

Forum in Vienna on Culture and Creative Economy as Bases for Sustainability

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Vienna, Austria - "Culture and Creative Economy as Basic Elements for Sustainability" was the topic of a forum at the Vienna International Center (UN offices in Vienna) on July 5. It was part of a broad celebration "Austria Brasil em Movimento - CarnaVieira 2013" organized by ABRASA, an Austro-Brazilian and Afro-Brazilian organization that fosters education, cultural activities, and social integration.



To start the program Peter Jam, a young musician and UPF Ambassador for Peace, presented his song: "If You Want Love, If You Want Peace ..." which he had sung on his tour through European capitals during the past month. He was followed by a German-Brazilian performance of the group Maracatu Nation Stern der Elbe, which had come from Hamburg for the CarnaVieira festival and performed the next day in a street festival marching and dancing through the main shopping street of Vienna.



Peter Haider, president of the Universal Peace Federation in Austria, welcomed an audience of 150 people and expressed his gratitude towards the UN and all partner organizations for their help in facilitating this event. He reminded the audience that the UN proclaimed the first decade of the 21st century and the third millennium, the years 2001 to 2010, as the International Decade for the Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. And countries in South America experienced most of the time in history periods without wars and violence among nations. So as Europeans we can learn from them. He also quoted a statement by the Brazilian theologian and writer Leonardo Boff, who mentioned that he saw more happiness in the eyes of poor children in the *favelas* of Rio than in the faces of Europeans.

Dr. Leo Gabriel served as the chairman of the first session. As a social anthropologist and a expert on Latin America, he spoke about the importance of the culture of indigenous and black people in Latin America. He tried to make a connection between what we understand as culture and creativity and how it relates to sustainability.



As a first panel speaker Queila Rosa Panstingl, ABRASA casa do Brasil, spoke about the vision and activities of her Afro-Brazilian NGO: “Through my work I wanted to make the Brazilians, who live in Vienna to become visible. We Brazilians are hyper-active and always want to do something. I specially wanted to help the women, and among them those who suffer from domestic violence. I also want to show to our country of Brazil how well we could integrate here in Vienna. There are 28,000 Brazilians living in Vienna. We need new opportunities; that’s why I asked the government to work out new strategies for integration. We would like to create opportunities for the migrants to be productive her in Austria. That’s why we need to cooperate with each other. Yesterday we had a conference about tourism and economy. There are many possibilities in tourism. We promote tourism from Brazil to Austria. Another very important point for the migrants is education and the acquisition of the local language.”



Then Ernst Woller from the Vienna city council spoke about the role of cultural activities in Vienna, a city of migrants and cultural plurality: “Vienna is a city of culture, but also a city of peace. It is one of the four UN headquarters in the world, which hosts several important UN organizations. Vienna is also a city where numerous international congresses that take place throughout the year. Tourism is growing 5% per year.

Last year there were more than 11 million overnight stays in Vienna. About integration: Vienna has 1.8 million inhabitants; 41% of them are with a migration background, which is defined by the fact that young people have at least one parent who was not born in Austria. We consider this as a great opportunity, not as an obstacle or a threat.

The city of Vienna has also successfully supported foreigners to learn the German language. The city council organizes language courses especially for mothers with children, and many different kinds of financial support are provided for attending these courses. Culture is one of the strongest attributes connected to Vienna: 50% of all international media coverage about Vienna is relating to culture. Culture, therefore, has become an important economic factor. There are more than 100 theaters and 300 museums here; 20 million tickets are sold yearly for cultural events. This is 40 times more than for soccer matches. The open-air festival on the Danube Island is the largest in the world of its kind. The aspect of cultural plurality is naturally included in many of these programs and the city is providing sponsorship for intercultural programs. They are so many that we don’t count them separately."



As a final speaker, Antonio Cancado de Araujo, a Brazilian who lives in France and works there in tourism, spoke about “Brazilian Culture in France” in a very personal manner. He is also an artist, a painter, and photographer. He had brought the colorful paintings and photos which were displayed on the wall of the UN board room. "What do we want? We do not only want to eat and drink, we want to live! I feel honored to be able to speak to you here in the UN! I even brought my paintings and photos with me. For 25 years I have been living in France. I am always in search of something. The Brazilian people are very creative, and despite many difficulties they are always optimistic. I myself am the same. I always see the glass half full, not half empty. We can choose to be happy. We have a thousand reasons for it. Fight for happiness! Find a reason every day to be happy! Sometimes we are in situations of uncertainty, but we have to move on!" After his statement he introduced the exhibition: "Bahia, Menina dos Olhos do Brasil."



