

Focus Experience

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Educating Cities
International Documents Databank



Title

United for Your Public Space Promotion of citizen participation in the regeneration of Zapopan public space

Basic data

City: Zapopan

Country: México

Number of inhabitants: 1,243,538

Topics: associationism and participation, welfare, civics and coexistence, culture and leisure, health and sport and urban development.

Principles of the Charter of Educating Cities: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20

Summary

Public space fulfils a function of social cohesion, communication and tolerance in a community. However, in different areas of the city these spaces have deteriorated as a result of various social problems, such as a lack of safety, violence, drug-trafficking or drug use, etc.

In order to recuperate our public spaces and decrease crime rates and violence in the city through citizen participation, the Municipal Government of Zapopan set up in April 2011 a programme called "United for Your Public Space".

Rollled out by the Coordinating Committee for Strategic Programmes and Social Entrepreneurship of the Directorate of Social and Human Development, in coordination with various civic organisations, the programme consists in generating community coexistence in the neighbourhoods through a series of interventions and activities that promote people getting together.

Our working methodology is as follows:

1. Study of the perception of public space on the part of the community.
2. Designing workshops or events to stimulate interest in taking back public spaces.
3. Establishment of a working plan shared by organisations in civil society and the municipal government for the organization of events or workshops.
4. Follow up of the use of public space by the community.

The educative impact expected from the experience is linked to encouraging the participation of citizens of all ages in the neighbourhoods of the municipality and the construction of a citizenry that is more committed to pushing forward the creation of a more humane, healthy, inclusive and just city.

Objectives

- To boost and develop new social dynamics in public spaces that have become run down throughout the municipality.
- To promote public space as a basis for community development, reinforcing the feeling of belonging and resolving social problems in a community.
- To work with the neighbourhoods in order to jointly develop solutions to the problems that they are experiencing and reinforce their strengths.
- To work with the different internal departments of the municipal government on the different needs of the communities in relation to their public spaces.
- To follow up the establishment of leaderships and groups of citizens of public spaces.
- To design manuals and materials that promote links for working with the people in the neighbourhoods.



Knowing the city by bike

Methodology

Phases of the project:

1. The “United for Your Public Space” programme is disseminated to the organisations in civil society which are invited to collaborate by taking their campaigns, contents, activities, interventions and/or materials to the neighbourhoods. The municipal government coordinates the activities and encourages the emergence of citizen initiatives.

At this time 10 citizen organizations are participating and working on issues such as the environment, human rights, mobility, citizen participation or peace, to wit: Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Jalisco Ecology Group, Citizen Proposal Movement, Rescue Guadalajara Foundation, CITA Arquitectura, Mi Bici-o, Integral University Push, Many for Peace and Tree Network.

2. An initial walk is taken with the residents of the neighbourhoods, in which the neighbourhood and its situation are shown to the institutions.

3. Various educating, creative activities and interventions are designed that can encourage community coexistence. Some examples are:

a) “Block” (*Cuadra*): awareness workshop for taking back public spaces. Thanks to the collaboration of a group of young town planners, a diagnosis is made of the condition of public spaces in the neighbourhoods and the most importance spaces are identified in order to improve them with the collaboration of the residents through interventions and activities that respect the identity of each neighbourhood.

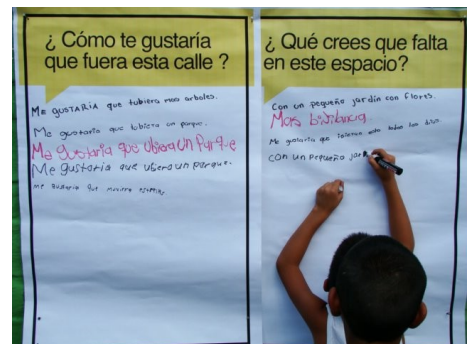
b) “Open Air Cinema”: showing films on a gigantic screen in public spaces of the participating neighbourhoods. In order to generate a cross-generational encounter, the films selected are addressed to all audiences and transmit family values.



Open air cinema by night

c) “Feet on My Street”: walks to identify and recognise the potential and weaknesses of public spaces, urban trees, exhibitions of information-photographs with pedagogical contents, etc.

d) “Pedalling through My Neighbourhood”: bicycle routes in order to encourage the use of this means of transportation and physical exercise. The bicycles are loaned out by the municipal government and the routes include visits to emblematic public spaces and information on the origin of the buildings in the area.



¿How would you like this street to be?

e) “Free Parks”: travelling theme parks. Abandoned municipal spaces are located in order to transform them with the support and collaboration of the residents, turning them into spaces designed by the same residents. The activities are designed for each block: for example: on one block activities are carried out for children that foster and recoup Mexican traditions: traditional games, such as hopscotch, raffles, etc., while in another street, activities are carried out for adults: dancing, crafts, exchange of professions, etc.; and in another street there are activities for young people: sports tournaments, urban art, or graffiti competitions, music band competitions, etc.



A new use of the street

f) Plays, dance class, artistic interventions, etc.

Social and urban context

Zapopan has a population of 1,243,538 inhabitants (according to statistics from the National Statistics and Geography Institute of Mexico, 2010) and is the municipality with the highest GDP per capita and Human Development Index in the state of Jalisco. It is part of the greater metropolitan area of Guadalajara, the second most populated area in the country. Its main economic sectors are services, industry and agriculture and fishing.

Assessment

The “United for Your Public Space” programme is addressed mainly to the middle and lower-middle class neighbourhoods, located in different parts of the municipality. At this time the experience focuses on 20 neighbourhoods, with a potential impact on 100,000 inhabitants.

The “United for Your Public Space” programme is making changes to the neighbourhoods, generating community and consolidating links of trust and solidarity amongst residents. It is also fostering an attitude of collaboration for transforming the neighbourhoods and public spaces.

Of special note is the solid alliance with organisations in civil society that are participating, since they are continuing to carry out their activities on a permanent basis and plan to adopt new neighbourhoods.

The level of citizen participation has increased notably; the activities and interventions have managed to bring together a large number of residents in their public spaces. The constant debate on the ideal neighbourhood desired by residents has generated very solid proposals that have impacted and will continue to impact the neighbourhoods positively. An example of this is the proposal of the residents of “San Isidro Ejidal” to pedestrianize a street, given the lack of community meeting spaces. This project has been adopted and will be carried out thanks to the initiatives of individuals and the citizenry, as they are the ones who will provide the final work project and the economic resources to build it.

The main proposal for the future is for the initiative to be welcomed and adopted by other organisations in civil society in order to expand its impact and ensure continuity. We will to establish a strong alliance with private initiative, the media and universities, one of the agreements of this alliance must be, without a doubt, the recuperation of public spaces in our neighbourhoods.



Awareness workshop



Citizens participating in project activities

Resources

Video on the Initiative “Pedalling through My Neighbourhood” (in Spanish)

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xo7ak6_pedaleando-mi-colonia_news

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