

THE WORKSHOP, A PLACE FOR PRODUCTIVE CULTURAL PROJECTS IN ROSARIO



TRADITION LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
EMPOWERMENT DIVERSITY HUMAN RIGHTS EMPLOYMENT
INCLUSION INDIGENE PEOPLE CULTURE CAPACITATION
HERITAGE PUBLIC SPACE INTERCULTURALITY

1. Context

Rosario is located in the south of Santa Fe province, Argentina. It occupies an area 178.69 km², with a population of 948,312 inhabitants. The city has been organized into 6 districts through the Modernisation and Municipal Decentralisation Program created to overcome the problems centralisation has on administration, management, and governability. "The Workshop" arts centre is situated in the 23rd of February neighbourhood, and serves the Toba and 23rd of February neighbourhoods, Sectors 6 and 7, and a zone of various settlements, where new homes have cropped up as a result of being the most underdeveloped part of the city. It is a zone of inhabitants who have temporarily relocated from different parts of the city or country, or are migrants from bordering countries. This phenomenon has a strong correlation with cultural diversity. The population of the core neighbourhoods throughout the city have problems associated with unemployment, addiction, delinquency, sexual and/or productive exploitation, among others. In 1992, Rosario began construction on houses in the Toba neighbourhood. The building space the arts centre occupies was originally a workroom shed during construction of the dwellings. Once completed, a multipurpose space was built for the community. The project was organized by municipal territory institutions.

Ninety percent of Rosario's cultural infrastructure is concentrated in its centre. In other, outer districts, the municipal Secretary of Culture Education should be connected to spaces that are otherwise not theirs. The lack of infrastructure complicates the ability to direct culture toward being a driving force in human development.

In 2008, the Secretary of Culture took over coordination of the area in a project that adopted the principles of Agenda 21 for culture. It involved an arts centre, as a direct response to public interest and issues of surrounding community, as well as be centre on public policy and cultural policy as source of rights and inclusion. This action expressed a clear political decision to anchor a municipal cultural space in the territory and to build an institute. This implied designating authorities with an elaborate project along with budgetary re-organization and population assessments. It also involved the task of reorganizing space, human resources, the agenda, and the planned activities. As a result of these structural changes, a plan was developed to emphasize training in different trades, incorporating an appreciation for design. The purpose was to provide future initiatives for microenterprises in order to improve labour conditions for residents, while simultaneously increasing the social and cultural capital of the community. Additionally, pre-existing spaces, such as community clothing market, "el roperito", were absorbed into the neighbourhood for the community, adapting the same philosophy as "The Workshop". Where there were once clothing markets for those in need, it has now become a communal place where people give and take. It is evidence that even people who are materially disadvantaged have a lot to offer. Another example is the hip-hop and break-dance group that has become linked with other spaces by participating in the communication campaigns of school for fashion design. Local cultural management expects a deepening in cultural decentralisation. It will do so through initiatives that fortify the local cultural development and recognize the value of neighbourhood identities, while stimulating social frameworks, specifically in areas in crises of vulnerability and violence.

THE WORKSHOP OFFERS ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGE GROUPS, PROMOTES INTERGENERATIONALITY, AND MAKES CULTURAL GOODS ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE.

2. Rosario and Culture

Culture and education, symbolic and material universes, and the building of communities cannot be defined in relation to one another. Rather, they continually enrich and expand their own meanings. As a result, developing cultural-educational policy is the driving force in the movement and continuous growth of all social transformations. It creates the tools necessary for developing proactive citizenship. With this in mind, the municipal Secretary of Culture and Education defined fundamental pillars that clearly outline such management. They involve deepening decentralisation, an emphasis on infancy and youth, comprehensive educational policies, institutional strengthening, the improvement of the infrastructure of spaces, as well as communication strategies designed to prioritize proximity with citizens, social identities and imagination, and the fabric of everyday life.

In this sense, educational and cultural planning contributes to the process of decentralisation. Deepening reforms mean encouraging proximity between cultural management policies and citizens. This entails developing strategies to build a government that understands cultural diversities and neighbourhood identities. This is evident in the appropriation and the sense of civic ownership of each space carried out in distinct cultural policies:

- Reclaiming public spaces as ones of culture
- The process of cultural decentralisation—framed by implementing decentralised local management policies—is a tangible example of transformation after re-balancing territories, civic participation, the joint work of diverse actors, and a populations access to cultural goods and services.
- Cultural initiatives in local management have a strong relationship with a municipality's education policies. The exchange of knowledge, through a respect and recognition of

diversity, develops skills that empower people and an entire generation with productive, self-sustainable skills.

- Promoting literacy in adults, reintegrating children, youth, and adolescents into the formal education system are some of the areas that are prioritized.
- One of the pillars of building industries and creative, cultural microenterprises is a perspective on sustainable development.



