



International Association of

Educating Cities

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Information
bulletin
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EDUCATING CITIES
FOR A BETTER WORLD



Musical performance at the Blanquito Theatre

experience

Travelling Theatre in Mexico City

With a population of more than 8 million inhabitants and a surface area of 1,749 km², Mexico City is the political, economic and cultural centre of the United States of Mexico. The city makes up one fifth of GDP, but even though it is the richest city in the country it has a great deal of socio-economic inequality.

In 2007 the Department of Culture, specifically the section of Community Participation, set up an original initiative entitled the Blanquito Theatre, a Travelling Forum that tours the streets of the city offering high quality entertainment to a broad public, making people appreciate folk culture, arts and crafts.

Inspired by the cart pulled by Melquíades in

the novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude" by Gabriel García Márquez, the Blanquito Theatre surprises the inhabitants of the city with the transcendent magic of art and culture. This is a trailer with a stage of 49 m² for the performances of top artists, thinkers and craftspeople that have chosen to use the power of culture to achieve social transformation and the construction of a better society. The Blanquito Theatre has thus become a multi-disciplinary theatre that brings the best of the arts, sciences and crafts to the streets of the city by staging top level entertainment and encouraging the city's inhabitants to get up on stage as the protagonists of their own culture.

In order to create spaces for thought and learning, open-air debates and lectures and arts and crafts workshops are also organised. They are addressed to children, young people, adults and seniors and generally include gastronomy as an obligatory workshop for the collective closing ceremony.

The project is designed depending on the place where it is carried out, the local community customs and the topic in vogue in the collective unconscious at the time, using as a guide the (continued on page 2)

"The Blanquito Travelling Theatre threads its way through streets of Mexico City surprising its inhabitants with the magic of art and culture thanks to the fact that a series of top class artists, thinkers and craftspeople have unhesitatingly opted for the use of culture in social transformation"

editorial

An example of the vitality of the Association is that to a great extent the objectives set in the 2009-2010 Action Plan have already been achieved. Its priorities focussed on communication; the growth, strengthening and expansion of the IAEC; cooperation amongst member cities and collaboration with other organisations and institutions.

Amongst the communication activities of special note are: the publication of the monograph "City, Urban Planning and Education" in which we reflect on the city as an educating agent from the town-planning perspective, and the discussion workbook "Cultural Actions and Sport as Tools for the Integral Development of People in Educating Cities", which was edited by the Latin American Delegation. In addition to these publications we can point to the burning of a DVD which simply and attractively illustrates some of the principles of the Charter of Educating Cities.

As proof of the progress achieved in terms of growth and strengthening of the IAEC we can point to the fact that 25 new municipalities have joined, as well (continued on page 3)

Travelling Theatre in Mexico City

celebration of festivals such as children's month, corn sowing and harvest days, the Day of the Dead or the brightest moon. In the same way, international campaigns such as International Astronomy Day held in 2009 are also involved.

In order to promote the activities posters and brochures are designed with information, poetry, drawings, texts or thoughts on each topic, as well as musical scores.



Celebrating the Day of the Dead



Promoting folk culture



Street party

The activities emphasise humanism, equality and critical thought, opening up a debate in the community on topics such as the country's great cultural heritage, multi-culturalism or the importance of the collective factor.

Another achievement of this Travelling Theatre is the transformation of urban spaces through murals, sculptures and art

that remain in the community, leaving a long-lasting trace in its wake. Through this they intend to foster the transformation of certain marginalised community spaces into tourist sites, given the current economic recession.

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

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city networks

★ Presentation of Educating Experiences at the 14th Summit of Mercociudades

From 24 to 27 August Rosario hosted the 14th Summit of Mercociudades called under the theme of "The Cities that Are Building Mercosur", in which the Educating Cities Latin American Delegation coordinated the presentation of educating experiences. This meeting, which brought together 200 cities, had representatives from several IAEC



member cities such as Rosario, Purranque, Los Ángeles, Montevideo, Villa Constitución, Mar del Plata and Belo Horizonte.

