TRANSFORMING A CITY INTO A "LEARNING COMMUNITY": A PILOT STUDY IN BRAZIL

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PILOT PROJECT DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP:

Tremembé CITY
HALL

A Brazilian Non Profit
Organization

INSTITUTO | natura
bem estar bem

What is Learning Communities

It is a project of school transformation, which deeply transforms the school and its context through a participatory education.

The heart of the process is to transform people's interaction based on egalitarian dialogue.

Based on the same principles,this pilot study is investigating if and how an entire city, neighborhood by neighborhood can be transformed as well.

What is Learning Communities

Learning Communities is a project based on a set of evidence based Successful Educational Actions (SEAs) aimed at fostering social and educational transformation. Combining science and utopian dreams, the project improves the academic achievement of all students and develops a better coexistence and attitudes towards social solidarity. Its key features are efficiency, equity and social cohesion. This educational model is in line with international scientific theories that emphasise two key factors for learning in today's society: interactions and community involvement

CREA (Centre for Social and Educational Research) of Barcelona, based on the theories of Habermas and Paulo Freire, has developed the concept of **dialogic learning**, which is a dynamic key. To make possible such transformation, seven concepts must be applied: (1) Egalitarian dialogue; (2) cultural intelligence; (3) instrumental dimension; (4) transformation; (5) solidarity; (6) meaning creation and (7) equality of differences. (Flecha, R. (2000)

The **process of transformation** occurs in 5 phases starting with a Sensitization phase where families, students, neighbors and school personnel are invited to work together.

RAISING AWARENESS

DECISION MAKE

DREAM

SELECTION OF PRIORITIES

PLANNING

PROJECT PURPOSE

Applying the same principles and the same phases implemented within schools this PROJECT is investigating IF AND HOW an entire city, neighborhood by neighborhood, can be transformed as well.

To bring people to dream, plan and implement actions together to transform public spaces into learning spaces!!!

PROJECT PURPOSE

Throughout the phases of the implementation process, each family and each individual will have the opportunity to decide whether to participate, to analyze and better understand the family relations and neighbor relations in the communities and to democratically dream and prioritize what to do to transform their neighborhood into a better place to live in.

DIALOGIC LEARNING

Dialogic learning happens through equal dialogues, in interactions whereby cultural intelligence is recognised in all people. Furthermore, "Dialogic Learning is produced in interactions, it increases instrumental learning, it encourages the creation of personal and social meaning. It is guided by fundamental principles and in those in which equality and difference are compatible values and mutually rewarding" (In Aubert, A.; Flecha, A.; García, C.; Flecha, R.; Racionero, S.; 2008, Pág 167)

Project assumptions

Considering dialogic learning is produced in interactions, it is believed that when we increase spaces and opportunities for INTERACTIONS que relationships will increase and the neighborhood may become a better place for all. Communities may be transformed into LEARNING COMMUNITIES!

City of TREMEMBÉ

Tremembe is a small city, with a population of 44.000 inhabitants, distancing one and a half hours from the State Capital, the city of Sao Paulo, in the southeast of Brazil. The economy is based on agricultural and local market.

This initial phase

As part of this larger intervention, this study focuses on the diagnosis process conducted in a rural neighborhood in the process of transformation and it´s implication to the larger project, considering the initial phases are key elements to the success of the implementation

Research Objectives

(1) To characterize the neighborhood focusing on family relations and patterns of community interactions;

(2) To analyze expectations of quality of life and level of involvement during Sensitization Phase and

