

La Unión and its mining park

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In my lecture, I introduced the study case of La Unión, following outline: Geographic description; UHB History background; Description of the leading agents, such as Municipality, Flamenco Festival, Mining park, Minerals Fair, Portman Golf; Scientific Mission; Living Lab.

La Unión (The Union in English) is a municipality at the



South-East of Spain with 20,000 inhabitants and a small territory of 24,6 km². Today La Unión's productive structure supply services and produce auxiliary industries. Because of the proximity to the second largest city of the region, Cartagena, the municipality also serves as a dormitory town. La Unión was a small and new town settled in 1860 for a group of localities that decided stopped to pay taxes to the city of Cartagena. La Unión own identity was based on the secular tradition of mining exploitations, and since the 19th C, the flow of migrants from Andalucía to work inside the mines. Around the money of the mine, the town, before only a settlement of miners and temporary workers, grew. During the decades of 1940 to 1960 the modernization of the mining activities brought more wealth to the area. And also the prelude of the greatest ecological disaster of the 20th C in Spain. During the second half of the 20th C, the bay of the municipality was used as a massive landfill dumping site by private mining companies. When the mine definitively closed in 1991, hundreds of miners' families had already migrated. Others remain and tried to make a living outside the mining in the industry services. Alas, the ecological disaster is a constant and negative reminder of the mining past. The mining heritage of La Unión is nowadays visible in several activities promoted and conducted by the municipality: an annual and international music festival of Flamenco, a mining park, and also a couple of conventional museums in the center of the city. During the lecture, I provided statistics about the success of those activities.

There is also another activity organized by the local entrepreneurs association that offers another angle of the mining heritage: an annual fair of minerals. The fair is part of an international organization and also congregate a good number of local collectors and sellers of minerals. After analyzing the economic and social impact of those activities, there are several common points. But the most shadowed is the low implication of the local communities. Institutions such as the local corporation and the entrepreneurs' associations run the economic activities around the mining heritage. Therefore the participation of the citizens is basically as viewers, visitors, or clients. The role of the community as decision-makers seemed vague and accessory, if non-existent. The target of the living lab created was to learn more about people's identification with the territory; and how to involve citizens in the design of activities aimed to increase their influence valorization of the underground heritage of La Unión.