



International Association of

Educating Cities

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EDUCATING CITIES
FOR A BETTER WORLD



experience

Human books that break down stereotypes in the Vasconcelos Library of Mexico City

Mexico City is the capital and the main axis of the economic progress of the country. Its population reaches almost 9 million inhabitants and adding the conurbation areas the population exceeds 15 million.

The philosophy of the Human Library consists of the fact that the books being consulted are "human books", that is to say, people that, due to their personal situations, have a story to tell and offer themselves as volunteers to become a book. For their part, the "readers" show interest in getting

to know these personal circumstances firsthand. In this way, a constructive dialogue is created between people who don't have the opportunity to communicate with each other in their everyday lives.

The "books" are generally people who mostly represent social groups that on a day-to-day basis have to face prejudices and stereotypes, leading them often to becoming victims of discrimination. These people can be of very different ages, cultural origins, sexual conditions, socio-economic backgrounds, etc. As such, tramps or homeless, homosexual mothers and fathers, indigenous people, rock musicians, wrestlers, etc., offer themselves to become books with the aim of fostering mutual knowledge and fighting against social exclusion.

The readers choose the books from a catalogue which is placed at their disposition. Each couple or pair, the book and the reader, goes to the reading room, which in the case of the Vasconcelos Library is the garden itself. In groups of seats, located all around the garden, they maintain a conversation which lasts between 15 and 20 minutes. Readers can

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editorial

A city is the sum of intentions, ideas and opportunities. A city is plural and this plurality is expressed in the public space, the agora, the space that belongs to the city.

The public space is much more than just a physical space where the everyday life goes on. It is a shared space where you can find "the other", where confrontation takes place and relations are forged. It is a place of co-existence and socialization, where the individual and collective identity becomes defined. It is a place of memory, where the present is lived and the future envisioned.

It is also a political space. The urban planning and the decisions taken regarding this space, although they could seem to be merely aesthetic, are loaded with political contents, even though this may not always be incorporated in a conscious way. Thus, questions such as the specifications for the use of a plot of land, the height limitations of the buildings, the locations of certain facilities in one neighbourhood or another, the management of the mobility, the protection of the heritage, etc., are not arbitrary but

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The Human Library is presented as an innovative method that promotes dialogue, reduces prejudices, and fosters mutual understanding.

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change the book if they want to do so. Usually the consultation of the book is individual, but there also is the possibility of increasing the number to more simultaneous readers. A collection of documents from the library itself (novels, essays, films, music, etc.) related to the topics to be dealt with in each edition of the experience are available to the readers.

This initiative is presented as an innovative methodology that promotes dialogue, reduces prejudices and fosters mutual understanding, with the purpose of showing the public that

the reality is far broader than it seems. When, for example, a person victim of stereotypes is invited from a library to become a "book", a message of human richness is being given to the city. The Vasconcelos Library counts on this experience as one of its most important tools and clearly relies on it for its action plan. Up to the present, 4 editions have been carried out, in sessions on Sundays from noon to 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The topics dealt with so far are: Gender equality (September 2014), The Guerrero neighbourhood (March 2015), Paternities (June 2015), and The earthquake

of 1985 in Mexico City (September 2015).

The Vasconcelos Library is the largest public library in the country (in area, in number of documents and in visitors). Three out of ten people who attend the library come from outside the city, especially from the large dormitory towns that surround it: Ecatepec, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, Tlalnepantla, etc., which confirms that it has become a library of reference. It is open every day for 11 hours. In the first four-month period of 2015, it received 170,000 visits monthly, with a daily average of 6,100 visits.

This initiative was thought up 14 years ago in Copenhagen, within the framework of the Musical Festival of Roskilde, by a group of youths concerned about combating violence by means of dialogue. Since then it has been extended throughout the world and many organisations carry it out with the aim of breaking down stereotypes and fighting against social exclusion.

You can find more detailed information about this experience at the website: www.edcities.org

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cities networks

★ The member cities from Northern Europe meet up in Helsinki

On 22nd September, the member cities of the IAEC from Northern Europe met up in the City Hall of Helsinki with the aim of discussing and exchanging experiences based around the topic "The city as a school", to get to know first-hand the initiatives of the City of Helsinki and to lay down the bases for the constitution of a working group.



★ Meeting of the Brazil Network in Santo André

The coordinating city of the Brazil Network hosted a new meeting of the Brazil Network on 18th June in which they debated the Action

Plan, and agreed that the next National Meeting of the Brazil network would be held in Santo André on 3rd and 4th November.

