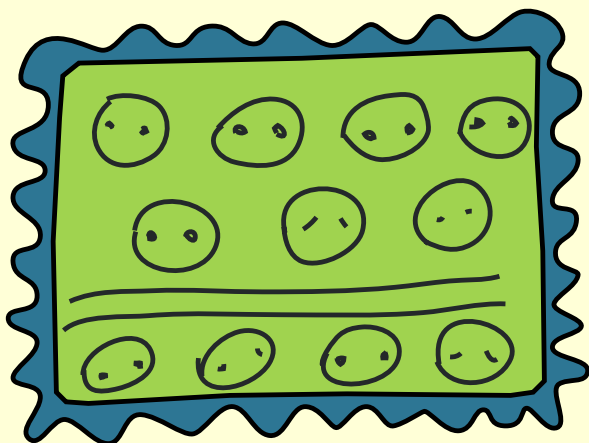




# Bulletin n°1 January 2003



## HaCER current pro- gramme

Since the publication of "bulletin zero" in June, 2002, the HaCER programme has become much busier, and preparations are now under way for a 2003 that looks like being even more dynamic:

In September, 2002, we held a first seminar at the French National Assembly in Paris, focusing on the new mission the Belgian government has asked us to undertake. Immediately following this, participants attended quite a number of meetings at the International Town Festival in Créteil.

Now we are actively preparing a combined show and symposium in Marseille called "townspeople & police for citizenship." Our main partner in this is the MCRS association (Médiation citoyens relais Schebba). The event should lead to a programme on the same theme in Europe's Mediterranean Basin countries, in which several HaCER groups will be involved.

There was a new meeting in Barcelona in mid-December, where the Trinitat Nova group organised a neighbourhood congress, the "Congrès de barri," to look at results and prospects after more than six years' work on a participative project for the renewal of the district.

While all this is going on, the [www.hacer-europe.org](http://www.hacer-europe.org) web site is taking shape and getting livelier every day, with a discussion forum where participants can have direct exchanges.

## HaCER Happy New Year 2003

This bulletin is an opportunity for us to wish all of you our best wishes for a 2003 and to express our hope that the coming year will be full of active citizenship projects and prospects, that it will see the HaCER network grow, with more exchanges of experiences, more meetings, and more shared projects.

We shall be getting together in mid-March in Brussels to promote the idea of citizen participation in urban project schemes with national and European institutions.

Between now and then, we sincerely hope that the HaCER network will provide encouragement for our experiments along with friendly and attentive support.

## HaCER debate

At the September meetings, several important questions were raised and some contrasting points of view came out:



## Rights for the townspeople?

Ferdinando from Unione Borgate proposed that we push Europe to take account of inhabitants' rights, which are notably absent from the European Constitution being drawn up. It can be remarked that great causes, Women's Rights for example, went through such a declarative stage before starting to make any real progress.

Other participants disagree with this and think that a more important priority is to further experience in the field. Their main fear is that European Legislation will be like an injunction from above, not taking specific issues into account and turning out to be more of a hindrance than a help. Our Antwerp friends, in particular, consider that getting townspeople themselves involved is a more pressing matter. Patrick Bodart of Periferia has confirmed that in Brazil, where legislation regarding participation is a lot firmer, many townspeople complain that the practices lack value. They therefore consider it better to develop actions from the ground upwards until they reach a point where common practice engenders new laws.

Are these two points of view really incompatible?

## Representation or involvement

We all live in democracies where representatives are given a long mandate. Many of our representatives, having acquired their mandate, turn their back on their voters until the next election comes round, leaving no room for debate between instalments.

In Tenever, the experience of appointing townspeople delegates for a three-year term came up against a similar problem: those who were not elected could not take an active part. Now the inhabitants are assigned responsibilities on a project-by-project basis. More projects means more involvement. Silvia confirms that this has led to more and more townspeople getting involved.

We can also see the way this system tackles actions with an overall approach, rather than with functional or geographical compartmentation as is so often seen in institutional town management. This brings into question the representative nature of interest groups, who are often the only bodies institutions or housing authorities take any notice of.



## Médiation



In Antwerp, PASH's actions are conducted through social workers paid by the town, though this by no means implies they are bridled. They are fully independent and their projects are defined in conjunction with non-institutional organisations. Because these workers are professionals, they are able to work more effectively.

The Tenever group, on the other hand, notes that there is always a certain wariness when it comes to social workers, who are seen as a

filter and are often considered as being on the side of the institutions. Confidence needs restoring first, and for that, it's no doubt better for people to be present in person at the negotiating table.

## Public safety

This subject keeps cropping up in different districts in different parts of Europe and in different dialogues. Two opposing attitudes arise from the HaCER debates:

In Antwerp, PASH members note that the institution fails to act on, or at least doesn't pay enough attention to this question. Certain organisations from neighbourhoods where a large number of elderly, anxious people live, or where there are lots of burglaries and break-ins, have organised themselves into an "RIQ" — a telephone coverage system operated by the inhabitants themselves and linked with the police and shopkeepers. Their system springs into action immediately any illegal activity is reported in the street.

In Montreuil, on the other hand, one of the reasons the Ensemble notre Quartier group was formed was to avoid this trend. Georgio affirms that public safety must remain a matter for the authorities, otherwise we risk seeing private militia-like groups being formed. An organisation's task is to provide cultural and educational solutions to these issues, not to take over responsibility from the powers that be.

