

BENEFACTANCE OR SOLIDARITY?

The solidarity fights for the beneficiary to have "his own voice"

In the book "La institución del Voluntariado" [The institution of Volunteering] by Antonio Madrid, the author distinguishes between benefactance and solidarity. Benefactance is understood as a charity act that depends on the benefactor subjectivity and ability to grant favours, it would be like "being the voice of those who have not voice". However, the term solidarity moves away from the charity and relates it to the social rights of the action beneficiary; it would be to try to fight for the beneficiary "to have his own voice".

Usually, in cooperation and volunteering scopes, it is necessary to "be voice of those who have not voice", that is, benefactance is needed. However, it can easily become an alibi if this voice that we give does not correspond with the words that would be said by the one that has no voice or if we really use it to raise our voice on behalf of a false benefactance or if this voice that we give does not affect our life. However, solidarity has a lower alibi margin, because they are the beneficiaries themselves those who after a mutual learning and helping process raise their own voice: there are no intermediaries.

For a real solidarity to take place, a previous benefactance step is often needed. We do not want to underestimate the benefactance,

editorial

but we don't want either to oversize it: a benefactance without the solidarity as an horizon, understood as the effort to help the beneficiaries to "have their own voice" and talk by themselves, is suspicious and questionable and in a long-term future it will probably become sterile and responsible for the persistence of social injustices.

Form our small ONGD and in spite of our limitations and lacks, we want to keep on betting on solidarity better than on benefactance. In that sense, within our links with Makhado communities (South Africa) and as we announced in the bulletin communications of April-June, we have initiated a new stage by granting a scholarship to a boy of the region: Rabelani Sinthumule. This scholarship pretends to give him a University education that might revert afterwards on his personal, professional and communal life. This scholarship only obliges us for his first educational year and then, depending on his results and our economical capacity we hope to renovate it. It is not the aim of our ONGD to give scholarships indiscriminately as we don't have the economical capacity for it and also because we do not believe in an "anonymous solidarity". It is one of our identity goals to share and grow together with the person who will benefit from our commitment. With Rabelani's scholarship we are also at stake.

The Council

THE HOUSING PROBLEM AND THE SOSTRE CÍVIC

Housing accommodations have gone from being a consumer good to being an investment tool

One of the most important social problems in Catalonia and in the majority of the Spanish State is the unceasing and progressive increase in the cost of housing. In the last ten years, the cost of an accommodation's square meter has increased by 17% per year, where a flat that used to run for about 120.000€ today costs more than 500.000€.

Salaries have obviously not increased to more than 3% per year so, although the cost of money has become cheaper, the economic position of the average citizen to be able to buy their own place is progressively reduced each year. In other words, the chance to find affordable housing gets harder as the days go by; is now more often found further and further away from the urban centres; and sometimes it's even null.

One could think that renting is the alternative, however, with this alternative there is the problem of scarce availability and that the cost of renting has had a parallel rise to the cost of purchasing. Therefore, one can hardly rent a place for less than 800€ in Barcelona, Spain.

This is a dramatic and overwhelming situation, especially for the majority of our society's young people. Housing accommodations have gone from being a consumer good to being an investment tool. Apartments and houses have gone from being purchased for the proprietor's use to being purchased for the purpose of investing some money. This is mainly caused by a very specific economic policy supported by the reduction of the cost of money.

Only families with a good economic position are able to bear the cost of purchasing their own place (housing proprietorship serves as an instrument of social differentiation and as the main family asset) along with local and foreign investors (motivated by the 90's stock exchange decrease and the ease for the construction business to cleanse „under the

thoughts

table“ money with the arrival of the euro).

Today's cost of housing is not ruled by the laws of supply and demand, but by the „market value,“ just like the Telephonic shares, although it is a universal right recognized by the Spanish Constitution.

It is a problem that does not get solved because there is not a clear political will to do it.

Simply by recording the capital gain generated by the housing dealing or the possession of inhabited housing (to give an example), the problem would take an important turn in no time. Regardless of it all, this political will is nowhere to be found, and it looks like it's not going to happen in mid-term.

The SostreCívic association arises in Barcelona at the beginning of 2004 as a society's response to the housing problem. It is an initiative to promote and develop a new model for housing accessibility and affordability, not speculative nor reproductive, based on the 90 years of Denmark experience on the well known „Andel“ model, and exploiting all of it's potential in regards to ecology and social integration.

