

ROCA UMBERT FACTORY OF ARTS: CULTURAL CREATION SPACE IN GRANOLLERS



HERITAGE ARTS MEMORY YOUTH
ACCESS CREATIVE INDUSTRIES DIVERSITY
ECONOMIC CITIZENSHIP NETWORK

1. Background

Granollers is a city with a population of 60,000 located 30 kilometres north of Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. Throughout the 20th century it developed an identity as an industrial city, with a textile industry that employed 71% of the working population during the 1950s. The decline of traditional industrial work forced the city to diversify its economy. Today, its identity is more cultural and creative.



Aerial view of the Factory

Granollers is a city of education, defending diverse, quality learning that helps all people grow. Bombings during the 1938 Spanish Civil War was a turning point for Granollers, which thereafter promoted a culture of peace both locally and internationally. The city is small and welcoming. This has made it easier to preserve natural spaces, ensure agricultural production, and expand pedestrian areas that promote citizen life. Creating this model has been possible because of living associative networks, which energize the city and political leadership through decisive long-term visions.

2. Granollers and Culture

The Roca Umbert Factory of Arts, or simply The Factory (*La Fábrica*) is a grassroots and strategic initiative started by the Granollers municipal government. It involved the transformation and renovation of an old textile factory that closed in 1991. The building was converted into a training space for creating and disseminating art, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of the city.

THE DECISION TO TRANSFORM AN OLD TEXTILE FACTORY INTO A CENTRE FOR ARTISTIC CREATION LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR GRANOLLERS TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A PLACE THAT GENERATES CULTURE AND AN ENGAGED CITIZENRY.

The factory's closure left a space full of infinite possibilities right in the centre of the city. In 1992, the municipal government decided to dedicate 20,000 square metres, a large portion of the area taken up by the factory, to the creation of culture. The goal was also to limit the expansion of residential neighbourhoods that would turn Granollers into a commuter town. In addition to promoting artistic creation, investing in a cultural project meant fostering cohesion, development, and coexistence in a space located in Sant Miquel, a neighbourhood defined by its cultural diversity, which could slow down overdevelopment.

The project is based on specific goals, and is carried out via different local cultural policies. Agenda 21 for culture in Granollers was approved in 2006. This initiative is based on "access to culture for all citizens" and is rooted in the core values of "*Granollers as a shared cultural space*," and "*Granollers*



Showcasing festival figures in the bar.

teaches and constructs culture". Additionally, the project promotes cultural rights, plurality, innovation, and creativity as tools for economic development and social transformation, as detailed in the city's Strategic Plan II.

It supports artistic and cultural creation, as well as cultural and creative industries in its ongoing support for sustainable economic development. Additionally, *La Fábrica* promotes a management model based on agreements with different actors and on formulas designed to create more efficiency in the governance of culture, as well as the involvement of public entities, associations, and organizations.

Another of the Factory's most important assets is its cooperation with education centres through courses or artist engagement that fosters skills among youth. Furthermore, while artists must of course consider the social returns on their work, there must be both sociocultural and economic benefits.

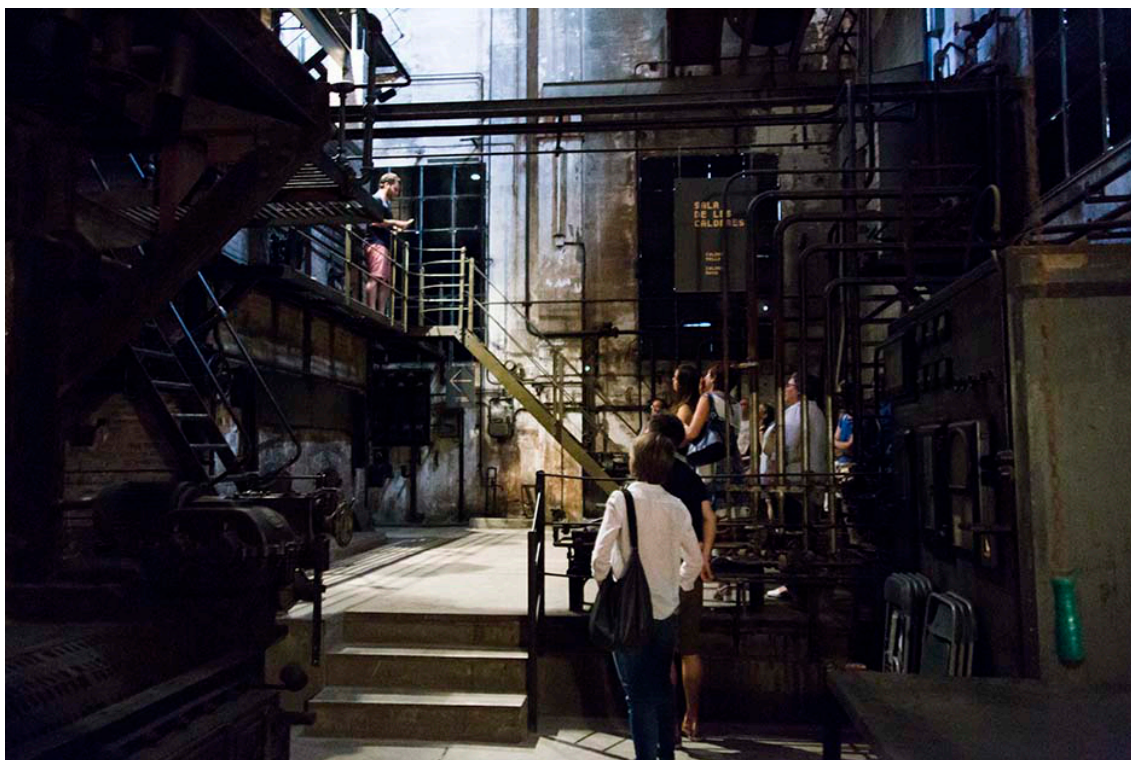
3. Objectives and Project Implementation

