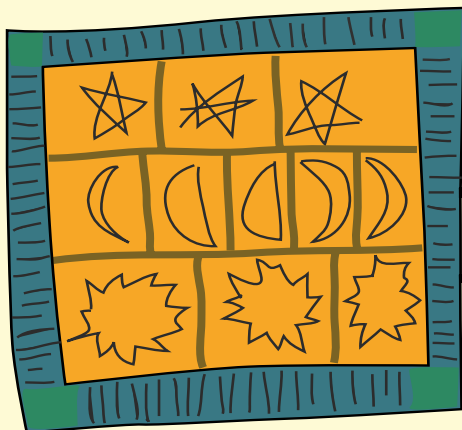
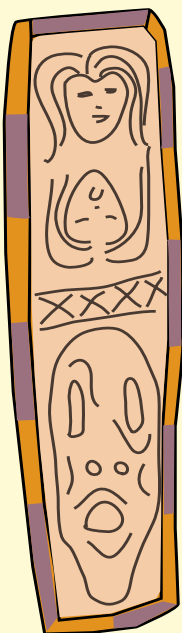
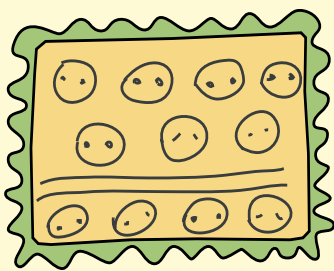
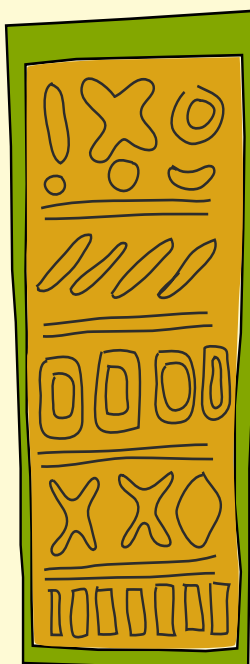
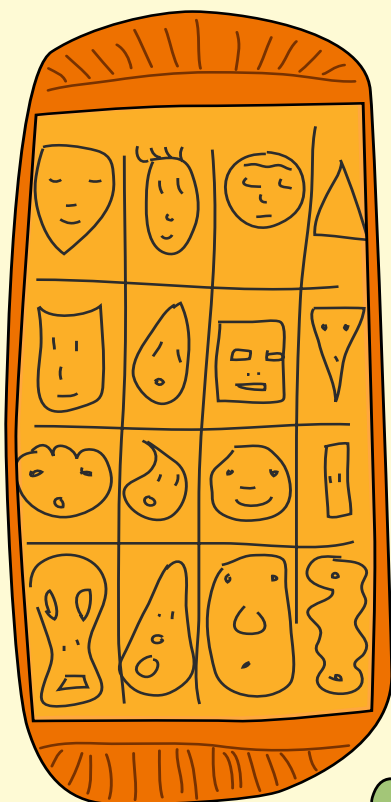




Bulletin n°0 June 2002



HaCER Bulletin

*Saying is fine,
but doing says it
even better.*

The HaCER programme has now reached a firm enough stage of development for us to put together a set of communication tools to keep people in touch with what's going on. This first bulletin, No.0, is designed to be HaCER's internal information vehicle. It gives a quick overview of the European townspeople's network, provides an account of the Montreuil encounters, and lays down the next steps in the programme.

HaCER, What is the purpose ?

HaCER is a programme of meetings and discussions between townspeople from different parts of Europe who have gathered to take a collective look at their respective preoccupations. It is the fruit of a French initiative, more exactly, that of the CNV (Conseil National des Villes/National Committee for Towns). It promotes exchanges between neighbourhood and district action groups with the aim of progressively exploring their opinions and developing a point of view with which they can intervene in the political and technical construction of Europe. HaCER's ambition is to take questions raised in towns and districts, to take the opinions of those who are involved in everyday realities in these neighbourhoods, and to make them an issue of European construction.



Hacer, to do what?

The first encounter between European townspeople's groups was at the 2001 International Towns Festival in Créteil, France (repeated in 2002). The groups were also present in Gavle in Sweden at the Welfare Economy Forum. In May, 2001, they got together in Paris to set the HaCER programme on its course. They were involved in the Brussels Citizen Participation and Urban Policies Congress during Belgium's European presidency. Their last gathering was at a second HaCER founding meeting, which was called to establish a programme and which took place in Montreuil, France, on 25th and 26th January, 2002.

The HaCER programme is financed by the DIV (Délégation Interministérielle à la Ville - Joint-ministerial Towns Delegation) and by the Fondation de France (French Foundation). It is run by a provisional secretariat that includes Pierre Mahey and Hélène Allée of «arpenteurs», Philippe Merlant and Catherine Baudrouet of Place Publique, Bernard Fargeot of CIRAP (Citizens' Initiative for Renewed Public Action), and Marie-Pierre de Liège and Céline Braillon of the CNV. An associated legal entity has just been formed in the shape of a non-profit making organisation registered under the name of "Association de Coordination HaCER" (A.C.HaCER), with Bernard Fargeot as its chairman.