(3) To understand the reasons for joining or not the project during the Decision Make Phase.
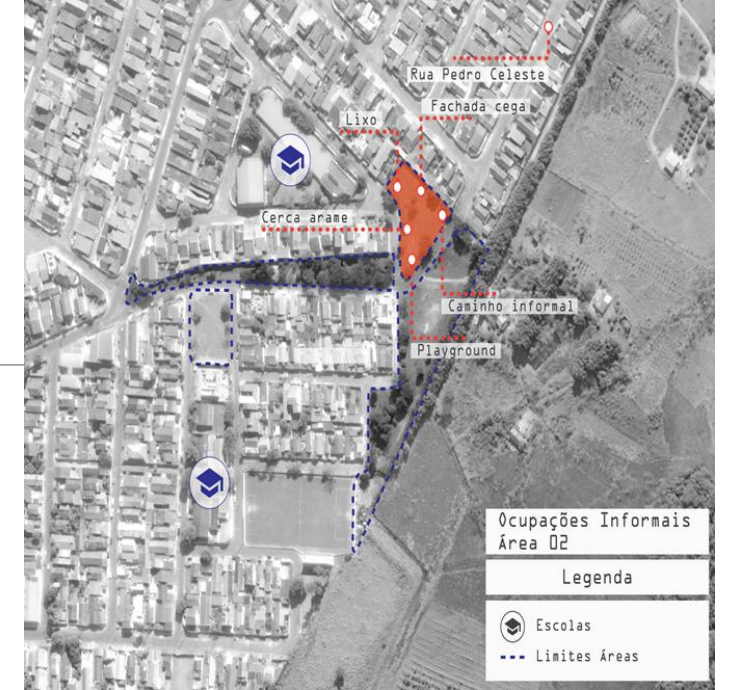
METHOD – Participatory Action Research
(reflection, data collection and action)

| Observation "getting to know the neighborhood" | Survey Investigation | Raising awareness sessions |

The neighborhood

Raising Awareness Sessions

People were invited to a meeting in the school setting

Project was presented and people participated in small groups dynamics

Survey began

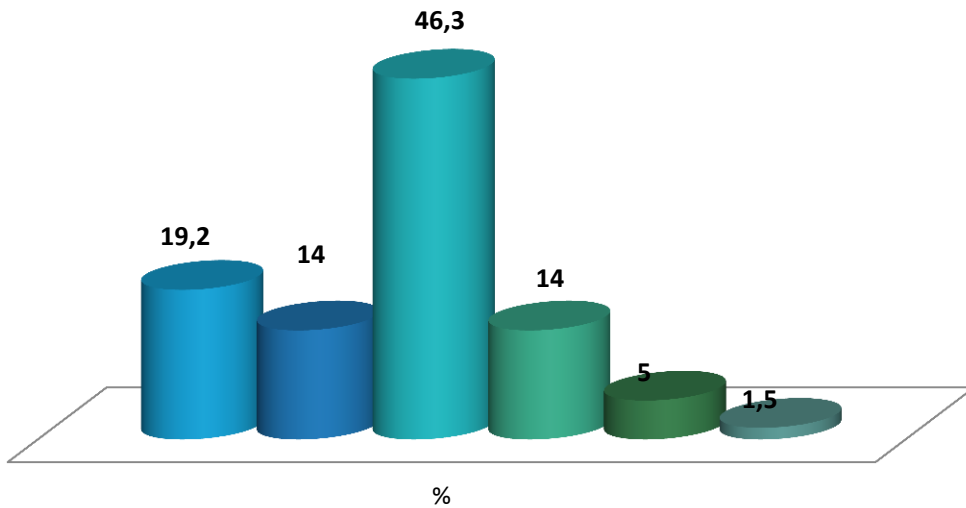During a second meeting people walked to the square to explore

The space to be remodeled

SURVEY RESULTS

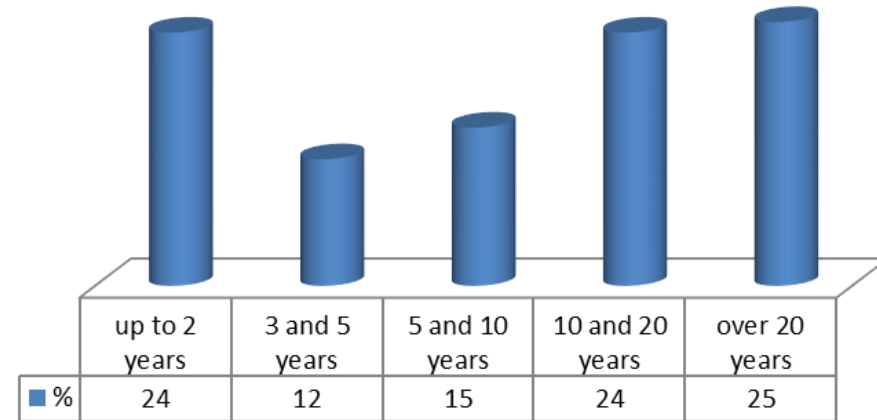214 respondents, both genders, from 15 to over 60 years of age