★ Participation in the Paris Education Fair and at the PEL Meeting

The French Network of Educating Cities participated actively in the Education Fair held in Paris on 19 to 21 November by organising two debates on Early Childhood (0-6 years old). There was also a meeting of the France Network held as part of the National Meeting of Local Education Projects (PEL) focussing on "The Future of Territorial Education Policies", held in Brest on 24 and 25 November.

★ 2nd National Congress of Educating Cities in Mexico

Representatives of thirteen educating cities in Mexico attended the 2nd National Congress

of Mexican Educating Cities: "On the Move: Sport and Citizenship", held in Mexico City on 6 and 7 November.

The participants exchanged experiences under the theme of sport as a tool of social inclusion and cohesion, beneficial to health and the environment. They also worked on coordinating the attendance of Mexican cities at the 11th Congress of the IAEC.



interview

Maria Emília Neto de Sousa

Mayor of Almada (Portugal)



The city has a strong tradition of creating associations. Can you explain how this contributes to the construction of an educating city?

Almada is a municipality that is marked by intense population movements...The migratory phenomenon has a close relationship with the strong growing movement of associations (cultural, educational, sports-related) as a result of the needs of the new sociabilities, of the new (re)construction of identity of peoples. These associations took responsibility for boosting culture and recreation, playing an important role in literacy campaigning, and sowed the seeds of many social and political movements.

At this time there are more than 500 formal and non-formal institutions, of which more than a dozen are more than 100 years old, and make Almada the capital of the association movement.

The responsibility of the municipal government is to stimulate, support, frame and challenge the association movement, with the understanding that the latter is a historical agent and a fundamental resource for the construction of Almada, as an educating city, a cross-cultural territory of participation and respect for others.

In Almada a lot of importance has been given to the Municipal Youth Centres. What do they contribute to the community?

The City Council has taken on the implementation of policies whose goal is the actual participation of young people, by providing them with the appropriate context for exercising their rights, building solutions and fulfilling their duties.

In the 80s the City Council took on the task of creating a network of facilities for young people

between the ages of 12 and 30...The areas of education, leisure and training constitute the poles of attraction for young people to use these municipal facilities, which function as spaces for organising the city's cultural development. The Youth Centres act as "tree nurseries" for innovative experiences and "scenarios" for the consolidation of cultural projects, some of which are on their way to professionalisation.

Can recreational city celebrations play a major role in the construction of educating cities?

Although we emphasize the recreational side, we do not ignore the connection with the city, with people... We mobilise the social agents from different backgrounds and conditions (cultural producers, immigrants, schools, parents' associations, leaders of associations, private institutions for social action, clubs, collectives, individual citizens, universities, as part of the city's recreational stimulus, giving purposefulness to the participatory process.

Almada has a special link with Africa. Can you tell us about this relationship and its goals?

Almada maintains close, visible collaboration with the Provincial Government of Kwanza Sul (Angola) in the construction of schools, heritage preservation, promoting tourism and business investment, preparing studies on town planning and solid urban waste management. Cooperation means promoting an understanding amongst peoples and getting to know each other. This premise has led to the participation in the project of 400 students and teachers, who are trying to establish fruitful ties with the schools and the communities where they were built. In this context, we invited the Government of Kwanza Sul to participate in the 10th International Congress of Educating Cities in Sao Paulo in which Almada showcased the experience "The Solidarity Embrace".

What are the challenges facing Almada at this time? What can belonging to an international network such as the IAEC contribute?

Almada joined the IAEC in 1997, taking the following into account: that the precepts of municipal intervention coincided with the Charter of Educating Cities; the rich experience that the government and the socio-cultural and education community of the municipality were carrying out, and the advantages of forming part of a national and international information network.

Already in the 90s Almada defined its local development paradigm based on a commitment to dialogue, transversality of action, the

editorial

as the creation of the Asia Pacific Territorial Network and the proposal to continue the training seminar entitled "Educating City and Local Governance" through a network of regional trainers. Another initiative is the pilot travelling exhibition entitled "Educating Cities: Local Action, Global Values", which has already toured 4 cities of the 7 planned during the initial period, and which is making the IAEC known locally and is making people think about the day-to-day construction of peace through different experiences.