HaCER at Montreuil

Twelve European groups were represented and took their places around an enthusiastic and workmanlike table. Bad weather in the north of Europe prevented any Swedish participation, leaving Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and France represented. The French authorities were also present, represented by CNV, who initiated the whole idea, and the DIV, as well as Montreuil Town Council.

Other than the presentation of each group's actions and the visit organised by members of Ensemble Notre Quartier (Our Neighbourhood Stands Together) to the district of La Boissière in Montreuil, three main topics were on the agenda: urban renewal, the fight against social exclusion, and the future path to be taken by HaCER's actions.

All these themes were chosen from proposals made by the groups themselves during the weeks leading up to the encounters. Each workshop was led by one of the groups in attendance. Thus group presentations took place under the watchful eye of Mark from Birmingham. Giorgio from Montreuil took the groups on a visit to the district of La Boissière and to a social centre for receiving inhabitants from abroad. Fernando from Rome ran the workshop on urban restructuring along with Ati from Barcelona. Jorg from Bremen conducted the workshop on the fight against social exclusion. Pierre from «arpenteurs» took the chair at a Saturday morning meta-debate on the structure of the debates themselves, a topic whose necessity became apparent during the previous day's exchanges.

Last but not least, Ernest from Roubaix led the debate on the paths to be taken by the HaCER programme.



HaCER knows how to do

Let's look at a few of the lessons to be learnt from the actions exposed by the different Montreuil participants.

1-The law and regulations can be of significant help in any action envisaged by neighbourhood inhabitants. Thus legislation giving tenants the right to manage their

own dwellings enabled militants from Bloomsbury in Birmingham to enter into meaningful negotiations with the local authorities.

2-Participation is a commitment and implies radical acceptance of responsibility. In Birmingham, the residents themselves are responsible for the management of 700 dwellings!

3- Any negotiation with the institutions always raises the question of how decisions will be made. In Bremen, the inhabitants have been able to force acceptance of their input to the decision making process. They have also forced the acceptance of consensus decision-making: no decision can be taken unless all the partners are convinced.

4- The path to integration for people from foreign families leads through language learning and women's integration, be it in Bremen, Montreuil, or Marseille.

5- A neighbourhood's identity is a dimension to invest in. You must keep active control of the district's image as received by the outside world. The Moulin district in Arnhem confirmed this to us.

6- Relays need to be activated towards larger territorial coverage, getting things known through the media, with for example the local EPRA radio network, who had a representative in attendance, but also through networks like HaCER. These are levers that can be used to develop actions. Arnhem et Roubaix have made use of them.

7- Taking stock together: a joint diagnosis is a way of setting things in motion and of proposing change. Most of the groups begin their actions using this method.

8- Enthusiasm, the pleasure of doing things together and learning together is a source of energy which Trinita Nova from Barcelona in particular hold dear.

9- It seems important to understand how public property is constituted. When Unione Borgate from Rome explain how private owners donate part of their land to public action so that the latter can pay for much needed public service improvements, one can better understand how a communal sense of reason is a value worth building, with individual property included.

10- Associations and neighbourhood residents can become



mediators, catalysts for changing the institution. This for example is what is being developed by Shebba in Marseille, with schools and even with the police force.



Hacer fights against social exclusion

«No one can think on an empty stomach; people stop thinking on an overfilled stomach»

The main clash of ideas in this workshop saw the emergence of two basic opinions on the subject. For some, the only efficient weapon against social exclusion is to give everyone a job, redistributing the available work. For others, social exclusion can be defeated by giving individuals recognition, through providing work but also by getting people involved in citizens' actions, in creative activities, etc.

Most actions that involve reintegration through employment don't allow sufficient scope to take into account individual needs and focus too much on filling slots. Yet experiments that put people into situations of responsibility have often been able to demonstrate how effective they are. Grants awarded to young people in Roubaix enabled them to stage a concert, then to rehearse for themselves, then to organise meals for older people which will pay for their trip to the Bourges Festival thus a train of action was put into motion for them. Others in Grande-Synthe started out by building a garden then participating in the design of another garden, thus becoming participants in an Urban Workshop, a citizen's debate forum where originally they had no place.

Social exclusion doesn't just concern money or lack of it. It's also possible to be excluded intellectually, or not to have access to modern technology, etc.

It might be fairer to speak of discrimination rather than exclusion, which would give us a more active outlook on a phenomenon that is too often considered inevitable.

HaCER, urban restructuring and training.

