

Why Do Artists Migrate to Large Cities? Cultural Affinities and Work Conditions for Performing Artists Who Settle in Buenos Aires

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Mid-sized cities often serve as vibrant enclaves for artists, with a local bohemia, prizes, and institutions. However, they may also present significant constraints, such as limited work opportunities or conservative environments. While many noncapital cities in Europe have achieved notable leadership in cultural and economic activities, Latin America presents a more centralized landscape, with prominent metropolises concentrating resources, professional opportunities, and cultural legitimacy. Why do large metropolises retain their magnetism, even for artists who developed solid careers in vigorous mid-sized cities? What challenges do mid-sized and capital cities pose to comprehending artistic fields in Latin America?

This article analyzes the trajectories of fifteen performing artists who move from Tucumán, a mid-sized city in the Northwest of Argentina, to Buenos Aires. While various reports have offered quantitative indices on the advantages of large cities, this article provides a qualitative investigation on artists' experiences, emotions, and decision-making processes. Three main issues are examined: the reasons to abandon Tucumán, the role of mentors and creative undertakings as important components of Buenos Aires attractiveness, and the work conditions encountered in the capital city. The article demonstrates that "culture counts" insofar as artists migrate to develop personal creative projects, detach from an alleged conservative environment, and escape from peers' anticommopolitan biases. Furthermore, the study shows that mid-sized cities meet the needs of emerging artists but have difficulty providing work and creative opportunities for those at intermediate career levels.

Keywords: performing arts, artistic labor, city cultural venues, Argentina, artist migration, theater workers

Las ciudades de tamaño mediano a menudo operan como vigorosos enclaves para los artistas, con una bohemia local, premios e instituciones. Sin embargo, también pueden presentar limitaciones significativas, como reducidas oportunidades de trabajo o entornos conservadores. Si bien muchas ciudades no capitales de Europa han alcanzado notable liderazgo en la actividad cultural y económica, América Latina presenta un panorama más centralizado, con metrópolis poderosas que concentran recursos, oportunidades profesionales y legitimidad cultural. ¿Por qué las grandes metrópolis conservan su

magnetismo, incluso para los artistas que desarrollaron sólidas carreras en importantes ciudades medianas? ¿Qué desafíos plantean las ciudades medianas y capitales para comprender los campos artísticos en América Latina?

Este artículo analiza las trayectorias de quince artistas escénicos que se trasladan desde Tucumán, una ciudad de tamaño mediano en el noroeste argentino, a Buenos Aires. Si bien varios informes han ofrecido índices cuantitativos sobre las ventajas de las grandes ciudades, este trabajo proporciona una investigación cualitativa de las experiencias, las emociones y la toma de decisiones de los artistas. Se examinan tres cuestiones principales: las razones para abandonar Tucumán, el papel de los mentores y los emprendimientos creativos como componentes relevantes del atractivo de Buenos Aires y las condiciones de trabajo encontradas en la capital del país. El artículo demuestra que “la cultura cuenta” en la medida en que los artistas migran para desarrollar proyectos creativos personales, desvincularse de un entorno que les resulta conservador y escapar de los sesgos anticosmopolitas de sus pares. Además, el estudio muestra que las ciudades de tamaño mediano satisfacen bien las necesidades de los artistas emergentes, pero tienen dificultades para proporcionar oportunidades laborales y creativas para aquellos en niveles profesionales intermedios.

Palabras claves: artes escénicas, labor artística, espacios culturales ciudadanos, Argentina, migración de artistas, trabajadores del teatro

Introduction

Several factors transform large metropolises into attractive enclaves for artists: a robust cultural infrastructure, extensive networking opportunities that grant access to resources and information, enthusiastic audiences, awards, press, critics, proximity to state officials who facilitate funding, as well as a bohemian environment that fosters confidence and nurtures the affective bonds essential for sustaining a career in the creative professions (Rius-Ulldemolins 2014). For their part, medium-sized cities, whose artistic fields have been considerably less explored by scholarship, present an ambiguous and challenging landscape: they share some advantages that large metropolises provide to artists, but, in other dimensions, they exhibit significant constraints for artistic professionals.

Moreover, while European mid-sized cities have proven to be vibrant enclaves for cultural development in different realms such as arts, education, and technology (Montalto et al. 2019), Latin America reveals a significantly different scene—one dominated by a handful of powerful capital cities that concentrate population, economic resources, and the greater part of artistic institutions and professional opportunities. Combined with the usual precariousness of artistic fields (Menger 1999; Zallo 2007), many artists who studied, produced, and accomplished solid positions in Latin American mid-sized cities, even achieving recognition or regular income, decide to set off and try their luck in large metropolises. In sum, the unequal distribution of resources in many countries of Latin America results in medium-sized cities—ones that hold regional leadership to some extent—having great difficulties in retaining their artists.

The objective of this article is to tackle an oft-mentioned but empirically rather unexplored issue in Latin America: the prevalence of large metropolises in artistic fields and the strategies carried out by artists in mid-sized cities. Specifically, we will examine the resources and opportunities, as well as restrictions and constraints, for performing artists who are settled in a mid-sized city of Argentina, and the reasons that push them to move to the capital of the country.

To accomplish this goal, this essay will analyze the trajectories of fifteen performing artists who began their careers in San Miguel de Tucumán (hereafter, Tucumán) and moved to Buenos Aires. Unlike previous reports that offer quantitative indices to explain cities' cultural prevalence (Florida et al. 2011; Montalto et al. 2019), this study undertakes a qualitative strategy to explore the meanings, experiences, and affective dimensions involved in the professional careers of those who decide to migrate to a prominent metropolis.

The city of Tucumán has nearly a million inhabitants, a major university offering several artistic programs, and a vibrant bohemian scene with independent spaces (Salas Tonello 2021). In other words, artists exiting to embark on an uncertain venture do not leave behind a small town characterized by deprivation, but rather an intermediate city that maintains artistic leadership in its region. The creative workers we follow enjoyed several professional advantages in Tucumán but decided to abandon relatively solid positions in their hometown for the allure of a promising metropolis. This paper will explore, then, the qualitative differences between an intermediate city and an appealing metropolis like Buenos Aires that looks auspicious for creative professionals.

