



International Association of

Educating Cities

20
Information
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EDUCATING CITIES
FOR A BETTER WORLD



experience

Neighbourhood Agreements: an instrument of participatory democracy in Geneva

Situated on the shores of Lake Lemans, Geneva is the second most populous city in Switzerland, with a population of 192,000 inhabitants and a surface area of 16km². Its international, cosmopolitan character is not always in synchronization with the quality of life of the inhabitants of the city centre.

The Neighbourhood Agreements represent a commitment of the City Council of Geneva, local inhabitants, workers and retailers to improving the quality of life of their neighbourhoods.

The Neighbourhood Agreements were born with the goal of fostering citizen participation, improving dialogue with the local authorities and adapting municipal action to the different local realities.

The City Council has been carrying out different participatory processes since the nineties as part of the remodelling of public spaces and facilities, but the Neighbourhood Agreements represent a step forward. They constitute a formal process in which the participants have the chance to get involved in the neighbourhood, by proposing the type of intervention that they believe are the most urgent and should be prioritised. This mechanism was born as a pilot project in 2009 and was inspired by the Neighbourhood Agreements in the Brussels-capital region that started in the first decade of 2000s.

The Neighbourhood Agreements began from the detection of a series of needs which exceeded one-off problem that can be solved by the municipal services. At this time three Agreements in districts abutting the train stations are underway. These neighbourhoods are characterized by a very high population and building density, environmental problems caused mainly by vehicular traffic and the lack of green spaces.

Based on a preliminary balance sheet of
(continued on page 2)

editorial

More than 1100 representatives from local administrations, as well as experts and members of social organisations from 189 cities met up in Barcelona on the occasion of the 13th International Congress of Educating Cities. The Congress was a great opportunity to dialogue and learn from each other and to make known different local policies and initiatives for fostering social inclusion and to continue advancing together in the fulfilment of the principles of the Charter of Educating Cities.

With the theme, “An Educating City is an inclusive city”, the Congress represented an opportunity to reflect on the important role that the local governments play in tackling social inequalities present in the cities, dealing with the causes that generate them.

The main lines of work were: Inclusion as a right, the Educating City as a promoter of welfare and life opportunities; Citizen participation and commitment, the Educating City as a space of coexistence, dialogue and relationships; the Educating City as a space of innovation and creativity.

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Neighbourhood Agreements: an instrument of participatory democracy in Geneva

needs, the inhabitants and users of the areas are offered a Neighbourhood Agreement. An initial meeting called "Neighbourhood Council" is organized, bringing together city representatives and the neighbourhood population, in which representatives that would form part of the "Coordinating Committee" are elected. This Committee is in charge of canvassing citizens' needs and collecting proposals for the neighbourhood.

The entire population is invited to join different working groups whose mission is to propose solutions to improve different aspects of city life. The groups are structured around the following subjects: urban refurbishment and the environment (appreciation, safety, cleanliness of public spaces), socio-cultural and sport facilities (opening of new spaces for the neighbourhood, adapted play areas, etc.) and community development projects (solidarity initiatives and mutual aid, neighbourhood events, etc.).

The Coordinating Committee prepares a roadmap, including the proposals that have received the greatest interest and submits it to the Executive Committee of the City Council. The actions that are approved must be carried

out within a maximum period of four years while keeping the inhabitants abreast of the progress through new meetings.

As a result of the Agreement in the St-Gervais, Seujet, Voltaire neighbourhood, of special note is the transformation of the *Promenade de St. Jean Park*, bordering a primary school, which had a very bad reputation as it was a drug trafficking area. A new remodelling of the space, the opening of a bar, the organization of different cultural events, etc., were some of the actions which made the park into a get-together and recreational space that is popular amongst all generations. Moreover, the neighbourhood squares have been improved and collective interventions have been made in order to reduce anti-social behaviour around the train station. The canton authorities have also become aware of the neighbourhood's poor air quality, action in which the schools have participated.

On the other hand, the district of Grottes –of special note for having an active network of associations– benefits, thanks to the Agreement, from new premises where different cultural activities are carried out. Moreover, a new weekly market has been



organised, the setup of Zone 30 in the district has been accelerated, the safety of school paths has been bolstered, and the public spaces have been embellished and landscaped with the participation of the population, etc.

The positive results and the high degree of satisfaction of the participants have led the City Council of Geneva to continue the experience by encouraging new Agreements, which have proved to be innovation labs of a more proactive administration to face the needs of the population and for the city's progress.