49% have lived in the neighborhod between 10 and over 20 years

age

■ 15 to 17 ■ 18 to 25 ■ 26 to 40 ■ 41 to 50 ■ 51 to 60 ■ over 60

46,3

19,2

14

14

5

1,5

%

How long have you lived in the neighborhood?

	up to 2 years	3 and 5 years	5 and 10 years	10 and 20 years	over 20 years
■ %	24	12	15	24	25

SURVEY RESULTS

56% of the houses have
between 4 to 6 people

70% of the Family settings are:
parentes and children living together

Number of people living in the house

15%

29%

56%
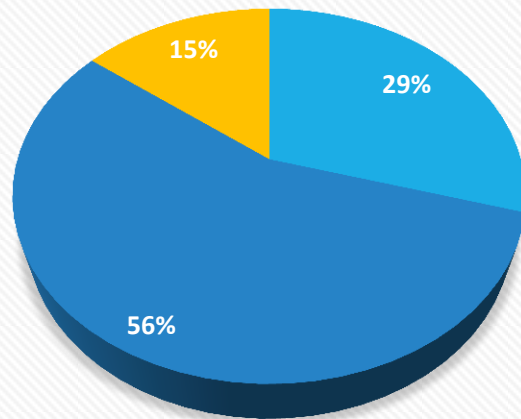
■ up to 3   ■ between 4 and 6   ■ over 6
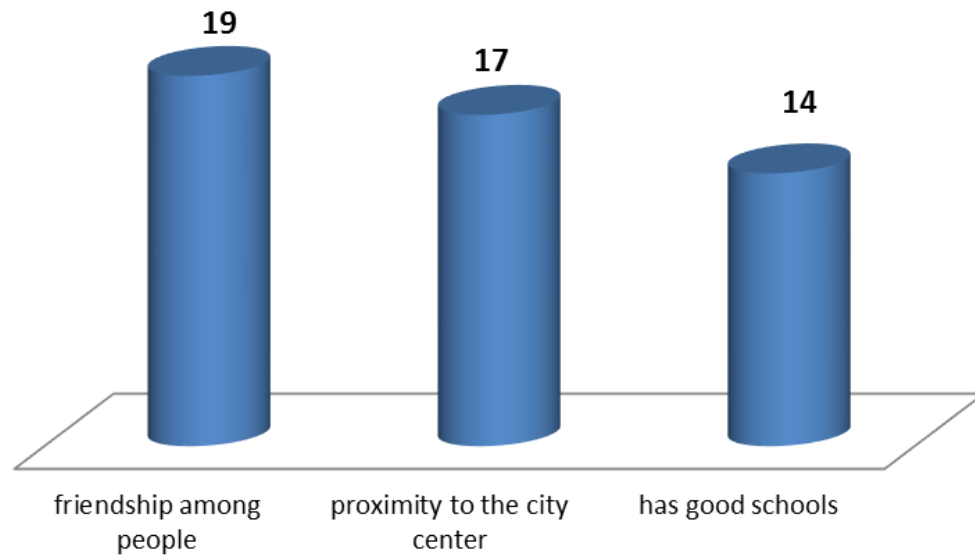
family settings

8%

22%

70%
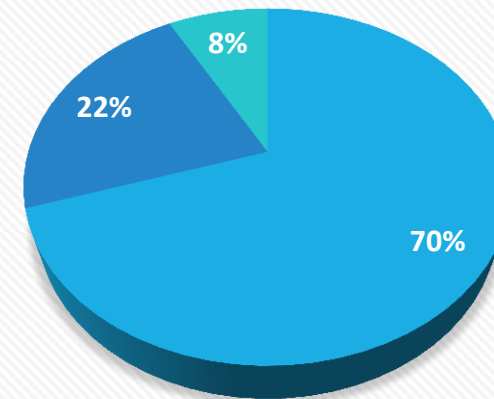
■ **parents and children**   ■ **parents, children and other relatives**   ■ **only adults**

RESULTS

3 things you LIKE in your neighborhood

- friendship among people: 19
- proximity to the city center: 17
- has good schools: 14