This article explores the decision-making process of artists undertaking calculated chances, driven by the promising metropolis, but also by the bitter experiences of the local labor market. By addressing the dilemmas involved in specific turning points of professional careers, the article sheds light on the limitations and constraints of the artistic fields in a mid-sized Argentine city. Specifically, we will demonstrate that Tucumán hosts a somewhat conservative environment rooted in strong aesthetic traditions and moral standards that can be summarized as “be local, not postmodern or cosmopolitan.” Despite the presence of numerous companies and studios in Tucumán, artists perceive that local context is homogeneous and suffocating for their creative growth. As will be presented, those who achieved an intermediate stage in their professional pathways experience significant working and educational restrictions, resulting in the decision to leave. However, even as Tucumán presents difficulties for artists, Buenos Aires also exerts undeniable cultural magnetism through a wide variety of elements: cultural infrastructure, renowned mentors, better income, and access to the TV and film industry.

Cities, Cultural Infrastructure, and Artistic Fields

In the last decades, cultural policies in Europe have undergone a significant transformation: from the focus on the democratization and decentralization of culture on a national scale, a new agenda has emerged centering on attracting artists and creative entrepreneurs to global cities, resulting in a competitive ecosystem between metropolises (Menger 2010). In such initiatives, culture may operate as a “resource” for economic development, integration, and the recognition of identities (Yudice 2002), and the creation of a “creative class” (Florida et al. 2011) is encouraged, insofar as “creative” workers are considered as the leading generators of a fertile environment for tolerance as well as business and technical development.¹ In this context, metropolises and medium-sized cities present relevant differences regarding their cultural infrastructure and capacity for drawing creative entrepreneurs.

In long-term comparative research, Montalto et al. (2019) examined the results of the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (CCCM), a survey that measures the “cultural and creative vitality” of 168 European cities. A remarkable finding stands out at the “Enabling Environment” index (which includes indicators such as accessibility of roads, tolerance, public trust, and universities, among others), as it presents better values in noncapital cities than in the capital city in fourteen out of twenty-four European countries. For instance, top urban centers like Milan, Leuven, Barcelona, and Utrecht reveal better results than their corresponding capital cities. Similarly, some small, medium, and noncapital cities overshadow the corresponding capitals in “Cultural Vitality”—Florence, Granada, and Norwich—and “Creative Economies”—Stuttgart, Linz, and Umeå. Thus, many medium-sized cities in Europe present notable cultural leadership, either by hosting renowned universities, creative initiatives, or festivals. On the other hand, less frequent are the cases such as France, Portugal, and the United Kingdom, where the capital city’s cultural metrics noticeably outperform those of medium-sized urban centers (Montalto et al. 2019).

While the European cultural landscape is multipolar and characterized by governmental decentralization, the situation is significantly different in Latin America, where social inequality and demographic concentration in crowded megalopolises reveal a long and complex shared history (Padilla Cobos 1998). In Argentina, social and economic

¹ As Bayardo and other authors have extensively shown, Florida et al.’s (2011) definitions are problematic: The category “creative class” lumps together very different professional profiles, from health workers to schoolteachers and small business owners; the replacement of “art” with “creativity” may imply a false democratic gesture similar to that found in television talent shows; complex problems traversed by micropolitical practices, such as racial discrimination, are simplified under glassy and schematic measurements, labeled as “tolerance indexes,” that contribute little to understanding the various forms of segregation present in large cities (Bayardo 2023, 131–141).

inequalities between Buenos Aires and the provinces have been a problematic issue addressed by various public figures at least since the nineteenth century. Permanent debates on radically different opportunities were exploited by the capital port-city that gained significant profits from customs tariffs, while inland urban centers faced difficulties in placing their products in the international market. The greatest depopulation of rural areas in Argentina and consequent demographic concentration in the Buenos Aires suburbs started in the 1930s, leading many intellectuals to assume accusatory positions toward Buenos Aires, claiming its supposed greed and self-centeredness as causes of the provinces' scarcity (Cattaruzza 2009).

Although the relationship between arts and urban environments has been of key interest for the social sciences, it has received only limited analysis, mostly due to the practically nonexistent sociology of the arts in Latin America and Spain (Facuse 2010; Rodríguez Morató 2017). Moreover, comparing indices from different cities is productive for studies originating in the Global North but difficult to implement in Latin America, where data and indicators are often scarce, irregular, and not easily comparable. Studies on migration have begun to make substantial contributions to understanding displacements arising from critical experiences—income crises, social and political violence, and natural disasters—yielding excellent research on racialized, feminized, and working-class populations (Herrera and Sørensen 2017). In contrast, few studies have addressed the displacements of middle and upper-middle professional sectors—often the same sectors to which many academics themselves belong—engaged in intellectual or creative work that has a significant impact on the ecosystem and cultural leadership of cities.

In the arts field, Buenos Aires boasts significant advantages over the provinces due to various factors: its public institutions as the capital of the nation, cultural infrastructure development from extensive municipal expenditures, and robust cultural industries that achieved great expansion after the first decades of the twentieth century (Mauro 2018; Kriger and Poppe 2024). Furthermore, the cultural outlay of the district has historically been higher than what provinces spend. In 2007, the City of Buenos Aires allocated ARS \$109 (Argentine pesos) per inhabitant and 3.5% of its total budget to cultural policies, while the national average was ARS \$25 per inhabitant and 0.46% of the budget. In 2017, these contrasting indicators remained: Buenos Aires spent ARS \$1230 per inhabitant and 2.1% of its budget on culture, while the national average was ARS \$222 and 0.45% (SINCA 2010, 2019). In 2007, for instance, the province of Tucumán was below the national average for both indicators, with ARS \$10 per inhabitant and 0.3% of the budget allocated to culture (SINCA 2010, 16–18).

Additionally, cultural policies in Buenos Aires and the provinces differ not only in the amounts of allocated funds, but also according to how expenditures encourage traditional, avant-garde, local, or global expressions. Cultural policies explicitly targeting

youth established long, institutionalized traditions in Buenos Aires: the Bienal de Arte Joven (Youth Art Biennial) inaugurated at the Recoleta Cultural Center when democracy returned in 1983; the massive Buenos Aires No Duerme (Buenos Aires Doesn't Sleep), an annual youth art event carried out in the late 1990s (Aguilar 2019); the BAFICI – Buenos Aires Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente, which screened and awarded early talents in different editions; Ciudad Emergente (Emerging City), a set of free public concerts where young groups can perform. The prevalence of young, contemporary, and global expressions—like skating, gaming, K-pop, urban art, trap, and stand-up—and sponsorship by private companies have become hallmarks of Buenos Aires' official cultural policies.

