

Building a Common Language

Sergio GONZÁLEZ ZEPEDA

Architect - Taller Experimental y Laboratorio de Arquitectura (T.E.L.A.R.),
Experimental Workshop and Architecture Laboratory - MÉXICO
telar.laboratorio.de.arquitectura@gmail.com

Sergio BELTRÁN GARCÍA

Architect - Taller Experimental y Laboratorio de Arquitectura (T.E.L.A.R.),
Experimental Workshop and Architecture Laboratory - MÉXICO
telar.laboratorio.de.arquitectura@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

As deficiencies, mostly educational, have been identified within indigenous groups of Mexico, NGO's have risen to support the effort to attack and solve these differences. Within these, we mention the case of SIEMBRA (Integral Services for Entrepreneurial Women, for its Spanish acronym), which focuses on teaching microcredit methods to a group of indigenous Otomí women in the State of Mexico who call themselves the Yapanigui. These women's main economical activity is the manufacture of crafts, mainly tapestries and weaved goods. As the scope of the project has evolved during its ten-year life, the beneficiaries have been enriched with other areas of education, such as gender-role workshops, sustainable farming methods, political awareness and influence building strategies. Thus, a new need has emerged for the Yapanigui women: the creation of an architectural space where they may fulfill a decade of empowerment.

TELAR, our architectural firm, was created for the specific purpose of making the architectural design of this Yapanigui Arts & Crafts Center. We soon realized the unique conditions of the project, and it was clear that to follow the conventional and hierarchical path of the common architect would be to trample on those ten years of work for the Yapanigui. We quickly decided to approach the women not as our clients who choose our services due to our architectural knowledge, but as the architects themselves; therefore, we acted as facilitators and translators of their needs and upcoming ideas.

We intend to narrate our investigation and experience in this paper, elaborating on what and how we learned it as clear as we can allow ourselves, without betraying the fact that this was not our idea, but a consequence of the design process we shared with the Yapanigui women.

Keywords: *cooperative construction, participative design, community empowerment, placemaking, horizontal hierarchy*