



The intercultural city *Concept and instruments for intercultural dialogue across Europe*

The experience of Lyon

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The wealth of this Congress, its depth, the diversity of its themes and the number of delegates, is a good demonstration of the common challenges faced by our cities. I should like to thank its organisers for giving us an opportunity during these three days to compare the conceptions which drive our policies and the solutions and innovations that one or other of us applies, based on our respective histories, to harmonise our cities, from the urban to the human factor, and build the major European cities of tomorrow.

The challenge is sufficiently daunting to merit the sharing of any positive experience for the benefit of all. This is the spirit governing my presentation here of the main working focuses and a few examples of the policy applied in Lyon on art and culture in social integration. I will state straightaway that these are actions designed and encouraged by the City, but that many associative initiatives (social, cultural and artistic) at the scale of an area or district supplement the local initiative map.

Lyon has inherited ideas of Republican unity and therefore of policies tending to assimilate successive waves of immigrants. The City thus strives for equality in terms of quality of life in its various districts. We therefore conceive the work of “social cohesion” around a programme of urban renovation, development of social housing and allocation of social or cultural equipment, which refurbishes the outlying districts and breaks down the image of social ghettos. The idea is that every district, by keeping and promoting its history - of work,

of immigration, of modern town planning -, becomes as attractive for daily life as a city centre.

The cultural and artistic component of the Urban Contract for Social Cohesion (in partnership with the State) has set itself the task of enhancing, in the eyes of its own residents and the entire city, the “priority districts” and of widening each resident's movement area in the city.

A major focus is residents’ Memory, the memory of districts. Residents can thus fall back on their own history to comprehend the changes in progress. The transcription of oral memory (in the ethnographical sense) takes different forms depending on the very history of districts and the players which initiated it. Two examples spring to mind: eye-witness accounts filmed at the request of an association of forefathers, descended from immigrants from Maghreb, who wished to dialogue with the youngest generations based on their experience of arriving in France. This film, *Mémoire de nos pères* (Memoirs of our forefathers), was screened both in the district where the forefathers actually meet and in a city centre district; it achieved its aim on both occasions. At the Regional Centre for Traditional World Music, further transcription of oral memory has taken shape with an *Atlas sonore* (Sound Atlas), a recording of music and songs played, sung and handed down in families in two immigrant districts in the city centre precisely where music associations and actual playing abound today.

Preserving and promoting these collections produced with researchers is also work undertaken with the City of Lyon Museum of History (Musée Gadagne). I shall return to the involvement of institutions later on.

The role of professional artists is also very important in the work towards social cohesion. Bearing another way of interpreting the world, their arrival for a stay of several months in a district as part of a social and urban project provides another viewpoint on the history, identity, divides, places and movements. The artistic project they build up from there with the residents is often a true exercise in democracy and collective involvement, no less than practising and rubbing shoulders with contemporary art. It is a device which gambles on the mutual contribution between art and folk cultures away from the normal production and demonstration sites.

We experiment with two types of artistic residence projects: those we combine with the main cultural events, including the Dance Biennale parade - and this year I shall have the pleasure

of welcoming a delegation from Barcelona - which has been the role model in Lyon, and those supporting the major urban renewal projects.

However necessary urban renewal may be to improve the quality of life of residents, it is clearly a traumatic event with its demolitions, temporary or permanent relocations and radical transformations of districts. Firstly because, however unsatisfactory a set of bars and towers may seem, it is a living place where residents have created a sociality, solidarities, a life, a memory which must not be discredited at the same time as this type of housing over which doubts are raised today. And then because these urban transformations take several years to schedule and create, during which time the residents fluctuate between regret and anxiety. We have gambled on entrusting this cultural dimension of the transformation of a district, in this instance a district of some 5,000 housing units in Lyon, to a company of resident artists since 2005. They operate in three main areas. The short-lived reinvestment in premises in the district that are already empty, to bring them back to life (Temporary Artistic Areas). The "1000 bar" housing, scheduled for destruction by 2009, is thus transformed into a Short-Lived Museum, welcoming artists and their works in nine vacant apartments. The Original Observation Areas regularly unite a college of some ten people to reflect and consult on the project and organise times for meeting and discussing with key players in the district and its residents. The Virtual Artistic Areas are made up of three blogs hosted on the company's website, representing a means of communicating and exchanging on the project.