3 things you DO NOT LIKE in your neighborhood

- unsafe: 23
- has no leisure areas: 14
- lack of activities to all ages: 14
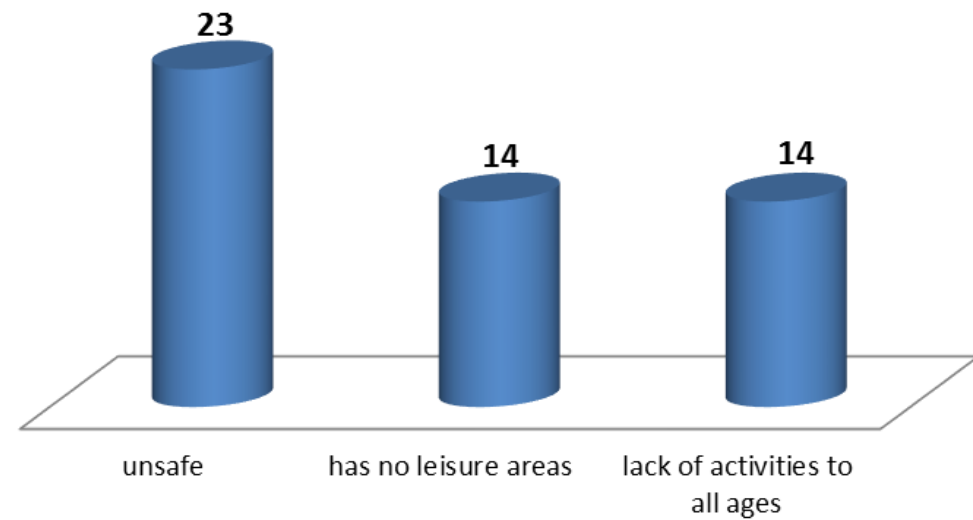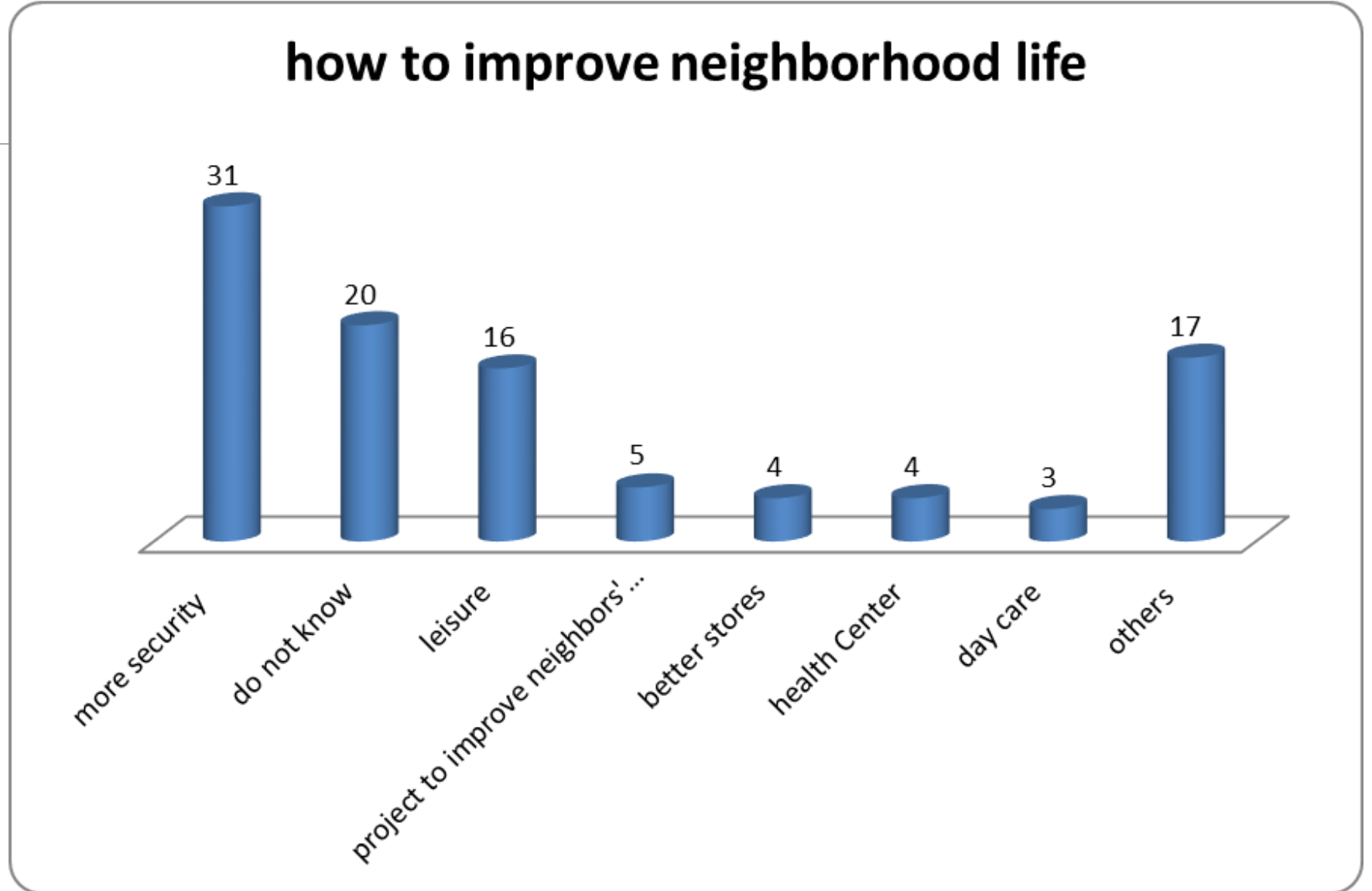
Rating life in the neighborhood