More information at: www.edcities.org

presented by: City Council of Geneva,
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cities networks



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★ **The Territorial Networks in the 13th Congress**
Various territorial networks called their meetings in Barcelona within the framework of the 13th International Congress of the Association, among them were included the Brazilian, French, Italian and Portuguese networks. Furthermore, the Spanish Network called its General Assembly. There was also a meeting of the Asian-Pacific Network, and a

joint session of the Latin American cities. For its part, the northern European cities analysed the feasibility of creating a Network that will be coordinated by Helsinki.

★ **General Assembly of the French Network**
The city of Romainville hosted an Extraordinary General Assembly of the French Network on 5th December, during which the Statutes were modified, information was given about the development of the 13th Congress and a debate was carried out about the priority actions for the period 2015–2020.

★ **Educating Cities in the 19th Mercociudades Summit**
The Delegation for Latin America organised a dialogue about Inclusion Policies in the Educating Cities within the framework of the complementary programme of the 19th

Mercociudades Summit held in Rosario from 3rd to 5th December.



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★ **Manifest of the Spanish Network**
The General Assembly approved a Manifest to express its concern about the Rationalisation and Sustainability of Local Administration Act (LRSAL) approved by the central government.

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interview

Mr. Xavier Trias

Mayor of Barcelona and President of the IAEC

Why did Barcelona make a commitment towards being an Educating City and continues to be committed?

Barcelona is a city committed towards education, an education that goes beyond the school doors and which spreads throughout the city.

The city educates through its educational institutions, but also in an implicit way by means of its urban fabric, of the opportunities it offers, as well as the diverse social policies and practices. In line with this, we understand that education for all the inhabitants and throughout their lives, is not the responsibility of a single department, but of the local government as a whole so as to be able to respond to an increasingly complex reality.

Over the years, "Barcelona, Educating City" has become label of the city, permeating the overall municipal policies. Likewise, we work to bring in entities from the civil society and in this way join forces in this shared project; the creation of various citizen councils, such as: the Council for the City, the Youth Council, that of the Elderly, for Vocational Training, Sports, and of Culture, are an example of this will.

Another example of the renewed commitment of the city of Barcelona with education and with the Association has been the organization of the 13th International Congress of Educating Cities, held last November. The Congress counted on an extensive participation of the civil society and gathered together more than 1,100 people to reflect on the theme "An Educating City is an inclusive city".

Could you mention other initiatives of Barcelona that have become consolidated over time as educating experiences?

There are many municipal actions that have a clear educational component and that have become consolidated and improved with the passing of time. Among these it is worth mentioning the introduction of the selective waste collection, the interconnection of the neighbourhoods with public transport, the fostering of public spaces, the architectural adaptation of the city for the disabled, the participative design of the public spaces, the libraries plan, the pedagogical programmes of the museums, the community centres, the health campaigns, the conception of the city's festivities, etc.



Since 1990, there have been various municipal teams in the City Council of Barcelona, but the commitment of our city to the Charter of Educating Cities is unquestionable.

What role does Barcelona play in the IAEC and what does forming part of the Association contribute to the city?

Barcelona has been one of the main promoters of the IAEC and since the creation of the Association it has maintained an active role, taking on the Presidency and the Secretariat.

The IAEC constitutes a platform of exchange of reflections and best practices, which allows us to learn and collaborate with other cities of the world, with whom we share the same goals and aims.

In this way, Barcelona has had as a reference model various cities for boosting different policies and actions. Cities such as Rennes, Turin, Rosario or Medellín, amongst others. And at the same time our city has constituted a model for many cities.

Furthermore, in the current context of globalisation, belonging to the IAEC allows us to raise the voice of the cities before organisations claiming the importance of education as an undeniable instrument of progress and social and economic transformation.

What motivated Barcelona to propose the theme of social inclusion for the last Congress?

We are living in times of deep and accelerated social transformation that implicitly includes new opportunities, but also new threats and forms of exclusion. That is why one of the main goals that Barcelona has set itself, in the current context of crisis, is to work towards social inclusion. And the Educating City

editorial

The programme of the Congress, organised over three days, included talks, dialogues, a roundtable of mayors, and various workshops and speakers' corners in which around 150 experiences were presented and exchanged. Participants were also able to visit in situ an example of initiatives in favour of inclusion from fields as diverse as labour insertion, sport, education and culture.

The Congress coincided with the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the creation of the Association, which led to a reflection about the path we have travelled and the future perspectives. The will to continue advancing in the foundational goals, the need to boost processes of innovation which respond to the new needs of the cities and the determination to gain in political impact are some of the new goals included in the Strategic Plan 2015-2018, approved by the General Assembly.

In the closing session, the Final Declaration of the Congress was presented by means of which the Educating Cities commit themselves to continue working on the construction of more inclusive and educating cities and to call on the state and international bodies to recognise this work and also to commit themselves to foster social inclusion.