In comparison, Tucumán has an urban center with around 600,000 inhabitants, surrounded by four other municipalities, resulting in a total population of about 800,000 people in the most crowded district of the northwest region of Argentina. The city is home to the well-reputed National University of Tucumán, which offers advanced programs in theater, music, and film production, attracting many young people from the region each year. Fifteen small theaters constitute the local bohemian circuit, while six official venues provide larger stages and opportunities for performing companies (Salas Tonello 2021). As can be seen in Figure 1, most of the venues lie within a squared area of about four km² locally called “the four avenues” (*las cuatro avenidas*), where most of the administrative offices, commercial activities, and artistic venues are located. In the last twenty years, some small bohemian venues started to mushroom outside this area and encountered considerable difficulties in attracting audiences in a city where public transport stops running early in the evening.

Figure 1: Theater Venues in San Miguel de Tucumán: Public and Independent Spaces



Source: Developed by the author.

Sharp disparities with Buenos Aires emerge when focusing on Tucumán's most significant and consistent cultural factor in theater, the Provincial Stable Theater (Teatro Estable de la Provincia). It is one of the few remaining regular troupes of salaried actors and actresses, primarily dedicated to performing classical plays from national, Spanish, and Western traditions. Founded in 1959, the Stable Theater was part of a broader project of cultural and economic modernization, initially dedicated to programming contemporary works, but adopting more traditional and patrimonial aesthetic features from the 1990s forward (Salas Tonello 2022). Tucumán's theater personnel includes dozens of performers, directors, and artistic assistants who often hold precarious job positions. They strive to be integrated into the field's network while being involved, at the same time, in significant aesthetic and moral disputes concerning their creative work (Salas Tonello 2024).

Methodology and Materials

The methodological approach of this qualitative study is based on fifteen semistructured interviews, with ten men and five women, conducted face-to-face, with only one exception carried out via video call. The interviews were conducted primarily in 2019 and 2023 as

part of my doctoral and postdoctoral research. The following table provides an overview of each interviewee, including their pseudonym,² gender, age, roles in the artistic profession, and the date of the interview.

Table 1: Artists Migrated from Tucumán to Buenos Aires: Interview Data

	Name	Gender	Age	Roles	Date
1	Andrea	Woman	29	Actress, Teacher	13 Sep 2016
2	Gonzalo	Man	24	Playwright	18 Mar 2019
3	Lautaro	Man	37	Performer, Assistant	11 Apr 2019
4	Gastón	Man	45	Actor	23 May 2019
5	Joaquín	Man	23	Actor	03 Jun 2019
6	Ramiro	Man	43	Playwright, Director, Teacher	13 Jul 2019
7	Thiago	Man	36	Performer, Producer	21 Oct 2019
8	Pedro	Man	39	Theater and Filmmaker, Scriptwriter	26 Feb 2021
9	Ignacio	Man	31	Actor, Film Assistant	13 Feb 2023
10	Pilar	Woman	30	Actress, Teacher	19 May 2023
11	Nicolás	Man	24	Actor, Film Assistant	14 Sep 2023
12	Jorge	Man	34	Producer	16 Sep 2023
13	Fátima	Woman	35	Actress	10 Oct 2023
14	Soledad	Woman	36	Actress, Director, Teacher	24 Oct 2023
15	Karina	Woman	36	Actress, Director, Playwright	13 Oct 2023

Regarding age, three groups can be defined: those who moved to Buenos Aires in their early twenties after finishing secondary school (Joaquín, Gonzalo, Nicolás); those who relocated in their mid-twenties or early thirties, many shortly after graduating from university with theater degrees (Andrea, Soledad, Karina, Pilar, Fátima, Jorge, Ignacio); and those who moved to Buenos Aires after already achieving a distinguished position in the local artistic scene, with significant training and evident recognition (Gastón, Ramiro, Lautaro, Pedro, Thiago).

In terms of gender, there is a noticeable disparity, with a ratio of three men to one woman. This outcome stems from the snowball sampling method used to find and contact interviewees, where the goal was not necessarily to attain a representative sample.

² To preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, pseudonyms have been used. This decision was made because the interviewees belong to a very small professional field, and some of the insights shared could be critical. Additionally, this was part of the agreement made with the interviewees prior to the conversations.

Furthermore, in different moments of the search, when quantifying how many artists from Tucumán were living in Buenos Aires, the prevalence of men was always evident, which might suggest a possible initial account: it was easier, more likely, or desirable for men to migrate to Buenos Aires than for women, who usually prevail in number in the performing field.

Resentments, Ceilings, and Unfulfilled Promises: Departure from Tucumán

Artists' accounts for leaving Tucumán exhibit a wide spectrum of narratives that go from explicitly negative encounters—tales of unacknowledged talent, humiliation, the burden of heavy critiques for embracing aesthetics strongly rejected locally—to more moderate feelings rooted in other kinds of experiences, such as “being stuck,” having bumped up against an invisible “ceiling,” or even perceiving that, in Tucumán, “everything was served up on a plate,” uniform, or lacking in inspiration. In short, while some artists carry a palpable resentment toward specific features and figures within Tucumán's theater scene, others recount their departure to Buenos Aires as emerging from a more rational evaluation, even as the natural outcome of a long process. Within each artistic trajectory, the decision to set sail for Buenos Aires unveils diverse constraints in the creative field of a mid-sized city related to infrastructural conditions, professional opportunities, or microsocial experiences, from which artists seek liberation. In the following paragraphs, the motivations that propelled Lautaro, Ignacio, Gonzalo, and Thiago to bid farewell to Tucumán will be explored.

Lautaro is an actor and performer who decided to move to Buenos Aires “already as a grown up,” as he says, nearing the age of forty. Recounting his final months in Tucumán, Lautaro lists a bunch of activities in which he was involved that had slowly started to lose meaning, given the considerable effort they demanded and scarce economic return, as well as a diminishing symbolic recognition: “I was about to take part in a university competition as a teacher, which actually never took place. Meanwhile, I held an unpaid position in another department, participated in a research group, an academic journal, a research institute, and taught in schools... .”³ He points out additional reasons, including a limiting conservatism in Tucumán. While working on his undergraduate thesis, he became enthusiastic about Gilles Deleuze's work and wanted to use his contributions as the cornerstone of his final project. However, his advisors insisted that his key author of reference should be Jorge Dubatti, a leading theater theorist and critic in Argentina. “I'm quite a fighter,” he comments. Additionally, he remembers feeling very upset after participating in a production where he was “mistreated” by the director: “Those mentors! They feel they're untouchable! They believe that you owe them your career because they

³ Interviews were conducted in Spanish. My translations throughout.

recognized you, because they directed you well... ." For him, leaving Tucumán holds a special component of dissatisfaction with hierarchical figures for not allowing him to evolve professionally at the university or to open up his intellectual work to authors not accepted in a pre-set series.