From 1 to 5 how do you rate life in your neighborhood?

3,69

Discussion

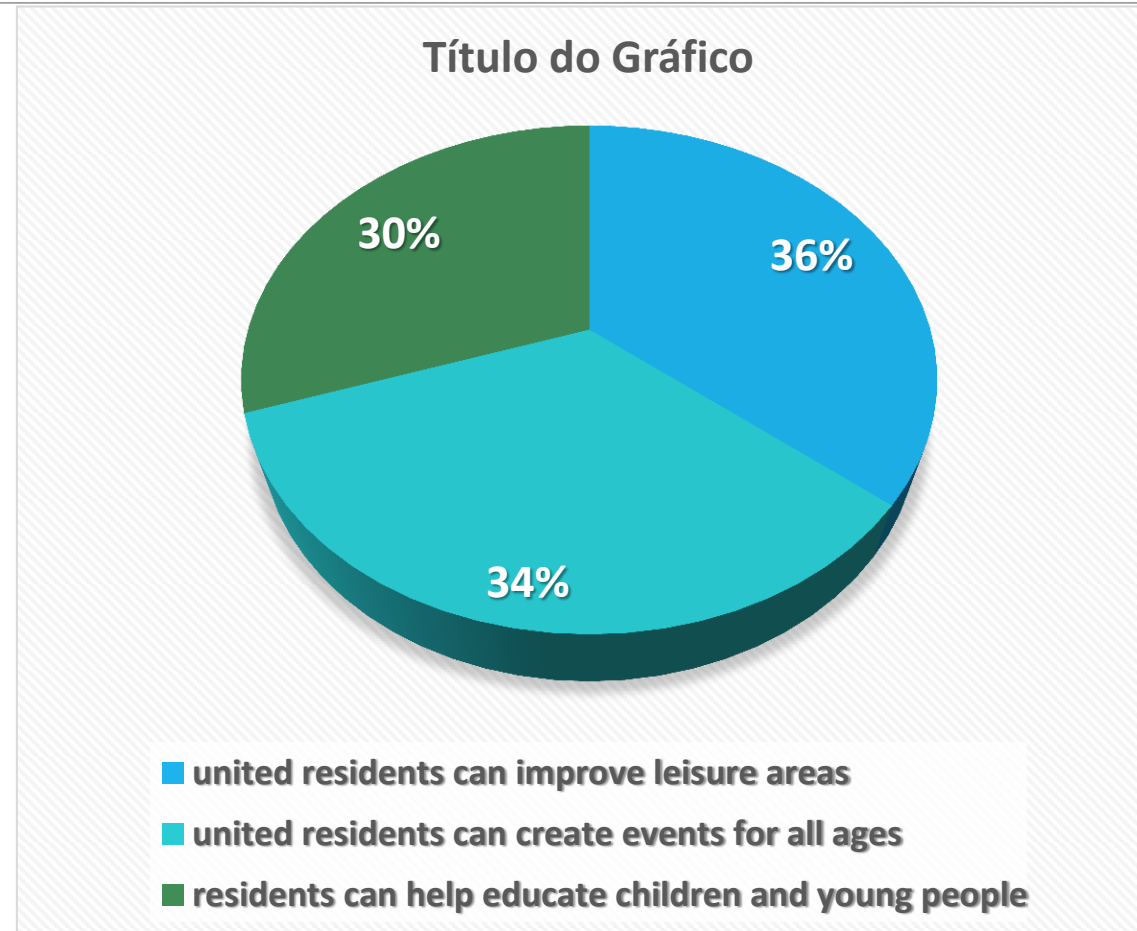People have low expectations about how the life can be improved beyond government innitiatives

