VIII INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF EDUCATING CITIES

-CONCLUSIONS-

Foreword

The VIII International Congress of Educating Cities "*Another city is possible. The future of the city as a collective project*" took place from November 17 to 20 2004 in Genoa.

This was a great opportunity for 181 cities worldwide and more than 700 participants to exchange their views on the current role of the city and on possible new forms of local territorial government.

During a four day period, nationally and internationally renowned personalities have gathered to share their opinions and prompt discussion. Guests were offered the chance to visit city places and structures where the concept of educating city finds application. Many local organisms, starting from the participants to the "Civil National Service" project, schools, associations to the various municipality offices and private organizations, have contributed to the carrying out of this event.

Moreover, in the framework of 20 thematic workshops, the cities involved introduced 259 projects which were examined by a Scientific Advisory Board.

The Scientific Advisory Board that organized this event is a complex organism representing an actual participatory process. In fact, this body is made up of university professors, staff of Genoa Municipality and adherents coming from the Genoese experience of the Educating City called "the pact of eugeni@".

The Board has taken on the responsibility to interpret and propose a new way of reading the most meaningful parts emerged not only from the thematic workshops, but from the entire Congress. This is not therefore a sheer, traditional account, but an interpretation, a reading, something adding new impulse to the divers meditations and actions of your daily experience.

This document is organised in two parts. The first one is made up of questions, unresolved issues which have been read, heard and explained in the light of what was said during the plenary sessions, the mayors' session but also during the thematic workshops. The initial questions of the International Association of Educating Cities and those of the Scientific Advisory Board have also been considered. Besides we have thought of considering the thematic workshops not as meetings that could provide answers, which would be ambitious, but as solution paths, or possible hypotheses of answers to the questions that have come out during the Congress.

We could draw our conclusions through one last consideration. We find ourselves living in a world which has voiced its preoccupation for the great tension present in the cities, at least the ones that took part in this event, but we

also have seen some case studies on how critical situations can be faced applying the criteria of the Educating City.

On this occasion it was possible feeling the presence of a great determination to create new connections in the big cities, to build up bridges joining the many parts of a city as well as to decide that the content of such exchanges must be education, culture, solidarity and a listening and participatory attitude.

Moreover, what emerged was the intention to try and focus on the weaker actors, the more disadvantaged ones in the building process of another possible city.

Finally, this document aims at communicating in few pages the results of an experience which was fruitful not only in terms of theoretical elaboration but also in terms of relationships and at an emotional level. The Scientific Advisory Board of the VIII International Congress of Educating Cities entrusts to the city the results of its meditations and discussions of these two years of work. As it could be pointed out, the questions are not new at all, but thanks to this last step forward they have found a new strength and communication power.

<u>Questions</u>

- THE OTHER POSSIBLE CITY
  How the educating city promotes the inclusion of marginalised subjects (gender, poverty, age, etc.) and transforms itself
  The title of this first question is demanding. The use of the periphrasis "the other possible city" helps us opening the field of possibility, and this often paves the way for misunderstandings. If cities were adequate as they are today, we would not place this question. There is something wrong with them, something unsatisfactory in the way they are organized, in their political, social, civil and human relationships. This definition (the other possible city) is useful because it helps preserving this transformation tension which can be either utopian or pragmatic. But this is that essential tension that must be kept alive. The open question is in what ways the Educating City opposes the processes of social exclusion, the marginalisation of frailties, of weak people and disadvantaged ones, those who for misfortune and not for guilt (there have also been guilt cultures) were born and live in situations of vulnerability, weakness and lower social contractuality. The city can be a great place to act, today, and oppose the phenomenon of marginalization and social exclusion at all levels, thus promoting social inclusion. It is important to prevent integration from becoming assimilation. Also, integration should not imply domination processes, but produce respect, appreciation of differences and the wish to learn from alterity. This concept evokes Dussel's victim issue: we live in a world where there are dominators and victims. It seems that this two dimensions are growing apart and this is why it is absolutely necessary that the victims become active subjects, subjects in motion, the subjects of a communitarian integration. We know that this is an extremely important concept because we have grown up, at least in the Western world, with the postulate that sooner or later the victim will become the executioner, in this - as a matter of fact - quite violent oscillation. Speaking then of the victim as a

positive subject that becomes a politically aware subject, a subject in movement, means to strongly question this postulate of power and domination.

- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
  How to re-build a community in the age of globalization, the phenomenon that breaks up social ties, when otherness is perceived as a threat

We want cities to become conscious communities, places of active citizenship, where it is possible to fully express human, civil and social rights. We want cities, urban communities (we obviously talk about cities, but they are the simplified representation of megalopolis and rural villages), places of associated and communitarian life to become the main creators of that necessary element that we call social relationships, people's relationships. Relationships are a public patrimony. It is necessary to oppose a globalization which wants people to become anonymous and often isolated entities, with a liquid identity, as Bauman said. The task of an Educating City is to turn people into human beings with relationships, who are able to exchange experiences and words. It is important to focus the Educating City action on the person, on the growing up of citizens. The Educating City should become a container where all this is possible, a place training citizens to continuously build up social ties, citizens who are able to question themselves and who, on such a basis, are able to welcome otherness, all types of otherness, the one coming from within the community, as well as the one coming from outside; other cultures and types of otherness such as people with mental health problems, seriously disabled people, deviants, foreigners and all those who in some ways can cast doubts on our presumed self-confidence made of a sense of omnipotence and iron-made identity. A community of citizens interwoven of social ties is able to welcome the other human beings, feeling enriched by such experience.

- LOCAL IDENTITY
  Dialectics between tradition/evolution/transformation/discovery

In this same perspective local identity issues are to be considered. The case introduced by Perna, for example, as an experience, the experience of Southern Italy, Calabria, the Park of Aspromonte, has a more complex meaning. We could summarize it with these words: a dialectics between tradition, evolution, transformation and rediscovery. It is necessary to try to imagine that we can put these four words in a circle: tradition, evolution, transformation, rediscovery, like a cycle, a cycle that repeats itself and becomes each time wider, taking a step forward. There is a relation between these four words, there is an interdependence, a circularity. According to our thought, primary identity and tradition cannot develop without an open attitude towards transformation; and there is no transformation that does not circularly respect identity. This is the proper process of growth. It is very similar to natural life processes: life is tradition and continuous transformation at each phase of age.

- MUTUAL LEARNING
  The city as a place of mutual learning

Also on the basis of the aforesaid reasons, we can say that the city is the place where mutual learning takes place. In the learning process there is not someone who teaches and someone who receives information. The learning process can never be a linear, one way, top-down process. Orders are given top-down and we surely cannot define them a democratic learning process. The learning processes have their own linguistic perceptive and cognitive codes. Above all, they have an essential characteristic, that is reciprocity. What came out from all workshops is that the subjects, for example, for which work projects were elaborated (covering issues such as childhood, health, integration into work, welfare processes) were not the object of a project but its intrinsic content. The only way a project could be carried out successfully was when people became its active protagonists and on the base of a listening attitudes, of the analysis of needs and the checking out of processes which had to take into consideration the opinion of the people involved.

- SUBURBS
  How to develop the suburbs making them and the city centres a good place to live

The suburbs and city centre issues represent an enormous problem. In Genoa this is a main problem because of its large and beautiful historical centre built up through various ages and because of its suburbs presenting the typical problems of industrial areas. Suburbs and their relation to the city and countryside are another aspect of the same matter. Today, facing suburbs issues such as their revitalisation and enhancement, considering the great contribution suburbs can give, means also dealing with the problem of the unity of the city, regional and national communities. Above all, though, it means dealing with the increase in life quality even of the town centre, where the "strong powers" are situated and which represents with its places the power's organization. Without good suburbs we will always have city centres that lack something in terms of quality, while we know that suburbs are relevant to the life of all of the community.

- EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY
  Instructions for use

This is a very short question which lays itself open to many comments. It deals with two keywords which are essential, strictly connected and indivisible. Without adequate education processes there is no democracy. Democracy is not an empty numerical formula which is used to test the institutional powers, not even simply the quantitative analysis of people consensus and the votes that we count at each election deadline. Democracy is a complete, conscious process of belonging, of responsibility but also a power process in the life of the community. Democracy needs education and knowledge.

- METHODS FOR ENDORSING EDUCATING AGENCIES IN THEIR SUPPORT OF THE OTHER POSSIBLE CITY

This is, in a way, the core of the Educating City process. The Educating City development project is not meant to focus on school and school age only. The Educating City is such because it always deals with education, in the interest of everybody, as this is the funding concept of its establishment, of its project and transformative hope.

