs

'Coworking from Home' Program

ACTION

When we closed doors we felt that the activity of our creative hub could not stop.

So, within a week, we created a weekly online program to engage and stimulate our community, which included:

- * a weekly newsletter with accurate information on government support for the creative sector and self-employed workers
- * an ongoing schedule of events (eg Discussions, Meet the Maker, Film and Lecture Nights, Workshops, etc.)
- * Replication of some of our physical events to online format

OUTCOMES

Members of our community remained active and involved, facilitating activities for their peers, and finding new alternatives for their professional activities.

Ensuring short-term financial sustainability and responding to emerging needs

Online Daily Lunches

ACTION

An abrupt switch to online pushed us all into a climate of separation anxiety and a general feeling of isolation.

Some of our coworkers live alone, are foreigners or, for various reasons, need an escape from their new lives of home recovery.

These were the reasons why, similarly to the face-to-face and spontaneous lunches that took place daily at the hub, we recreated a lunch hour in zoom, where any member of the community could gather, while eating, on a daily basis.

OUTCOMES

In this space and time on this virtual platform, anxieties and joys, news and recommendations were shared online and daily.

This event, being recurrent and constant –there was a constant link that was shared daily with everyone as a reminder – created, in addition to a sense of social extension, a routine that helped freelancers and remote workers in better time discipline during the lockdown period.

01
Reaction
Phase

Ensuring short-term financial sustainability and responding to emerging needs

Online Daily Lunches



01
Reaction
Phase

Ensuring short-term financial sustainability and responding to emerging needs

Online Daily Lunches

“The online lunches were a good way to keep a routine similar to the one I had before the confinement. This initiative created a conversation space that was positive and didn't leave me overwhelmed with the news”

Joana Estrela,
illustrator
and coworker at CRU

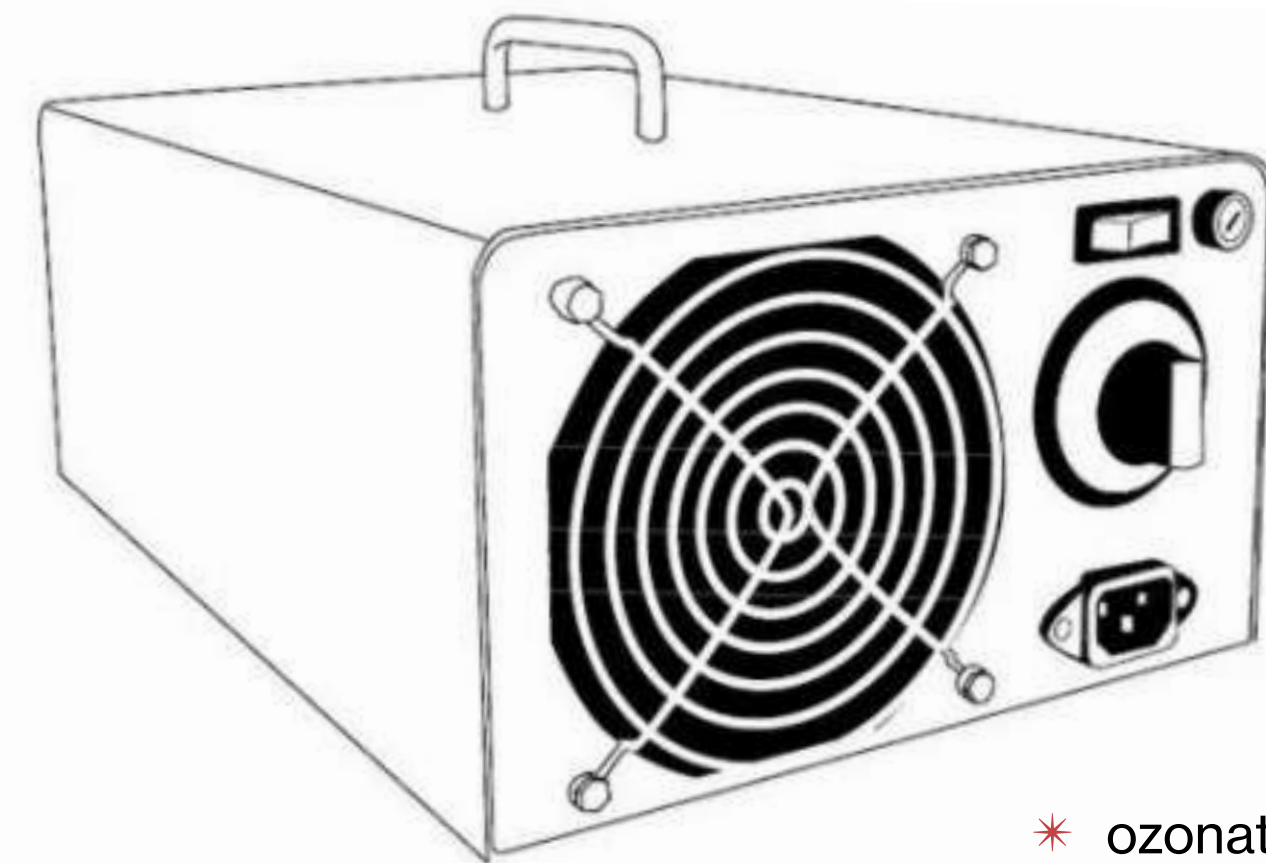
“Lunches were essential to keep some regularity in the work routine. Seeing the colleagues I used to see inside the cowork helped to maintain the normality of the days, and prevented the feeling of isolation and panic that confinement provoked”