how to improve neighborhood life

Category	Value
more security	31
do not know	20
leisure	16
project to improve neighbors' ...	5
better stores	4
health Center	4
day care	3
others	17

Discussion

Do you believe that a project with the participation of the residents can improve the life in the neighborhood?
(choose 3 options)

The results show people do believe that united residents can help to improve the neighborhood regarding lack of LEISURE and also helping the education of youngest

Título do Gráfico

30%

36%

34%

■ united residents can improve leisure areas

■ united residents can create events for all ages

■ residents can help educate children and young people

Discussion

In your opinition how is the relationship between people in your neighborhood?

Overall people qualify
the relationships
between residentes as
weak and/or restricted to
those living close by

- people relate with those who live close by

- I relate well with people in my neighborhood

- I do not see much interaction between people in my neighborhood

41%

35%

24%
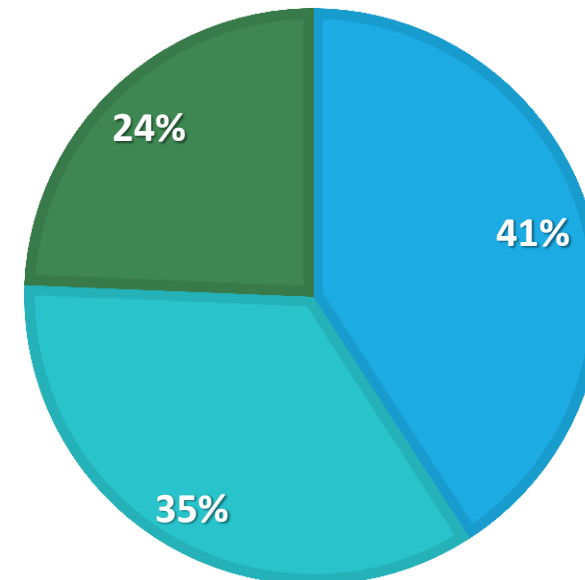
Discussion

In your opinition what would IMPROVE relationship between neighbors?
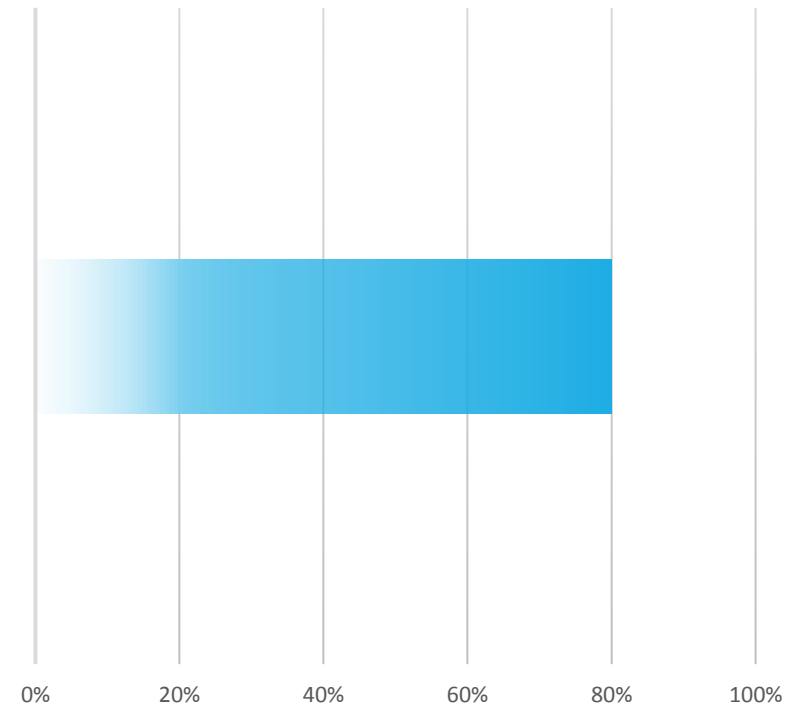
The majority of participants (80%) atributted the solution to a government action and not to something the residents could do themselves

