

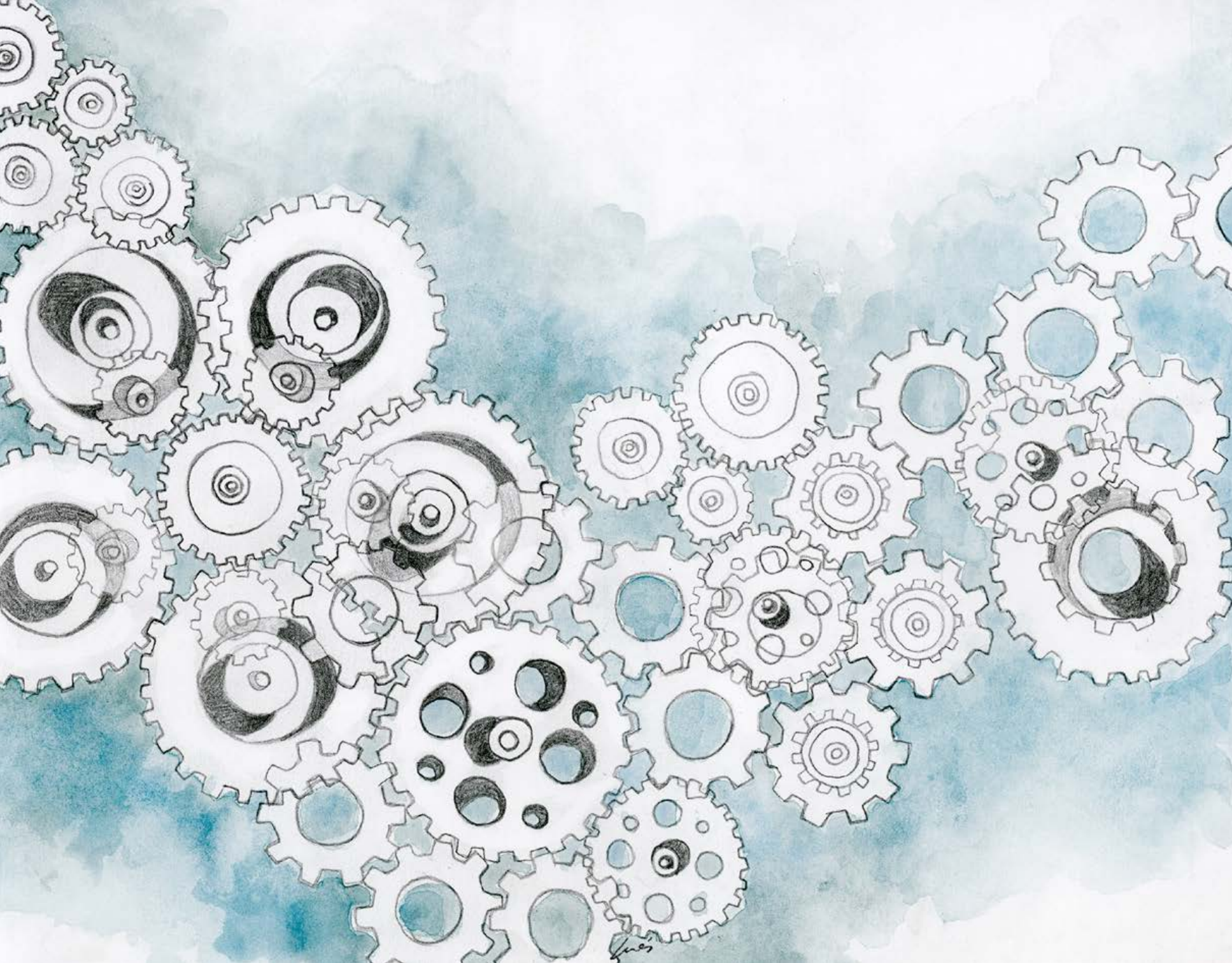
campus GSD

february 2017



Understanding
ROCHDALE

Learning
SPACES



Understanding Rochdale

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In all likelihood on October 24, 1844, it was raining in London. Most probably, it was a dark, grey day, with a damp coldness that chilled to the marrow of the bones. It is probable that the dense smoke spewing from the chimneys hung over everything until it blocked out the sun. It was probably not a remarkable day, a day like any other. Just another day in the asphyxiating, almost tubercular, rhythm of life beating in the industrial city.