On the other hand, the Association has been invited to participate in UNESCO's Partners Forum held as part of its 35th General Conference, in the 30th General Assembly of the International Association of Francophone Mayors and in the 14th Summit of Mercociudades, which shows that the IAEC is internationally recognised. The Association is also working on the possible of organisation of a session at the World Congress of the UCLG in 2010.

The territorial networks are a key tool in meeting the objectives of the Action Plan. Therefore, networks are invited to submit their proposals for the new Action Plan that will be adopted at the Assembly in Guadalajara (22 April 2010).

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relationship between administrations (local and central) and civil society.

At this time the municipal administration is putting forth policies of equality, citizen inclusion, participation, cohesion and commitment to development strategies for the municipality. Many of these policies are founded on major conceptual, strategic and programmatic references of the IAEC or other transnational coordination bodies.

For more information go to: www.edcities.org

experience

Exchange of pro-human rights and pro-democracy activists

From 18 to 27 May 1980, the inhabitants of Gwangju rebelled against the military dictatorship of General Chun Doo and took over the streets of this city in southwest Korea. The authoritarian government reacted by imposing martial law and severely repressing the demonstrators. Since then, this event has been remembered as "518" or "18 May".

Over time and after the restoration of democracy in 1988, Gwangju and its 1.5 million inhabitants has consolidated itself as one of the main economic benchmarks in South Korea thanks to its automobile industry, the manufacturing of digital electronics, mining, industrial design and high tech industry.



The memory of the struggle of the inhabitants of the city for democracy and human rights in May 1980 is still alive, having given rise to a pro-democracy movement. This is the context of the 18 May Memorial Foundation, which since 1994 has been working to keep alive the spirit of solidarity of the revolt, promote the peaceful reunification of Korea and contribute to moving towards peace and human rights around the world, especially in Asia.

One of the main action lines of the Foundation is the fomenting of the exchange of activists through the International Human Rights Practices Exchange Program, which began in 2001. This is a program that has been carried out in collaboration with the Cultural Centre for the 18 May Memorial and the Publicity Division of the Democratic Spirit Department of the City Council of Gwangju.

On the other hand, the Foundation plays host to members of non-governmental organisations from Asia or other parts of the world for a period of 10 months. During this time, people from these organisations have the chance to learn about the experience of the Korean democratisation movement and establish contact with the people in the main

"Gwangju (Republic of Korea) boosts pro-human rights activism through the exchange of volunteers, supporting democratic movements and establishing international networks for peace."

groups in the country. On the other hand, the Foundation also sends volunteers for 10 months to countries such as Nepal, India, and Japan, Germany or Australia, funding the travel, lodging, medical insurance and stipends of intern activists, who, accordingly, can also learn about other movements for peace, the defence of human rights and democracy.

In addition to boosting the volunteer exchange, this experience helps, together with other projects, to bring other non-governmental organisations closer together and to create pro-human rights international networks.

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



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did you know that...

- ★ From 3 to 5 November the first Training of Trainers meeting was held in Mexico City in order to continue the work of the "Educating Cities and Local Governance" seminars in Latin America.
- ★ The exhibition "Educating Cities: Local Actions, Global Values" has already toured the cities of Granollers (Spain), Budapest (Hungary), Tampere (Finland) and Bethlehem (Palestine).
- ★ 419 cities in 35 countries have joined the IAEC.
- ★ The Educating Cities International Documents Databank already has 925 experiences.
- ★ The Korean city of Changwon will host the 12th International Congress of the IAEC in 2012 under the theme of "Environment, Creative Education".

the voices of the cities

1. Through the program entitled **Integral School - Knowledge Workshop**, the Department of Education of Sorocaba (Brazil) has taken education out of the school walls and outside school hours in order to take over the streets, parks and museums, thanks to the involvement of social collectives. This activity has received the Itaú-Unicef prize.



2. The **Libélula Environmental Recreation Centre** of Sabaneta (Colombia) fosters respect for the environment through a program covering all municipal activities, promoting workshops and recreational activities addressed to students and organised groups in the community.

3. The City Council of Lleida (Spain), in order to facilitate interfaith dialogue and social cohesion, created the **Municipal Assembly of Religions**, an advisory body in which representatives from different religions in the city are participating.

