

CONCEPCIÓN: CULTURAL STRATEGIC PLAN



CROSS-SECTORIAL INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABLE PEOPLE PUBLIC SPACE PARTICIPATION IDENTITY RESILIENCE INCLUSION EDUCATION

1. Context

The city and community of Concepción, has an area of 221 km² and is the capital of the province of the same name as well as the Region of the Biobío, Chile. It is located in the central region, 509 kilometres to the south of Santiago. It has a population of approximately 230,000 inhabitants, and on provincial level metropolitan Concepción surpasses a million inhabitants.

It was founded in 1550, and from the beginning, the city has acted as border between the Spanish presence and the Mapuche territory. It played a fundamental role in Independence, being the place where Chilean freedom was declared in 1818. The 20th century saw the birth of the University of Concepción, an institution that will have a significant impact on it's future status. The 1940s drove industrial development in the area, which then spurred important growth in peripheral areas. This connected the adjacent communities that, when consolidated, made up the second largest conurbation in the country.

Concepción's economy is based on development in industry, forestry, fisheries, services, and university education. In fact, there more than 10 higher education institutions for a young, and constantly rotating population. It also has an efficient roadway system, hotel infrastructure, and an airport with 45-minute flights to Santiago.



Its geographical environment is rich with things such as rivers, mountains and lagoons in urban areas. One of the major environmental influences is earthquakes, which it has suffered many times throughout its history. Large earthquakes have left their mark on city, evidenced in its modernity and resilience, but have also deprived it of a deeper architectural heritage. What is more is they have forced a part of the population to relocate.

Today, the city is in a difficult position on an economic level. This is due to difficult global competition, an overexploitation of marine resources, and the aftermath following the earthquake in February of 2010 that placed a heavy emotional burden on the population.

Concepción boldly wants to support culture, as an investment that will prompt a new dynamic in sustainable development. Of particular note is the great strength and resilience of the community. It has managed to reconstruct and reinvent itself time and again after each disaster, in spite of enormous difficulties.

IN ORDER MAKE CULTURE A DRIVING FORCE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, AND GALVANIZE A NEW DYNAMIC AS A CULTURAL CITY, THE PLAN IN CONCEPCIÓN IS TO CONSIDER CROSS-CUTTING DEVELOPMENT IN TERRITORIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL SECTORS.

2. Concepción and Culture

In March of 2013, Concepción's city hall kick-started the *"Working Concepción into a new city by 2030"* program. This initiative sought to define four pillars of development for the coming years. After much consideration these were to make Concepción: a university city, a services provider city, a sport city, and a tourist city. All of them are geared toward a process of participative planning that will serve as base to guide municipal projects. The first exercise in culture-related planning was carried out between October of 2013 and August of 2014. It aimed to reinforce local culture, repositioning its identity at a national and Latin-American level in order to transform Concepción into a cultural, effervescent, dynamic, and inclusive city, as driving forces in the sustainable development of the city.



The process facilitated the creation of a unique methodology based on the Good Practices from similar experiences in other cities around the world, which are applicable and adaptable to local conditions. This would generate processes of debate and civic reflection based on participation. Furthermore it would identify the current state of the city's culture while defining shared goals. It had 3 basic principles: participation, transparency, and being open source.

It was led by an *executive board*, which included the Municipal Directorate working in the area of culture that was primarily the mayor and appointed councillor. It was also formed with an *advisory board* made up of 11 prominent cultural institutions involved in creative city projects. They were invited to provide assurances about the process and was carried out by a *technical team* of 8 people.

ALONGSIDE EIGHT OTHER PILOT-CITIES AROUND THE WORLD, THIS SIGNIFIES AN IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF CULTURAL WORK, AND THE WILLINGNESS TO TRANSFORM CONCEPCIÓN INTO A CULTURAL CITY.