3.1 Primary and Specific Objectives

The main objective of the project is to make culture more accessible to the public, and that people participate in the entire process of artistic creation through new organization and management structures. It is about integrating culture in a transversal way, while bringing citizens together through cultural outreach and access for everyone. The project can be seen as a creative process for generating synergies in addition to sociocultural and economic development.

3.2 Project Development

Main Actions Carried Out



Poetry session at La Térmica.

The cultural uses of *La Fábrica* are distributed across different cultural facilities where artists, entities, cultural professionals, and communication or information technologies coexist. Together, they collaborate under four core lines of work that give the centre its vitality. These are: the creative process as an alternative to the finished product; fusion and interaction between disciplines as a creative tool; transversality between the creator, the public, and the city; and the conservation of the historical memory and heritage of the textile factory.

The following spaces comprise *La Fábrica*: La Troca, a popular culture centre linked to other entities; Arts Centre [*Espai d'Arts*] a centre for visual artists' exhibitions and residences); Library in the south of the city with a study room that is a hub for activities with high educational value; Sala Nau B1 concert hall; Musical spaces, which are rehearsal and recording rooms for emerging artists; Audiovisual Centre; Technological and University Centre; Centre for Performing Arts [*Centro de Artes en Movimiento*] dedicated to dance, theatre, and circus residencies; and La Térmica, a space listed as an industrial heritage site with a museum programme. In addition, *La Fábrica* is home to the workshop and archive of photographer Joan Fontcuberta, the Arsènic theatre school, and the Sarandaca popular culture workshop.

As a factory for creation, *La Fábrica* has different programmes with its own activities. The most unique is that of artist residencies organised by public calls. This initiative supports contemporary creation and establishes a framework for exchange and collaboration among artists, companies, and citizens. In 2017, The Factory hosted: a total of 107 residencies 48 of which led to artistic projects with 20 for fine art, 6 for performance, and 22 for music; 22 companies; 15 cultural associations linked to popular culture; and 22 cultural groups such as amateur theatre or circus companies.

The Factory's outreach programme is made up of festivals, exhibitions, workshops, and more. The scheduling of these events is done through local initiatives and arts projects, which creates a cycle. Some of these activities emerge directly from the local sector and are integrated into the Factory's ongoing events. One example is that of the Microtheatre programme, initially promoted by the Arsènic

School, the annual Minibeat music festival, created at the request of a musical association, or the Technology Market initiated by the city's teaching staff.

The sociocultural action programme promotes cultural work with specific groups, such as youth or circus activities, and functional diversity such as through integrated dance groups. The education programme promotes free activities for Granollers schoolchildren so that they know resident artists, the city's industrial heritage, or the history of popular culture. On other occasions, due to the uniqueness of demand, the Factory's collaboration focuses exclusively on providing space and helping with revitalization.



THE FACTORY COORDINATES NEARLY 400,000 ANNUAL CULTURAL INITIATIVES INCLUDING PARTICIPATION IN AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES LIKE CONCERTS, TALKS, PRESENTATIONS, REHEARSALS, AND ACTIVITIES WHERE CITIZENS ENGAGE IN ACTIONS SUCH LIBRARY CONSULTATIONS, ASSOCIATION MEETINGS, ETC.

