

MIRAFLORES PARK EXPERIENCE, SEVILLA, Spain

1.- Miraflores, Pro-educational Park Committee

The Miraflores Pro-educational Park Committee was created in 1983 as a citizen support group for building Miraflores Park. In the beginning the Committee was a platform of other associations and movements from the Macarena neighbourhoods.

Macarena's area is extramural and is located in the north part of Seville. Most of the Macarena's neighbourhoods were built during the Spanish real estate boom (1970s), and traditionally the area of Macarena was an agricultural zone for the provision of food and water to the old town of Seville. Many neighbourhoods were named with the names of the *Cortijos* (country estates) and market gardens. These new zones were populated by people coming from the rural areas (rural exodus, 1970s). This is during the time when many agricultural workers coming from the *Latifundios* (large cultivation estates) became industrial workers in the city.

The Committee was the movement which led the struggle of Miraflores Park and today it is the association that manages and promotes the experience of the educational park.

Different levels of participation in the Committee:

- Staff: approximately ten people, volunteers and project workers
- *Huerta* (vegetable garden), "Las Moreras" Programme (since 1991)
- Training and vocational school for youth (since 1992)
- Associations and social movements Network from Macarena's area. The main role is played by the parents associations, deeply involved in the educational allotments for children. They support the Committee's demands.

2.- Practice

One of the main struggles organised by the Committee was "how to design a park for/by the population and with the population". The main question was "What did Miraflores Park want, need and wish?" The Committee organised different meetings with associations and groups of children and young people, and exhibitions to get proposals for the Park. Most of them contained the idea of one area dedicated to urban agriculture with allotments for children and people in general. The idea had more of an identity and cultural dimension, rather than an economical one.

"Huertas Las Moreras" Programme:

It occupies around 5 hectares (included the agricultural emblematic buildings), with 167 allotments (around 150 m² each one). The Programme introduced four different projects:

- **Educational allotments:** It benefits 250 children from primary school, every academic year. This is organised by the Committee with the parents associations. Thematic: traditional and ecological agriculture.

- **Young Green House:** Benefits around 50 youngsters who had the experience of the allotment and want to continue working in agriculture in the park.

- **Leisure allotments;** There are 157 allotments based on participation, communitarian work, ecological growing techniques and self consumption.

- **Pedagogy Route (Park Itinerary):** A tour about the Heritage buildings and the current history of the struggles for the Miraflores Park.

“Miraflores” Training School: Since 1992 the School is using the park as an instrument for training the youth of the Macarena’s neighbourhoods.

The Future → The whole project including the agricultural component is far from being completed, it is a process of changing the reality; the local economy, the quality of life, health and the environment... We are questioning how to integrate a participatory process generated through the struggle into the new model of the park, based on participatory governance. We are working with the University in the documentation of this process.

3.- Dimensions

In Miraflores Park, urban agriculture addresses a combination of the three dimensions:

1.- Social inclusion. Children, youth, people with special needs, women who work or participate in parents associations and the elderly are involved and participate actively in the project.

2.- Leisure for the urban population. Culture and identity for old population coming from the rural exodus.

3.- Economic dimension. Generating jobs, quality of life and welfare.

4.- Summary of my experience:

I arrived to the experience five years ago (2004), as a worker for the Park’s training school. We work with young people, between 16 and 24 years old that did not finish compulsory school. The park is an instrument for an educational process which has a course of two years duration. In it, the youth learn to work and support the cultural activities of the park.

All the different activities of the Committee create some conflicts between the public administration (city council and political parties) and the Association; it is a conflict of governance.

The population applied for permission to increase the number of allotments, because there are currently more than 100 people in the waiting list. There is a large demand and the current provision is limited. However, the demand is in all the city of Seville. Many neighbourhoods are creating an “Allotments Programme”, other popular and workers

areas have started to formulate a similar experience (like Alcosa and Torreblanca neighbourhoods).

5.- So far we have not opened the reflection on the current food crisis. However, we have worked other related topics:

- Health and food, GM food, Traditional and Ecological Agriculture, Welfare; all of them through social participation.

It is important to empower and to foster the **autonomy** of the population, like creating spaces for recovering tradition and identity.

6.- Challenges: A more integrated and participatory governance.

The framework and the base of the process is a participatory action for changing the context, our local reality. This is a political process which could demonstrate the importance of the Citizen's Organization.

7.- Contact:

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