Ignacio was thirty years old when he arrived in Buenos Aires at the beginning of 2020. He could not have known that, in a few weeks, job and training opportunities would come to a long standstill due to Covid-19 restrictions. Nevertheless, the chance he took on Buenos Aires proved positive, as he views his trajectory in retrospect. Unlike Lautaro, Ignacio had one foot in performing arts and another in the audiovisual field, where he acquired skills for "producing content for social networks, operating cameras, laying cables, streaming." As a young performer in Tucumán, Ignacio had not only participated in experimental and impassioned, self-managed projects with friends, but also worked simultaneously in many advertising campaigns, design agencies, and television studios that offered sporadic jobs: "Big gigs that lasted two or three months, and then... nothing. All under the table, as you can imagine." Ignacio recalls some bitter experiences of humiliation, "ugly mistreatment," and constant promises that he would eventually get a stable position, which uncovers the problems of precariousness and instability inherent in local audiovisual production with little development. Although the film industry in Tucumán appeared to have grown since 2005, when a film degree was founded at the local university, Ignacio indicates that film activity never really took off. Moreover, he emphasizes that only a few have the equipment and the relevant contacts, all of which are obtained through family ties and previous socialization in high school, a privilege he lacks. Like Lautaro, Ignacio's feelings of frustration and lack of recognition were key drivers for leaving Tucumán.

In December 2018, eighteen-year-old Gonzalo opened his email box and discovered great news: he had been awarded with a scholarship for a humanities degree at a prestigious university in Buenos Aires. In Tucumán, Gonzalo had been quite engaged in various activities in the performing arts—musical theater productions, independent studios—and had even sneaked into rehearsals at the university, where he smoked pot with students who would open doors to the underground bohemia. But then everything changed. This grant would be his "golden ticket," he says, to settle in Buenos Aires, since a bachelor's degree was a bit more serious motive to obtain support from his parents than dedicating his time exclusively to the theater.

However, once settled in the capital, he left his full-ride scholarship to start a meteoric career as a playwright. As he recalls, some previous experiences in Tucumán in theater had started to be disquieting. For instance, he recalls particularly a workshop where participants "started criticizing my work solely because there was no sex," an anecdote that reveals predominant aesthetics and cultural patterns in the Tucumán theater: the

courageous imperative to present sex, as well as the tacit obligation to incorporate Tucumán's local identity prominently in plays. It took a lot until Gonzalo could finally get rid of these heavy components that had nurtured his creative work for years, as he points out. Laughing sarcastically, he recalls one of the first plays he premiered as a playwright in Buenos Aires, which was packed with diametrically opposed features from those in Tucumán: "dozens of LED lights" and tons of synthetic material on the stage: "It all looked like a spaceship!" To conclude and make his point, he enumerates emphatically: "I hate old objects, I hate old wood, I hate used vintage clothes, I hate brown shoes!" which all-in-all summarizes some predominant aesthetic elements in various workshops and self-managed casts in Tucumán.

Recalling his formative years, Gonzalo specially remembers seeing the play *Dykenstein* by Susana Cook,⁴ premiered by a local cast in 2013. "*Dykenstein* was a play that blew my mind! It fascinated me!" The reason: "It was at least a bit worldly! The story didn't necessarily unfold in that heavy brown atmosphere of Tucumán." Gonzalo was amazed by the English names of the characters, as well as the costumes, stage design, and visual advertising, which were markedly inspired by pop culture and comics. Such plays are certainly rare in Tucumán, where leading referents are reluctant to embrace cosmopolitanism, a tendency that raises suspicions alleging its lack of engagement with the territory. As Marc Abélès (2012) indicates, left-wing activism often accuses cosmopolitanism for its (supposedly) limited local rootedness, little commitment to social change, and suspicious and ambiguous bonds to the interests of global imperialism. However, Abélès shows that these polarizing judgements simply overlook that "globalization is neither good nor bad" in itself. Many well-known cosmopolitan figures, like Marx, were deeply committed to social change, and, in parallel, many nationalist regimes have maintained vectors of structural inequalities (Abélès 2012, 19–23).

While Gonzalo's experience shows great discomfort with Tucumán's dominant aesthetics, Lautaro's and Ignacio's accounts emphasize the precarious work conditions as one of their key memories of Tucumán. As many trajectories indicate, the pressure of dominant cultural patterns in the creative field, as well as bad work conditions, converge in different individuals by triggering a similar emotion: a lack of recognition, which becomes even more unbearable to those the artists who have gained experience.

⁴ *Dykenstein: Sex, Horror and the Tragedy of the Straight Brain* (2003) is a humorous camp version of Mary Shelley's classic written by Susana Cook, an Argentine playwright who resides in New York. The play presents the story of Dr. Dykenstein, a lesbian scientist whose beloved girlfriend has suddenly become heterosexual. While the title *Dykenstein* clearly refers to lesbianism in an Anglophone context, that name would not ring any other bell in Tucumán but the obvious reference to *Frankenstein*. The version presented in Tucumán was quite successful before audiences but did not receive any recognition from the most important local award, the Fiesta Provincial del Teatro, usually reluctant to bestow prizes to comedies or cosmopolitan-rooted plays. A recording of Tucumán's *Dykenstein* directed by Marcos Acevedo is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS6X7UIHKLY&ab_channel=MarcosAcevedo.

When leaving Tucumán in 2016, Thiago wrote long posts on social media naming the obstacles colleagues had put in his way to his working in public institutions. From his early years at the university, Thiago had been interested in performance and began doing street interventions, since he hardly ever received offers to participate in plays. His short acts in public spaces immediately caught the attention of the written press. Everything changed when he visited Córdoba, an important city in the center of the country, and saw a play featuring Eugenia Hadandaniou, a recognized artist who showed him on stage the exact genre he had been yearning to do: performance. “I wouldn’t say I’m an actor. I’m a performer, and I like to define myself in those terms.” Like Gonzalo, Thiago was interested in a genre linked to postmodernist trends and associated with the so-called biodrama, a genre that had enormous success in Buenos Aires starting in the 1980s but never took off in Tucumán. In summation, rejections of Deleuze, pop culture, and performance reveal a certain reluctance to embrace aesthetic and cultural contents that may look too postmodernist or cosmopolitan for expectations, where local identity, collectivism, and traditional left-wing culture are key elements (Salas Tonello 2023).

