

LA CARRERA DEL GANCHO: THE FESTIVAL, A DRIVING FORCE IN THE PROCESS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD ENHANCEMENT, ZARAGOZA



INTERCULTURAL **CITIZENSHIP** PUBLIC SPACE
CREATIVITY EMPOWERMENT **IDENTITY PARTICIPATION**
CULTURAL HERITAGE SUSTAINABILITY DIVERSITY

1. Context

The neighbourhood of "El Gancho" is located in the heart of Zaragoza, a city with over 680,000 inhabitants, and in the centre of the Old Town (the 2nd largest in Spain). It emerged 800 years ago when the Market moved outside the Roman city. As it was linked to trade, it became monumental and noble, but over the years it depreciated as affluent families moved out to areas with more and better services to accommodate middle and low socio-economic class families. Halfway through the last century, came the arrival of new residents, making up 35% of its population: internal migration (rural areas, gypsy population); and foreign immigration from Europe (Portugal, Romania, etc.), from Africa (Morocco, Algeria and sub-Saharan countries) and Latin America (Ecuador and others). This process converted "El Gancho" into a degraded, marginal and unsafe neighbourhood, with concentrated pockets of poverty, an increased proportion of older people, loneliness, inequality, chronic absenteeism, unemployment, problems associated with youth idleness, drug abuse, and criminal behaviour. In the "El Gancho" neighbourhood, both relations between neighbours and with the rest of the city had stopped flowing, leading **to a process of self-degradation** in which people

became more and more isolated, losing their identity and visibility, and gradually becoming excluded from cultural practice.

In 2000, the Frederic Ozanam Foundation was participating in cultural activities in the Berlioz neighbourhood (Pau, France), and adopted the initiative to act on improving the "El Gancho" neighbourhood through community action, art and culture. With this came the emergence of the *Neighbourhood Enhancement Programme*. La Carrera del Gancho was founded in 2004 as **a social and cultural enhancement programme, to promote inter-cultural coexistence and improve social cohesion**, carrying out educational and preventive work and strengthening the capacities of the community in order to provide more appropriate responses to their challenges. The sociocultural experiences of La Carrera have been pace setters for the drafting of various local government action plans:

- *Integral Plan for the Old Town* (1997) coordinates and develops the urban and socio-economic enhancement of the Old Town, incorporating culture as a key element for the recovery of the territory.
- *Enhancement Plan for Historical Centre* (2010) "*Culture Transforms the Centre*" addresses the influence of cultural activity in the neighbourhood, especially the history of "La Carrera", projecting improvement actions and use of public space: urban planning, mobility, housing, plots of land, environment, socio-cultural facilities, ...
- *Strategic Master Plan for Social Services in Zaragoza 2012/2020*, which recognises and incorporates experiences and cultural activities as tools for social activism.

It was the character of the neighbourhood that drove forward the Festival as an element common to all cultures, due to its participatory approach in everything playful and its street activity. In "El Gancho", people know, respect and value each other, and in this mutual appreciation lies the key to the success of the initiative, which **has managed to bring together residents and social and cultural aspects**, with a common goal: to overcome the social difficulties, through a model of participation open to all residents lowering the exclusionary elitism associated with artistic practice.

LA CARRERA WAS BORN WITH THE AIM OF PROMOTING AN INTEGRAL PROCESS AIMED AT IMPROVING THE TERRITORY, THE LIVING CONDITIONS, CO-EXISTENCE, INTERACTION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND BUILDING AND PRESERVING THEIR IDENTITY

2. Zaragoza and culture

Zaragoza, after the dictatorship, chose **popular culture** as a tool to signify democratic change in the city and it encouraged participation as a main **element of identity for its citizens**. The festive spirit got people out on the streets thus demonstrating its integrative and solidarity capacity, a legacy that was to inspire subsequent management structures and manners of action. Since the local cultural sector was quite unstructured, the city government led and protected a model for the self-management of public resources, equipment, and funding.

However, this model of general application did not account for the differences in the growth of the sector and neglected other needs in socially disadvantaged areas which required more singled out and supportive care. Therefore it was felt that there was a need for a renewal of the formula and the natural transfer of the role to cultural activities and citizens, in the management and decision making. In the last decade the City Council has moved away from its role as a "producer" of initiatives to become a **catalyst for proposals arising from the sector itself**, improving the sustainability and the participative character of programmes and projects and contributing to the development and strengthening of the local cultural industry. It has established a greater complicity with other professional fields with the consensual **belief in the value of culture as a factor of territorial regeneration and social welfare**.