★ The Latin American exhibition "Principles in action" has been presented in 4 more cities

The Latin American exhibition of Educating Cities continues its itinerary. Throughout the months of July, August and September the exhibition has been presented in Montevideo (Uruguay), Esquel, Pergamino and Godoy Cruz (Argentina). For more information, go to www.ciudadeseducadorasla.org

★ The 7th Regional meeting of the Asia-Pacific Network focuses its attention on the issue of social inclusion

Gumi (Republic of Korea) will host the 7th Regional Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Network on 3rd November.

★ News from the Portuguese Network

55 representatives from 27 Portuguese member cities participated in the Meeting of the Portuguese Network which took place in the Museum D. Diogo de Sousa of Braga on July 3rd. Furthermore, the 6th National Congress of the Portuguese Network will be held in Almada from 11th to 13th November 2015, under the theme "Participated Cities, Adapted/adaptable cities". For more information, please visit www.edcities.org/rede-portuguesa



interview

Ms. Nathalie Appéré Mayor of Rennes, France

Rennes is...

...cofounder of the IAEC along with Turin and Barcelona. This commitment is more than symbolic; it is a sign of the permanent will of the City Council of Rennes to place education at the heart of its political project.

How do you implement it?

For the last thirty years, Rennes has made education a driver of development. The elaboration and putting into practice of the Local Education Project (LEP) is a way of responding to the local democratic challenges, and, at the same time, boosting the fight against inequalities. The LEP is based on a balanced diagnosis in terms of the needs and the social demands.

Rennes Educating City has developed its approach and its education policies in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Caisse d'Allocations Familiales (a French public organ that manages the social and family provisions) and the local fabric of associations. It has always given priority to the transversal dimension of the projects, with an approach which goes beyond its actors and of the traditional fields of education.

Mechanisms have also been created of supervision and governance, with the participation of the different stakeholders and collaborators involved, so as to enable debate and consultation. This co-educational approach responds to the demand of a school open to its surroundings, to the local agents and facilities.

How do you foster the respect for the public space and a good coexistence?

The regulation and shared use of the public space in a city undergoing change such as Rennes, are the focus and target of many public policies. The city is undergoing a growing mix of cultures and of generations, and this social diversity has always conditioned the municipal policy. The newcomers contribute to the social and cultural opening up of the city and encourage us to actively boost the mutual knowledge and cultural exchange. The challenges that this reality brings along are mainly securing a citizenship and a secularism which are accepted by everyone and for everyone.

I decided to create a Consultative Committee on Secularism, to share and define guidelines and firm actions that respond to the specific problems that emerge on a day-to-day basis. This work, which constitutes the backbone of



the municipal programme, is developed around issues related to school, the public space, the life of the associations and living in diversity.

How does culture contribute to strengthening the identity of the city and social cohesion?

The cultural and artistic opening up of the city fosters and boosts inclusion both in the field of education as well as in the field of social cohesion. The issuing of the "Sortir!" (Go out!) card, which is granted according to the resources and, therefore, accessible to the inhabitants with lower incomes, is an example of the will to make culture a shared heritage for all. In the field of education, there exist programmes that allow all children, irrespective of their origin, to enjoy leisure and cultural activities during the school and extra-curricular timetables. The initiatives of the professionals of the municipal cultural services and facilities, as well as the artists in residence or in workshops, above all, in the schools that form part of the networks of priority education, are the main vectors of this policy of emancipation.

Over the next ten years it is foreseen that some 60,000 new inhabitants will arrive in the metropolitan area of Rennes. How is the city preparing for this? What role will the citizens play?

The demographic dynamic demands planning and appropriate measures, specifically with regard to public services and infrastructures. The construction of a second line of metro which will communicate the neighbourhoods of the city from east to west is one of the structural projects of the decade. The Mobility Council allows things to be planned in a concerted and coherent way. The Office of Time is another organ that helps us to understand the urban transformations and to conceive adaptable services. Furthermore, there is a

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respond to the vision of the city that the government team has.

However it is also a symbolic space of a synthesis of values, codes, customs, and patterns of social interdependence. It is a space which represents the community, where citizens can express their views and be heard. It is also an indicator of the democratic quality of the society, given that it is there where social achievements and imperfections take on visibility: freedom, diversity, and solidarity, but also poverty, segregation, violence, etc.

