

YouthActionNet®

CASE STUDY SERIES

BogotArt:

*Democratizing Art in Bogota's
Marginalized Communities*

A partnership between:



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

School of Foreign Service
Global Human Development Program



Introduction

This is one of a series of case studies produced by students enrolled in the Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University through its partnership with the International Youth Foundation (IYF). Students enrolled in a course exploring the role of social enterprises and social entrepreneurs were paired with young leaders of social ventures identified through the IYF's YouthActionNet® program. The students were given the assignment of analyzing the venture's assets, successful methodologies, and opportunities for investment to increase impact. Through this experiential learning process, the student consultants gained hands-on experience and exposure to the needs of social enterprises. The ventures, too, benefited from student insights into their strengths, areas for growth, and recommendations for enhancing their impact and sustainability. The Georgetown practicum is part of YouthActionNet's larger efforts to partner with institutions of higher learning around the globe to integrate social change into the academic experience and career interests of students.

International Youth Foundation

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities.

www.iyfnet.org

YouthActionNet®

Since 2001, YouthActionNet, a program of the International Youth Foundation, has provided founders of social ventures, ages 18 to 29, with the training, networking, coaching, funding, and advocacy opportunities they need to strengthen and scale their impact. These young social entrepreneurs have pioneered innovative solutions to critical local and global challenges, resulting in increased civic engagement, improved health, education reform, economic opportunity, environmental protection, and more inclusive societies. Our work is carried out through a network of 23 national and regional youth leadership institutes that collectively support over 1,350 young social entrepreneurs globally.

www.youthactionnet.org

Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University

The Global Human Development Program of Georgetown University is home to one of the world's premier master's degree programs in international development. An innovative, academically rigorous skills-based graduate program, the Master of Global Human Development degree prepares the next generation of development professionals to work with public sector agencies, private businesses, and non-profit organizations that advance development. Through coursework, extracurricular activity, and practical fieldwork experiences, our graduates develop the insights, skills, and experiences necessary to become leaders in development and make a difference in our global community.

<https://ghd.georgetown.edu>

INTRODUCTION

Meet Leonardo Párraga: Founder and Executive Director

Leonardo Párraga is a 23-year-old Colombian activist and business leader with a passion for art and community development. He is the Founder and Executive Director of BogotArt, a non-profit organization based in Bogotá, Colombia that empowers marginalized community members through art. Prior to founding BogotArt, Leo received a degree in Business Administration from La Universidad de los Andes, and a specialization in Entrepreneurship from the University of Maryland. He has worked on a number of social enterprises, including a renewable energy company; EcoManglar, a community-based tourism agency; and cultural identity initiatives such as Museo de Trajes Regionales.



Leo represented Colombia at the 2013 DO School Peace Program, 2014 World Forum for Democracy, 2014 United Nations Alliance of Civilizations - Education First Summer School, and 2015 World Innovation Summit for Education Learners Voice Program. In 2015, he was honored as a Laureate Global Fellow of the International Youth Foundation. In his spare time, Leo likes to take photographs and discover the hidden cafes and alleyways of his hometown of Bogotá. He enjoys traveling, meeting new people, and discovering diverse cultures. In addition to Spanish, Leo speaks English and German.

BogotArt empowers marginalized groups to use art as a tool for self-expression, community building, and democracy.

The Problem

Bogotá is Colombia's beating heart. A vibrant city of eight million people in the middle of the Andes mountains, its rising skyscrapers are complemented by its colonial architecture. A melting-pot of people and culture, Bogotá is one of Colombia's most historic cities. Nonetheless, the city and country are still affected by the world's longest-running civil war, which has lasted 55 years, taken the lives 220,000+ civilians, and internally displaced more than 5.7 million people. As a result, many people need help keeping kids in school, accessing healthcare, dealing with the deteriorated infrastructure of the barrios, and other public issues.

One of the neighborhoods most affected by the turmoil is La Perseverancia. Throughout its history, La Perseverancia has been characterized as a working class neighborhood. From 1889 into the 1950s, it was home to the workers of Bavaria Brewing Company, a prominent nearby employer, where kids took part in hand making *capachos* (baskets) and adults worked on the assembly line. Everyone participated in some way in the beer-making industry. But since the violence of the 90s overtook the city, there have been fewer opportunities for local youth, causing them to pursue unhealthy lifestyles, including gang involvement, drug use, and violence. In 2013, La Perseverancia was notoriously violent, stemming from narco-trafficking gangs competing for territory. While the situation has improved, there is still much work to be done.

The Solution

BogotArt is a non-profit organization, founded in 2013 to promote a more inclusive world. BogotArt organizes a number of different activities to address the social issues related to prejudice and crime. Barrios in which the organization has worked include La Perseverancia and Bosque Calderón Tejada.

BogotArt's Mission & Vision Statements

Mission

"Permit marginalized and vulnerable groups to contribute to the development of society through the use of art and culture as mediums of expression."

Vision

"Create a world where walls can speak about the conditions of equality of society."

Key Activities

BogotArt undertakes a variety of activities, including:

Workshops: The organization's primary activity is to provide workshops targeting youth at-risk. Educational workshops cultivate the youths' creativity and confidence, which they can later use to find employment in the marketplace. Workshop themes have included muralism, photography, recycling, theater, and origami. The organization aims to instill a sense of belonging among local youth and empower them as change-makers in their own communities. The workshops are free to young people, ages 6 to 15.



Murals: BogotArt has also painted murals to add color and vibrancy to a grayscale town. Their murals display social justice issues such as the importance of exercise, or community symbols such as *chicha* or *la pachamama* (mother earth) which provide cultural significance.