3. Project

Of the ten months spent planning, five were for internal municipal, preparatory, and pre-production work. The other five were for direct implementation through the participation of more than three thousand people between institutions, groups, artists, management, and the general community. Here is a model example of the participatory process. In order to receive proposals from citizens, important survey work and individual interviews were carried out in places connected to daily life. It involved reaching out to inhabitants either in the street or by going door-to-door in different neighbourhoods throughout the city. This process had the aim of covering various areas of citizenship, including those that did not feel the questions applied to them, or those that were not put off by their public nature. In this way, it included a large quantity of representative input, which allowed for proposing concrete actions for a culture-based plan. Subsequently, these systematised proposals were presented in a public meeting, allowing participants to vote and to decide for themselves on the importance and prioritisation of the Municipality's actions.



The Cultural Strategic Plan for Concepción sets out its vision of being a cultural city up until 2030. It outlines action through 5 pillars of development and 9 priority programs between 2015 and 2020, whose evaluation and reformulation will be necessary for the next decade. In effect, the first 3 initial measures as voted by the community were: the creation of a Municipal Department of Culture, the establishment of public infrastructure geared toward fostering creative work, and the development of a program for strengthening artistic education in the city's state schools, which will be implemented, starting in January of 2015. Additionally, the *advisory board* will be kept as a link to the community will create a *work group* to coordinate the operations of other public institutions that create community cultural development programs.

TO IMPROVE ITS CURRENT SITUATION, CONCEPCIÓN BOLDLY WANTS TO SUPPORT CULTURE AND PROMPT A NEW DYNAMIC IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Finally in order to make culture a driving force of sustainable development and galvanize a new dynamic as a cultural city, the plan in Concepción also takes into account cross-cutting development in territorial, environmental, economic, and social sectors. Some examples would be planning alongside other local, inter-community governments, as well as collaboration between the public, private, and cultural sectors. Nine cultural targets were defined to achieve this. They were adapted to their context, falling in line with sustainable development as it becomes defined on an international level. Present indicators will make it possible to assess the stage of completion of those goals between 2015 and 2017.

4. Agenda 21 for Culture

Concepción was chosen as a pilot-city for implementing Agenda 21 for culture, carried out between June to December of 2014. Selected alongside eight other pilot-cities around the world, this signifies an important international recognition of cultural work, and the willingness to transform Concepción into a cultural city.

The pilot-city process involved the six-day visit of an expert for implementing Agenda 21 for culture. This consisted of meeting with local people and local municipal actors in order to draft three documents. First,

was an internal report on the municipality with an analysis and recommendations for implementing the principles of Agenda 21 for culture. Second, was a brief public report highlighting the critical contributions of the city and its cultural actors to drafting the new Agenda 21 for culture. The third document pertained to Good Practices based on the proposed methods of this cultural plan.

The process has created greater visibility and closer relationships with other cities committed to *Agenda 21 for culture*. As a result it has also seen the second meeting on "*Cities, culture, and the future*" to date, which took place last October in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This created a joint effort between the Secretariat of Culture for the City of Mexico and the Mexico-Chile Joint Cooperation Fund in a project for strengthening arts and trades. Currently, they are in a process of a twinning arrangement with the city of Cordoba, Argentina, which will revolve around cooperative projects with their Secretariat of Culture.

The pilot-city program of the *New Agenda 21 for culture* has been well-received by authorities, actors, and citizens involved in the process. All of the participants have recognized the great potential this approach will have for Concepción in driving renewal and a new local dynamic. This will be presented in greater detail at the *UCLG Culture Summit*, taking place in March, 2015 in Bilbao, Spain.

THE PROCESS FACILITATED THE CREATION OF A UNIQUE METHODOLOGY BASED ON THE GOOD PRACTICES FROM SIMILAR EXPERIENCES IN OTHER CITIES AROUND THE WORLD, WHICH WOULD GENERATE PROCESSES OF DEBATE AND CIVIC REFLECTION.

5. Further information

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