

8<sup>th</sup> EMES International Research Conference on Social Enterprise  
**TRANSFER OF THE VENUE FROM ZARAGOZA TO TERUEL CAMPUS**

University of Zaragoza, Teruel campus | October 4-7, 2021

## 8EMESconf goes to Teruel

Recently, the Organising Committee of the 8<sup>th</sup> EMES International Research Conference and EMES Board of Directors have chosen to hold the event at the University of Zaragoza's Teruel campus. The fundamental reasons for this decision are included in this document, with the aim of sharing and giving visibility to what we see as a very positive adaptation to the conference venue.

The transfer of the International Conference from the University's Zaragoza campus to its Teruel campus renders visible the urgency of promoting specific public policies for territories far from urban dynamics. The city and province of Teruel constitute an epicentre of the depopulation phenomenon affecting the European rural world in our global present, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, holding the Conference in Teruel has important connotations, both practical and symbolic, at a number of levels:

- i. At the **international level**, the presence of international networks in specific territories is essential to facilitate connections between the global and the local. In the case of EMES, being a network of individual researchers and institutional research centers, emphasis is placed on the need to connect academia with the social challenges we face, such as depopulation in rural areas;
- ii. At the **national level** of the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, the holding of our conference in Teruel endorses its designation as Social Economy Capital and provides Teruel with an event of international scope;
- iii. From the point of view of **local institutions and social entities and companies**, it means making visible the relevance of this field and the quality activity that the latter carry out, with special attention to their wider impact on the territory;
- iv. For the **University of Zaragoza itself**, it means supporting a Campus that does not always receive the attention it deserves. It offers the opportunity to demonstrate its capacity for the development of an international level research event that complements the teaching and research activity that is carried out on a regular basis.

The remainder of this document outlines the reasons for and benefits of the venue decision.

## A Territorial Rationale

The concentration of resources of multiple natures in a given territory has a pull effect of greater financial and human investment. This can in turn attract human talent to support the sustainability of the territory and economic and human development rates that are sustainable and fair. Bringing the 8th EMES Conference to Teruel means contributing to this attractiveness of less popular destinations while being able to access collaboration with entities and institutions that are truly committed to this meeting based on two elements: the connection with the territory and its communities and the awareness of the benefits (direct and indirect) that the holding of this event will have on the territory.

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed challenges to the capitalist growth model, prompting a serious rethinking of the relationship between freedom and security. This is reflected in the Conference itself. In a COVID year, in which companies and public administrations have very limited budgets focused on economic recovery, holding the Conference in a smaller environment means that the direct economic impact is more significant. The pandemic has also amplified the discussion between urban and rural citizenships. This discussion focuses on the relations of dependence and hierarchy that have been consolidated over time by the development model, which has resulted in large differences in the endowments of the territories and a perception of subordination of the countryside to the city.

It is urgent to redefine the relations between urban and rural areas and communities and to recognise new notions that broaden dichotomous visions of territories (e.g. bioregions) in order to respect the needs and identities of the living beings that inhabit the territory. The 8<sup>th</sup> EMES International Conference is committed to the centrality of this dialogue in the scientific community, by dedicating several sessions to these new perspectives and by generating spaces of encounter between various actors active across territories.

In this rural-urban dependency, community-based social enterprises can play an innovative mediating role to break the causal linearity assumed in this relationship. Social enterprises make the best use of resources based on ethical values, generating processes of social innovation with a strong incidence and impact on the territory, as is the example of Teruel in Aragon. In the spirit of broadening knowledge about these dynamics and processes, the 8th EMES Conference will take place in a territory that represents the struggle of citizens against depopulation, thus acting as a loudspeaker toward Europe and the rest of the world of such struggle.

## Advantages for Citizens and Institutions

Bringing the Conference to Teruel holds the potential for greater impact. While in Zaragoza the Conference would go more unnoticed, in Teruel, especially if connected to the Spanish Capital of Social Economy 2021, we will be able to obtain stronger support from institutions and the media on a continual basis. This will open the door to increased visibility via interviews with the local and national generalist and specialized media, as well as the alignment with larger strategies by the Ministry (the potential of the capital city to attract international communities).

Despite a less obvious tourist destination, we will have support in terms of transport and travel to Teruel as a way to counteract possible logistical difficulties for attendees. In fact, getting to Teruel is no more expensive than getting to Sheffield (UK), Roskilde (DK) or Trento (IT), places that have hosted EMES Conferences in the past. Moreover, we believe the potential logistical difficulties will be compensated by the attractiveness of the place and the availability of institutions, social entities and companies, and the society of Teruel. In addition, the fact that it will be held in Teruel will generate a climate of closeness among those attending in person and offer a more positive experience, recovering the spirit of the "camp" that characterizes EMES events.

## Benefits for the Academic Community

The Conference will bring together academic communities from around the world to study different aspects of social enterprise and related areas ("the SE field") from various perspectives and theoretical approaches. These include social innovation, social entrepreneurship, voluntary activity, hybrid organisations, commons, transitional movements, as well as critical approaches in management and management studies. EMES' characteristic theoretical reflection on the SE field is based on a connection with praxis and policy-making. For the 8th edition of its international Conference, the Network builds from the epicentre of the current problematic in the relationship of rural-urban dependency and the generative and re-generative processes that emerge from horizontal solidarity and mutuality.

Moving a Conference to Teruel allows scholars and the academy to move against the discourse on depopulation and local development to participate collectively in the process of proposals against depopulation from the tools that are accessible from the academic space. In other words: as academics, we can not only *talk about* depopulation, we can (and want) to *be part* of the solution.

Through the promotion of a different type of "conference tourism" academic events can, in fact, have local benefits in the hosting territories, generating positive externalities for their people through a continued dialogue and collaboration with local communities.

***In sum, this move provides an opportunity for the EMES network to live its values.***

If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at <mailto:8emesconf@emes.net>.