4. Impact

4.1 Direct Impacts

Impact on the Local Government

Cultural initiatives pass through the doors of this old factory, and this has helped creativity has become a pillar of municipal policy that incorporates different fields. From economic promotion in a facility where young entrepreneurs are supported, and 22 cultural companies with a total of 83 workers have established themselves, to urban planning with the "These Walls Can Talk" project or the installation of a piece of public art by artist Jordi Benito in Ponent Park.

The project's annual budget is 1,526,000 Euros, 19% of which comes from its revenue. Given that it is a municipal project, 73% of its budget comes in locally, while 7% is from grants and contributions from the Government of Catalonia and Provincial Government of Barcelona.

Impact on Culture and on Local Cultural Actors

For local stakeholders, the project has had a significant impact on popular culture. This is reflected in the workshops of popular events, an artistic production space for the Blancs ("Whites") and the Blaus ("Blues"), two groups that take up the challenge of helping with the city's main festival year after year. This festival promotes modern competition, citizen participation, and group leadership, which results in artistic and cultural creation. Furthermore, its unique activities highlight the impact that *La Fàbrica* has had on the youth education sector.

Impacts on the Territory and Population

The Factory has managed to incorporate the arts across the city. The project guarantees access to culture for groups that may be isolated from this sphere. The space brings together public and private initiatives, as well as top-level groups such as the music school conservatory. This has led to quality local artistic creation that still only represents 20% of all events in the theatre community of Granollers.

Inclusion and exchange are promoted by organizing activities that mix different groups together, which creates a true feeling of belonging and cohesion in a city defined by its cultural diversity. In addition, The Factory is part of publicly funded networks in order to cooperate with other centres, such as Xarxaprod and Transversal, in the creative sector, the XATIC Network, or the Museum of Science and



The facility showcases characteristic elements of the city's popular culture.

Technology Regional Network of Catalonia, related to heritage and industrial tourism, or the Trans Europe Halles network.

4.2 Assessment

The Factory is a project that creates proximity among users, residents, and artists. Online satisfaction surveys are distributed to those who participate in the activities. Satisfaction surveys are also carried out with resident artists and a final interview with the residency director. Surveys are also distributed to schools that visit the spaces.

Additionally, quantitative data is available on differentiated uses, tickets sold at concerts, the number of residencies and workers, and much more. This information is collected in a database and helps define indicators for gender, territory, and age.

A TOTAL OF 48 ARTISTIC PROJECTS USE THE FACTORY SPACE ANNUALLY TO DEVELOP SOCIOCULTURAL ACTIONS THROUGH THE RESIDENCY PROGRAMME.

4.3 Key Factors

The success of The Factory is based on five factors. First, it is a long-term transversal project for the city. Today, it is difficult to imagine Granollers without *La Fàbrica*, in much the same way that it could not be understood without the Roca Umbert Factory of its industrial past. The project has gained legitimacy because of the fact that citizens have participated in the entire transformation process of the old factory. These people are therefore both responsible for its success and a fundamental part of its development. Third, the centre has demonstrated its ability to adapt to the needs of citizens and to changes in social, cultural, economic, or other contexts. Indeed, it is clear that The Factory will continue to be a place for culture and an engine for economic growth by creating opportunities and promoting employment, which is a large part of its positive impact. Finally, the project is a success because of the required social returns on all projects that wish to use the facilities.



Finally, the space also hosts integrated dance sessions.

4.4 Ongoing Work

The Factory is a strategic ongoing city program, with sustainable financing and continuous investment, depending on available resources. Over the next few years, a project will be developed to promote industrial tourism to the city, renovate part of the old factory, and draw up an itinerary for the facility that can be communicated to the rest of the city using the building's chimneys.

Overall, the project's management has established a global perspective, which adapts initiatives to tackle modern issues and future challenges. Currently the organization is dependent upon the ability of the Sant Miquel neighbourhood to attract culture-based businesses.

However, decision-making processes for different lines of work is not pyramidal, and includes citizens' active participation. Together these contribute to the project's continuity. Furthermore, shared decisions help ensure joint responsibility and legitimacy, which subsequently strengthens the project.

THE FACTORY IS A SUCCESSFUL, ESTABLISHED PROJECT THAT HAS EVEN SURVIVED A NUMBER OF DIFFICULT YEARS UNDER REDUCED BUDGETS. ONE OF THE MAIN CHALLENGES HAS BEEN TO FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN PROVIDING A RELAXED PUBLIC SPACE AND ADDRESSING IMMEDIATE CONCERNS.

5. Further Information

Granollers was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 - May of 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2018, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be included under Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by Ester Prat Armadans, Project Coordinator for the Roca Umbert Factory of Arts in Granollers, Spain.

Contact: eprat@rocaumbert.cat

Website: www.rocaumbert.cat