

AJUDADA



Community-based economy: We're all in it together

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portalegre

Portugal

communication kit





AJUDADA

Community-based economy: We're all in it together

An International Gathering
to be held in Portalegre, Portugal

14th - 16th June, 2013

FACT SHEET



The Challenge

To imagine a new economic model based on the core values of community-based life with its giving and sharing. The word “Economy” is used here in its original meaning of “**managing our common home**”.

The Concept

AJUDADA – the name of this event – alludes to an ancient practice common in many rural areas, in which members of a community joined together to help one another in the different chores in the fields. Men, women, children and the elderly, all participated in an **AJUDADA** with a specific task, in a collective endeavour of sharing and co-responsibility. We wish to explore what this means in modern times and to replicate this approach in all envisioned activities.

AJUDADA is inspired by the key concept of ‘gift economy’, in which people give to and receive from each other in an ongoing relationship of mutual support. In a gift economy, people organise themselves to collectively share the resources and skills that already exist within the community. Everyone has an active role and is valued. This is in contrast to a ‘market economy’, in which goods and services are mainly exchanged for financial benefit.

AJUDADA aims to promote gift as a creative act based on cooperation, trust in others and valuing others. The expressions of that gift are as diverse as the people that belong to a given community. Giving and sharing have always been part of relationships within communities but have been gradually losing their relevance in a society governed by a market economy.

The Organization

AJUDADA is not a conventional conference. It will build on the diversity of ideas and practical experiences of the local community and international guests in the spirit of the gift economy. It intends to trigger a process of change in Portalegre by planning, implementing and extending proposals that stand out for their creativity and resilience: practical projects that make a difference in people’s lives, providing for their daily needs where money is very restricted.

AJUDADA will be a starting point and a catalyst for ongoing change. It will start in Portalegre, but its influence will extend through its international guests and the publicity it generates. It will be open to the wider community, not just those attending the main events. **AJUDADA**, even in its early planning and preparatory stages, is inspiring contributions from many local people including local government, businesses and business organisations. The main organising work is being done by the local community, backed up by a team of Portuguese and international supporters.

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The Program

The formal program will unfold during the course of three days, building on extensive preparation, while leaving room for spontaneity, and leading to ongoing projects. The first day (Head) will have discussions, debates, and round tables. The second day (Heart) will include workshops, street performances, multiple interventions in public places, exhibitions of local projects, and moments of celebration. The last day (Hands) will call for collective participation in the actual implementation of larger projects planned in the preparatory phase, bringing together the local community and all the participants.

Participation

AJUDADA has attracted well-known International promoters of the concept of gift economy, such as Charles Eisenstein, author of "Sacred Economics", and Mark Boyle, author of "The Moneyless Man". It will also receive representatives of national and international organisations promoting the transformation of their communities, including Schumacher College and the Transition Network, as well as a range of local and regional authorities, working together to make AJUDADA a platform capable of triggering positive action for the future.

During the preparation phase of AJUDADA, we are encouraging local people and organisations from all areas of activity to get involved and contribute their visions, dreams and energy into building sustainable alternatives for Portalegre.

For the event itself, we are inviting wide public participation, either by engaging in the variety of planned activities, or by taking up the challenge to bring in one's own proposal and make it come true in the spirit of AJUDADA. We envision a range of new and growing practical projects, catalysed by AJUDADA, that will be joined by individuals, businesses and organisations in and around Portalegre, leading to a new sense of optimism, a sense that with sufficient will and innovative thinking the community can find its own way towards hope and prosperity.

Everybody inspired to participate, to support or know more can use the contacts below.

Information and contacts

www.ajudada.org

Email info@ajudada.org **Facebook** <http://www.facebook.com/Ajudada2013>

Telephone contacts

Local (+351 93 477 04 92) **Internacionais** (+32 486 07 61 50)



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

AJUDADA's main aim is to foster the 'real' economy of Portalegre so that it may serve as an inspiration and a model to other local communities anywhere in the world.

AJUDADA is not simply an event but brings together a movement of people inspired by the idea of gift and motivated to work locally so as to promote joy and well-being within the community.

This document contains a synopsis of the following topics: the reasons for choosing Portalegre as the host town for the event, and the main ideas and concepts that inspired the organizers as well as the preparation and programme of **AJUDADA**.



Ajudada is an expression used in rural areas of Portugal to describe a once common practice in which members of a community joined together to help one another in the different chores in the fields. Men, women, children and the elderly, all participated in an **AJUDADA** with a specific task, according to their abilities and skills. The word hints at the combination of the Portuguese verbs to help ("ajudar") and to give ("dar").

The choice of this word is intended to emphasize that, like in an *ajudada*, everyone has a role in the local economy and a task to suit his/her own talents. Anyone is able to give something to others and the expressions of that gift are as diverse as the people in a given community..

