

NEWS

PROJECT

CAMINA -Community
Awakening for
Multicultural
Integrative Narrative of
Almería

📍 Almería, Spain

TOPIC

Culture and cultural
heritage

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UIA EXPERT

CAMINA – How CULTURE fosters social integration and re-connects degraded cultural heritage neighbourhoods within city life

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The project “Community Awakening and Multicultural Integrative Narrative of Almería (CAMINA)” has been fostering a new approach to promote Cultural Participation and Inclusion in Almería. CAMINA is a holistic initiative aimed at rediscovering the values of culture and cultural heritage and its positive effects in the social integration of the people living in three deprived neighbourhoods, located in the city centre of Almería, representing the splendour past of the ancient city: Almedina, La Chanca-Pescaderia and the Centre. This first web article provides an overview of the challenges, the project goals and the innovations of CAMINA.

Think European Act Local!

The New European Agenda for Culture has the goal to foster new opportunities to access culture for European Citizens, considering that as a huge number of Europeans neither take part in cultural activities nor visit cultural sites. The persistence of a traditional approach for Culture distances people, especially those living in suburbs or in deprived areas, to benefit from Cultural activities.

In Almería, the cultural production is consumed by a small rate of population. The cultural demand is not extensive, and it is usually concentrated on people with the highest level of socio-cultural resources.

The Municipality of Almería, through the project CAMINA, is willing to change this mindset by providing an **innovative approach to include the citizens in the co-design process of cultural production** for valorising visible and invisible heritage and local traditions. Common people, residents, culture passionate people have been engaging by CAMINA to re-write and co-imagine a **Novel City Narrative** aimed at re-connecting three deprived cultural heritage neighbourhoods with the whole city. The challenge of CAMINA is to also involve the vulnerable people who live in the neighbourhoods from the early development of the project and during the whole implementation of cultural activities.

Project motivation: from urgency to innovation

The idea of the project “CAMINA - Community Awakening for Multicultural Integrative Narrative of Almería” was born during the collaborative workshops set up for writing the Strategic Plan of Almería, so called “*Almería 2030*”, that aims at transforming Almería in a modern, sustainable, developed, accessible, connected, inclusive and

diverse place - according with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Municipality of Almería recognised **the urgency to focus the attention on the three historical neighbourhoods, La Chanca-Pescaderia, Almedina and the City Centre**, currently degraded and with sound problems of social marginalisation. Indeed, it is not possible to transform Almería in a modern inclusive sustainable place if people are left behind. And the most marginalised people, such as Roma people, migrants, poor urban residents, live in these three neighbourhoods.

Despite being deprived, these places also represent the splendour past of the ancient Almería, that was a “safe port” for the people coming from the Mediterranean welcoming migrants from North Africa that cohabited with the natives and other ethnic groups. **The presence of important cultural heritage sites**, especially related to Middle Ages and Al-Ándalus Arab period, **and the non-material heritage, such as flamenco music, marine culture and realism plastic-art, make the regeneration of these districts a top priority for Almería Municipality.**

The Municipality of Almería together with relevant local stakeholders designed the innovative project CAMINA, which promotes Culture as an activator for social integration, reducing the stigma towards people at risk of exclusion such as migrants or Roma and fostering to increase the consumption of culture in Almería, which is currently very low, for all citizens.



The Plan of CAMINA at a glance

CAMINA aims at co-creating a **Novel Collective Narrative of Almería's Cultural Landscape** through the active participation of culture experts, cultural organisations and citizens of Almería.

The Narrative will drive the design of an **urban circular route** aimed at re-connecting the three deprived neighbourhoods of Almedina, La Chanca-Pescaderia and the Centre with the rest of the city, through **ICT solutions** and **physical interventions**.

The Narrative is also the foundation element of **social laboratories** for cultural co-designing with local stakeholders (cultural organisations, NGOs, artists, residents, etc), so called “**civic curators**”, uncharged to co-

create and promote the innovative cultural programmes to be realised in the urban circular route and into three “cultural nodes”, that are the **Katiuska cinema**, the **Doña Pakyta Museum** and the **Mesón Gitano**, located into the three deprived districts (one node per district). The Cultural Nodes will become meeting points for the “civic curators” and cultural hubs for all the citizens to trigger citizen participation in cultural activities and encourage the cultural proposals from the grassroots movements.

The recipe for innovation

How CAMINA can provide innovation for Culture and Cultural Heritage and contribute to cultural participation and social integration through culture?

CAMINA is an innovative project aimed at boosting social integration of marginalised communities living in cultural heritage degraded sites by promoting a novel approach of Cultural participation. CAMINA allows common people, residents, artists together with the Local Authorities (the Municipality, the Province and the Regional Administration) and cultural stakeholders to contribute to a novel way to shape culture: **from grassroots to a collaborative design and implementation of the city cultural programme**.

The ingredients are described briefly follow.

The cultural ecosystem Map – All on board!

A “Cultural Ecosystem map of Almería” based on secondary data (provided by the Almería City Council and Almería’s Provincial Council) and field work was realised to engage with local organisations, residents, citizens, and local communities for re-writing the City Narrative and setting up the social laboratories – civic curators – for co-designing the Cultural programme of Almería.

But to be sure to leave none behind, a “slow approach” for engagement and participation was promoted.

“To include the residents of Almedina, La Chanca-Pescaderia and the Centre in the projects required us to go in the street. Walking across the neighbourhoods and taking the time to talk informally with the people living there.” Maria del Mar Plaza, general manager of Municipal Corporation Almería 2030

This face-to-face approach has been contributing to build one of the most important elements for “CAMINA”: the trust between local communities and project partners. The strategy of the Local Authorities was to position themselves in the backstage, letting the delivery partners, Khora Urban Thinkers and Eptisa Servicios de Ingeniería, working in the field, to foster a middle out /bottom-up participatory approach.