The program proposes a sense of cultural development as a nerve centre for the development of human community, concurrent with the proposals of Agenda 21 of the culture. This is part of the premise that the cultural diversity of a territory, inclusive of migrant populations, is treasured. It is a source of varied knowledge and experiences which are driving forces in exchanges of creativity and innovation, as well as a source of rights, *per se*. The arts centre offers spaces for the manifestation and expression of participants' knowledge as a way of exercising their cultural rights. Furthermore, it is a way of preserving cultural diversity, and helping extend the cultural ecosystem. It is a meeting place for exchange and the construction of citizenship. For this reason, it is primarily a cultural space, schooling cohabitation.

THE OBJECTIVE IS TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN VULNERABLE SECTORS BY FACILITATING ACCESS TO TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL GOODS, BONDS BETWEEN GROUPS AND COHABITATION, AND THE INCLUSION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE, EXPERTISE, AND ANCESTRAL SKILLS.

The Workshop offers activities for all age groups, promotes intergenerationality, and makes cultural goods accessible to everyone. It is a starting point for cultural democratisation based on the freedom of expression and access to goods. It recognises that culture adds economic value to anything that is created and this involves recognition of artistic identity armed with copyright protection. What is produced is included in fair trade and production chains that stimulate the socioeconomic inclusion of cultural industries. The designs that are created imply a type of development that recovers expertise and knowledge while incorporating innovation and adaptability for the use, and possible reuse, of material. Any actions must consider that reducing environmental impact contributes to the sense of continuity in communities. The reuse and the recycling of waste are the primary alternatives to using raw materials. Ultimately, The Workshop contributes to the sustainability and development of a sense of community by preserving cultural diversity, building connections between people and groups, stimulating production and fair trade, and reducing environmental impact.

3. Objectives and Project Implementation

3.1. Specific primary objectives

The main objective is to improve quality of life for the populations of vulnerable sectors. This is achieved by building connections and cohabitation, facilitating access to tangible and intangible cultural goods, as well as socioeconomic inclusion through the training and recovery of ancestral knowledge and expertise. The idea is to have a shared space with others, with a framework that builds respect for cultural diversity and promotes both environmental and human sustainability. The Workshop Arts Centre has been converted into a reference centre where people of a neighbourhood can go for health demands, and card and document processing, and stay afterwards.

3.2. "El Roperito"

Young expecting mothers who initially came to request medical services will be able to come back to the Roperito for a workshop on creating their baby's trousseau. Here they will learn to make basic clothing and toys for their baby. As they learn to weave slippers and sew baby clothing, they will also be able to share their experiences with childcare, nursing and breastfeeding, and even instances of domestic violence. The idea behind the Roperito is simple. Every person that comes to the Roperito in search of clothing convenes in order to make new clothes for others. It is a place for exchange, sharing, and creating connections. The permanent workshops in the Roperito are for sewing, making stuffed dolls, knitting, and moulding. There is also a working classroom for the school of fashion design, run by the Cultural Coordination of the Western District's Municipal Centre. The 2013 campaign was dedicated to disarmament, using prints for t-shirts and tank tops, handkerchiefs, and hoodies. The print bore the messages: "0 calibre", "Messenger", and "In the word". The collection was sold through social networks, thanks to a photo campaign and a video starring the students of the hip hop and break dance company.

In 2010, the CAF Development Bank of Latin America listened to speakers of The Workshop, and how public policy as consented to by inhabitants, the municipality, members of a community, workshop facilitators, craftsmen, professionals, formal institutions, small neighbourhood organizations, and private groups, created an extensive cultural framework in Rosario. This provided an ideal multicultural, interagency, and collaborative environment for proposals. From this, there emerged the possibility of a financing project, providing funds to The Workshop in order to carry out building projects, training courses, and purchase tools and materials.

THE WORKSHOP RECOGNISES THAT CULTURE ADDS ECONOMIC VALUE TO
ANYTHING WE MAKE. THIS INVOLVES RECOGNITION OF ARTISTIC IDENTITY
ARMED WITH COPYRIGHT PROTECTION.

Also in 2010, the Paraná Ra'anga expedition made a stop at The Workshop. It was a cultural and scientific endeavour where international artists, thinkers, and scientists embarked toward Asunción via the Paraná river from Buenos Aires. This interchange created strong ties that still remain, bringing some members of the expedition to continue their exchanges up until now. This kind of collaboration results in a combination of design incorporating the ancestral and the innovative. Both of these hold a unique place in the annual Newspaper Design Exhibition for Rosario's "La Capital" in the Fine Arts Museum. The first mockup was a blanket called *patchwork*. It was made from different pieces, where each told a story, comprising a larger story on all the cloths. Then, they were pots or containers made of recycled paper. In 2013, a Qom-art wickerwork version was made with scraps of fabric instead of the traditional reed. This influence is from an indigenous ethnic group of the region with a strong presence in The Workshop's neighbourhood.