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Gift Economy

A “**gift economy**” is an ongoing flux of giving and receiving based on sharing the resources and skills that already exist within the community. Instead of valuing just those people who earn money, in a gift economy everyone has an active role and is valued by the collective trust in each other’s knowledge and creativity.

Although barter, local currencies and other alternative tools are likely to have a growing place in local economies, the vision promoted by **AJUDADA** is that of gift: the notion that we all have something to contribute to the collective, the perception that through cooperation we will all feel safer, more trustful and fulfilled, and therefore richer (in a deeper sense of the word). **Giving and sharing have always been part of relationships** within communities but have been gradually losing their relevance. This is the point we want to make and we are not implying that other economic mechanisms will disappear completely.

The word economy is nowadays used mainly in the context of a commoditised society. However, its original meaning is that of “managing our common home”. Money was originally intended to be a tool for economic transactions but recent events have shown that it is definitely not fulfilling that role. Other mechanisms of mutual support have thus become necessary, i.e., other means to manage the exchange of gifts to serve the needs of the community.

Ajudada in Portalegre

As many other towns in Portugal and all over the world, Portalegre is facing a severe economic and social crisis. On the one hand, the basic needs of many people are not being met and, on the other hand, those with the time and willingness to contribute to the community are not able to do it, including many people who are currently unemployed. **It has become clear that neither the central government nor the European authorities are helping Portalegre since they have their own crises to manage.** The time has thus come to give a chance to the people of Portalegre to join together and find ways of supporting each other. Not only are there many needs in the city but the ability to meet them is also there. Only a collective awakening will enable all the potential that exists in Portalegre to express itself fully.

This is ultimately a feeling that crosses many communities and societies. **Given the current global and structural crisis that challenges our traditional methods, our values and our world view, nothing less than a new vision and a fundamental change is required.** We need to question and reassess our own behaviour towards the world around us and towards nature of which we are part, and to find new ways of living in community.

With the growing awareness of the complexity of the conundrum **we find ourselves in, a myriad of proposals and initiatives have been emerging that are showing us there are other ways to respond to the great challenges we face.** Many of those projects carry with them a great deal of creativity and make use of the key tools of **sharing and giving**. Since much of what is happening is still dispersed and barely visible, we felt that the time was ripe for exchanging experiences and sharing of knowledge from all those projects.



The choice of location

When a group of people inspired by the concept of **gift economy**, which includes North American author **Charles Eisenstein**, initiated the design of this international event, Portalegre was suggested as the host location.

The pioneering idea was to choose a location that, in terms of accessibility and convenience (for speakers and participants), would never have been selected. **On the one hand, this choice serves as a symbol of the gift of the (inter)national speakers and participants to a region in need of a breath of hope.** On the other hand, it increases the potential for future impact to a region where the concept of community is still alive and strong and where giving and sharing are still present, because there is fertile ground for the implementation of a number of innovative projects as a result of **AJUDADA**.

Setting AJUDADA in a region such as Portalegre, opens up the possibility of joining together perspectives that are rarely present in classic events: it encourages the participation of the whole community and creates the conditions for the development of local ideas and initiatives that are meant to continue after the event. **Thus not only are the participants offering their gifts to Portalegre, but the city itself will offer a gift to all those who come to visit.** This gift will be the proof of the full potential that an apparently hopeless town still possesses. We expect local creativity to unfold and that everyone can learn in the process. It won't be the central government that will come for the rescue. **Real change and renewal must come from the people within the community.** If Portalegre can "be the change", so it can happen anywhere else.

AJUDADA

Objectives

The main objectives of **AJUDADA** are thus to **gather initiatives and thinkers** and to foster the right conditions to make the event go beyond what we already know, **creating a platform for sharing and collective learning that will enable the discovery and design of new ways and new processes.** **AJUDADA** is also to bring together isolated initiatives or projects in an international network of goodwill. **The event itself is not the ultimate goal**, but only part of a process that will prepare the ground for the germination of the seeds sown during and after the event.

AJUDADA will also be an opportunity **for the people of Portalegre to dream their vision of the future, using local resources (manpower, skills, etc.)** that are currently undervalued or underutilized and finding ways to use them without relying on money brought in from the outside. The key questions are **“How can local needs be met locally?”** and **“Which local needs are not being met?”** **AJUDADA** is the ideal opportunity for everyone to bring their dreams and wishes into full fruition.

Web links

Charles Eisenstein

Sacred Economics with Charles Eisenstein - A Short Film

www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEZkQv25uEs

sacred-economics.com

yesmagazine.org/happiness/to-build-community-an-economy-of-gifts

Gift Economy

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gift_economy

yesmagazine.org/issues/money-print-your-own/37-ways-to-join-the-gift-economy

futurepositive.synearth.net/gift-economy

guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/video/2012/jul/30/charles-eisenstein-gift-economy

context.org/iclib/ic41/pinshotg

gift-economy.com/theory.html

Mark Boyle “The Moneyless Man”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Boyle_%28Moneyless_Man%29

<http://www.moneylessmanifesto.org/>

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