In 2009, a broad participatory process began (because of the candidacy of Zaragoza in the European Capital of Culture, entirely based on the principles of *Agenda 21 for culture*) in order to design the new cultural policies in the city (**Master Plan for Culture in Zaragoza, 2020**): culture that is shared, inspired and open to a broad range of experiences within the model of responsible self-management

applied in the neighbourhood and with proven effectiveness in the development of La Carrera. This change has been reflected in the policies developed by the City Council:

- promotion of shared public / private initiatives
- the **transfer of publicly owned spaces** to private management.

La Carrera was born in 2004 from the problems and conflict, motivated by the urgent need to alleviate severe social deprivation through a Public Festival of a participatory, inclusive, sustainable nature, and without established standards but from intuition and experience gained from future editions. For La Carrera, solving real, everyday problems has been and continues to be the aim in order to raise awareness and isolate the conflict, encouraging participation.



The Agenda 21 for culture was developed in 2004 out of necessity. Culture as a remedial element can stage and attend to the problem, thus avoiding its escalation. La Carrera is a clear demonstration of the reality of the goals and commitments of *Agenda 21 for culture* and the opportunity for its implementation: problem-need-performance-difficulty-achievement. The same objectives and tools legitimise the obvious similarities:

- Respect for diversity in order to strengthen a shared identity.
- Neighbourhood, identity and belonging, strengthening the recognition of full citizenship.
- Identity against globalist standardisation.
- Public festival and celebration, linking and renewing cultural diversity.
- Integration and participation open to all cultures of the immigration process.
- Universal access to artistic and cultural practices.
- Recognition of personal skills strengthening individual and collective self-esteem.
- Democratic participation: for everyone and with everyone.
- Diversity of relationships; young-old, native-immigrant, artist-amateur, public-private, resident-visitor, ...
- Culture as a tool for the activation of other strategic sectors.
- Streets and squares, natural places of celebration and relationships that are open, accessible and active.
- Self-management and balanced allocation of resources, independence and decentralisation.
- Sustainable development in the funding and use of land, people and equipment.
- Multidisciplinary support from the local government, without intrusion or constraints.
- Experience open to other territories.

10 years of overcoming problems and difficulties, but also of successes and achievements for the life of all the residents of the neighbourhood, resulting in the recovery of a neighbourhood for the city and the strengthening of coexistence. **La Carrera and Agenda 21 for culture were born out of necessity:** consistency in their Principles and the natural development of their Commitments.

3. Objectives and implementation of the project

3.1. Main and specific objectives

La Carrera was born with a clear objective: to promote a comprehensive process to enhance the territory, living conditions, coexistence and interaction between people and to build, preserve and defend its identity, fostering a new culture of participation. And to achieve this in the most natural and

recognisable setting: The street festival. In short, **generating a context of territorial enhancement** from which inhabitants can find their individual and collective growth, **improving their self-esteem and pride of belonging to the neighbourhood.**

Specific objectives:

- Promote **inclusion and social cohesion** through the active participation of all neighbours. Relationship and exchange between the neighbourhood's generations and cultures.
- Recognise and safeguard **inter-cultural coexistence** and respect for diversity, a hallmark of the neighbourhood.
- **Reclaim the streets** and redesign public spaces for social gatherings and entertainment.
- Recover and strengthen the **self-confidence of the neighbours**. Appreciation of the challenges that have been overcome.
- Show-off the appeal of "El Gancho", **eliminate prejudice** and combat stereotypical views.
- Achieve a **socially responsible and united territory**.
- **Sustainable development** based on the use and regeneration of local resources.
- Consolidate a common festive event, incorporated into the neighbourhood's public commemorative calendar as a stable expression of its unique **identity**.

LA CARRERA WAS BORN FROM PROBLEMS AND CONFLICT, MOTIVATED BY THE URGENT NEED TO ALLEVIATE SEVERE SOCIAL DEPRIVATION THROUGH A PUBLIC FESTIVAL, OF A PARTICIPATORY, INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE NATURE.