The model consist in a system of non-profit co-operatives by which housing proprietorship always resides in the hands of the co-operative, where their members participate in and have the right to an indefinite use of the accommodation through an initial amount of money down and an economical rental. This right to use may be given in inheritance and may be exchanged, and the initial amount of money down is refundable. It is a „middle of the road“ model between the conventional rental and the proprietorship that enables the opening of a new park or housing parallel to the existing one. Housing that may only serves for their use and that are banned from investment and speculation.

If you are interested in co-operating or signing in for the list of interested individuals write to: sostrecivic@moviments.net; for more information go to www.sostrecivic.org.

Diego Carrillo Messa
Member of SostreCívic
Tanger (Morocco), October 2005

REPORT OF THE „MAS” PROJECT FROM SOUTH AFRICA

What has been done?

1. A building with two classrooms, a small living room and bathrooms. This building was finished in January 2005. Since the beginning of March the building is used for psychic disabled boys, girls and young adults of Madombidzha and other neighbouring towns (School of children in need of special care). At the moment there are 45 students and 4 teachers in the school. Among these teachers, there is a well-trained nun, Sister Elite, who has all the studies required to qualify for this activity. This nun comes from Kerala (India), where she has worked for several years in a similar school. Sister Elite is also the school's principal. We wanted to use this building as soon as possible, since the old school, also in the mission's land and located 200 meters away from the present school, was really small and in precarious conditions.

The new building is very pleasant; the children, with the help of the teachers, have planted flowers and water them so that, in a near future, trees may be planted. At this time, however, our province suffers a terrible drought and a heat that surpasses the usual average temperature for this season. We are impatiently waiting the rains.

2. It has not been possible to finish the large building: the dining room. It is as it was left in September 2004 after the labour camp of the volunteers of "Clam per the Dignitat". Only the ceiling and the windows are missing, as well as some other small details. No doubt it will be a nice building, we hope it can be fully used soon!

3. The second building of classrooms, whose foundations are already finished, is ready for the construction of the walls. We would like to finish the works as soon as we have the chance to do so.

4. The foundations for the small buildings that are planned for the garden have already been done. Nevertheless we will have to wait in order to finish their construction.

5. The water piping is already in use to obtain water for the children. So far, we have taken all the technical-administrative steps to be able to receive water from the connection with the town of Madombidzha.

- Effects of the project on the community

1. The children that use these buildings are psychical disabled. A 90% of them come from a poor or a very poor environment. Their age range goes from 10 to 19 years. These boys and girls must be picked up by the nuns at their homes, and the nuns have devoted themselves to the task of convincing their parents that these school workshops are good for the children. The kids go happily to the school-workshop and the parents are also very happy.

2. We have also used the buildings for a children's camp, which lasted a total of eight days (between the end of June and the beginning of July). The kids came from all the towns where we have groups of children. At the same time, these children invited other children, poorer, abandoned or orphans. There were 124 children in total, 30 of which were from the poorest

experiences

families. Those in charge of the children during the camp were 25 young monitors, who usually take care of them.

3. Now, since the buildings are available, we shall use them for other encounters of children and young adults.

- Effects of the project on the inhabitants of the town

It is important to know that everybody in town knows of the existence of the school, for it represents a lot for the communication. Everyone values the school as a testimony of the nuns' mercy. Nowadays the school is part of the daily life. One of the nicest experiences in relation to our work happened one day, while the children were in their annual excursion, far away, some 100 km away from the city – most of them never had left their town and never taken a train. A policeman approached one of the nuns and told her: "Dear sister, ¡thanks for everything that you do for our children!". The policeman did not know the children and simply saw them next to the nuns. With regard to the local authority, they are very happy with this school and they are thinking on building a school for healthy children next to another special school (inclusive school).

The school has improved the children's lives. On the first instance, the children are happy: they are proud of their uniform and of their school. This was especially evident when they participated in some kind of "Special Olympics" of the region. The school intends that these kids become as autonomous as possible. In this new school we want to make a vegetable garden as soon as possible, so that the kids can learn how to work in it. Our desire is to open in the future a small carpenter's workshop adequate to our possibilities.