Days like these would little lend themselves to the accomplishment of grand gestures, or, at least, so was thought by those who declared climate determined character. In stark disagreement, or perhaps even openly opposed to this way of thinking, were a group of pioneering entrepreneurs who choose to take matters into their own hands, or rather onto their own feet, and decided, with a sure step, though not free of many doubts, to walk the 272 kilometres that separate Rochdale from the capital of England. The end result of this journey, in some ways a beginning that followed in the footsteps of ancient Orphism, was a statement of Principles of the first venture in the history of the entrepreneurial cooperative movement.

It may be true that between their feet and their heads, their gesture and their ideals, there existed an unbridgeable abyss. It is likely that Miles Aspley, a wool weaver, Chartist and first president of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers and the 28 other signatories were not able to anticipate, as intuition is not knowledge, all the things that their declaration of principles would lead to in the future. But perhaps they did...

What do Rochdale, the Pioneers and their Principles stand for? What meaning could an answer to this question have today? Can one respond with a generic answer or should we define or limit the semantic field of the answer? Does Rochdale have a general meaning or has its influence been specific? What significant impact does the question have on Rochdale? There are multiple answers and they depend on the objective we hope to achieve in formulating the question and they will be determined, in the final analysis, by the general principles that underlie the responses to the question. Despite positivism, there are no "plain facts".

In our case the response will be constructed from the totalizing perspective that we take as the framework of our interpretation or response. We believe that the Rochdale Cooperative Principles systematically tied together different political, economic, legal and philosophical currents of a diverse nature. For us, "Understanding Rochdale", means at the very least understanding all the influences intermingling at that historical moment. This totalizing interpretation will be the prism through which we focus our search for the answer to the question: What is Rochdale?

From the historical point of view the role of the ideological triad of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity", around which the French Revolution was carried forward, was crucial in the formation of industrial society. In the first place, we understand that "liberty" is determinant as an element shaping the behaviour of individuals and their associative capabilities, specifically with respect to their entrepreneurial capabilities of "entrepreneurial freedom" established in the Le Chapelier Law of June 14, 1791.

This idea of "liberty" in an ideological sense impregnates the development of industrial capitalism. It set the stage for the great scientific-technological progress of the nineteenth century and, as both utopian socialists and Marx would establish, it generated inhuman working and living conditions for the majority of the population at the same time it was enshrining the liberal-capitalist economic/production model.



PHOTOGRAPH OF THIRTEEN OF THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS
ROCHDALE EQUITABLE PIONEERS SOCIETY.



With respect to "equality", present in the Enlightenment discourse that the French Revolution spells out ideologically, this concept is borrowed as a guide for action in the works of authors called utopian socialists (Owen, Saint Simon, Fourier) and in the socialism with a Marxist root. The posing of the question of equality in these authors tries to correct or go one step further than the formal/legal equality established in the French Revolution. In the opinion of the socialists and Marxists, the formal/legal equality articulated in the French revolutionary ideology is the first step in the negation of the Ancien Regime with respect to royal and clerical privileges, but it did not go far enough.

Equality should go further than the area of positive law and apply itself in the economic-productive landscape. As a response to economic inequality, there arise theories of value and work from economists like David Ricardo or Marx, who believed true equality will, in the end, result from disappearance of private property, which the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen passed by the French Assembly had guaranteed and protected.

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**From Rochdale
onwards, an
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story of the
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develops**

Regarding "fraternity", if we look closely at its etymological meaning, we find it directly related with "brotherhood" and in this sense it possesses undeniable theological and religious references. In fact, it is no coincidence that Saint Simon wrote a work entitled "New Christianity", introduced by the words of Saint Paul telling us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. This belief of Saint Simon's and of the theorists of the cooperatives movement in general presupposes a conception of mankind born precisely from the ideal of human brotherhood. In this sense we would be able to speak of an anthropology of an entirely humanistic and equalitarian character as the backbone of cooperative thought.

These three currents or perspectives determined by the French triad flow together systematically in the economic/productive proposition that one finds in the Rochdale Principles. The economic/entrepreneurial cooperative system is based on democratic criteria (one man, one vote) buttressed by a belief in common property and open membership. In other words, the formal equality of the principles of the French Revolution can be reformulated in an entrepreneurial form but fortified by the criteria of economic equality and

common property. This business model embodies the ideas coursing from the French Revolution, systematically synthesized and articulated, correcting the conditions of economic inequality developed within the framework of the liberal-capitalist economic society. From Rochdale onwards, an uninterrupted story of the cooperative movement develops, establishing principles and values around which this entrepreneurial type should be nurtured. We cannot ignore that material and historic conditions set off an internal evolution or transformation of the original cooperative principles but, in spite of the history, the modifications and redefinitions it has received throughout its history, the ideological fundamentals established in Rochdale have clearly been preserved with respect to principles and values.