The discussion and questions from the audience focused on ideas for better support for NGOs and artists by government institutions.



To start the program after the break, the dance group Jeroky Paraguay entertained the audience with two traditional dances in their colorful national costumes.



Mag.^a Corinna Pummer, representing Aufwind Peru, an NGO working inspired by the Andean condor in aiding Peruvian children, was the chair for the second session.

As a first speaker Dr. Gerardo Thadeu, member of the Brazilian Parliament and the Human Rights Commission in Brasilia, spoke about Migration to and from Brazil. "I am very happy for the opportunity to speak to you today! I'm representing the President of the Brazilian Parliament. In the Congress we discuss a lot about culture and creative economy. To support the migrants is very close to my heart. Brazil is a very interesting country: decades ago it accepted migrants from all over the world, from Europe, from Japan and China. They have contributed greatly to the Brazilian culture. Twenty years ago Brazilians started to migrate to other countries. Four million Brazilians live outside of Brazil today. Sometimes they have undergone great difficulties. Today many Haitians try to get into Brazil, due to the devastation by the earthquake caused some years ago. We try to help them all, but we also appeal to other countries to help. Besides, many people from Africa, Peru, and Venezuela seek to move to Brazil. I am glad to meet Austrian people! I saw that they are happy people, even if they express it differently than we Brazilians would do. Finally, I would like to assure you that as long as I am a politician I will make efforts to make life better for all migrants!"



Then Dr. Jorge Portugal spoke about the Carnival in Bahia, Its History and Importance for Blocos Afros: "My city is the oldest city of Brazil, the place where the most ancient traces of population could be found in Brazil. When the Portuguese occupied this country they found 4 million indigenous people whom they could not enslave. That's why they brought slaves from Africa into this region, mainly from Angola. The tradition of the carnival came from Europe to Brazil as a celebration before the 40 days of Lent in which no meat was to be eaten. Music and dance became an important element of the Carnival. At the beginning, Carnival was held only in some areas of Brazil, and later it spread all over the country. In 1928 the first samba school was established. This kind of black rhythm became prevalent at the Carnival. In 1950 people in Bahia were celebrating the Carnival, and it had already spread to all the other regions as well. The atmosphere at the Carnival is unique. Everybody participates, everybody dances on the street. Lorries with musicians who play the electric guitar drive through the streets, and people dance to the music. The Brazilian music has many African influences, because so many Africans were brought to Brazil. Some decades ago they started to establish special clubs for the people with African roots. Almost all of these clubs have social functions: people can learn to play an instrument or join a Capoeira group. The Afro-Brazilian culture is important for Brazil, and I am happy that I could tell you a little about it.



Dr. Marineide Araújo addressed the topic of the Responsibility of Governments to Support Cultural Diversity. "The Brazilian government created tax reductions for companies that are involved in culture. They also support the work of NGOs by reserving 6% of the tax proceeds for them. Education is another area that the Brazilian government considers very important: 10% of the income from oil is invested in education. We have good universities, but we are planning to create more. We have also increased the number of schools which provide professional education for crafts persons or specialized jobs in other areas. The creative economy means to support cultural projects. Our art has to be presented to the public through culture."



To conclude the conference Peter Haider presented Ambassador for Peace certificates to some speakers and famous artists who helped with CarnaVieira 2013. He referred to the founder of the Universal Peace Federation: "Rev. Moon was a great fan of Brazil. After he had become famous in the USA he suddenly moved to a small farm house in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul near the Pantanal in Brazil. He lived there for several years and taught that the true spirit of creation is to be found where human beings have not yet destroyed nature; he called attention to the Pantanal as one of the biggest wetlands in the world. In addition, he was very interested in Brazil's national sport, soccer. He even had created an international soccer tournament called "Peace Cup" together with Brazil's soccer legend Pele."



The forum was a joint project of UPF, ACUNS (the Academic Council of the UN System), and Austria Brasil en Movimento.