The meeting ended by passing the baton to Rosario, the city which will organise the 14th Congress of the IAEC, foreseen for 2016, under the title "Territories of Coexistence in Cities"

Website of the 13th Congress: iaec2014.bcn.cat/en

The Secretariat of the IAEC

provides us with an ideal framework, because education constitutes an essential instrument for the individual and collective development, and for the improvement of coexistence, cohesion and solidarity.

The Educating Cities are committed towards equal opportunities and for an education in values such as respect, tolerance, participation, shared responsibility and interest in what is public. In this sense, the Final Declaration of the 13th Congress includes new commitments in matters of social inclusion that we invite you to assume and spread.

More information at: www.edcities.org

experience

“You matter to me”, San Francisco (Argentina) fights against school dropout

The Argentine city of San Francisco has a population of 72,000 inhabitants and is located in the province of Córdoba in a rich agricultural region. One of the problems faced by the city is the high rate of school dropout of children taking primary or secondary education as well as early pregnancies among teenagers.

Faced with this reality and with the goal of ensuring the right to education, in 2008, the programme “You matter to me” (*Vos me importas*) was created with the aim of providing adolescent mothers and fathers with access and permanence to the formal education system, and by doing so, offering them new work opportunities and the possibility of a better future.

This programme, managed by the Health Department of San Francisco, emerged at the proposal from the Articulation Roundtable by means of which the Municipality works with the community, in the detection and evaluation of the needs and requests and in the coordination of the actions to be set in motion to promote the right of all of the population to an education of quality.

To do so, work is done with the secondary education schools for the control of absenteeism or school dropout and the



reinsertion of the youths who abandon their studies. Neighbourhood centres, NGOs and other institutions from the community help to spread the diffusion campaign of the programme so as to ensure that the information reaches the maximum number of youths. Likewise, agreements are signed with teacher training institutes and universities, so that their students provide educational support on a voluntary basis to young people that return to education if they require it.

Another of the key axes for the success of this programme is the creation of a free-of-charge evening municipal nursery school for taking in girls and boys, from toddlers to 10 years old, while their parents study. This centre provides a warm and friendly environment where the kids can develop their cognitive, physical, affective and social skills through very varied

“You matter to me”, is a programme that provides a new educational opportunity for adolescent mothers and fathers.

activities. Furthermore, they are given an afternoon snack and supper, thus ensuring a healthy alimentation, and which also counts on a team of health professionals.

The youths commit themselves to attending the classes regularly and to get the most out of the course. A social worker is charged with carrying out the follow up of the process by elaborating different strategies to avoid further dropout, as well as offering advice and assessment about early parenthood and school and work guidance and counselling.

So as to ensure that the programme runs well, continual assessment is carried out during the course, both with the parents, as well as with the staff of the educational centres, with the municipal health team, and with the volunteers that provide tutoring support.

Thanks to this programme, 38 mothers and fathers have completed their studies in different levels of the formal education system and some thirty others are currently studying. For its part, the nursery school that started its activity with between 18 and 20 children, now has 48. The increase in the demand for this type of service indicates that there are progressively more young people and adults aware of the importance of education in today’s society.

presented by: Municipality of San Francisco,
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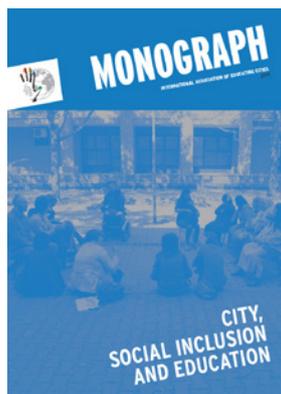
did you know that...

★ The next meeting of the General Assembly of the Association will take place in Turin on 13th March.

★ Toluca de Lerdo (Mexico) will be hosting the 3rd Meeting of Educating Cities of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean from 23rd to 24th April under the theme of “Education in the city, a common Project for transforming the urban space into an educating space”. For more information you can visit: www.toluca.gob.mx/sitios/congreso

★ The travelling exhibition of the IAEC continues on the move. Between August and December 2014 it visited the cities of Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo, Santos, Itapetininga, in Brazil, and El Vendrell, in Spain.

★ You can download the fifth monographic volume of the IAEC entitled “City, Social Inclusion and Education”, recently published, at: www.edcities.org/en/publicaciones/monographs



★ You can consult the first materials produced as a result of the last International Congress at: iaec2014.bcn.cat/en

★ The website of the 14th International Congress of Educating Cities, to be held in Rosario in 2016, has just been inaugurated: congresoiaec2016.gob.ar

