

Reflection



Looking back on the last two weeks, I can say that the Intensive Programme in Barcelona was everything it promised to be: a (very) intense and busy programme, but filled with the most surprising discoveries and the most wonderful experiences.

First of all, I've learned a great deal about how a city can be discovered, using the senses. What was special to me, was that even I, who has lived in a city for most of my life, learned that so many places and squares and little details, such as balconies for example, are taken for granted when you walk around in your hometown, whereas walking in a city that is strange to you, focusing on specific elements, requires all your attention and activates all your senses. You basically get a total different picture than when you would just 'walk by'. That's why I found the workshop about the *genius loci*, where we tried to find the spirit of a place and from there on come up with creative ideas to let other people experience the place in the same way, so interesting. It allowed me to take a look at the *Plaza del Sol* as probably, I like to imagine, no-one has done before. I can't wait to walk through Antwerp when I get back home, because I am sure that I will now look at my city from a different angle, seeing new things and, that's for sure, (re)discover it, on my own and with children.



Another thing I've learned is that music is the key to communicate with each other, or to bond for that matter, over the barrier of different cultures and languages. We did not only experience this in our workshops, using musical warm-up exercises, body percussion, canon singing, ... also when making the transfer to our Spanish class, music proved to be a great ice-breaker and it helped to let the kids feel more at ease with their 'new teachers'.

One of the workshops that will stay with me forever, is the flashmob we did with the whole group on Saturday. After a good hour of training in the monastery, we went out in the city to perform as a group. It was the most intense experience, as everyone of the group was completely focused and 'in the moment'.

We had a lot of interest from the people on the street, which made everything even more intense. I can't recall the amount of times that I've seen a flashmob and thought: "That is something I want to do once in my life." I don't need to tell you that I am very happy that I got the opportunity to do this with this great group of nice people.

This brings me to the intercultural level, on which I have learned some things as well. Communication in a group with such a big variety of languages has proven to be difficult in some cases, but I've learned that it is possible when everybody shows respect and patience. Still, I've also experienced how big of a limitation it can be when you're not able to express yourself, because you just don't speak the language. I noticed this especially in (and out of) the Spanish classroom with the children. Eventually we were able to let them understand what we wanted them to do, but it took us more than words: it took our body, it took every Spanish word we knew, it took the strangest gestures, ... But it worked! Also during some lectures we experienced the same problem, which has taught me a lot about how non-native speakers feel in a class, where they don't understand everything that is being said and where they find it hard to express themselves. This might be one of the biggest lessons I have learned during this programme.

It was so interesting to meet so many people from different countries, with different backgrounds, yet often with the same ideas, wishes and dreams, when it comes to *'the ideal school'* for example. I've had many interesting talks with all different kind of people and it was eye-opening to learn that there are so many differences, f.e. when it comes to educational systems, ways of living, ... What was the most surprising to me though, were *the little things*, the little differences: that one gets paid to study in Denmark f.e., which was quite unusual for me.

Next to all the differences, this international group shared a lot of things in common as well. We were all equally interested and enthusiastic, all eager to learn and to meet new people. It was a very nice and dynamic group and I am sure that I kept a few friends for life. Oh yes, of course: the five year olds in Spain are just as cute and nice to work with as the Belgian ones.

To conclude, I can say that this IP in Barcelona has made me grow on different levels. It was an experience that has made me stronger as a future teacher and more patient and understanding as a person. I will look back at this IP with great memories and I've lost my heart to Barcelona, a wonderful city.