While some artists claim resentments or anger, in others, a sense of fatigue, boredom, or lack of challenge stand out. “When you do theater in Tucumán, you automatically get to know others, and if they like what you do, someone else will call you. . . , because it’s all so compact, you see? If you manage to do things well, there’s always someone who will recommend you,” says Andrea. This perception is shared by Lautaro, but not precisely as a positive feature: “At some point, it’s very easy to settle (in Tucumán), it’s very easy to be recognized, it’s very easy to become a reference.” Stories in which artists reach a plateau, as well as various difficulties in moving into positions that correspond to their expertise, are echoed throughout the interviews.

When Fátima completed her undergraduate degree in theater, she had already achieved significant professional integration, one of the most desired objectives for initiates, and certainly dazzling for many, as it is not easy to decipher what the means are to accomplish it. A few months after graduating, the feeling that her career was flattening became more and more evident: “I’m at the peak of what I could have wished for here,” Fátima thought at that moment. “Great, I appreciate it. I’m not interested in working in the Stable Theater. I’m not interested in working at the university either.” In this case, Fátima highlights two paths that many theater artists share as the obvious spaces where to apply to grow professionally: the Stable Theater and the university, public institutions that offer only a handful of positions for the large number of artists.

Not even salaried positions are completely effective to retain artists, as it is shown by Gastón. Although he had accomplished integration into the Stable Theater after fierce competition and was already enjoying of a monthly-paid position, after five years there,

he decided to quit and try his luck in Buenos Aires: “I felt that I needed to put myself in a student position again. I felt I was stagnating, and the places to study acting in Tucumán were all for beginners,” he says, pointing out that studios in Tucumán are certainly homogeneous, considering their targeted students. Overall, as seen in the cases of Fátima and Gastón, far from expressing anger against the local scene, they allege having stumbled upon “stagnation,” a “ceiling,” or unchallenging opportunities.

Over the years, Pedro has become a well-known filmmaker, but he also started out as a theater director who—he can see clearly now—was constantly trying to use film language in each play he directed. Like many of his peers, he attended the university and a private studio where he met his “eternal master.” After staging some plays in the indie circuit of Tucumán and winning a prize that allowed him to tour to different cities, the penny dropped: his true desire was to make films. For years, his friends had called him the “crazy film guy” because everywhere he went, he insisted that he had a film in mind and that, sooner or later, he would accomplish his goal.

During the first decade of the 2000s, there were no prospects for audiovisual production in Tucumán, apart from the opportunities offered by local television. Pedro carefully studied the funding sources of the National Institute of Audiovisual Arts (INCAA, for its Spanish acronym)—which, unlike the National Theatre Institute, does not have offices throughout the country, but only in Buenos Aires—and applied with a friend in the section “Debut Film.” The results were positive and a company of producers from Buenos Aires immediately became interested in their work. Now, ten years later and settled in Buenos Aires, Pedro looks back in time and says with amazement and some bitterness:

We made all that fuss about the INCAA contests for something that production companies here in Buenos Aires have direct access to! They don’t need to go through debut film contests. They go to the Institute and participate in any contest they want, with the film they want, and they’re given the money. It’s about knowing how to get in. But we had no way in! We didn’t know anyone who did, so we had to take the longest route.

Pedro even emphasizes that no one in Tucumán could give them guidelines on how to apply for the INCAA, not even at the film career center of the National University of Tucumán. In some way, his activity in theater can also be understood as a sort of delay in arriving at the film profession, an industry that practically exists only in Buenos Aires. Although many superior film careers and festivals have mushroomed in various provinces in the last two decades, as well as funding opportunities, the difficulties for audiovisual production are more daunting the farther you are from Buenos Aires.

To summarize, Tucumán seems to fulfill successfully the expectations of initial artists, but looks insufficient for those who achieved intermediate career levels. Following Tufro (2011), artists at an intermediate level are those who feel "at the gates of the field, but still in a very precarious way" (157). They are not beginners, because they have already achieved some recognition, and usually complain about how most official subsidies allocate to newcomers. The situation of artists in the "second stage of their career" is the most "complicated": they have made several "choices, so it is quite costly to abandon the project at this point," but they do not have access to diffusion platforms or special grants (Tufro 2011, 157).

When establishing contacts with interviewees, it was impossible to find an absolute newcomer from Tucumán who was settled in Buenos Aires. They were all at intermediate career levels, even those who moved in their early twenties, who had already traversed significant experiences in studios and plays. Moreover, they had already made profession-based decisions and were convinced to follow an artistic path. Tucumán's institutions, studios, and circuits appear to satisfy what beginners look for. On the other hand, when tackling the expectations of intermediate performing artists, those who have earned a bachelor's degree or relatively favorable positions, Tucumán's cultural infrastructure seems inadequate for many.

Mentors and Creative Work: Buenos Aires's Cultural Magnetism

Job opportunities and better income are by no means the only or main attractions in the promising city of Buenos Aires. Migration studies often show that moving to a large metropolis can result in better working conditions and economic rewards. However, among performing artists, the desire to take classes with teachers from the prolific alternative theater circuit in the capital is a widely shared and enthusiastic reason, much stronger than any eventual improvement in work. Therefore, it is not only the capital's cultural infrastructure, understood in the classical sense, but mostly its informal, magnetic bohemia that functions as a key driver for those who decide to undertake a new path of professional formation.

When they arrive, practically all the interviewed artists take part in workshops with prominent personalities "whom you already know from the typical stories you hear at the university and ateliers in Tucumán," as Soledad puts it. In many cases, public institutions support students from the interior who want to take classes with widely acknowledged figures, under the condition of returning to their hometowns and offering classes to their communities in exchange. Seven out of the fifteen artists moved to Buenos Aires only after obtaining a training grant from the National Theater Institute (Instituto Nacional del Teatro) or the National Endowment for the Arts (Fondo Nacional de las Artes), which

consists of monthly stipends for maintenance and the reduction or exemption of fees to attend a private studio.

“In Tucumán, there comes a time when you don’t know who else to train with,” Thiago points out, echoing Gastón’s case, discussed in the previous section. As Battezzati (2017) shows, when acting students reach a certain level of expertise, they do not randomly wander through studios, but become stiffly convinced of one and only aesthetic language to which they adhere, rejecting other styles that they know in advance will not suit them. Students thus begin a centripetal movement, starting with disciples of an important master and ultimately seeking to take classes with the central figure of the “lineage” (Battezzati 2017, 18). In a word, once they are convinced of an aesthetic language, it is more likely that actors and actresses will no longer choose just any studio, but only those that fit the style with which they have built an affective bond. Moreover, the hierarchical distance between the famous masters from Buenos Aires and the newcomer students from Tucumán enable the latter to move more freely throughout the studios without feeling that they will downgrade their professional status.