Maria Restivo,
researcher and
CRU ex-coworker

Making work spaces safe and supporting the community

Space adaptations

Like many other hubs that include a shared workspace, it was a real challenge to reconcile the civic and social duty of contributing to stop the spread of a highly contagious virus and simultaneously continuing our economic activity and gather conditions for the productivity and socialization of 40 coworkers in the same closed space. To make this possible, during the first confinement, we rearranged the space for the time coming that we could be in this situation



* ozonation equipment

Making work spaces safe and supporting the community

Space adaptations

ACTION

- * reduction of space capacity from 42 to 30, and then to 36 workspots
- * temporary suspension of flexible modalities or shared desks / tables
- * spacing of at least 2 meters between workspots
- * installation of acrylic panels between face-to-face desks
- * installation of several sanitation points
- * creation and dissemination of a contingency plan
- * adaptation of outdoor furniture and common areas
- * installation of stronger wifi in outdoor spaces
- * installation of 4 air purifiers that filter 99% of nanoparticles, allergens and viruses
- * Daily sterilisation with ozonation equipment
- * creation of an original and friendly signage, explanatory of the new mandatory routines

OUTCOMES

Our dedication to maintaining a safe and sociable space has given confidence to our resident coworkers as well as new members.

Our preparation and investment in equipment and routines allowed us to maintain the necessary confidence to keep the coworking activity open during the second confinement which lasted almost 3 months (January to April 2021).

01
Reaction
Phase

Making work spaces safe and supporting the community

Space adaptations



Making work spaces safe and supporting the community

Supporting the community to go online

During our hub's digital transition phase, we realized it was time to help our community make that transition as well. The replacement of the physical by the digital ensured that some professional activity could be maintained or developed. It was essential for professionals in the creative sector to find alternatives to continue working.

ACTION

In this area, we were acting singularly in cases that clearly needed our help, namely:

- * providing and sharing access to our various video-conferencing platforms by our members, who were excused from adding another monthly fee to their expenses
- * making ourselves available personally for training in using these platforms or even co-organizing and assisting in events organized by our coworkers.

OUTCOMES

We taught people from our community to promote workshops, lectures and online conferences, accompanying them in their first events as production assistants and publicizing their initiatives, resulting in greater confidence and autonomy for the promotion of online activities.