The result of this artistic effervescence - the LàHorsDe Company is also at the cutting edge of cooperation with Kosice in Slovakia for Lyon's candidacy as 2013 European Capital - is to bring new vitality to this transition period, to contribute to a memory of the transformation turned towards the future of the district.

The aim of artistic residences based on cultural events (Dance Biennale, Festival of Light, Festival of Leaves and so on) is to associate the population and priority districts as widely as possible with artistic events: contemporary dance for the Biennale, plastic and graphic arts for the Festival of Light, land art for the Festival of Leaves. The artists are chosen, from a project, to work with the residents of a priority district culminating in a short-lived installation forming part of the overall programme of the event. The Dance Biennale Parade, a huge choreographic parade, is this year uniting five Lyon districts as well as twelve towns in Greater Lyon and six from the Rhône-Alpes region, each with its own theme and choreography - a total of 4,000 amateurs and 250 professionals. This is not just an outstanding

festive moment but an example of the integrating power of the arts, to use Jean Hurstel's title, as the only condition for participating is the desire to take part and work together. This may be difficult to measure, but involvement in this collective project alters the perception that each dancer or costume designer has of him- or herself (I'm thinking especially of people finding it difficult to integrate professionally), changes the sociality, the perception of the district and of the City, of citizenship, culture, contemporary dance and so on.

The examples I have suggested are also examples of investment in the public space, a choice also well founded in Lyon's cultural policy which helps facilitate access to cultural events. I am thinking in particular of the Everyone out! Festival (Tout l'monde dehors !) ; every summer over two hundred entirely free outdoor artistic events open to all are scattered throughout the Lyon districts in the gardens, in the squares and on the banks of the Rhone, which have been so successfully developed into a public space during the previous term of office.

But Lyon also has a wealth of cultural establishments, libraries, museums, Dance Academy, Opera House and more which take up a major part of the City's cultural budgets. It is therefore logical to make sure that they are frequented by the majority of its inhabitants. Together they form an extraordinary reservoir of shared, highly diverse culture which can only enrich the cultural and artistic capital of each and every one. We know that this is the driving force behind the major changes for professional librarians over the last 25 years, to the point where they now run areas for exchanges that are essential to the life of the district, not just places to read and consult archives. For this reason the City of Lyon is continuing with its programme of setting up public reading establishments in each district.

Armed with this experience of cultural appropriation and the Dance Biennale model which combines artistic requirement for contemporary dance shows and an amateur folk parade, the City of Lyon has invited all the major cultural institutions to sign a joint Cultural Cooperation Charter, to add the priority districts of Lyon and its suburbs to their traditional missions. The City's Cultural Cooperation Mission works with the twenty establishments to help them with their project, provide them with information on the districts they wish to work with and on a certain number of cross-disciplinary themes, such as memories as I mentioned earlier, cultural diversity, urban music and so on.

The Opera House is undoubtedly one of the most active cultural institutions. Already partners of such programmes as “Schoolchildren at the opera” and “Secondary school students at the opera” with the departmental and regional authorities, which give an entire age group the chance to see at least one lyric performance, and already open to the diversity of artistic expression by lending its rehearsal rooms to young hip-hop talents performing in the square in front of it, the team has set up a project christened Kaleidoscope with a nearby working-class district (the old silk workers district) and a working-class district in a town in the Lyon suburbs. The first event this year, after a year working with the opera artists and the residents, supported by social and cultural associations, clearly shows the spirit of the Cultural Cooperation Charter; a series of small scenes circulated through the nearby district as far as the Opera House auditorium, with amateurs singing texts they themselves wrote with the help of an author on their experiences in exile, the lost home, etc. set to music composed for them by a contemporary composer.

I have other, equally convincing examples taken from amateur theatricals, such as a director working for several months to create a troop of actors in an underprivileged district around a strong, demanding contemporary text. As part of an amateur Theatre Week, the actual performance was amazing, on the stage and in the hall, as families set foot in the theatre for the first time, as well as admiring the performance of someone dear, away from the normal homelife, function and social condition.

So you see, Lyon’s experience which it seeks to expand, like becoming European Capital of Culture, for example, involves not separating audiences, folk cultures and contemporary creation, institutions and open spaces and mixing cultures from here and elsewhere to produce a common product, aiming at the highest artistic and human quality, as this is the basis for cultural experience.

I shall end here so that I also can benefit from and be inspired, I am sure, by experiences of other European cities. I should however be delighted to exchange views with other delegates, delve deeper or explain further.

Thank you.