Conversations with artists demonstrate how aesthetic and intellectual quests prevail as highly intense motives to settle in Buenos Aires. They do not move to the big city solely to find better working conditions but are convinced of and mobilized by a creative project⁵ or by a personal insistence on learning, improving their practice, and becoming more intensely engaged with those foundations that give meaning to their work. In short, cultural reasons play a significant role in these movements, and the stimulus to go to Buenos Aires is part of a passionate search, aiming for the creative work to increasingly and better coincide with what they understand as intelligent, honest, devoted, or beautiful. Therefore, it would be a serious mistake to reduce these migrations to mechanical movements toward social and economic well-being.

In the following paragraphs, cases will be presented of individuals who experience a crisis or conflict with their own creative work in Tucumán and find in Buenos Aires a mentor who allows them to solve or channel an aesthetic concern.

Before starting her bachelor’s degree, Karina knew that her main interest was theater for children and young audiences. While studying at the university, she got involved in various children’s theater productions, developed her practical exams presenting short pieces in this genre, and slowly began to sketch a final undergraduate thesis to tackle the debates that she had been reading about. Uncomfortable with the dull and reiterative

⁵ Following Menger (2016), “creative work” is understood as a process of great importance that has its own autonomy and whose dynamics greatly affect the rules of artistic fields. We also incorporate Farrell’s (2001) insights about creative work as a kind of activity that is carried out within collaborative circles of friendship, where affection and struggle against other groups give great impulse to artistic endeavors.

ways in which the genre was presented in Tucumán, Karina decided to undertake a critical research project on the taboo themes and typical narrative patterns that overloaded children's theater. One day, still in Tucumán, she went to see a spectacle and was fascinated. "It wasn't underestimation. It was nothing like what I'd seen up to that point! . . . You know, the story with a predicted ending, the colors, the musical explosion. It blew my mind. I was already in search of that, and I told him [the director], 'Hello, I want to work with you.' " In several cases, artists bring to the conversation these noteworthy moments of great audacity and shameless decision to express openly their admiration for a master and the correspondent desire to work with them. In this mentor, Karina would find a key to grow in her own quest, working in many of his productions while progressing with her undergraduate thesis.

Before defending her final project, she decided to move to Buenos Aires with a grant that enabled her to take classes with Nora Moseinco, a renowned coach for child actors. However, everything would change when she enrolled in a graduate program in children's literature and playwriting for children. Her decision was "because I couldn't find in children's theater the theory that would help me to define some concepts that I needed for my undergraduate thesis. Inevitably, I turned to children's literature." Living in Buenos Aires allowed her to deepen a quest that had been limited in Tucumán, as it had been difficult to come across experts in the field. Today, while maintaining her "internal militancy," she frequently receives offers to stage shows. "It's not to brag, but I get work." In her case, moving to Buenos Aires meant a growth in creative work and improvement in employment. The "theoretical" search, as Karina puts it, refers to an incorporation of her own concerns in her creative work, by undertaking a path of conscious reflections and eschewing traditional patterns.

Pilar's desire to move to Buenos Aires began to materialize during a short pleasure trip she took with her friends in August 2018. That weekend, Pilar decided to go alone to see a performance by Cristina Banegas, a well-known actress and almost a living myth, as she was the closest disciple of the late director Alberto Ure. Pilar had been passionately reading Ure's writings in a private studio in Tucumán and knew that Banegas's teaching style followed Ure's so-called "theater of intensities." After the show, Pilar was thrilled and approached the actress to say, "Hello... Congratulations. Look, I would like to study here." She began to inquire about grants, asked friends for advice, and decided to submit her application the following year. Even before the results were announced, Pilar had made up her mind and bought a plane ticket to Buenos Aires, where friends already had rented a place where she could live.

Pilar started taking classes with Banegas and within the next few weeks received the positive result of the scholarship grant. When she describes how her experience in Buenos Aires unfolded, it is inevitable to talk about "Cristina": "I got along really well with

Cristina, I mean... she kinda adopted me. And to this day, I see her and hug her, kiss her, I don't know... I go to her house to drink wine. We talk about theater. That was the best thing about the whole studio!"

When asked specifically about the classes, Pilar does not mince words to point out an uncomfortable opinion: "She's a good actress! But she is neither a good teacher nor a good director." Apparently, while the classes were not so interesting, the close contact with an almost legendary figure of Buenos Aires, the anecdotes—and, why not?, gossip—about well-known personalities heard directly from a star became one of the most exciting and relevant experiences of the first years in Buenos Aires. As Michael Farrell (2001) indicates, the interplay between creative work and friendship can be quite prolific when analyzing the birth of scientific, political, and aesthetic projects that changed history. Laughing, Pilar remembers one night when she and Cristina attended a show with a leading figure in an official theater in Buenos Aires and sneaked out before the end because they did not like the play at all. In this case, aesthetic complicity, closeness, and emotional connection with mentors are revealed as key factors that intensify the experience in Buenos Aires.

Playwrights Ramiro and Gonzalo also found mentors in Buenos Aires who triggered significant changes in their creative work. For Gonzalo, it was critical to attend the studio of Maruja Bustamante, a prominent actress and playwright who, at that time, was barely over forty and not part of the established pantheon. Gonzalo recalls the affective skills of Bustamante to create a sensitive and open-hearted atmosphere, as well as her quick and acute interventions: "She told me that I was trying to write like someone else, someone she didn't know, she said, and that it worked for me because I already wrote well. But that wasn't me!" Those words had a deep impact on Gonzalo, who began to detect and discard elements he had brought from his previous training in Tucumán. In Bustamante's workshop, he started to search for his "own voice" and became fond of themes that he thought could never be included in the theater: "Dead animals, foreigners, teenagers, Jewish things," and contents that might be more naïf or connected with global flows.

For his part, Ramiro, a renowned and award-winning playwright, says that the expertise he achieved in the field was accomplished thanks to Patricia Zangaro, whose studio he attended in Buenos Aires: "I began to feel like a playwright only after being with her. Before that, I had many doubts. . . . I didn't feel like a good writer; I didn't feel like a playwright. Today, I can say that *I am a playwright*, because before, I felt that there were things I couldn't solve. I wrote stuff just to fill the pages! . . . I started working with her, and she removed all the vices!"

