

The Book's Pharmacy [*La Botica del Libro*] is a project made by young people and addressed to young people and to the rest of population of our nearest communities. The main aim of the project is to promote the integration starting from the reading field in two neighbourhoods of the city of Cartagena [Murcia] with special social characteristics. It means, an action dealing with the dynamization in areas with social inclusion and intercultural integration aims.

We have called it The Book's Pharmacy as we consider books to be "medicines for the soul" and the same each physical condition has a chemical remedy, there is a suitable book for every soul condition. Instead of a librarian, the pharmacist of every pharmacy prescribes the suitable book to the neighbors of his community, who are considered as members of the Pharmacy [*Botica*] throughout activities in the interest of the community, training activities about books and high technology, loaning books activities in the street and loaning books in the residence of people with mobility problems (and reading out for disable people) by young volunteers.

The project has constituted these two new local libraries in these two neighbourhoods of the city which are administered by two youth associations, thanks to the books donations by different citizens, bookshops and libraries. These two libraries mean a public space promoting the meeting of all the cultures living together in the same area of the city, making easier the access to culture by the teenagers of these areas and organizing different activities in favour of the integration of young people with social integration problems.

And so, the *Boticas* offer different permanent services held by volunteers and a complete planning of cultural and leisure activities:

Services to the community:

- Books loaning
- "The *Botica* goes home". Young volunteers read out for disabled people or people with certain difficulties.
- "The Book's Hospital" donated books in bad conditions are restored and incorporated to the funds of the *Boticas*.
- "Traveller First aid kit": loaning of sets of book to associations or groups of people or to people with mobility problems.
- Books collection: citizens realize how important may be to donate books.
- School Lessons to support students.
- Intercultural mediation.

Developed activities:

- Creative reading and writing workshop.
- I short tales of the World contest.
- Bookbinding and restoration workshop.
- Audio-visual means workshop.
- Introductory course on Internet.
- Women's workshop on erotic tales.
- Visit to the Municipal Library.
- Storyteller in several languages.
- Meeting with writers: we have meet Rosa Montero thanks to Mandarache's Project
- Celebration of the Book's Day.
- Visit to *TVE* and to the regional Film Library.
- "Books in the street": books loaning in

Books as social medicine. Our project is based on "healing with books", throughout "prescription-books" that we think suitable for our readers. It consists of offering the possibility to the members of our libraries to establish a humane and sensitive relationship with books, which are instrument for positively building their reality. In this way, *LA BOTICA* represents an agent for the changing and dynamization of the social environment and an instrument in favour of the intercultural exchange and the better knowing of cultures.

Our *Botica* expects to provide investigation resources for finding information about education, information and entertainment processes for our neighbors. But most of all, our library may be the perfect instrument to avoid exclusion situations and the perfect intercultural exchange instrument.

Of course we find necessary the development of initiatives like the ones of "*La Botica*", whose implementation means the access for everyone, initiatives generating social interaction and promoting integrative attitudes, positive leisure activities, respecting the goods of the community and making easier to create in the imagination of the participants a positive view to identify with. Our project works out well and the proof of it is that **nowadays the "*Boticas*" still offer their activities and services to these neighbourhoods.**

Outcome

The results of the project have been in many aspects much better than what we expected. Thanks to the collaboration of the Youth Programme and the Cartagena's City Council we have made this two popular libraries work, with donated bibliographic funds and with our own funds, which comes to more than 9000 books in Spanish, Russian, English, French and Arabic.

However, the most important thing is that our *Boticas* begin to play an important roll as a public space and as a meeting point. They are, in many circumstances, the "living room" for many women and children of our neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, many members of the community have approached our resources and activities, and not only the teenagers of the community have joined "*La Botica del Libro*" but also, people of different ages, including adults and children who have taken part actively throughout the development of the project. We have also managed to involve a great number of immigrants of different ages and countries, attracted by the books written in their own mother tongue that we have in our *Botica*.

Impact

In Jose M^a Lapuerta, one of the neighbourhoods participant, the approximation to the European values such as coexistence, conscience to plurality, and knowledge about other countries has been important. There has been a constant flow of people from different countries, some of them being members of the European Union and some of them not: coming up from Morocco, Eastern Europe, South America... We have achieved a relationship between them, especially among teenagers, children and women. This *Botica* has meant a place for intercultural meeting, interchange and learning.

The *Botica* of Lo Campano, the other neighbourhood, an slum area with an important social degradation and even an area with healthiness problems, is the only option for culture and leisure and the only common place in which order, cleanliness and silence are respected.

Both areas have considered their *Boticas* as original, funny, useful places, respected by society positively. The *Botica* have nowadays more than 250 users. Currently, ***La Botica* is the only project we know that develops the social and cultural integration throughout reading promotion and in general throughout books.**

From its beginning, this project leans on the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth, especially on those values referred to social inclusion, intercultural richness and the fight against discrimination and those referred to social participation and active citizenship by young people.

<p>On 27th February 2007, our loved project <i>La Botica del Libro</i> has been one of the winners of the national award "Young People with convictions" from Fundación Obra Social La Caixa.</p>
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