Trinita Nova of Barcelona's presentation turned out to be the basis

for this exchange. The question was: What needs to be done in order to get urban projects based on a resident's-eye view of the situation when institutions are reluctant to accord residents' groups any credibility? The answer is that residents need to train themselves. They have to learn how to run a project, to speak in public, to use tools such as photos or videos as a back-up to communication between themselves and with the institutions. They must acquire confidence in themselves and in the relevance of their own resident's view of matters.

Some groups add that it is important to always maintain a degree of distance from the institutions. It would be wrong to rely too much on them. How can training tools for residents be developed that are independent from the local powers?

This is maybe an angle the HaCER programme should look at developing: that of providing training frameworks to ensure true independence.

The question of training is seen as being closely tied to the question of power. Co-directing a town in the twenty-first century can hardly be envisaged without giving thought to the «training-power» combination, which is the only way to put the urban renewal process on the path towards participatory democracy.



HaCER, its debating rules

HaCER's has two great strengths: having contacts all over Europe and its ability to draw on participants' in-the-field experience. These strengths give HaCER the necessary credibility to make itself heard by the European institutions, which themselves have too little presence in the field. It therefore needs to organise invitations for European technical and political representatives at each assembly, so that these can witness the debates taking place within HaCER.

These debates should always be based on experiences, as the network's big strength lies in the exchange of experiences. It therefore seems wise when preparing encounters to study each group's actions as exposed by them on, for example, the web site. These presentations can be linked to an index or to a corpus of questions. Exchanges can then

be organised based around innovative or exceptional experiences that have been exposed, on topics chosen at the preparation workshops. The first four planned workshops could cover the fight against discrimination, urban renewal, participatory democracy, and coexistence between cultures.



HaCER's programme of action

Different milestones have been set down for the organisation of actions in 2002:

- the organisation of two annual meetings (counting the invitation from Barcelona to participate in their universities) with the participation of representatives from the European institutions.
- development of the four debate/workshops mentioned earlier
- construction of an index or corpus of HaCER topics, questions, keywords
- enhancement of the web site, integrating the workshops, pooled experiences, information watchtower, etc.
- the search for European financial support
- opening up to new groups
- participation in local, national, or European events in the name of HaCER
- the creation of tools for presenting the network

HaCER defines its organisation

At the end of the encounters, a series of collective decisions and orientations for the organisation of future action was proposed and confirmed.

The assembly constituted during the Montreuil encounters, after a long debate over the terms "permanent secretariat" and "general secretariat", confirmed the need for a general secretariat to act as a policy steering authority. The assembly delegated this role to the facilitators and to the National Committee for Towns (CNV), at least until the next meeting.

For the time being, since the initiative and financing both come from France, it seems natural for France to remain in the pilot's seat.

The general secretariat will first have to concretise the financial help currently under request and then look for new sources of finance, especially from Europe.

It will need to build a collection of tools to use for the exchange of skills and experience from each of the groups.

It will have to help in producing an index, a corpus of common questions, and help set up workshops to deal with these questions.

It will need to make an immediate approach to the European Commission to ensure it sends representatives to the next encounters.

Lastly, the general secretariat has to organise the next 2002 encounters.

In addition to this, each group goes away from the encounters with the mission of activating its own network around itself, in order to expand and develop HaCER, to bring in new skills and experience as identified in the corpus of questions, and lastly, to find more finance resources for the HaCER programme.

One of the programme's biggest difficulties resides in the number of languages used. An attempt should be made to devise means of translating that do not make too heavy a demand on the budget. Could each group try to find local resources for the translation of its own texts into several languages? The solution of using a limited selection of languages for exchanges has not been found acceptable. A lot of participants have never had the opportunity to learn English or French and would find themselves at a disadvantage. Therefore all of our output should be translated as much as possible.



HaCER seen by

Gilles Garcia of the DIV has been given the job of monitoring different network implementations. He has remarked that the questions raised by HaCER on urban regeneration are similar to those raised by a network of professionals and elected town officials.

The difficulties are of course related to the vocabulary used and are not just a question of translation. The experience of each member is also a main driving force behind the exchanges. To make their presence felt at European institu-

tion level is another aim. Patrick Darré, deputy mayor of Montreuil whose town played host to us, puts heavy stress on the political relevance of our work. We must give each citizen an active part to play in the management of towns, and at the same time, we must find relays for acting on a higher scale, notably metropolitan areas and Europe. Central organisations are not sufficient for that; networked action is needed.



HaCER, February - June, 2002

Since the Montreuil encounters, the general secretariat has dedicated most of its energy to concretising the financial support promised by the DIV. This took a lot of time and there were a lot of new twists and turns that proved quite difficult because the French government had reported all financing pending the coming presidential and parliamentary elections, which only occurred. This measure results in delays to launch HaCER project.

In order to be able to submit our file, we had to create a registered legal entity, namely, the association «A.C. HaCER,» whose officials are, as things stand, Bernard Fargeot, chairman, Philippe Merlant, secretary, and Michel Joncquel, treasurer. Pierre Mahey is managing the file and Hélène Allée is in charge of the project

...



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