



“Every event is an invitation to be more authentic”

At the helm of Vanilla Project and as Executive Director of Book 2.0, Silvia Rodríguez has been building bridges between culture, knowledge, and transformation. For her, leadership is not just about achieving results — it is about placing people and their essence at the center of every project. In this interview, Silvia shares her vision for the new leadership agenda in 2026, the role of events as catalysts for change, the importance of lasting communities, and how authenticity has become the foundation of impactful partnerships and leadership in Portugal.



SILVIA RODRÍGUEZ

FOTO: ANDRÉ STACHEL

In recent years, events have taken on a central role in your strategy. Why invest in this format as a driver of transformation?

Because events do something that no digital content can: they bring real people into a real room, with all their complexity, their stories, and their fears. And when this happens with intention, with curation, with care — something shifts. It's not magic, it's presence. Transformation begins when someone feels seen and heard. And events, when thoughtfully designed, are one of the few spaces where this still happens genuinely.

How can an event go beyond inspiration and generate concrete action and lasting collaboration?

Inspiration without structure fades. We've all experienced it — leaving an event feeling energized, only to return to exactly the same place three days later. That's why, at Vanilla Project, we see the event as the beginning of a process, not the end. What happens before and after is just as important as what happens in the room. We build bridges between the moment of discovery and the moment of action. Lasting collaboration emerges when people find, in the same space, not only ideas — but others who want to bring them to life.

How do you ensure the right people are in the room to create real solutions?

This is actually the most strategic question of all. “The right people” are not necessarily the most well-known or the most powerful — they are often the most willing. Willing to listen, to change their minds, to collaborate without ego. Our curation is deeply based on this: who has the openness required for something new to emerge? Sometimes, that leads to surprising outcomes — solutions appear where we least expect them.

What role do communities play before and after events?

They are the true legacy. The event is the catalyst — the community is what remains. Before the event, the community prepares the ground: it creates familiarity, trust, and shared context. People arrive already feeling a sense of belonging. Afterward, it's where the real work happens — projects are born, partnerships take shape, and



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conversations continue. A well-nurtured community is a living ecosystem. And we take that very seriously.

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Book 2.0 — The Fourth Edition
Book 2.0 is now reaching its fourth edition.
How has the event evolved since the first one?

In the first edition, there was a question in the air: is there space in Portugal for an open conversation about the future of books, reading, and knowledge? The answer was such a clear “yes” that it motivated us to continue. With each edition, Book 2.0 has matured — not necessarily bigger, but richer in quality, diversity of voices, and real impact. We’ve learned to listen, and to have the courage to change and evolve. And that is reflected in every detail of the program.

What can participants expect from the September 2026 edition at the Belém Cultural Center?

They can expect a space where thinking can breathe. The CCB is a venue with a very unique energy — it has grandeur without intimidation, history without heaviness. This edition will deepen the conversation around returning to origins, returning to books, where creativity emerges as a driver of both personal and collective transformation.

We will create moments of real connection between the publishing, business, and cultural worlds — while leaving space for the unexpected, which is often where the best things happen.

What role does this event play in the debate around knowledge, creativity, and the future of cultural industries?

Book 2.0 does not exist to provide answers — it exists to ask the right questions that lead to action. At a time when artificial intelligence, fragmented attention, and new business models are redefining what it means to create and share knowledge, we

share knowledge, we need spaces where these conversations can happen deeply and without urgency. That is what we strive to be — a place for open, collective thinking, free from agendas.

You have been Executive Director of Book 2.0 since its creation in 2023. What is the significance of your role?

Honestly, my role is to safeguard the soul of the project. As events grow, it’s easy to lose what made them special in the beginning. My responsibility is to ensure that every decision — programming,

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communication — stays aligned with the “why” that brought us here.

To preserve the legacy and mission entrusted to me. And that “why” is simple: I believe that knowledge, when shared authentically, transforms people. And transformed people change the world around them.