WHAT WOULD IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS:

|	
more security to improve walkability	████████████████

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Discussion

Would you be willing to participate in a project to unite the residents and build better pubic spaces and relationships?

The majority of participants (54%) would participate if they believed was good, which opens up opportunities to envolve the community.

■ I am not sure

■ If the project is good I would participate
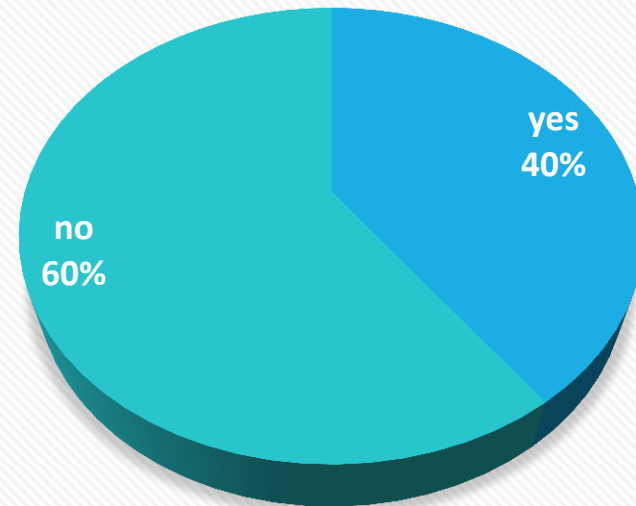
■ No, I am not interested

16%

30%

54%
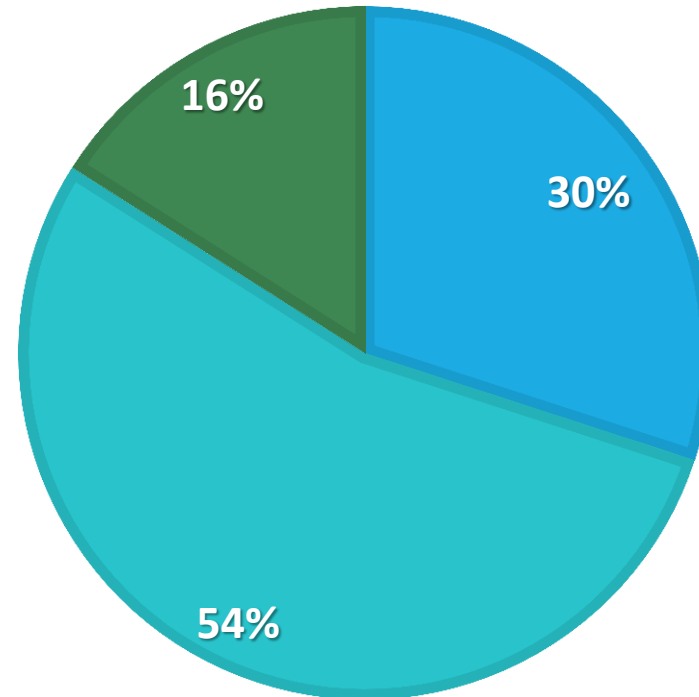
Discussion

Although the Project is implemented in all schools in the neighborhood 60% do not know anything about it

Do you know the Learning Community Project within schools?

yes
40%

no
60%

■ yes ■ no

Some conclusions

Considering we are at an early stage of the process, the results will help to evaluate and direct the next actions. In general, people are not satisfied with the structure of the neighborhood and with the quality of life, and show low perspective in building participatory solutions.

The Learning Communities principles can be very helpful to transform quality and kind of interactions resulting in a better community to be shared by all.