Possible paths and perspectives

The starting point of our thought is that our cities, all of them wherever they are in the world, are undergoing deep transformations and changes as never before, perhaps, in the history of man. These changes need to be understood, followed and in some ways checked through various sorts of intervention and, above all, of education.

- Education as an agent of **change**

The first element to be pointed out is just the idea that using education as a positive agent of change is necessary.

- Sharing the priorities of **resource use**

This condition implies that there is an attentive use of resources and that a priority in this use be established**.**

- Identifying educating/meeting **places** that can promote participation and sharing

Also, a correspondence between the physical places and the interventions that are carried out allows for the development of positive social relations through the performance of participatory and sharing processes**.**

- Development of **models** and sharing/participation practice

Through this process we recognise the unavoidable need to find models of practice, decision sharing and participation to the processes and projects.

- Urban **pedagogies** for promoting participation

In other words, we could say this is about elaborating a system of pedagogies favouring all types of participation, including the "education to participation" that should be especially promoted among younger citizens.

- Learning to **evaluate**, learning to choose

Actually, learning to participate means first of all learning to evaluate and choose. However this is true for participating citizens as well as for the administrations and the social groups that turn decisions into actions.

- **Listening** methodologies

It is considered essential to develop listening methodologies, i.e. ways of collecting the opinions of all the people involved.

- Educating to **civic responsibility**

The importance of educating to civic responsibility implies that citizens' relationship with the city is not only based on the claiming of one's rights but also on the performance and learning of duties and virtuous behaviours.

- Relationship between bottom-up processes of **community building** and the mechanisms of formal representation

There is of course a clear relation between bottom-up processes of community building and the mechanisms of formal representation. In other words, there is the need of a profitable exchange between the citizens and the administrations, between the decision making process and the phase of participation and then that of the resource enhancement.

- Building processes of **place identity**

Behind the relationship with a city there is, as aforesaid, a process of place identity reconstruction. If places do not have a recognizable and strong identity, citizens will very rarely make them their own. Therefore, it is essential on one hand to equip the city of signs that make it recognizable and, on the other hand, to teach people to read these signs that have become not so easy to interpret than they maybe were some time ago.

- **Accessibility** to everyday processes

On the other hand, this also implies the development of a city quality that is its accessibility. An accessible city can be enjoyed by all citizens of any age and kind, in any living condition, expressing any sort of necessity.

- Development of **competences** in the subjects that favour changing processes

Accordingly, the development of competences in those subjects that are appointed to favour the processes of change, i.e. publicly elected decision-makers, public administrations or the private sector, is also required.

- Opposing the homologation of **desires**

We should moderately oppose and certainly limit the spreading of globalization and of homogenous criteria of expectations towards the city. A variety of point of views must exist so that the desires, which represent perhaps our inner selves, can have different ways of expression and different answers according to the characteristics of the various places.

- Learning methods of the **critical thought**

What is undoubtedly implied here is the development of the learning of a critical thought which means the necessity to teach, especially to the young generations, how to see things from a different point of view.

- **"Narration"** of the city as a deductive process

The city can be considered as a text which is to be read through its signs, as it happens in a real narration. In this sense it has two different aspects. The inductive narration is part of us all, everyone performs its own daily

narration of the city; however, the fact that signs are difficult to be read implies that this narration should be explained and discussed to be learnt.

- Educating settings and **development of the identity**

As a matter of fact, learning settings are very often essential for the development of the identity and of the processes that are enacted. Therefore schools, or in general educating institutions, often play the role of joining agents between daily life activities and those moments dedicated to learning how to manage one's relationship with the places, the city and the city development.

- Exchange and **communication** of values

Beside such processes of education and the parallel training ones, it is necessary to develop the exchange and communication of values. These two elements are very different but complementary. Exchanging means that we can export our positive experiences, good practices, cognitive elements to other realities and then make other ones our own. Communication is, on the other hand, something more intimate with reference to our personal growth and concerns the communication of information and cognitions, but also the communication of one's own experiences and one's own life styles. Communicating values means conveying the most significant part of this world of knowledge and of lived experiences.

- Critical appraisal of **virtual meeting places**

Going straight into detail, there are a few points concerning some phases of the communication process. It is known that the virtual world is continuously growing. By virtual world we refer to a type of communication that does not act in "contemporary presence", that is conveyed through the information technology systems that we all know, and that represents a great resource although it may be sometimes risky as it more easily creates misunderstandings. The evaluation of these virtual places is among those critical elements that is necessary checking in order to obtain effective communication and learning processes.