Building local alliances and a collective intelligence with our peers

Stay Social Cowork Safe initiative

ACTION

Fruit of several years of peaceful, complementary and friendly coexistence between several competing coworks in the city of Porto, and still in March 2020, immediately after we closed the doors of our hub, we were part of an informal and spontaneous group of 5 coworks in the city Porto, with the intention of supporting each other and facing the impact of the pandemic on coworking.

With the invaluable support of this group of people - all founders or coworking managers - and in regular weekly meetings, we are able to think and analyze the best solutions for each space, share best practices, suppliers, and other accurate information.

OUTCOMES

An example of our initial collaboration was a table of problems, possible solutions and providers to make our areas safe for our communities, that we built together.

This joint and regular work, in addition to redoubled motivation, resulted in the #Stay social initiative, cowork safe - the positive communication of new routines and rules through original illustrations commissioned to reflect our attitude towards the crisis and to reinforce increased recognition and credibility of our decisions on security measures imposed in our spaces.

All our 5 spaces had a common sign, according to these examples.

01
Reaction
Phase

Building local alliances and a collective intelligence with our peers

Stay Social Cowork Safe initiative

#SAFECOWORKINGPORTO



#SAFECOWORKINGPORTO



01
Reaction
Phase

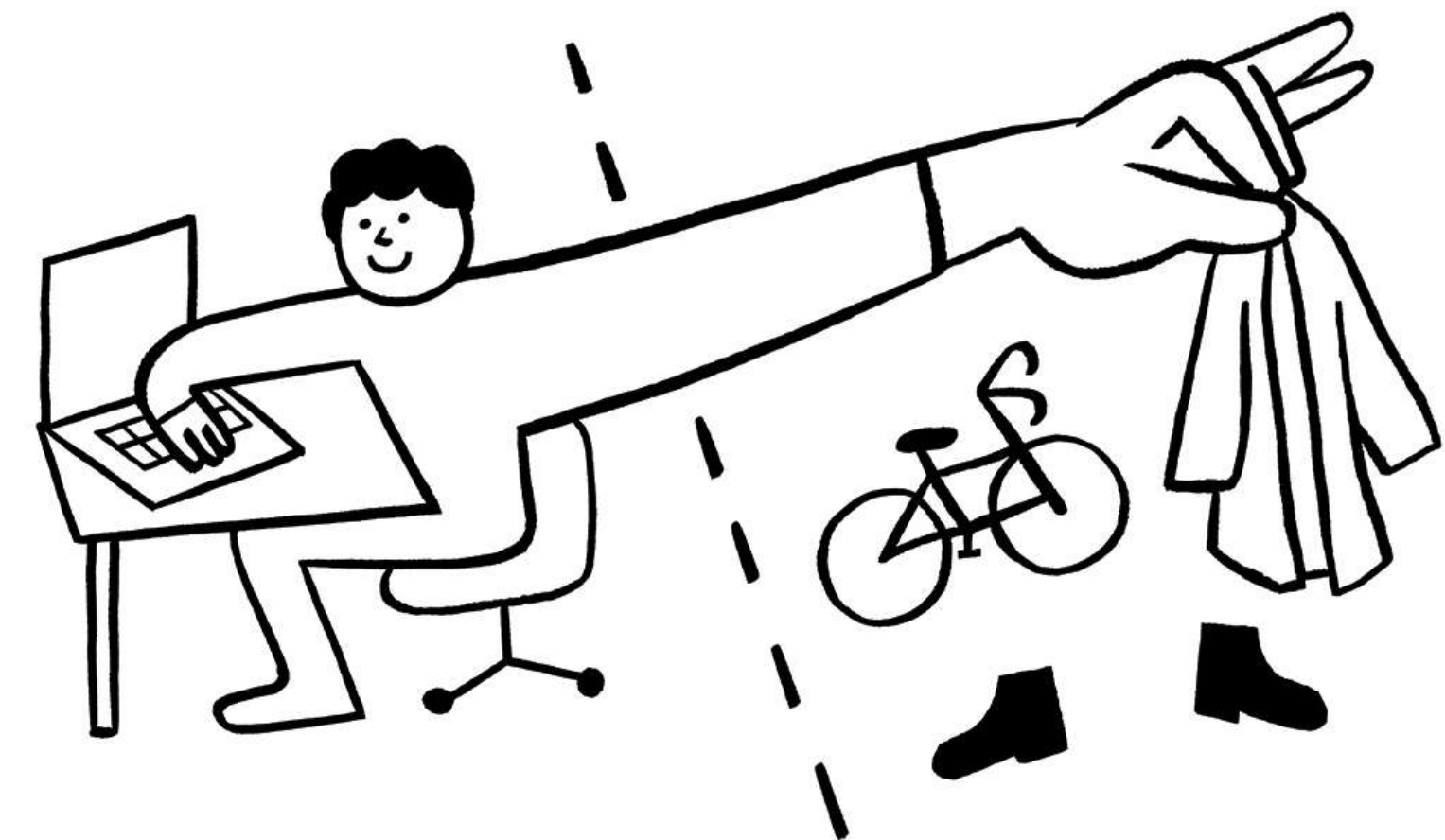
Building local alliances and a collective intelligence with our peers

