

Avec nous

Description of Life in Babayaga House

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I. -PREAMBLE

Let us recall that our project of a life of **active citizenship** in Babayaga House centres around two poles:

1. A **living space** for aging individuals choosing to follow their life course with a cohesive group of companions until life's end.
 - a living space for encounters, meetings, festive exchanges, reflection and research, in particular concerning this anthropological revolution: the rapid and important lengthening of the duration of life.
2. A **life of active citizenship with others**: this will take place essentially in the **collective spaces** that the Babayagas, and those who join with them, will develop.

We know how much various promotions of Third Age clubs and retirement homes strain to arouse the desire [in their members and residents] for real civic participation. [However,] **It is only when all these encouragements are driven by the residents themselves** that this desired dynamic may express itself.

While reserving a large capacity for welcoming the outside in, Babayagas will be vigilant that in their spaces calm may prevail, a serenity that it would be normal to find in any living space for aging individuals, who would certainly appreciate, in the midst of a life more and more rushed and chaotic, those who will share [this calm] with them.

To ensure harmonious activity on the premises in these two dimensions:

- a united life for Babayagas among themselves
- an open civic life

we envisage a binary daily rhythm:

-In the mornings, the collective spaces will be reserved for the residents, for their life together, and for contacts and encounters with partners, organizing activities, meetings, various contacts:

media, study, research;

-In the afternoons, these spaces will largely be open to the social and cultural life of the neighbourhood and beyond.

II. GROUP LIFE OF THE BABAYAGAS

The dimension of **solidarity** will be exercised first of all among the residents, and so too the dimension of **citizenship/civic engagement**.

This involves doing things together during some scheduled periods, and at other, unscheduled times, individuals use the premises as they wish, e.g., strolling about, or encounters among the Babayagas

II.1 Mutual Stimulation/Motivation/Leadership Among Babayagas :

Below, we briefly review examples of life together that we have set out elsewhere:

Daily activities

Various tasks for pairs/dyads

Regularly scheduled activities

Weekly meetings of residents

Monthly meal of the College of residents, to maintain a friendly and festive connection among ourselves.

Meetings with various interveners/interested parties:

Particular promotions [sponsorships, animations]:

Invitations to individuals we know, people we have encountered in the course of various meetings, trips; film showings; arts, discovering places, particular moments, reflection.

It means welcoming the friends of Babayagas, and these encounters may sometimes be open to non-residents

II.2 [Examples of] Information And Education For Babayagas :

Various wellness workshops: easy gymnastics, yoga, massage

Workshops on memoir, introduction to cinema, photographs/photography, drawing,

Nutrition and diet workshops

An art studio

A computer centre (indispensable for running such a place!)

.....(not an exhaustive list)

...studios and workshops started by experts, either by profession or through long practice.

Training and Information: regarding all the tasks noted earlier—administrative, management, promotion and motivation, etc

1. corresponding to the deepening of knowledge, necessary for accomplishing the tasks of management and operation of their House.

2. on policies concerning elderly persons.

Following politics is one of the necessities of our civic life.

This is information indispensable for the residents' lives, to be capable of knowing how to act, where to focus our attention, so as not to allow ourselves to be surprised by the consequences of eventual changes.

A particular mention must be made about training in emergency first aid, [needed in the event of] a fall, loss of consciousness, etc, while waiting for Emergency Services to arrive. Several agencies provide training certificates in First Aid, such as the Red Cross, etc. (A clear document must be developed, regularly updated, and kept within easy access for everyone—and especially those who are on call—so that they might act without panicking.)

Our desire to permit each person to end their life at home, among her companions, brings us to envisage training vis-à-vis end-of-life support and palliative care, which those individuals who are so trained could exercise in the case of home hospitalization.

III. -LA MAISON DES BABAYAGAS : A CENTRE OF CIVIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

We review here the requirement that our House be opened in an ambience of **citizenship**, one of the pillars of our project.

III.1 Personal Commitments Of Babayagas.

Each resident is a citizen in and of herself. She enters the House with her particular commitments, whether community, political, cultural, which no doubt she would want to maintain while living in Montreuil.

It might be participation in community activities in the neighbourhood. It might equally be something of influence within the House, where one of her activities turns out to be also of interest to other residents.

These may be personal initiatives, but they can lead naturally to exchanges among residents, giving these projects a collective coloration at the same time.

III.2 Activities Of La Maison Des Babayagas Open To Non-Residents.

Workshops, studios, training, information, the activities mentioned earlier: various training options—these may all be shared with those who use the House.

Also—

Festive times

a. around “world cuisines”

Montreuil has numerous residents who have come from elsewhere, among them women who might be homesick and feeling their exile difficult, or who, as they are growing older, find themselves alone as their children settle far from them to pursue an urban or professional life.

It is by means of cuisine, that largely filled their days in the past, that they might find in Babayaga House moments of shared conviviality.

b. around different leisure activities

Favourite readings, writing workshops, different games, such as cards, scrabble...—

Participating in intergroup encounters may give rise to other festive moments that would warmly animate the House.

All of these activities, their momentum giving rise to links and partnerships with similar places in the neighbourhood, will get us to join in using collective sites, in varied rhythms.

IV. -UNISAVIE : POPULAR UNIVERSITY PROJECT

This comes under the dimension of **collective activity** in the life of Babayaga House. We devote a particular section to this subject [AS: See *translated paper, UNISAVIE*].

V. -FINANCES

V.1 Costs of Collective Spaces

The common sections and collective spaces as they were imagined from the beginning, and as they were rendered in the plans by the architectural firm, display a sound translation in spatio-temporal terms of identity as envisioned by the Babayaga House project.

Babayaga House could never find its expression in a space that is strictly summed up in “individual apartments and common areas,” as one usually understands these in [other forms of] co-housing/co-op housing/collective housing. The normative [subtly coercive] and narrow character of such a social space would be too restrictive to allow each of the residents to develop, both within herself and beyond herself, her own space of individual and collective identity, and allow her to maintain her autonomy. Thus, an important aspect of the Babayaga House project could never be realized in such a space.

The Babayaga Association will have to find the financial means to cover that part of the rent and charges relating to the common areas, EDF[?], telephone, internet and insurance expenses, as well as expenses resulting from various activities. These financial resources may be sought among the adherents to the Association, and by way of whatever might be earned by setting up activities both within and outside the House. This must be done to minimize the financial charges that the residents will have to take on individually, while at the same time making adjustments/realignments according to each person's revenues.

This adjustment, affirmed as a principle concerning the entirety of general operational costs, must be clearly specified by rules decided by the Association's General Assembly, following a proposal from the College of residents; these measures will appear in the in-house rules.

This text reflects the thinking of the Babayaga group who have led this project for several years. It is evolving, and may be subject to modifications and complements [in time].