The Rochdale Principles were: "1. Open membership, 2. Democratic control, 3. Distribution of surplus in proportion to trade, 4. Payment of limited interest on capital, 5. Political and religious neutrality, 6. Cash trading, 7. Promotion of education". The principles established by the ACI (International Cooperative Alliance) in the Manchester Declaration of 1995 currently in force are "1. Voluntary and open membership, 2. Democratic member control, 3. Member economic participation, 4. Autonomy and independence, 5. Education, training and information, 6. Cooperation among cooperatives, 7. Concern for community".

In conclusion, we should say what Rochdale means today, taking into account the history of the cooperative movement begun in 1844. It seems that Rochdale means above all an exercise in criticism and self-affirmation. Self-affirmation in the sense that the activity carried out is based on principles and values that are clearly democratic and equalitarian. At the same time, Rochdale also signifies an exercise in criticism. Criticism which we think should continue to defend the cooperative way of doing business as opposed to other types where the principles and values are not found to be based on the principles of democracy, equality and common property. Rochdale is a metaphor for criticism of an economic and political system where it is evident capital is unequally distributed and where work does not establish a direct and balanced relationship with capital. Rochdale is, in the end, the touchstone we should constantly revisit to affirm that another form of business is possible.

It is probable that the Pioneers of Rochdale were not conscious of what that date, October 24, 1844, would signify. But perhaps they were... It is probable that they also did not think that their action would draw from many diverse movements and earlier currents that were nourishing their own. It is probable that they did not know that they were inaugurating the history of the cooperative movement.

It is probable that their feet never wanted to go further than London, or perhaps, they did, but thanks to them, their feet, I mean, we, GSD Cooperative, here today, are offering solutions to the underlying problems our pioneers confronted to join effort to ideology.





Open Learning Spaces

Professor Peter Jamieson and educational consultant Rosa Storelli highlight the importance of redesigning classroom spaces to improve formal and informal education. Both spent some days in Madrid and visited several GSD centres.

Innovation in teaching must be a priority to face the educational challenges of the twenty-first century. In this sense, learning requires paying attention to various areas: the academic, the emotional and the sphere of social relationships. Addressing all these areas in education is necessary but is as challenging, perhaps, as "squaring the circle". These are some of the conclusions of experts Peter Jamieson and Rosa Storelli, who visited several GSD centres in recent months with one objective: to study and optimise how to use and make the most of school spaces as a catalyst of transformation and didactic progress. The careers of both of these professionals and their broad experience in schools all over the world reveals that an inspiring, safe, comfortable, cheerful and functional environment promotes higher achievement, as well as improving students' individual and group behaviour.

Who are these advocates for this revolutionary idea that will transform the day-to-day of the educational community? Let's look at them individually. Peter Jamieson has participated in the design of schools in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Sweden, Singapore, China, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The results have always been surprising and many international centres have used his work as a model. One example is Methodist Ladies' College in Melbourne, one of the most advanced and successful learning institutions in Australia, a school which has forged the character of generations of students for more than 130 years. Nevertheless, despite his knowledge on how to redesign school spaces, Peter Jamieson would never call himself an architect, but rather a teacher concerned about his students, about their motivation, capacity for interaction and the use of techniques such as cooperative learning. With identical educational objectives, working alongside Peter, is Rosa Storelli, who in her own words, is a "passionate educator" who has held posts of the highest responsibility in schools in Australia. A role model in her own country in the field of educational leadership, Storelli emphasises: "Learning has to be fun!" Together they spread the word about their proposals with conviction and rigour, yet their conclusions are contrasting and complementary, rather than identical.

Under the title "Rethinking the places of learning", they explained their ideas in the second GSD Pedagogical Meeting held in October, 2015, and they analysed them in first person, recently visiting GSD schools and recreating the work dynamic in situ. Specifically, they carried out a practical session at GSD El Escorial last February. The words on the screen introducing the talks read: "Creating a learning campus. Developing the external environment". It is their 'leitmotiv', which runs from early childhood education through university, the topic that guides their work: having better school spaces for the entire educational community.