As the trajectories confirm, training with teachers from private studios is a powerful incentive to move to and stay in Buenos Aires. Artists experience growth in their personal

aesthetic quest as they get closer and closer to production that they understand to be better in technical, conceptual, ideological, or existential dimensions. Moreover, the affective proximity to the mentor constitutes a great source of satisfaction, as it offers the possibility to join a “collaborative circle,” where aesthetics, friendship, and a project of social renewal unify and bestow one’s practice with deep and worthwhile meaning (Farrell 2001). During the interviews, when faced with the classic social questions about their training or working conditions in Buenos Aires, artists often extended their answers enthusiastically to talk about “theory,” that is, the conceptual, moral, and existential foundations of their creative undertakings: a dramaturgy of one’s self (Gonzalo), a challenging and sensitive theater for children (Karina), a dance piece that pushed the body to its limit (Lautaro). Thus, aesthetic search is a consistent vector to comprehend the decisions and experiences from artists that migrate from Tucumán to Buenos Aires.

Encounters with masters in Buenos Aires are not always happy and romantic idylls, however. The first year in the city can be quite tough, especially for those who are dedicated to acting, and sooner or later have to step onto stages and speak with an accent that is quickly put on the spot. In her stand-up classes, Andrea developed the character of a countryside *tucumana* lost in the big city, while Pilar ended up exaggerating her accent to better meet the expectations of the studio she was attending. Creative possibilities undergo notorious upheaval, as these actresses may suddenly only appear as representatives of the interior. Soledad and Karina, for their part, do not have good memories of their first years as students in Buenos Aires. “There was this exercise where you had to be alone on stage, like a monologue. I didn’t do it all year! I just didn’t feel confident! And I had just finished my bachelor’s!” says Soledad. “Everyone was so hip! The clothes, the hair!” recalls Karina when evoking an acting studio full of “advertising folks,” people she would later see on television. “I felt embarrassed all the time. The context is basically people with money who do casting . . .,” says Soledad. “I made friends with a girl from Bolivia, of course. Yeah... I wasn’t having a good time.”⁶

Interestingly, Nicolás and Lautaro manage to cushion eventual hard experiences by consciously picking less hierarchical figures in Buenos Aires. Nicolás took classes with a young teacher from Tucumán who works at a well-known studio, while Lautaro, after being mistreated by top masters in his hometown, deliberately leans toward “far more horizontal studios,” ateliers in charge of artists who are in their mid-forties. “They are not ‘masters,’ ” he emphasizes. “They’re just people who give classes and are still exploring.”

⁶ Based on qualitative research on the experience of illness and pain conducted in Australia, Manderson, Bennett, and Andajani-Sutjahjo (2006) offered interesting insights on the social dynamics of the interview, showing that women are more likely to open up their repertoires to scenes of vulnerability and emotional management compared to men, whose memories tend to construct distanced, objective accounts. In tune with this indication, women’s accounts obtained for this research also related emotional scenes more frequently than men’s, who tended to highlight successful events more often.

Working Conditions for Artists

In September 2016, the twenty-nine-year-old actress Andrea received me at her apartment to talk about her current activity as a performing artist trying her luck in Buenos Aires. She said she was “really short on work” and quite frustrated because the opportunities that came up had little to do with her creative interests. At that time, she was teaching theater at a health center outside Buenos Aires—sixty kilometers by train from her house—for teenagers in drug rehabilitation. She worked on weekends as an oral storyteller for children at events of a well-known candy company. The income was not very good, but she received free candy. “Here, take as many as you want,” she said and offered me a bag full of lollipops and bonbons. As we sat to start the interview proper, she mentioned a playwriting course she was taking, although she was rather unconvinced: “I should study something that makes me money. Maybe Human Resources. Something I could easily...” She did a quick gesture with her hand, as if catching bills on the air. When I finally turned on the recorder, I asked her more directly what her current occupation was:

Andrea: My occupation? It’s difficult to say. I would say actress, acting teacher, and hustler.

Interviewer: Why hustler?

Andrea: Because, if any job pops up that I’m even slightly qualified for, that matches my abilities, you know... I’d snatch it up.

This scene summarizes a typical encounter for performing artists who move to Buenos Aires: the initial high expectations of studying with distinguished masters or starring on important stages become overshadowed when job opportunities are narrow and fairly distant from personal aesthetic quests. The exhausting train ride that Andrea took for work was not to benefit her creative growth, but for basic income.

In the same vein, when Soledad arrived in Buenos Aires, she had to work many low-level jobs—secretary for a dentist, waitress in a bar, barista at Starbucks—even though she had a theater degree from Tucumán. When we met in a bar for our interview, she fit me into a two-hour gap she had on Tuesday afternoons. After talking with me, she had to give classes at 7 pm followed by a rehearsal that started at 10 pm: “I’m completely drained, but very happy. . . . I did four plays this year, I give physical training for actors in tertiary school. I work with children with disabilities, also in an atelier for adults, another for teenagers, another one for disabled adults too... But, you know, I’m thinking about theater all the time, every single day.”

Soledad traces a positive balance of her current condition as a performing arts worker. She cannot forget how in the past she would wake up in panic in the middle of the night

with the surnames of dental clinic patients swirling around in her head. Interestingly, her positive assessment of her jobs is not rooted in income, but in having accomplished full-time dedication to the theater.

Some artists do emphasize that settling in Buenos Aires brought a relative improvement in working conditions. In many cases, artists highlight that “here” things are more “professional,” in contrast with an “informal” way of doing things in their hometown: in Buenos Aires, crews must pay for rehearsal spaces, so wasting time is out of the question; everyone’s schedule is packed with obligations, so plays must be ready after only a handful of rehearsals; venues and institutions draft contracts that offer, and also demand, predictability.

Gonzalo, Karina, and Ignacio indicate that in Buenos Aires “you get work,” because private and official venues are in constant need of artists, which enables them to stop being permanent “hustlers.” In at least four cases, positions are inverted when creative work is located in Buenos Aires: they stop being hustlers and turn into active go-getters who receive job offers. When interviewed, Karina was a renowned children’s playwright and narrator who regularly entertained offers. Gonzalo was in his early twenties and participated frequently in venues interested in programming very young directors—a hallmark of Buenos Aires performing arts. Ignacio jumped from gig to gig in audiovisual production, which is usually better paid in Buenos Aires because unions are much stronger than in the rest of the country. Pedro, who moved from theater into film direction quite successfully, often worked as a “script doctor,” guiding new scriptwriters competing for funding. As can be seen, two of these cases refer to theater artists who shifted to TV and filmmaking, industries that offer far more numerous and better paid positions.