Stay Social Cowork Safe initiative

#SAFECOWORKINGPORTO



#SAFECOWORKINGPORTO



Building local alliances and a collective intelligence with our peers

Stay Social Cowork Safe initiative

“The emergence of COVID -19 took us all by surprise and constituted a serious problem in the management of spaces. Nobody really knew how to act, as even the Entities had difficulty in transmitting the guidelines clearly and objectively. (...) In this context, the combination of efforts between various Coworking spaces in the city of Porto was of utmost importance, with a view to guaranteeing the safety of users and employees. Thus, it was possible to overcome the greatest management constraints, guaranteeing the expected security.

This movement also raised awareness of the advantages of an active and constructive collaboration between companies in the pursuit of common goals capable of creating value for their spaces and for society as a whole. Now the future awaits us.”

Miguel Campos, Founder of Marshal 1551 Cowork

“(this group) Arose from a feeling of isolation and impotence, together with the curiosity to know how others were facing such an extraordinary phase. Always with the conviction that union is always strength. And it was really true: we created a magnificent group of mutual help for the difficult phase of reopening, to ease the fears and uncertainties that were arising, and then to face the day-to-day and the big and small problems that we are called to face .A few months later we called our friendship CO.PO”

Laura Lupini, Co-Founder Armazém Cowork

“Cowork Buzz made us meet, but it was really the pandemic that made us do something together. So that is how the #staysocialcoworksafe movement naturally emerged out of an already existing informal relationship. Today, we are not only cultivating this collaboration but also a healthy friendship. This is why Porto i/o was founded“

Nuno Veloso, Founder of Porto i/o Cowork

02 Proaction Phase

After the initial shock of the news, the closing of the hub's doors and the first adaptations for survival and adaptation to a new normality, we entered at cruise speed that allowed us to stop to think to what extent the creative sector and the world of work was being affected.

What events and what trends resulting from this global situation could affect us negatively or positively?

It was time for a deep and long analysis of our business and ecosystem.

Proaction Phase

Deep and long analysis of our business and ecosystem:

- Building a Strategic Plan towards resilience, recovery and prosperity
- Acting collectively
- Making tangible changes

Building a Strategic Plan towards resilience, recovery and prosperity

Consulting

After the initial shock of the news, the closing of the hub's doors and the first adaptations for survival and adaptation to a new normality, we entered at cruise speed that allowed us to stop to think to what extent the creative sector and the world of work was being affected.

What events and what trends resulting from this global situation could affect us negatively or positively?

It was time for a deep and long analysis of our business and ecosystem.

It was in February 2020 that, yet without contemplating the pandemic, we requested Oficio's consulting and monitoring services to help us to redesign our strategy for another decade.

ACTION

By March 2020 we knew we had to include all the lessons from C-19 in our design process...

During this process, we analysed:

- * Political, economic, social, technological, ecological and legal trends that could pose risks or opportunities for our business and for the businesses of our community;
- * Our internal weaknesses and strengths, prospecting the future for upcoming threats and new opportunities.