Almedina neighbourhood

Novel City Narrative – Story bank

In re-thinking the cultural system, the city of Almería, through the project CAMINA, has fostered the design of a novel city narrative as foundation element to build a bridge between the diverse and multicultural communities living in Almería.

The **“Novel Collective Narrative”** aims at connecting feelings, needs, people, neighbourhoods, city imagination, future, present and past of Almería to build a common Cultural Landscape.

The experts of the “Instituto de Estudios Almerienses”, the historical cultural department of the Almería’s Provincial Council were involved to shape a first draft of the city narrative.

But **the true innovation of CAMINA has been to open the doors also to “non formal expert”** people through the methodology so called “Story Bank”, an open call for all citizens willing to contribute at the collaborative narrative sharing their own history of life. The concept of Story Bank could be compared to the “Noah’s Ark”, where the cultured stories and the story of life have an equal importance.

Twenty stories were collected so far allowing the opportunity to draft the collaborative narrative which the vision of past, present and future of the city of Almería.

A **“Cultural Landscape Storytelling Group”** of Almeria was set up, composed by all the storytellers, both experts and common people. The “Cultural Landscape Storytelling Group”, facilitated by Khora project partner, have been meeting regularly to share the stories and co-create the Novel Collective Narrative of Almería’s Cultural Landscape.



Cultural Storytelling workshop

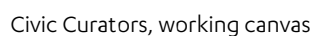
The Civic Curators

CAMINA promotes a new participative approach to design culture: the “social laboratories groups” so called “Civic Curators”. Indeed, cultural activities are commonly designed by experts: the art/cultural curators. In the case of CAMINA **the new Curators for culture are the people**, who will be driven to co-design cultural events and activities through participatory workshops.

The Cultural Ecosystem Maps allowed project partners to include in the Civic Curators a wide audience built by groups of formal organisations working on culture; informal groups which organise small festivals, cultural meetings and traditional neighbourhood events; the storytellers contributed to the Narrative and, “Key persons”, who have a sound knowledge of history and traditions of Almeria (and in particular the history of the three target neighbourhoods).

Six Civic Curators have been constituted. Two civic curators for each of three art forms: fine arts (paint, sculpture, drawing, etc), performative arts (music, dance, theatre, etc) and audiovisual arts (movies, photography, video games, etc). The participants for each civic curator will be enablers [dynamizing the group, ensuring the narrative and coordinating communication], social engagers [ensuring that the productions are inclusive and multicultural], mediators [motivating citizenship demand and engagement], cultural managers [experts in cultural production] and community groups [local associations and citizens]. Each civic curator will be in charge of

In September, it is expected to deliver the first cultural programme of CAMINA, which will re-activate streets, squares, parks of Almedina, La Chanca-Pescaderia and the Centre.



The circular routes and the cultural nodes - Bringing culture inside the deprived neighbourhoods

“In the modern era, the walls erected during the Al-Andalus Arab period don’t exist anymore, but they seem continuing to exist in the head of the people. There is a barrier for the Almeria’s citizens to come in Almedina, La Chanca Pescaderia and the Centre. They don’t feel safe because there is a problem of stigma. But there is also the evidence that they don’t have a reason to go. We want to fall down those invisible walls and create opportunities to visit our cultural heritage sites through a novel idea of culture”

Maria del Mar Plaza, general manager of Municipal Corporation Almería 2030

To create opportunities through culture to visit and rediscover cultural heritage of La Chanca-Pescaderia, Almedina and the Centre for all Almeria’s citizens is the purpose of CAMINA.

An urban trip crossing the neighbourhoods and the cultural heritage sites, so called **Cultural circular routes**, and the set up of three cultural public spaces, one per neighbourhoods, so called **cultural nodes**, should concretely provide novel experiences for Almeria’s inhabitants and tourists.

The Cultural Narrative will drive the design of the **“Cultural circular routes”** which aims at promoting the urban exploration of La Chanca-Pescaderia, Almedina and the Centre. The circular route will be promoted through ICT solutions and small urban interventions to welcome people inside the neighbourhoods.

Three **“Cultural Nodes”** (the Katiuska Cinema, Museum Doña Pakyta and Mesón Gitano), located in the three neighbourhoods, will be set up to host the novel cultural programme and become meeting points of the civic curator groups.

In particular:

- The **Doña Pakyta Museum**, located in the Centre of Almeria, is currently a museum hosting a permanent collection of realistic art including some of the most relevant works belonging to the “Indaliano” period. CAMINA will improve this place, enhancing its role of “hub for fine arts” and giving hospitality to the civic curator group focused on that cultural topic.



Doña Pakyta Museum

- The **Katiuska Cinema** is a historical cinema theatre from the Republic period, owned by Almeria Municipality. It is settled between La Chanca and Almedina Neighborhoods. Since the Spanish Civil War, the building has lost its public use and it has been progressively abandoned until reaching its currently ruinous state. CAMINA will renovate this space which will be give back to Almeria citizens as a cultural laboratory for multimedia and audio-visual arts. It will host the civic curator group uncharged to designed corresponded cultural programme.



Katiuska Cinema

- **Mesón Gitano** is a public building built on the slope of Alcazaba hill, inside Almedina neighbourhood nearby La Chanca-Pescadería. During the construction works of Meson Gitano, archaeological remains of the medieval city were found and incorporated into the building. The Meson Gitano will host the performative arts promoted by civic curators.



Mesón Gitano in the Almería Landscape

Culture and cultural heritage

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