3.2. Actions

For twelve months, the active annual preparatory process activates the best tools for achieving objectives, creating a dynamic ongoing dialogue through which residents and artists can propose ideas that they develop together. Collective challenges create actions, and the social and institutional fabric assists in resolving resource, logistics or space requirements:

- The **interdisciplinary working committees** (education, culture, environment, health, employment, etc.) prioritise common goals, and develop programmes based on the proposals and ideas from meetings, assessing the availability of resources.
- Formation of **artistic intervention groups** (theatre, dance, music, circus, street art, etc.). Creative activity excites and stimulates achievement and the overcoming of challenges. Working "with others" shares responsibilities in the final performance.
- **Construction, preparation and manufacturing workshops** for the festival (costumes, props, sets, decoration, etc.) favour intergenerational gathering, inter-cultural collaboration and create long-lasting relationship bonds.

Some activities in 2013: *THE CHILDRENS NEIGHBOURHOOD. THE PLACE OF DREAMS: "Children's manifesto", "We are in the clouds", "A thousand and one families", "Children dream", "Incredible tour, neighbourhood children-guides/actors," "The Toy Factory", "Illustrate your dreams", "Árbol saludabilis. Mural-Decalogue for health prepared by neighbourhood youth", "Orient expresshiva", "La marca de Ifigenia Sephardic music," "The smokeless car", "Inter-cultural Food Week", "The Tapas Route with Gancho".*

3.3. Phases

- (1) Choice of annual objectives, consolidation and new challenges.
- (2) Preparation, inventory and distribution of resources.
- (3) Content development, speech linked to the objectives and design of cosmetic procedures which give it coherence and meaning. (Theme, title).
- (4) Production and programme development: construction / manufacture of decorative elements.
- (5) Artistic training workshops.
- (6) Artistic and stage assemblies and installations
- (7) The event: the Festival.

- (8) Comprehensive and ongoing assessment of compliance of objectives.
- (9) Ongoing communication / information: education of the process

3.4. Obstacles

In the initial phase: (1) Disbelief and institutional distrust of an innovative, self-managed project that faces social commitments from the festive and popular culture. (2) Indifference of some more conservative neighbourhood sectors and reluctance from self-marginalised and / or exclusive sociocultural groups. (3) Lack of resources due to the slow incorporation of some of the socio-economic sectors in the neighbourhood.

In the consolidation phase: (1) Degradation of the socio-economic status of residents, causing discouragement and exclusion, as a result of the general economic crisis (especially in weaker and more disadvantaged sectors). (2) Risk of gentrification. (3) Risk of political and commercial use before the first successes of La Carrera.



○ Results

La Carrera has reversed the following obstacles:

- The pride, commitment and involvement in conflict resolution, the success of social initiatives have resulted in increased participation and solidarity in the organisational structure.
- Inter-cultural harmony and improved social cohesion has been established.
- Situations of dependency have been overcome (institutional support) through cooperation, participatory democracy and responsible use of available resources.
- Incorporation of the local media in city broadcasting.
- La Carrera has stimulated a permanent and open community process that involves administrations, technicians and citizens in addressing neighbourhood issues and challenges.

La Carrera del Gancho is a Festival of Arts and inter-cultural coexistence, in the streets, that over 3 days offers residents and visitors, in every corner of the district, more than 100 free activities created in a long process of annual work: concerts, parades, circus, dance, street theatre, creative workshops, festivals, flea markets, food, games, etc.

| Activity | Participants |
|---|--------------|
| Organisation, workshop participants and collaborators | 192 |
| Training and ambience workshops | 524 |
| Festive and leisure activities | 576 |
| International activities | 53 |
| Facilities, assemblies and monitoring | 76 |
| Previous acts (September) | 2,415 |
| Open programme activities | 7,245 |

There are currently over 130 groups and institutions, retailers, restaurateurs, other residents, friends and visitors participating in La Carrera.

4. Impacts

4.1. Impacts on local government

La Carrera has played a crucial role in local politics, as a **real example of a new form of culture** in the city. Its impact can be pinpointed in 4 key areas:

- Implementation of **new management methods**, more collaborative and participatory.
- Revision of the **global municipal strategies** in accordance with the experience of El Gancho.
- **Involvement of different management areas** of the Council in projects emerging from the private initiative.
- Recognition of **culture as a tool** to revive strategic sectors.

