

IBISS

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Project 1: Terra Encantada

We were picked up at the hotel by Nanko van Buuren with two IBISS vans, which were important to be recognized by inhabitants of the favelas as guests of IBISS. Our first excursion took us to a fairly new favela, Terra Encantada, which was established about eight years ago on the premises of an old steel factory. The favela houses almost 3.500 people. After the founding of the favela, IBISS was asked by the inhabitants, who knew the organization from other favelas where they had lived, to start its work there too.

We were welcomed in a class room where IBISS provides breakfast for children before they go to school and where they give informal lessons to those who don't go to school. Here, we listened to a presentation by Sandro, a former drug boss from another favela who was converted by the IBISS program "Soldados Nunca Mais" ("Soldiers Never More") and was now an IBISS employee. He told us about the things IBISS was doing in the favela, while Nanko translated this and added more information.

At first, the favela had no water or electricity supply and it was not acknowledged by the government. Electricity was tapped illegally from nearby lines. Through negotiation by IBISS with the local power supplier, a formal electricity grid was built. This costs the inhabitants more money, but in return they get an energy bill which proves they have an address. As a result of this, they can show the government that they legally exist and that they need to be acknowledged. This will force the government to build more facilities, like health care, schools and waste collection. Because there is no formal water system yet, IBISS taps water from nearby water pipelines and stores in old tanks used by the factory. From here it is distributed through the whole favela with informal pipelines built by the people themselves with the assistance of IBISS.

IBISS employees especially try to keep the youth of the favela from getting involved in crime and drugs trade. The most effective way to do this is to talk to them informally and tell them about the dangers and drawbacks of a life as a gang member. This is rather effective, but they acknowledge that it is still very attractive for youngsters to get involved in this world of easy money. IBISS tries to develop new programs to offer them other attractive opportunities to keep them out of the gangs. IBISS is going to provide a lot of training for youngsters to get more skills which are needed to get a job, for example like teaching people to use computers, make music or weld optic fibre cables, for example.

After the lecture, we had a site visit in an old factory building in renovation, where IBISS is building music and film studios, a cinema and a computer room to learn to work with computers. The trip continued with a walk through the favela to show the simple measures that are implemented to try

to enhance the living conditions in the neighborhood. One small example of this is the stimulate the building elevated doorsteps, to prevent the houses from flooding and to make sure that if the streets will be paved in the future, the houses will still be accessible. We also visited a bridge built out of scrap metal by our colleagues of the TU Delft. Nanko showed us the river that runs past the favela, which is used by the people to throw their trash in. He told us that IBISS tries to inform people that this habit is bad, because it leads to diseases and causes the river to flood the favela. This still does not work very well though, but they hope to convert people to throw their waste away normally in the future

The trip through this favela showed us that, in contrary to our earlier beliefs, IBISS really does make use of civil engineering knowledge, like building enhancements and the planning of power and water systems. It is however not professionalized, but more informal and ad hoc than we are used to. The organization is still in need of more professional knowledge to increase their activities in the area of civil engineering. It is however becoming clearer how IBISS tries to handle sustainability, not only in the People branch, but also on the Planet (waste management, flooding prevention) and Profit (helping people to get profitable jobs, lobby for electricity and address acknowledgement) sides.

Project 2 Vila Cruzeiro

After lunch in a local churrascaria, which was founded with a micro credit provided by IBISS, the vans took us to one of the most violent favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Vila Cruzeiro. We brought a visit to the IBISS center here, which is a large cultural centre with sports and dance rooms, a swimming pool and a large football field. Inside the building, we got a short description about projects, like trainings in different kinds of sports, dancing, swimming and of course football. Inside the building there were also lectures given to learn people to read and write, to combat the analphabetism in the favela.

On the bottom floor of the building, IBISS provides free dentist and doctor facilities. Every few months, the University of Amsterdam sends a few Dental Care students to IBISS for an internship. This enables IBISS to provide this service for free to the inhabitants of Vila Cruzeiro.

During a short trip around the favela and a football match with local kids, Nanko told more about the sustainability of IBISS projects. The largest part of this is aimed at People, which are not only rescued from the world of gangs, drugs and an almost certain dead, but are also provided with better opportunities to build a life in or outside the favela. But IBISS also looks at the profitability of its own projects. Nanko showed us some clothes from the clothing brand “Soldier Ware” which was started by a few ex-soldados and is owned for 51% by IBISS. Other projects are for example a very famous percussion band, a rap group, a party centre with its own training school and a training project which helps people to excel in football and get a job at a large football club. These projects are ready to make profit, which could flow back to IBISS if they will experience money shortage in the future. Until that time, the profit is invested in the projects themselves, to expand them even further.

The excursion was concluded with a street barbecue on the edge of a third favela, together with some IBISS employees and local people.