We ended with a a handful of scenarios for what CRU could become and what services to include, and then following a matrix of criteria, we decided the best way forward.

Building a Strategic Plan towards resilience, recovery and prosperity

Consulting

OUTCOMES

In the end, as with any other planning, the most important thing is the process!

Here's some tips

- * Make time in your schedule to think, research, plan, test;
- * Have the discipline to stop and study the situation instead of automatically continuing a logic of trial and error;
- * Find someone to follow up the process with you, questioning the obvious, motivating and checking your progress;
- * Don' stop until there is a clear, workable vision of a plan.



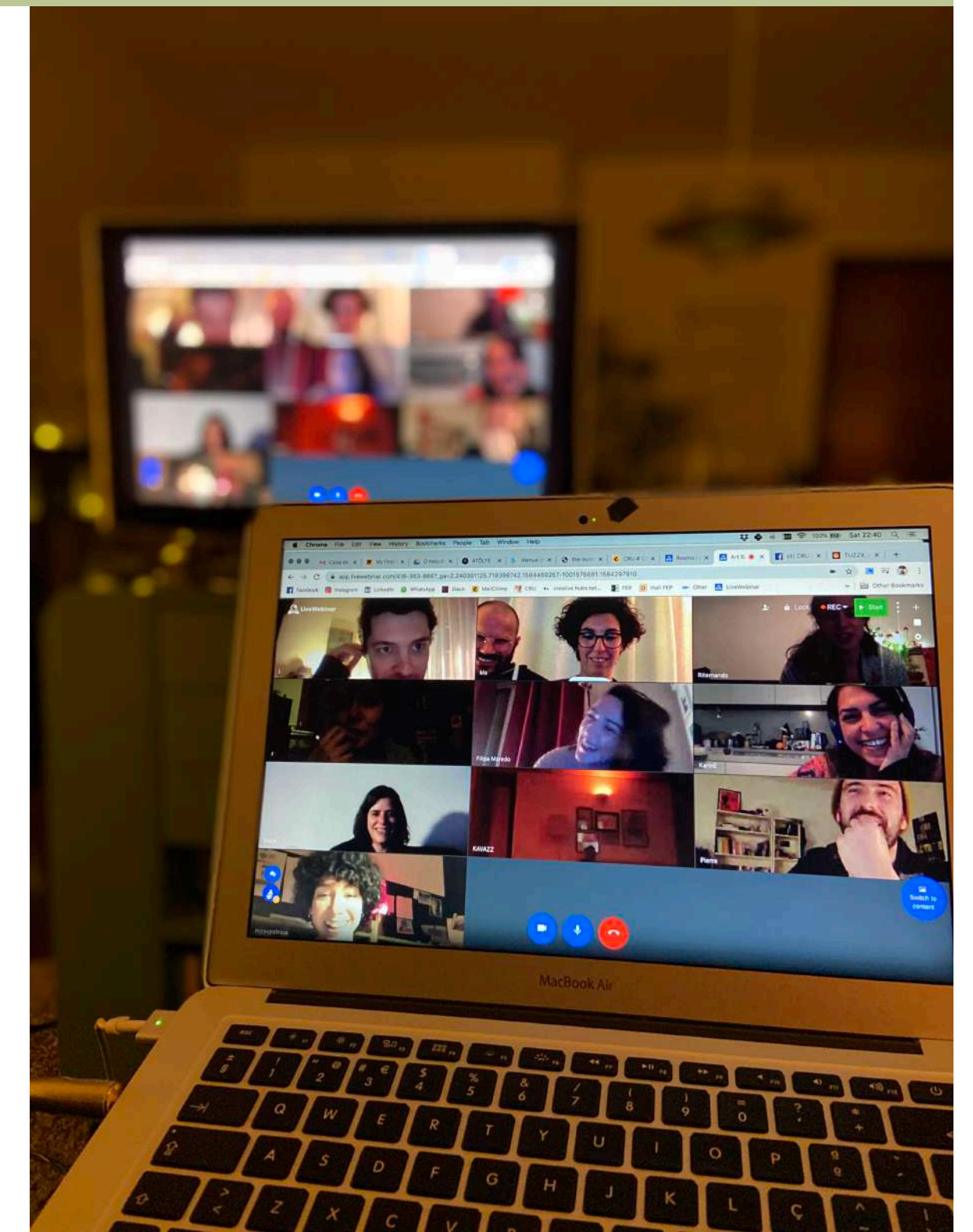
* Tânia & Miguel Barbot, O Ofício, 2021

Acting collectively

Internal Community: Hub level