Many of your projects and clients are long-term relationships. What explains that trust?

I think people can feel when you are genuinely interested in them — not in the contract or the project, but in the person.

And I always am.

I want to understand what drives them, what concerns them, what they haven't yet been able to say out loud. That kind of listening creates a relationship that goes far beyond work. And when real trust exists, everything flows differently.

The best things I've ever created were born from relationships like that.

How do you build credibility in a sector where results are not always immediate?

With consistency and humility. Credibility is not declared — it is built over time, delivery after delivery, conversation after conversation. And also by being honest when things don't go as expected.

In our sector, the most meaningful results take time to mature. Those who are not willing to wait rarely get to see the most beautiful outcomes.

What are organizations looking for today when they partner with impact-driven projects?

They are looking for authenticity — and they are increasingly able to recognize when it's missing. A few years ago, organizations partnered with impact projects for visibility. Today, the more conscious ones want something deeper: alignment that is real. They want their presence to add value — not just be a logo on a banner.

That requires clarity from us, on the project side, about what we are and what we are not. Clarity attracts the right partnerships.

You've said that communication and events are also a way of leaving a legacy. What legacy would you like to build?

“Legacy” is a big word. I prefer to think in terms of seeds.

Every project we build, every event we design, every community we help create — they are seeds. We don't control where they grow or in whom.

What I can guarantee is that they are planted with intention, with care, with the conviction that each person who crosses paths with us leaves more inspired to do things differently — and to express their own voice.

If even one person finds their voice through something we created, then the work was entirely worth it.



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What topics still need more visibility or debate in Portugal?

The relationship between identity and work — who we are when we do what we do. There is still a very artificial separation between the person and the professional, as if we had to divide ourselves to be credible.

We need more conversations about authenticity in business, about leadership that comes from the inside out, about building something that carries our deepest imprint — without fear, without barriers to showing who we really are. And also about the role of culture, reading, the arts, and creativity as tools for human development — not just entertainment.

How can business leaders take a more active role in addressing social challenges?

By starting from within. A leader who doesn't know themselves cannot lead with real impact.

The first step is not a corporate social responsibility program — it's a question: what kind of world do I want to help build, and what do I personally have to contribute? When the answer comes from a genuine place, the action that follows has a different quality — consistency, courage, and the power to inspire others.

How do you see the evolution of projects that connect business, culture, and social impact in Portugal?

With optimism — and with high expectations. We are living a moment of real openness. More and more companies understand that culture is

not an extra — it's an asset. Investing in knowledge, creativity, and community brings returns — not only financial, but human. The challenge is ensuring this openness doesn't become superficial or reduced to cause marketing. The sector's maturity will be measured by the depth of the projects we sustain together.

Do you believe we are entering a new phase of collaboration between sectors?

Yes, and I can feel it on the ground. There is a generation of leaders — in companies, cultural institutions, and social organizations — who no longer accept working in silos. They understand that complex problems require complex solutions — and those solutions rarely come from a single sector.

What excites me is that collaboration is no longer forced, it is becoming desired. And when people genuinely want to collaborate, what emerges is of a completely different quality.

What kinds of projects would you like to lead or see emerge in the coming years?

I would like to see a real movement of conscious leadership emerge in Portugal — not as a trend, but as a practice. Leaders who know themselves, act from their essence, and build organizations where others can do the same.

We still see too many egos overshadowing what truly matters — collaboration without competition for a greater mission.

If you could gather leaders, creators, and decision-makers in one room, what conversation would you start and what action would you hope comes from it?

I would begin with a simple, uncomfortable question: Who are you, beyond the role you occupy? I believe most of the deadlocks we face — in organizations, institutions, and society — are not about resources or strategy. They are about identity. People who don't know themselves well enough to understand what they want to build — and why.

From that room, I would want a commitment: each person taking one concrete action into their own context. Not a grand plan — but a real, personal gesture. Because the transformation of a country always begins like this: one person at a time, choosing to be more fully themselves.