Another attractive possibility for stable work that clearly excels in Buenos Aires is the existence of theaters, small venues, and public cultural centers. In Tucumán, these places are self-managed and usually count on collaborators rather than employees, but venues in Buenos Aires hire people to run the bar and box office and as community managers of their social media. For their part, public cultural centers in Buenos Aires also boast larger staffs, and three of the interviewees found stable jobs there for many months, even years. Fátima and Thiago worked at the Recoleta Cultural Center, a well-known institution that programs young artists and aims to keep up with the most recent expressions. Thiago underlines that no parallel venue exists in Tucumán, where cultural centers neither launch open calls for artists nor have a specific artistic board exclusively dedicated to programming. “The great thing about the Recoleta is that it has nothing to do with the university. It’s another planet,” says Fátima, comparing it to the two key public cultural centers in Tucumán. In her opinion, the Recoleta has more autonomy to find new talent and create a circuit of young, even teenaged, artists who have little to do with the city’s official formation institutions.

Finally, a considerable contrast between Tucumán and Buenos Aires resides in the possibilities for plays to be staged and then circulate to different geographies, venues, or competitions. Pedro and Jorge, who do not know each other and have never worked together, outline in very similar ways what they consider the most critical restriction of theater in Tucumán: “Once the play is premiered, the critics have dropped by, and the Provincial Festival is done, then everything falls apart,” says Pedro, when he remembers the plays he did in Tucumán: “It was just the same with each new play. We performed well or badly... you won or lost at the festival... in Tucumán, it’s over! Everything ends with that funnel. Even when I was successful at the festival! It’s a definitive cut. The play has reached its ceiling.”

Pedro emphasizes how any play that dares to enter the “maws” of the Provincial Festival ends up annihilated. As shown in a previous study (Salas Tonello 2019), this festival certainly holds the dramatic power of legitimization, but Tucumán directors and producers lack resources and/or skills to move the production to other circuits. In line with this account, Jorge, who works as producer, provides a synthesis that coincides considerably with Pedro’s accounts: “I prepare a play, I do four or eight shows, I compete at the Provincial Festival, I win, I do some other circuit... and then the play dies! So next year, I restart all over again.” For Jorge, the brief life that theater plays attain in Tucumán imply one key consequence: the amount of work demanded from artists is huge, because the crews must come up with new ideas, texts, and costumes, and endure intense rehearsals, only to become trapped in the sadistic loop of an underdeveloped artistic circuit.

After he settled in Buenos Aires, Jorge made a critical assessment of his colleagues: “What about the international circuit? How can we go there? How do we open those gates? In a nutshell, it’s the scene that encloses you, because your colleagues are only concerned about local legitimization spots.” The city of Tucumán does not have internationalization resources, neither in the public or private realm of cultural management. In contrast, Buenos Aires has a long tradition of producers and cultural administration officials who encourage opportunities for artists in top capitals of the world.

Conclusions

This article examines the decision-making process and dilemmas of performing artists who move from a nonmetropolitan city to a leading capital by addressing a varied series of elements: sour local experiences of lack of recognition, professional plateaus, and aesthetic constraints, as well as the allure of Buenos Aires, hosting appealing mentors and promises of better work opportunities. Far from being a small town deprived of cultural infrastructure, Tucumán is a medium-sized city with regional leadership, many private

studios, relevant institutions, and a vibrant bohemia. Nevertheless, many artists end up facing considerable difficulties and decide to leave their city even after reaching relatively solid positions. This study sheds light on the hardships and dilemmas for creative professionals in nonmetropolitan cities, a relatively unexplored territory considering scholarship on artistic fields in Latin America.

The article provides evidence about, at least, three kinds of restrictions for performing artists in Tucumán: aesthetic, educational, and work-related. Thiago, Lautaro and Gonzalo coincide in experiencing bad reactions from colleagues and mentors when they try to introduce aesthetic elements linked to postmodern and cosmopolitan trends. Other interviewees reveal that studios and educational opportunities not only become narrower as they go through stages in their professional pathways and acquire expertise (insofar as most studios have initial actors as their principal target), but also when they want to develop their creative work in specific domains like dramaturgy or theater for children, which are limited in Tucumán. Even more, job insecurity and free labor are problematics that artists have to deal with even after gaining recognition and achieving professional experience. As was shown, none of the interviewed artists were newcomers taking their first steps on stages when they moved to Buenos Aires. On the contrary, they were already expert creative workers, had made considerable profession-based decisions and seemed more reluctant to consent to precarious work conditions.

In parallel, Buenos Aires exhibits at least two promising potentials related to creative undertakings and work conditions. First, private studios and iconic mentors play a great role in attracting artists who have an itch to experiment and convert their creative work into something more authentic, extreme, engaged, intelligent, or beautiful. Many artists arrive in Buenos Aires with a mental map of local masters and having chosen in advance the itinerary they will follow. Regarding job possibilities, Buenos Aires exhibits more positive conditions and opportunities: Gonzalo and Soledad indicate they “get work” as they are programmed in public and private venues; Gastón, Pedro and Ignacio obtain benefits from the TV and film industry; Fátima and Thiago had stable jobs in a theater; despite being exhausted, Karina manifests her happiness because she is doing and “thinking about theater all the time.” More rigid contractual conditions are emphasized as profitable by many of them: rehearsals are efficient because in Buenos Aires you must pay every minute you rent the studio (Ramiro and Karina); contracts and agreements are fixed further in advance (Thiago and Soledad).

The findings presented in this paper aim to contribute to designing cultural policies that seek to create more federal artistic landscapes in highly centralized nations. While many noncapital cities in Europe have achieved notable leadership in cultural production, the situation in Latin America is considerably different: capital cities concentrate financing and work opportunities, as well as vigorous artistic studios and preeminent cultural

institutions. Moreover, mid-sized cities in Argentina often lack the infrastructure and resources needed to connect artists with international showcase opportunities. Our report provides clear evidence of a mid-sized city meeting the needs of emerging artists but facing considerable difficulties in providing work and creative opportunities for those at intermediate career levels. Exploring the potentials and constraints of mid-sized cities in Latin America should become a major research agenda item in the search for more egalitarian federal nations.

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