



EURO
CITIES



Zaragoza leads peer-to-peer economy

Collaboration empowers community

Zaragoza has responded to the economic crisis by transforming the way the city supports and strengthens entrepreneurialism. Fuelled by shared talent and values, La Colaboradora is revitalising creativity, community, innovation and job creation.

Zaragoza, Spain's fifth largest city, was hit hard by the economic downturn. The unemployment rate rocketed and many highly-skilled citizens found themselves out of work. The city decided to help by prioritising policies supporting entrepreneurialism. One of results was the reinvention of an old sugar factory as the home of an entrepreneurial ecosystem of companies, people and projects known as Zaragoza Activa. After establishing services such as a knowledge lab and start-up web hosting, there was a desire to explore different ways of empowering entrepreneurs and in particular enabling them to create their own supportive community and access free services.

Inspired by the concept of the collaborative economy, based on a philosophy of collective responsibility and the sharing of human and physical resources, La Colaboradora (The Collaborator) was born. In this collaborative workspace members work on their own entrepreneurial, social and creative projects and exchange ideas, services and know-how through a time bank system. Aimed at entrepreneurs, freelancers, creatives, contractors, NGOs and activists, the project started with 100 members chosen on the basis of their talents and what they can bring to the community, such as IT, design or administrative experience, and what they need in exchange.



La Colaboradora is a collective conspiracy against the economic crisis and the crisis of values; it has a creative and cooperative spirit which can change the paradigm of entrepreneurship for the common good.

Raúl Oliván, director, Zaragoza Activa

Sharing culture

The time bank system is central to the project's ethos and effectiveness. It not only strengthens members' projects with no economic cost for support. It also takes peer-to-peer co-working to the next level, creating a sharing, caring and trusting community where the power of human contact is evident every day. The system works on the basis of indirect reciprocity. This means that in return for volunteering four hours of their time each month, either using their talents to help other members or to run the project itself, members can ask someone else for support.

cities in action

November 2016

where: Zaragoza, Spain
what: Economic development
when: 2013 - ongoing

La Colaboradora is co-governed by the public administration and the collaborative community. A steering committee meets once a week. This is made up of a representative from Zaragoza Activa and seven member 'Connectors', each responsible for an area of work such as bank time organisation or communication. Every three months the whole community comes together for a general assembly. The city council provides 100% of the annual budget. Initially this was €40,000 and covered building works, infrastructure and furniture plus small amounts for establishing community services such as training and consultancy.

Innovative ideas

Since La Colaboradora opened its doors in 2013, more than 8,000 hours of collaborative time have been shared by 250 members, 200 projects have started or grown and 280 training and economic dynamizing activities have been organised. Over 100 of these were open and free for all Zaragoza's citizens. Among the business start-ups which owe their success to La Colaboradora are Roamgym, which enables travellers to easily access gyms around Europe to keep up their fitness routines, and Micubo, set up by a librarian to publish children's books, the first of which is an illustrated sign language alphabet.

One idea that has turned into a successful public programme is #25 Talents, set up by a human resources expert to test his novel idea for helping unemployed people get back to work. So successful was the pilot project, in which 25 people undertook 10 social challenges such as raising funds for refugees and 70% found jobs within three months, that the programme is now being rolled out by Zaragoza Activa.

“ We keep learning and adapting every day to make sure La Colaboradora is here for the long term. When we realised for example the time bank and collaboration work specially well in members' first year, as their projects fly and involvement in the community dips we must work hard to maintain their engagement and hold the door open for new members ”

**Pilar Balet, La Colaboradora
member and Connector**



Sustainable future

The emergence of ideas like this, which provide a real benefit for the city, will go a long way to ensure the sustainability of La Colaboradora. As will its low cost, adaptability and deep comradeship among members, which have already helped it weather budget cuts and political change. La Colaboradora Fest, an annual forum for entrepreneurs, activists, business leaders and public officials instituted by the team and Ouishare, the world's largest collaborative community, on behalf of the city to help build a common vision, will also help maintain Zaragoza's standing at the forefront of collaborative economics.

In developing such an innovative and impactful way of governing and organising civic community, La Colaboradora has generated interest and praise at home and abroad. It won a Ouishare Award at the first professional event dedicated to the collaborative economy in Spain and was lauded for citizen-driven innovation by the Ibero-American Secretariat General (SEGIB). Barcelona is well on its way to replicating the project. The community has also welcomed representatives from Madrid, Argentina, Colombia, Brazil, Panama and Uruguay and travelled the world promoting its collaborative model.

