

## UPSIDE DOWN (Genoa, July, 5-8)



The Movement of Educational Cooperation organizes a conference called 'Training building sites' every year at the beginning of July.

This year the stage took place in the city of Genoa, northern Italy and was attended by 130 teachers and educators.

The title of the stage was 'Upside down' and intended to reflect, to experience, to propose unconventional ways of living school and vocational training.

During the meeting we dealt with different educational viewpoints on school, cities, and world.

### LOCATION

The course took place in the Garaventa- Don Gallo school, near Luzzatti park in the center of Genoa. The plenaries were held in the halberds room and in the town hall.

### MEANINGS

We explored a lot of possible meanings of 'upside down' seen as a new approach to teaching: the relationship between teachers and pupils, the order and importance of school subjects, the organization of the class and school, the relations between groups and social classes, the presence of other cultures, the relations between the north and south of the world, the relationships between, living organisms on the planet.

### WELCOMING PEOPLE

On the first day participants were welcomed, they were given folders, the materials to work with together with the instructions to go sightseeing around the city following the clues regarding the characteristic places

of the city. Some groups had to visit the updown area, other groups had to explore the downtown part. They visit from the the Roman Genoa through the Genoa Medieval up the nineteenth- century city. Than they met at the final meeting point.

When participants have arrived and have enrolled, he was handed a folder with their course materials and a card describing the path to small groups had to do in the old town. They going sightseeing around the town and they have orienting according to the clues: the Roman Genoa through the Genoa Medieval up the nineteenth-century Genoa.

#### THE PLENARY MEETING

The conference began with a plenary meeting in the halberds room. The organizers presented the course and the planning. Two members of the staff sang a song 'Sand creek' by Fabrizio De Andrè, a genoese singer and songwriter.

The speeches and the welcoming of the councilor to education were interspersed with readings on the theme selected. In the end, professor Fabio Bocci, University of Rome, held a lecture on the topic 'For an inclusive school'.

#### THE COOPERATIVE DINNER

According to the tradition of our association, in the evening we had a cooperative dinner on the terrace of the Garaventa school.

Despite a few drops of rain, we enjoyed a wonderful wiew of the city from up there and we tasted regional food offered by the participants. It was a good start followed by other shared moments during the workshop.

#### THE WORKSHOPS



The following day began the five laboratories provided for each animated by two members of the team. In each workshop there were 20 to 25 participants.

Workshops lasted from 9:00 to 13:00 in the morning and from 15:30 to 17:30 in the afternoon for two days for a total of 14 hours.



A workshop had the theme of children's literature (plural identities stories); a laboratory starting from the story of a Italian storyteller, Ascanio Celestini, 'the indian row teacher', proposed to work on diversity and difference with the technique of puppet theater; a scientific laboratory was in charge of forces and measurements; a workshop had as its theme the invisible and imaginary cities, starting from the book 'Altrondo'; the fifth workshop 'Democracy and organization' had as its theme the class as a cooperative structure and the relation with external reality through the experience of a radio.

All participants of the course, including many young people, have actively participated in the workshops.



#### THE WORD CAFÉ'

In the second part of the afternoon, from 18:00 to 19:30, the groups were mixed to form ten new groups called 'wordcafé' (groups in which tell of their experiences in the workshops).

The technique of mixing the members of a group forming other groups- two for each one laboratory-in 'cooperative learning' methodology is called 'jigsaw'.

Purpose of wordcafé was to offer the opportunity to know the set of laboratory proposed, to reflect on experiments carried out to analyze the possible embodiments and introductions of the techniques learned at school.

The conductors of wordcafé posed to the participants some questions around the strengths that the team defines as 'poles' of shipyards (while the laboratories are the horizontal structures, the plans): teaching techniques, knowledge, relationships, the education for citizenship and democracy.



On each of these four aspects, which correspond metaphorically to the cardinal points of a 'compass' that represents the school today, wordcafé participants are invited to write a word, a thought on the postit.

The expressions collected in the two sessions of Word cafe will feed, hanging on the big compass prepared by the team, in the final plenary.

#### THE EVENINGS

One evening there was a meeting relating to the activities carried out the 'Nettle theater' ( 'teatro dell'ortica'). It was held by the director Anna Solaro who is psychiatrist and an ex-patient of the mental hospital who plays in the acting company. We were particularly moved by his history.

In the final evening we attended in other meeting characterized by discussions among authors of books for children.

Then in the square in front of the town hall there was concert performed by a palestinian group of students.

All participants and tourists danced all night long.

#### THE FINAL PLENARY- THE HUGE COMPASS

At the end of the conference we participated in the town hall and we received interesting feed-back about the workshops seen as an opportunity to develop new ideas, to share experience and to get the energy to accomplish any project.

On the compass each group of word café hang pieces of coloured papers with new ideas on according to the four cardinal points proposed by the staff.

In the end the staff watched a video highlighting the most important moments of this event.

#### PARTICIPANTS FEEDBACK

Besides in this video you can listen to some feedback by participants interviewed at the beginning and the end of conference. The interviewees expressed their idea about the theme 'Upside down' and evaluated the experience.

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