We seized the opportunity of our daily online lunch meetings to listen to our community about the decisions we were making during the lockdown.

Thus, we were sure that physical distance did not prevent us from knowing the real needs of our community and thus designing solutions tailored to our target audience.



* Online Lunches 2020

Acting collectively

Bombarda, Porto Art District - neighbourhood level

We used the human and creative capital of our hub members - photography, video, copywriting, voice overs, etc. to create a creative 3 video campaign to promote our block, involving shopkeepers, galleries and restaurants, when doors reopen, after the first lockdown.

This was an initiative that helped to motivate and reactivate the economic activity and social aspect of our neighbourhood

Click to watch the videos.



Bombarda, que bom é ver-te de novo!



Por Bombarda, o quarteirão das Artes



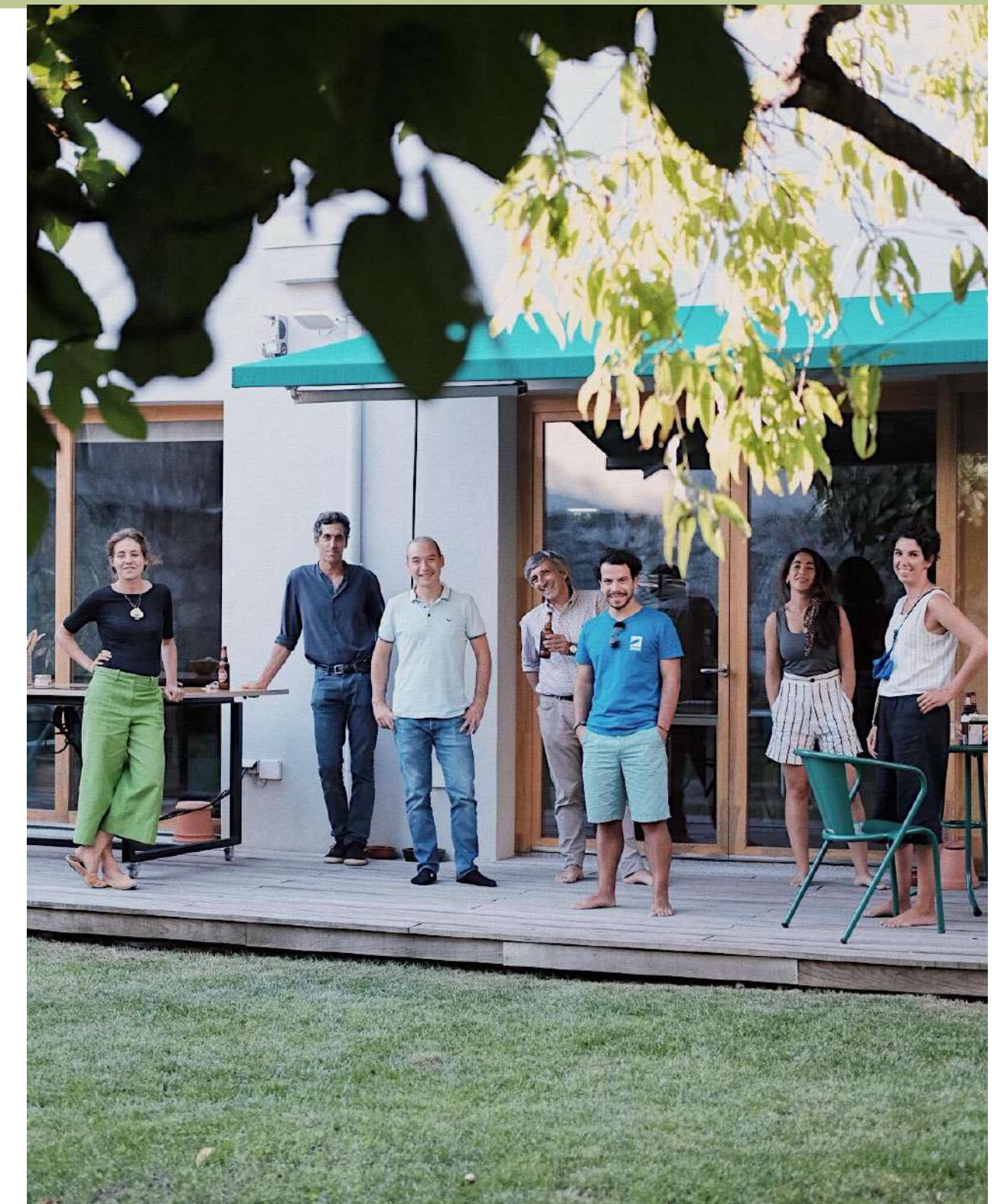
O futuro só pode ser um sítio bonito - Bombarda.