## Unione Borgate's wealth-generating battle



Since its foundation, Unione Borgate in Rome has fought to restore townspeople's rights by bringing their lands under the wing of the town planning authorities. Over 800,000 inhabitants find themselves in the position of living in districts that were built without proper planning permission. This means they are deprived of normal public services in their neighbourhood

After meeting with varying degrees of success in their actions, Unione Borgate is now embarking on a large-scale project. It involves working with the inhabitants of each neighbourhood to produce a development plan in which property owners turn over a substantial part of their land to the city council. This land then becomes a revenue source for the authorities, who will sell the land to families wishing to build. The net profit from this operation will enable the council to finance the necessary public services, utilities, and open spaces for the neighbourhood. The presence of these services will increase the value of each family's private land, and the district will become officially accepted by the authorities.

The administration's response times are, however, tremendously long. The projects are struggling to make progress. Unione Borgate is therefore planning on asking the town authorities to let the townspeople themselves take over the organisation and running of these projects.

## EMB Bloomsbury along with 220 other British groups now has the power to assess and correct actions taken by the public authorities



In Birmingham, the EMB Bloomsbury group plays a decision-making role as part of a measure designed to control the quality of certain services managed by the public authorities.

Within this measure, criteria are established for measuring the value of a provided service (for example, the maintenance of public spaces). On the basis of a contract agreed upon with the local council, performance is regularly monitored.

If objectives are not achieved, the measures allow the task to be awarded to a private concern

instead, with the council paying the invoices.

This new legislation is part of a government initiative to delegate power to local non-institutional organisations. It was implemented after a long period spent thrashing out details and goals with the public authorities.

## Barri Trinitat Nova's congress



On the 12th, 13th, and 14th December, 2002, the neighbourhood organisation Trinitat Nova in Barcelona organised a congress that marked the culmination of six years of projects and struggles. Several representatives from HaCER were able to join in with the people of Barcelona participating in this event.



Neighbourhood residents presented their various urban restructuring and development projects in widely differing forms, from tackling housing and development issues at one end of the spectrum to social, education, and neighbourhood activity issues at the other.



Cooperation with adjoining communities as well as others throughout Europe was one of the last topics discussed.

One of the most impressive aspects of this experience was to see the extent to which the townspeople attending this congress have, thanks to a remarkable public awareness initiative, become caught up in and enlightened about sustainable development matters.



Trinitat Nova's actions go beyond an effective involvement in the district's future: through the ability to motivate and educate residents, it is slowly but surely creating a determined popular movement.



## Townspeople & police for citizenship, with MCRS Marseille

After more than a year of work between the Marseille neighbourhood group MCRS and the National Police Training School, covering among other things a forum-theatre project run by the Naje Company, the city of Marseille will be hosting a combined show and symposium on the 10th and 11th January, 2003. This will be an opportunity for different neighbourhood groups throughout Europe and especially around the Mediterranean to relate their experiences.

PASH from Antwerp, Ensemble Notre Quartier from Montreuil-sous-Bois, and the Tenever neighbourhood association from Bremen will be there representing HaCER, cross-pollinating their experiences with those of the people of Marseille, especially as regards neighbourhood policing via preventive rather than purely punitive steps.

## The HaCER web site, an on-line discussion forum

Using the Internet, information is quick and easy to find. Also, among its many other possibilities, it lets people express themselves, give an account of their actions, exchange points of view, hold a dialogue, and so on. Problems of availability and distance are diminished, and a permanent debate can take place.

That is our aim, and that is what the twin tools of the:  
**www.hacer-europe.org** web site and:  
**forum.hacer-europe.org** discussion forum set out to achieve.

The **web site**, run by arpenteurs, is freely accessible by everyone. This is where HaCER introduces itself, where you can find its diary, rendezvous, reference documents, participants' accounts of their actions, etc. It also gives a brief profile for each participant.

There remains a lot of work, especially translation work, to be done. Some fact sheets regarding actions are in place but quite a few are still missing.

The **Forum**, HaCER's discussion room, is run by the participants. Some of the topics are accessible to anyone who wants to look at them, but most of them are restricted to HaCER group members. They are a means of exchanging experiences among ourselves, discussing projects, taking part in workshops, and collaborating in general. The forum has made a slow start, but already twenty or so participants have registered there and discussions are starting to go places. Ferdinando Cerrina, for example, has submitted texts concerning townspeople's rights and urban renewal in order to set the workshop debates rolling.

These web pages won't interest anyone unless they live and breathe, unless they are kept up to date, and unless they provide a ground for debates and exchanges. Only the HaCER participants themselves can achieve this.

**So, please, keep your pens sharp and your keyboards at the ready!**

## Coming dates:

Combined show and symposium in Marseille on 10th and 11th January, 2003, run by MCRS and entitled "Habitants, Policiers, acteurs de citoyenneté" (Townsppeople & police for citizenship).

A one-day event at Bremen on 22nd January for the 100th meeting of the Stadtteilgruppe, the neighbourhood forum through whom they have already implemented more than 250 projects by consensus decision methods.

The Brussels forum on 14th and 15th March. The No.2 issue of the Bulletin will be published after this forum.

## HaCER prepares for the Brussels forum:

The Belgian Minister of Social Matters, Public Health, and the Environment has asked HaCER to attend the Brussels event and run an international forum on 14th and 15th March, 2003 covering the subject of citizen participation and urban policies in the EU.

This task means being able to present innovative experiences and look at them in a realistic perspective as regards local legislative and regulatory contexts. The "Habitat & Development" organisation from the university of Louvain la Neuve in Belgium has been assigned the job of helping us prepare this forum, along with the "Participatie" group, which works with the larger Belgian towns. Three lines of attack have been proposed for the preparation of this forum:

- participation in political actions
- participation as a vehicle for economic development
- participation as regards education and culture

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