Tours: Lastly, the organization provides community tours. By offering tours of less-known, less-commercialized areas, BogotArt's goal is to provide an "alternative" source of tourism, one based on culture and learning. In this way, their target market includes backpackers and local professionals who are trying to gain a better understanding of the local context. As a result, BogotArt generates social inclusion and community participation through the dissemination of art and culture.

Since 2013, BogotArt has touched the lives of 300+ children through their workshops, and countless community members through their murals.

Operational Model

BogotArt was registered on September 30, 2013. It pursues a hybrid model combining for-profit and non-profit approaches. In 2013, the organization received a US\$3,000 grant from the DO School which helped initiate operations. In its first two years of operation, the Foundation relied on three primary donors. Today, a large portion of their funding comes in the form of private donations from individuals and local businesses. A smaller percentage comes from the generation of revenue. Key partners include la Casa Cultural de La Perseverancia, community leaders, local and international volunteers, NGOs, artist collectives, community-run spaces for local events, the Cultural Agents initiative of Harvard University, Leuphana University, The Do School, Sprach Institut, and PMP S.A. The organization counts on the help of over 20 partners. A dynamic mix of human talent lies at the heart of BogotArt's efforts.

KEY ASSETS

BogotArt relies on the contributions of a diverse set of volunteers, artists, and staff. Whether it's an actress and producer from Peru, a pharmacist from Egypt, or La Perseverancia community members, BogotArt wouldn't be where it is without the dedication and skills of a diverse team. BogotArt's full-time staff comprises a project coordinator, public relations manager, community engagers, and workshop leaders. The organization even has professional jugglers who teach juggling workshops.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

To become a more sustainable social enterprise, BogotArt needs to rely less on donations and more on income-generating activities. Possible opportunities include the use of murals as a marketing tactic for corporations, guided tours of the neighborhoods in which the organization works, and the selling of merchandise. BogotArt is considering starting a hostel service, which is possible but difficult at least in the short term.

Murals for Corporate Social Responsibility

BogotArt has a competitive advantage in its artistic abilities. The organization counts on the experience of a number of talented, professional artists. The murals BogotArt creates leave the casual observer in awe. With companies in Colombia relying on traditional forms of advertising campaigns

(e.g., billboards, flyers, radio spots), BogotArt has the ability to apply its experience in art to corporate social responsibility initiatives. BogotArt should seek to partner with local businesses to create murals with positive messages, on the condition that the murals feature the company logo, in exchange for sponsorship. In this way, BogotArt stays true to its mission and vision, while at the same time promoting corporate social responsibility. BogotArt is in the process of planning South America's longest mosaic mural, which would be 500 square meters in length. An endeavor of this magnitude requires much funding, and offers medium- and large-sized businesses a great opportunity for investment.



Neighborhood Tours

The non-profit is in the process of developing its neighborhood tours. The goal is to give about three tours per week. The target market includes backpackers who are willing to pay US\$8-15 and professionals willing to pay US\$15-25 per tour. Rather than simply sightseeing, the tour would highlight the history and culture of La Perseverancia, while taking stops at the murals to promote the great work that BogotArt does. The organization can market the tours in all of the Bogota hostels, as an alternative to traditional tourism. Transportation to and from La Perseverancia could be an issue, as petty crime is a risk. BogotArt needs to come up with a strategy for tour logistics, as one bad experience could lead to negative word-of-mouth.

Related to tours, BogotArt can consider organizing homestay visits for international college-aged students. By hosting an international student overnight, La Perseverancia community members would facilitate a sharing of cultures, while also generating income.

Selling Merchandise

BogotArt can take advantage of its artistic abilities to create niche, high-quality merchandise that appeals to national and international tourists. Most souvenirs for tourists are cheap and low-quality. BogotArt can sell postcards, bracelets, photographs, or paintings that demonstrate the team members' artistic expertise, while also promoting the social values that the organization is founded upon.

Private Donations through Online Platforms

BogotArt has relied primarily on donations from small, local businesses, in addition to some initial grants. Nonetheless, there are a number of private donors from different countries that would welcome the opportunity to contribute and make a difference in Colombia. There are a number of on-line platforms, most notably, GlobalGiving, where BogotArt should create a profile so that any individual who desires can contribute.

CONCLUSION

BogotArt displays tremendous opportunity for growth. The organization should aim to hold more regular workshops, increase its number of targeted children, and implement more revenue generating approaches, whether through tours or the selling of merchandise.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT BOGOTART

- BogotArt Website: <http://www.bogotart.org>
- BogotArt on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bogotart>
- BogotArt on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Bogotaart>
- Leo Párraga's YouthActionNet Profile: <http://www.youthactionnet.org/fellows/1053>
- YouthActionNet Video – Healing Communities Through Art: <http://www.youthactionnet.org/videos/healing-communities-through-art>
- IYF Blog – Meet Leo, Artist of Social Change: <http://www.iyfnet.org/blog/meet-leo-artist-social-change>
- Media Coverage of BogotArt & Leo Párraga:
 - <http://www.society30.com/getting-over-the-chasm-how-an-art-project-changes-bogotas-streets/>
 - <http://www.tea-after-twelve.com/all-issues/issue-01/issue-01-overview/chapter2/when-gang-members-turn-to-art/>
 - <http://unaocefs Summerschoolblog.tumblr.com/post/112510687501/past-participant-qa-leonardo-from-colombia>
 - http://www.guiaacademica.com/educacion/personas/cms/colombia/noticias_academicas/2013/ARTICULO-WEB-EEE_PAG-14356075.aspx
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-eNJ2GtLHo&feature=youtu.be>

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