UTOPIA

11.000 cans cover Utopia's Walls

Time-lapse: http://utopia.plako.net/utopia_evolucao.mp4

After creating the walls of the Utopia building by filling 2000 tires with earth, they are now being filled with a combination of mortar, lime, straw, sand and used soda cans.

Supported by the Municipality of Póvoa de Lanhoso, Quercus, University of Minho (Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering), among others, the Utopia project was born from the desire of a company linked to the area of new information technologies to have a facility with the least possible impact on the environment and respect for biodiversity in space.

Located 300m from the Cávado River, in Póvoa de Lanhoso, the area of over 1ha of land is surrounded by a stream of crystal clear water, in the middle of a vast agricultural area where grass pastures predominate, characteristic of the Minho region.

The idea came in 2010, when Plako (http://www.plako.eu) - located at the time in the center of the city of Braga - decided to move its headquarters from the big urban center to a rural area and demonstrate that it is possible to continue to grow. From that date until today, Plako is located in the Business Incubator of Ferreiros (Póvoa de Lanhoso) installed in the old elementary school of this parish.

The main building of the Utopia project is composed of a construction where the exterior walls of the building are built using used tires filled with earth. This technique, developed

in the 1970s by American eco-architect Michael Reynolds, was adapted to the humid climates in the north of the country, and the entire building is suspended in the air by 34 pillars to facilitate air circulation and improve the energy efficiency of the facility. This same efficiency will be evaluated through research conducted by the Civil Engineering Department of the University of Minho.
The ceiling will be constructed using wooden beams and boards and, on top of this, an extensive vegetation cover will be placed that will help minimize the visual impact of the building in the context of the surrounding landscape.

In terms of finishes, the building will have a cork coating on the outside and a clay-based plaster on the inside.

Besides the main tire structure, the internal walls will be built from research developed by Prof. Paulo Mendonça from the Architecture Department of the University of Minho. The Utopia building will be the first in the world to use this new technology that, besides presenting better performance in terms of acoustic and thermal insulation, has the advantage of being reusable.

Plako has developed, within the scope of this project, numerous integrated activities specially directed to the municipality of Póvoa de Lanhoso, such as study visits, attendance in festivals and seminars.

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