Acting collectively

Co.Po - Coworking Porto Association: city level

The regular collaboration between the 5 coworking spaces gave place to a more organised work group, to advocate for the coworking sector in Porto / region.

In addition to having held 3 ideation and co-creation bootcamps in 2020, the group is in a formalisation phase, having already an official name and logo.



Acting collectively

ECHN Monthly Online Brunches: international level

The European Creative Hubs Network has launched a monthly event (weekly at the beginning) for regular meeting of creative hubs founders and managers.

Online Brunch was and continues to be a place for exchanging ideas, mutual support and introducing new members of the network.

These groups, communities and networks were of the utmost importance in maintaining our mental health, intellectual sharpness and motivation to, more than withstand the crisis, build a new reality for the future.



Making tangible changes

Creation of new spaces and services

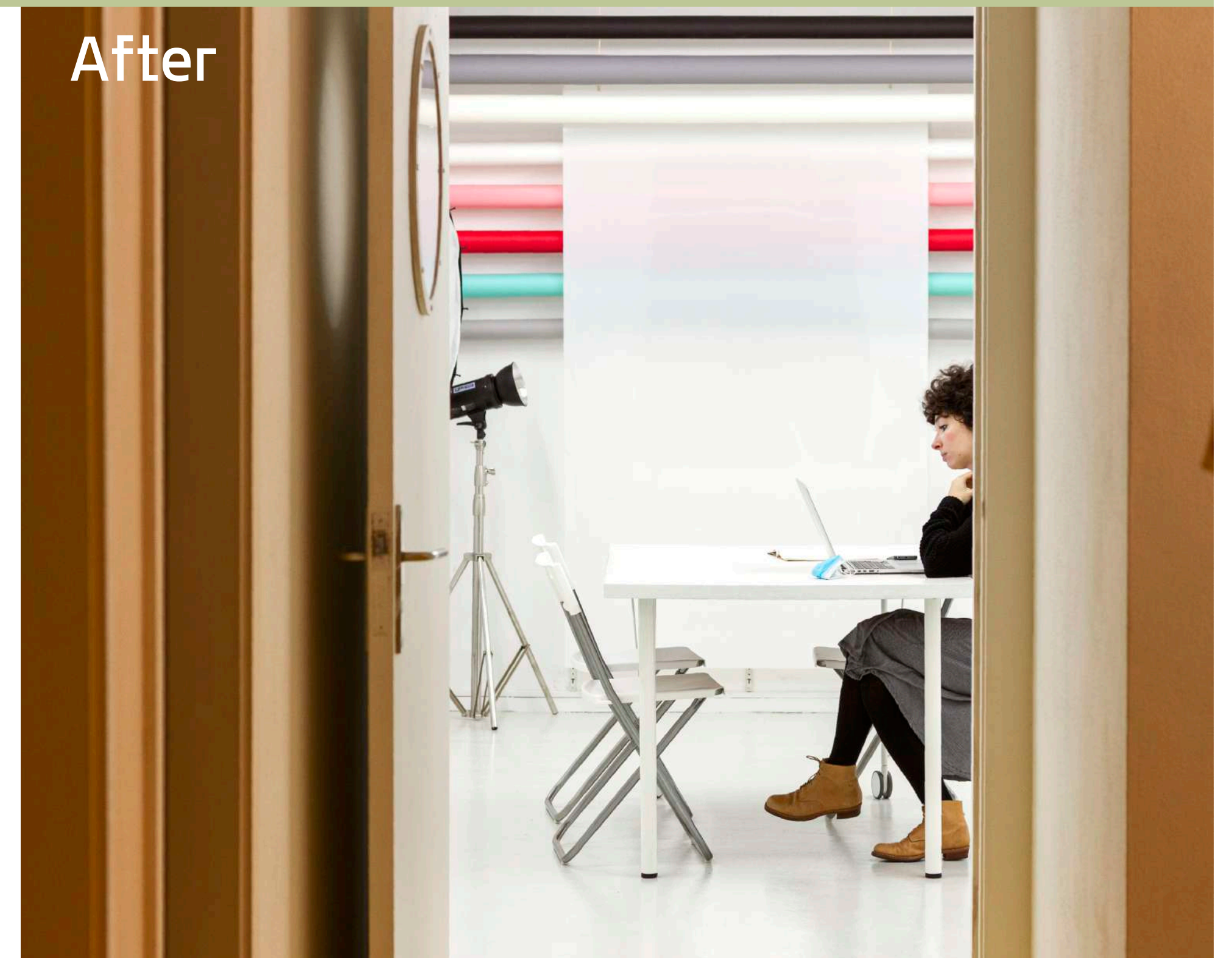
After a lengthy planning, we seized the pauses and slow pace imposed by the pandemic to renovate the physical space according to the new needs detected.

Renovations started in December 2020 and ended in June 2021 and included:

- * total renovation of our design shop - new furniture, floors, brands, etc;
- * creation of a specialty coffee bar in the store space;
- * creating a specialty coffee roaster on our patio;
- * renovation of an entire floor, dedicating it essentially to the production of digital content;
- * creation of a booth for video conferences, in addition to the two meeting rooms;
- * creation of a professional, fully equipped studio for photography and video;