4.2. Impacts on culture and cultural workers in the city

In the cultural workers involved in La Carrera, we can see a **change in perception**:

- Recognition of the **transformative power of culture**.
- Opening the process of creation to **shared multidisciplinary participation**.
- Emergence of **groups involved** in promoting cultural, social and community activities.

A noteworthy example is the **Espacio Comunitario de Relación**, [Community Relations Area], an active, multidisciplinary collaboration forum (Culture / health / employment / housing / education / other) with workers interacting in El Gancho and throughout the Old Town, promoting new initiatives and proposals together.

LA CARRERA DEL GANCHO IS A FESTIVAL OF ARTS IN THE STREET AND INTERCULTURAL CO-EXISTENCE THAT OVER 3 DAYS OFFERS RESIDENTS AND VISITORS OVER 100 FREE ACTIVITIES.

4.3. Impact on the city / territory and its population

The processes fostered by La Carrera have led to the creation numerous initiatives with a significant impact on the territory. These are just **a few examples**:

- The **EstoNoEsUnSolar** programme has converted abandoned plots of land into new areas for interaction and coexistence. e.g. the *Community Garden*.
- **The creation of "Las Armas" Music Centre** in the most deteriorated area of the neighbourhood.
- The **"Las Armas" Creative Area**, occupied by new cultural industries.
- Authorisation of the **Social Circus School** and the *Festival of the Circus, Magicians and Clowns*.
- The **Arte Urbano Asalto** (Urban art) **Festival**, has generated an attractive artistic legacy in the neighbourhood.

4.4. Cross-disciplinary impacts

The legacy of the editions of La Carrera in **multiple initiatives and corners of El Gancho**:

- New entrepreneurs have come to the neighbourhood: an independent theatre, a second-hand bookshop, and a dining area has been installed in the streets.
- New groups and associations have been born: "Las Armas" Creative Space, which promotes a monthly *Design Market*, the "Ronda del Gancho" Cultural Association, dedicated to local folklore, and the *Inter-cultural Orchestra of El Gancho (OIGAN)*.
- The Health Centre drives forward activities to promote hygiene, health and children, (**Heart Friendly Walks, Children's Inter-cultural Exhibition Area**).
- The Neighbourhood Mediation Service regularly promotes environmental care actions, such as the **Escobada vecinal** (neighbours called to sweep the streets together).
- Caterers promote cultural activities and entertainment such as the Culture, Wine and Street Fair.

In 2012, in order to highlight these impacts and promote Social Responsibility and Benefit, the **Socially Responsible Old Town** was built, which incorporates awareness, communication and the promotion of social responsibility among companies, organisations and citizens.



4.5. Continuity

10 years of experience and consolidation facilitate and ensure the continuity of La Carrera. The main objective is to **ensure continuity by preserving its autonomy and identity:**

- Maintain and, insofar as possible, increase the contribution of resources; both in kind and in funding, either directly or through private sponsorship, and in a way that is socially responsible and respectful of the image and goals of La Carrera.
- Encourage and facilitate the collaboration of Municipal Services, participating in the working committees, and improving the coordination of resources.
- Continue to implement projects and policies that respond to the programmes of La Carrera, and the demands and needs that La Carrera itself proposes: thus, in 2014, to cite just a few examples, the new *Social Circus School* was enabled, the *Children's Area*, and the creation of the *Community Resource Centre* is due to begin.
- Promote projects aimed at healthy habits and creative recycling.
- Replicate the methodology in other areas of the city.

IN SHORT, THE PROJECT AIMS AT GENERATING A CONTEXT OF TERRITORIAL ENCHANCEMENT FROM WHICH INHABITANTS MAY FIND THEIR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE GROWTH, IMPROVING THEIR SELF-ESTEEM AND PRIDE OF BELONGING TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

5. Other Information

The City of Zaragoza was nominated in the first edition of the "International Award UCLG - Mexico City - Culture 21" (January-May 2014). The Jury for awarding the prize produced its final report in June 2014 and asked the Committee on culture to propagate this project as an exemplary practice.

Application approved in September 2014.

Good practices published in October 2014.

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