3.3. Toy Factory

They began creating toys that integrated the knowledge and skills of the Qom artisans with traditional childhood games and toys. Three "indigenous" toys were created. First was the Montecito diorama

with 4 scenes hand-painted in wood and a version of the “monte chaqueño” region of the Gran Chaco forest, accompanied by 20 ceramic native animals. Second was the “Comiditas” play dinner set: a wooden box that transformed into table and tiny closet, accompanied by utensils. Finally, there was the Qom chess set. The invention of these 3 toys best summarized the project by creating new, contemporary products to highlight the beauty of the Qom-artists’ work, and with it, the possibility of opening up new markets for these crafts, normally sold in informal spaces. Afterwards, another line was developed that included small critters, furry birds, rodents, as well as small, hand-painted dolls, dressed with wool and textiles. Each doll, unique in its own way, was inspired by the women who worked for or was a part of The Workshop. Later on, they made robots, and toys that jumped using newer mechanisms. These unique *indigenous* toys followed a similar path to official institutions and shops specialising in designer goods.



3.4. Cooperative Work

The existing institutional frameworks for circulating goods are diverse and extensive. Many organizations in the region know that the work done there is based on principles of quality, cooperation, and recycling, and have developed from this. Some of the products created were put on display in the Rosario Fine Arts Museum Castagnino+Macro, or in the Central Contemporary Expressions Space of the Rosario shopping area. Once a month, staff of The Workshop set up a stall in the artisans' market on the boulevard. There is also an extensive list of local businesses at fairs or in alternative trade networks. The underlying logic is that of cooperation. Of the money collected, a part is kept for reinvestment into entrepreneurship, while the other is earmarked for authors. The proposal does fall under a context of exclusion and fragility, which is sometimes controversial, but it offers tools to rethink everyday opportunities. Currently, the EcoBolsas, the toy factory, gardens and orchards, fashion design, Roperito clothing market and wickerwork spaces all contain sustained microbusinesses. A cooperative space implies consistent group work since the majority of workshops function through an assembly line, where each person has an indispensable role.

4. Impacts

4.1. Impacts on local government

The Workshop arts centre has managed to address cultural diversity, while considering the population's knowledge, and integrating it into policies. This is demonstrated by the resolution of the Municipal Council of the Indigenous Peoples' Directorate, for a framework of co-management between municipalities and representative committees of the indigenous towns.

4.2. Impacts on the culture and cultural operators of a city

Along with democratic and representative electoral mechanisms, and participants as agents of municipalities and provincial governments, the inclusion and visibility of traditional knowledge made it

possible to replicate establishing recognition in other institutions. One example is the National University of Rosario, in their application of indigenous languages provided for the community. In this way, a new connection in cultural management between the centre and the districts has been created, as well as the decentralisation of programs and institutions.

THE WORKSHOP ARTS CENTRE HAS BEEN MADE INTO A REFERENCE CENTRE FOR THE CITY, NOT ONLY IN RELATION TO CULTURE, BUT ALSO TO HEALTH, THE ECONOMY, EDUCACION, AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

4.3. Impacts on the city/territory, and its population

The Workroom has become a reference centre and is an environment for linking other parts of the local and provincial states in regards to health, reproduction, the economy, education, and social development. It has facilitated the management of services that were once difficult to access, such as National ID card processing. Its presence implied a safer environment, and more collective dynamics. The people involved with The Workshop, and especially women, create opportunities for themselves and return to their neighbourhoods as agents of transformation.

4.4. Crosscutting impact

Participation in democratic processes like "participatory budgeting" allowed for executing projects linked to promoting bilingual culture and intercultural perspectives, as proposed by women and youths of the communities, favouring equality for genders and different age groups. Promoters are dedicated to connecting non-Spanish speakers with healthcare, social development, and education. The Workshop is an all-around model for recycling.

4.5. Continuity

In evaluating characteristics of the population and productivity of each district, it is expected that these experiences will be successful in the other 5 districts of the city.

5. Further Information

The City of Rosario was a candidate for the first edition "UCLG International Award – Mexico City – Culture 21" (January-May of 2014). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2014, and requested that the UCLG Committee on Culture diffuse this project as an exemplary practise.

Proposal approved in September of 2014.

Good practices published in October of 2014.

This was written by Horacio Rivers, Secretary of Culture and Education.

Contact: [Hrios \(at\) rosario.gob.ar](mailto:Hrios@rosario.gob.ar)

Social networks: Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/660007500687058/?ref=ts&fref=ts or Cultural Centre The Workshop, Rosario