We invite you to discuss these questions with experts of recognised international prestige and with colleagues from other cities during the 14th International Congress of Educating Cities that will take place in Rosario (Argentina) from 1st to 4th June 2016. We encourage you to share with us active policies developed with the complicity and commitment of the society as a whole for strengthening social cohesion and coexistence; initiatives that foster the appropriation, the caring for, and revitalisation of the public space; inclusive policies that respond to the challenge of equality, and which illustrate the transformations that can be achieved by means of education and culture, with the aim of promoting social cohesion. We look forward to seeing you!

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local housing programme that foresees the provision of 1,500 dwellings a year.

The involvement of the citizenship in these transformations is one of the keys to the success of these projects. The Citizen Councils and other spaces for participation, as well as the permanent will to "go towards", are indispensable for collecting opinions, ideas, and projects from the inhabitants of each neighbourhood. Finally, the regulations for the adjudication of social housing in Rennes, shared by the promoters and the different institutions which hold the competence in these matters, are the result of a shared aim to achieve transparency and social justice and currently they enjoy recognition at a national level.

More information www.edcities.org

experience

New spaces and forms to access learning in Andong

Andong is located in the province of North Gyeongsang in the Republic of Korea, and it has a population of 167,068 inhabitants. Through the years the city has become a tourist and cultural centre and furthermore it is also the commercial centre of a mainly agricultural region.

Access to lifelong learning is an indicator directly related to the degree of people's happiness. Based on this evidence, a new kind of learning centres were created in Andong: the Happy Learning Centres, which adopt a new philosophy of service: the activities available in these facilities should be entertaining, enjoyable and stress-free and should also provide a relaxing atmosphere that impacts positively in the people's welfare.

With the aim that all the people could benefit from lifelong learning activities through this new concept, the City Council of Andong has created many happy learning centres located in different neighbourhoods of the city.

In 2014, the City Council and the Andong Hospital opened a Happy Learning Centre in the hospital itself so that in-patients, their families and visitors could benefit from this kind of activities, contributing in that way to

improve their emotional and physical state during their stay at the hospital.

The Andong Hospital is the main hospital in the region. It was opened in 1982 and has a fluctuating daily population of 1,500. The learning centre at the hospital offers new ways to access to lifelong learning, on the one hand through various workshops addressed to different target groups (children, the elderly, pregnant women, etc.) and, on the other hand by making available its facilities and providing users with the chance to meet and relate to other people and to enjoy the scheduled activities.

Some of the activities undertaken are crafts workshops, educational activities on nutrition and food handling, among others, for young patients and their families; crafts workshops for long-term patients; workshops addressed to pregnant women as for example the making of environment-friendly products for infants; crafts workshops for the elderly in order they develop their fine motor skills, etc. During the activities materials such as wood, paper, paint and re-cycled materials are used.

Furthermore, exhibitions of works carried out by patients at the workshops are organised

The in-patients, their families and visitors at Andong Hospital can benefit from activities and workshops that contribute to improve their emotional and physical welfare.

by the Centre and different events are put on (magic shows, concerts with traditional instruments, etc.) as well as lectures on topics of interest.

This experience is shown to have various positive effects in the treatment of patients, since it contributes to reducing stress and provides them with new opportunities after their stay at the hospital.



More information about the experience at www.edcities.org

**presented by: City of Andong,
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did you know that...

★ With the aim of spreading the 14th International Congress of Educating Cities amongst the municipal governments of Argentina and the civil society of Rosario, the Garden of the children of Rosario (Argentina) held on 15th October a pre-conference day of talks and debates coinciding with a new session of meetings of the Executive Committee of the Association.

★ The period is now open for sending experiences and the early registration for the 14th International Congress of Educating Cities. For more information, go to the website <http://congresoaoice2016.gob.ar/>



★ On 30th November the 25th anniversary on the proclamation of the Charter of Educating Cities will be celebrated. Since then, cities from the five continents have committed themselves to fulfilling its principles. Various cities will organise celebration events. The Charter has been translated into 15 languages.

★ The city of Turin will be organising a Festival of Education from 13th to 15th November in the framework of which there will be a meeting of the Italian Network.

★ The city of São Carlos (Brazil) will host the exhibition "Educating Cities: Local Actions, Global Values" from October 25th to November the 5th.

★ The Association participated in the 2nd International Congress of Learning Cities that was held in Mexico City from 28th to 30th September.



★ The 3rd edition of the annual Conference of Education of Setubal, which took place last September 16, had as a central theme "The Educating City. A commitment for all".