- **Intergenerational and intragenerational** education

The aspects that can positively influence communication, making it more effective and therefore turning it into a form of education, concern also the intergenerational and intragenerational exchanges. Many examples of education based on exchanges through the various generations were dealt with during the Congress. Perhaps the dynamics within one same generation were sometimes neglected, for example within adults. This represents an extremely significant point which should be taken into consideration in future discussions.

- **Exportability** and non homologation

The idea of exchange as exportability of experiences was pointed out briefly as being perhaps the only way of opposing a certain kind of homologation which surely has negative aspects as far as life organization in our city is concerned.

- **Different perception** of values and rights

Attracting the attention of children and young people is absolutely essential for the building up of a possible city, in the positive sense, i.e. a city (the term "possible" is used with reference to both meanings) that is possible building and where it is possible living. This step must foresee the safeguard of the many already existing perceptions of values and rights, including all the shades that this kind of concept involves.

- **Extract from the closing speech by Luca Borzani, Councillor and President of the Scientific Advisory Board**

"The works of the VIII International Congress of Educating Cities were a unique occasion to share experiences and meet people. Today, we retain the memory of a happening which can be considered rare to some extent because allowed us to discuss with so many counterparts from all over the world.

The experiences which were introduced on this occasion, were aimed at tracing a new path towards public responsibility, a pact between institutions and citizens for the future of our communities. This is exactly our bet: projecting a new dimension of the public space and a new public use of such space, built through a system of relationships which connect citizens and administrations, citizens and institutions and that represents a new authoritativeness instead of an authority.

This path concerning the building of a new system of relationships can also work as one of the strongest antidotes to the emptying of the communities, to that fragmentation of individual and collective identities that let racism, intolerance, fear, insecurity phenomena spread.

This pact must also be made, and we know how difficult it is, between the generations and must involve the strong actors as well as the weak ones.

During the Congress we talked about the value and the acknowledgment of differences. In this respect we have another important bet to make: let us pass from a listening and dialogue attitude to a common commitment. We need to introduce "hybridisation paths" and go beyond the acknowledgment of the differences; let us build new cultures that are the outcome of such processes. These new cultures must mark the public dimension of the administrations, but have to grow also from people relationships.

It would be seriously wrong to just acknowledge the existence of differences. In fact this is how the idea of incommunicability has spread in some currently politically strong world contexts. The acknowledgment of differences is not merely the result of communication but it's the will of overcoming the differences even though maintaining identity paths; finding new paths, developing the new.

There is an important example: the children of our schools belong to different races and come from many different walks of life. They do not perceive their friends on the basis of their skin colour, as the bearer of a complex cultural project, but according to whether he/she is pleasant or unpleasant, if he/she enjoys or not playing with him/her.

The differentiation paths start outside the schools. That something that at school produces a new feeling of belonging and a new capacity to relate to other people is exactly one of those invisible paths that we must let grow in our cities.

This is a really difficult bet, that requires us to act "on the software" and not only "on the hardware": we are betting on the role of education as an end not as a means, an idea of education as the necessary condition to create a conscious citizenship, a quality future. This is how we want to answer to the questions coming from the many old and new material poverties that are troubling the world, as well as to the spiritual poverty of our Western world and beyond.

What we have tried to do during these days - and for the last 10 years - was somehow to swim against the tide in the effort to challenge the feeble words of today's policy, the low thresholds for representation and the widespread media cultures which are much stronger than administrator's and citizen's words and actions.

We are dealing with cities of long history, millenarian ones as well as cities that are only 20 years old, very small Italian towns and megalopolis of the East and Latin America that are even 50, 100, 200 years old. But there is also the end of the XIX century and the new millennium which has started off, breaking up social promotion and democracy building processes.

We are really in front of the difficult research of new paths where the system of relationship and knowledge and the capacity of circulating intelligence and know-how becomes essential. Politics and the Public Administration cannot make it on their own. In this perspective we can recognize the issue of the research enthusiasm, but also the hard work of the daily routine. We should never forget to emphasize the symbolic value of such issues that must always be connected to the inclusion of an ethic dimension.

Genoa is tucked between the sea and the mountains and its cultural identities fluctuate between an attachment to its origins and the choice, or obligation, to leave towards the new; the determination not to abandon the land and the knowledge that there is not much space and that therefore it is necessary to push forward, beyond the sea to be able to return to the mainland. A beautiful metaphor of the journey that we must undertake".