Jamieson and Storelli are fully convinced that "spaces significantly influence and alter the behaviour of people in all aspects of our lives". The places where we experience the process of learning "shape our character, our thought and our feelings". Why? Because everything we do happens in some space. Even when we are connected "on line" we find ourselves at that moment in a physical space.



Peter Jamieson and Rosa Storelli with Alberto Vicente, GSD' CEO.

"This simple evidence", they hold, "is what brings us to the exciting conclusion that every school, and the spaces that make it up, should be thought of not only as functional places apt for the carrying out of educational activity, but also as generators of opportunities to motivate and optimise the experiences of every student and teacher in the planning and practice of the process of learning". This goal must be built on common joint action: "We know from our experience that the best projects and space designs to create a motivating and positive school environment are accomplished through collaboration with the whole school community. We can assure you that it is a really positive experience with surprising results". Jamieson and Storelli recalled that they first visited GSD in the year 2011 and since then they have maintained an extraordinary relationship with the International Relations department. This fruitful exchange of knowledge contributes to the global orientation that today's education requires.

In Spain and in other countries, of course, there are already different educational designs followed to ensure academic achievement, but there is a long road ahead yet to be traced. In the same way that in supermarkets it has been shown that an agreeable environment, a correct positioning of products and music that reflects the feelings of the people will encourage people to buy, when it is time to learn in school, something similar occurs. Let's address more concrete questions: Why do so many classrooms appear identical? Who makes the decision on simple things, like, for example, what colours to paint the walls and classroom furniture? Are we aware of the fact that lively colours stimulate attention? Do students ever study standing up, perched before a lectern or in front of a computer, or do they always do it sitting at a pupil desk, like they have done their entire lives? Is the chair comfortable? Does that clearly affect concentration? Would it be nice to take a walk in the schoolyard? Is there some specific space that would be interesting for conversing with students on school grounds or are there no places that lend themselves to that activity? Do we care about our school? Is there some identifying trait that fosters pride of belonging that is deeper than the obligation to go to class or the friendship of a classmate? Have we noticed if we are being careful about the sound levels in the environment and, therefore, the mood of the school community? Do we smile more or less when we spend time with work and schoolmates at the centre?



At first glance, these seem like insignificant details, they are not: the decisions that Jamieson and Storelli make noticeably impact the progress of the teaching and learning in the medium term. According to these experts, the experiences of the students are keys for evolving, since the "school is theirs", and they are the ones who move "between formal and informal learning".

"Fun is essential; learning is enhanced. We are often not aware that we have to keep this in mind, since it involves, it helps, it makes people happy and improves outcomes." These are remarks made by Rosa Storelli at GSD Las Rozas, in October, 2015, when all the principals of GSD met to evaluate the importance of school spaces. Its role is extremely crucial: "You are the tip of the iceberg and you have to create this environment, that positive attitude. If you don't do it, the rest of the organization won't be able to". Of course, redesigning a location requires a methodology. The comparison they propose is graphic and infallible: "When we do this, we think of creating free-time space as if it were an airport. We look for a VIP lounge to be comfortable in". The difference is in a school great infrastructures are not necessary. Instead, it could be "converting a hallway into a space that is significant for students and educators. Modest changes that involve us all," concludes Jamieson, who underlines "the entire educational environment is a learning space". So that, as if we were building an airport, each corner will awaken greater or lesser satisfaction along the journey. Thus, the quality of the learning destinations of the students will be greater or lesser depending on innovation with school spaces. Putting architecture, reflection, experience and emotions at the service of pedagogy.

Jorge Garcia Palomo ■■



Four Keys to Transforming Education

- ▶ We defend and work for the total education of every person.
- ▶ We apply and foster shared leadership.
- ▶ We stimulate the spirit of innovation in our students and ourselves.
- ▶ The reason for everything we do is to help those around us.

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Published by : Gredos San Diego Cooperative. **Chairman:** Carlos Pedro de la Higuera Pérez.

Editorial Board: Alberto Vicente Pescador, Enrique González Prada, Lola Granado, Jorge de la Calle, Pilar Fernández, Eva María Villanueva González, Fernando López Bejarano. **Editing, design and layout :** Marketing Department GSD.

The people who have collaborated in this magazine: José María Vaquero, Jorge García Palomo. **Artwork:** Inés Beckmann