- * creation of a professional audio studio, fully soundproofed and equipped for recording podcasts, voiceovers, e-learning and professional video conferences;
- * creation of a mini auditorium for events with capacity for up to 20 seats.

Making tangible changes

Creation of new spaces and services



Making tangible changes

Creation of new spaces and services

Before



After



Making tangible changes

Creation of new spaces and services

These renovations and alterations to the space intend to meet new needs such as:

- *greater demand for digital content that can communicate brands digitally (increase in the number of online stores, instagram sales, etc);
- *trend towards creating higher quality photography and video content, thus requiring more professional means (studios, equipment)
- *greater adhesion to the consumption of audio content (podcasts, Clubhouse, etc.) and greater demand for its quality;
- *greater use of digital format in meetings, classes, tutorials, professional conferences, etc.
- *a need to make face-to-face moments more special than ever
- *a better articulated existence of social and leisure spaces with work and production spaces, in a 'third space' logic

Final Notes

This document was built with the purpose of sharing general information and guidelines about the experience of a Portuguese creative hub, in a particular context and time.

For further information about the practices here described, please book a mentoring session with our Ambassador Tânia Santos, through the platform on FLIP website.

[https://creativeflip.creativehubs.net/
creative-hubs-ambassadors-of-change/](https://creativeflip.creativehubs.net/creative-hubs-ambassadors-of-change/)

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