- Thank you

We would like to give our most sincere thanks to the "Ordesa" foundation and to the youth of the NGO "Clam per la Dignitat". This is a very ambitious project that the Carmelite sisters of Kerala have in their heart. Our gratitude for the economical support that, together with the young people in Barcelona, has permitted this project to become real. We would like to continue working in this project, especially in the framework of the friendship that we have with the youths from Barcelona. In the beginning we had some difficulties, due to the different opinions in respect of the emplacement of the buildings and also about the way of developing its construction. Today we intend to continue this project at any cost.

Thank you for your support, which partly goes to the children through your friendship, especially to those kids, who apparently



have no place in this society of ours. They are all very happy of the beauty of what has been done so far. We know, nevertheless, that often the terms agreed have not been complied and that the work has taken longer than it was supposed to, something usual in a country like ours. God bless you! We appreciate each contribution from you and we hope to go on counting on your support.

- My personal appraisal

As the priest responsible for the parish, where the school of Madombidzha is located, I can only say that I have a dream. I hope the contribution of the Carmelite sisters of Kerala together with the aid of this school and of its global work of mercy are fruitful for these children and their families. Along with the children and their families, that often live a relation of ingratitude and that you know, the children are precursors. Nowadays there are great numbers of families in our environment that live in a situation of critical poverty. We cannot forget the families affected by the AIDS virus. The number of orphans is on the rise and the Church in our country is in the vanguard of the fight against it. This work does not only consist in a work of mercy, but also in a work of education, especially for the children. It also offers a possibility for us to

expand the good news according to our beliefs.

Yes, this project is like a dream for all our apostolic team. And we would like this dream to continue and become a reality. As for me, I would like to be able to build something for the orphans or for kids with difficult family situations, particularly a small technical school with a garden for the families with AIDS. The sisters would create a school next to an orphanage for sick people without resources.

We have no fear. The land is vast enough, more than twelve hectares. We have the support of the inhabitants of the town as well as of the Catholic community. We know that a business of this kind needs time. It will face difficulties, but we believe that our community is called to this task. This project is not only limited to the community of our town, but it also includes a wider community. The towns around are very large and in the surroundings they are more than 25.000 inhabitants. God bless this project. We can count on the cooperation of the Congregation of the Carmelite sisters of Kerala and they are prepared to bring all the nuns necessary to make this project go ahead.

André Stephan, msc

communication

- Last Sunday, October 16th, the annual ordinary General Assembly of "Clam per la Dignitat" corresponding to the year 2005 was celebrated. The management carried on last year was approved, the goals for the present season were introduced and the Council was modified partially: Bea Valer, Juan Sols and Pedro Sols give up the Council; Viola Durán joins it as Secretary.

- Last Monday, October 3rd, the annual ordinary General Assembly of "Claim for Dignity"-Germany was celebrated.

The meeting was very positive; the possibility to open a new project was studied and doing something in Germany is not discarded. The Directive Board has been re-elected again for one more year (Andreas Simon, Michael Schliep and Édison Fañanás).

- At the end of October the final report of the "MaS" project was delivered to the Ordesa Foundation. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

- Last 16th of November, Javier Julve Pagola finally presented his career's final project, a software program that manages the 'Claim for Dignity' database, executable from Internet. Our more sincere gratitude to him and to his director of thesis, professor Xavier Canaleta, from the IT department of the faculty of Engineering and Architecture "La Salle", University Ramon Llull of Barcelona.

- Would you like to help us in the elaboration of this quarterly bulletin? Give us your opinion; send us your opinions or news in the form of articles or simple notifications. Tell about us. We are free! Tell us how you prefer to receive the bulletin (by e-mail or postal mail). In addition, we need translators from Catalan to Spanish (or vice versa). If you want to help us, contact our secretary (clamdignitat@clamdignitat.org).

- Saturday 10th of December we will celebrate the Christmas' meeting of "Claim for Dignity" at Sabine Molling's home, at Aich/Aichtal. All the members and supporters are invited. Confirmation is required (claimfordignity@claimfordignity.org).

- The next 2nd of January, at 20:00 hr, we will celebrate the Christmas meeting in our premises in Sant Just. We will share a dinner-meeting: all the members and supporters of "Clam per la Dignitat" are invited. Confirmation is required (clamdignitat@clamdignitat.org).

- Merry Christmas and Happy 2006 to all our members, friends and benefactors!

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