

"CULTURE CITY CHEONGJU" PROJECT, MADE WITH PEOPLE'S POWER



PARTICIPATION BOTTOM-UP COMMUNITY
TRADITION **CREATIVE INDUSTRIES** **JOBS**
RENEWAL **PROMOTION** YOUTH **DEMOCRACY**

1. Context

Cheongju is a city located in the centre of the Republic of South Korea. It emerged on July 1, 2014, from the merger of Cheongju-si (city) and Cheongwon-gun (rural community), as the result of a popular vote and bottom-up consultation.

Due to its superb natural landscapes, rivers and mountains, Cheongju is often referred to as a "green life city", associated with the idea of a clean and quiet city, as well as human rights values. The city image is also strongly related to culture, creation and education, as it is where originated the oldest metal printed book, "Jikji".



2. Cheongju and culture

Cheongju City's policies revolve around several targets: "rich local economy", "happy and safe city for people", "sharing hope and customized welfare", "clean administration focused on the people", and "mutual and balanced development".

The integration of Cheongju-si and Cheongwon-gun in 2014 has caused various socio-economic issues, displacement of people to other regions as well as internal conflicts due to cultural differences among communities, and to an inadequate cultural environment.

Moreover, demographic changes have led to several urgent issues, such as ageing of the population, housing shortage, youth unemployment, etc. To address these problems fundamentally, Cheongju city decided to establish a "cultural platform".

NOWADAYS, CHEONGJU ACTIVELY PROMOTES CULTURAL ART PROJECTS AND HAS BECOME AN INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED CITY FOR CULTURE AND ARTS, BY HOSTING, AMONG OTHER EVENTS: "CHEONGJU CRAFT BIENNALE", "WORLD CULTURAL OPEN FESTIVAL (BETTER TOGETHER 2017)", AND THE "CHOPSTICKS FESTIVAL".

It was set in a former tobacco processing plant and Dongbu warehouse in Naedeok-dong area, a building with high industrial heritage value. Formerly the largest cigarette factory in Korea, the factory was closed in 1999. To preserve the building and activity in the now derelict area, people from the neighbourhood gathered to bring the fate of the factory up in the political agenda. 20 civil debates were organised to reach a "public consensus" on potential ways to use the factory, such as hosting exhibitions about the history of formal tobacco processing plant, organising concert for local former workers, etc.



3. Goals and project implementation

1.1. Main aim and specific goals

- To share cultural resources among people, places and sectors;
- To connect people with culture and creativity;
- To establish a culture of self-perpetuating habitat, revived through arts and people;
- To solve social conflicts with culture and arts, towards a happy cultural community.

1.2. Development of the project

Main actions carried out

The project “the Culture City Cheongju, made with people’s power” was initiated in 2016 by Cheongju city together with the local population. The aim was to restore the former factory and make it a joyful, cultural and sustainable place. With a 750-million-won annual budget, the project encompasses several activities:

Everyone in Cheongju City is the owner, and let’s make it together.

The Civic culture network (Culture City forum/salon) provides a place where people can express their views on local cultural policies. 3 forums, 3 social fictions, and 10 humanity salons have been organised, gathering a total of 770 participants. Since then, people’s opinions have been integrated into the cultural policy, and civic awareness has been reinforced.

Moreover, in cooperation with local institutions, the social dining program “Outreaching lunch-box talk” is organised every month. On this occasion, local institutions cooperate to host cultural projects and events. Thereby, a network of 16 organisations was established, gathering local arts & civil organizations, senior welfare centres, community rehabilitation centres, educational institution, etc.

Train talented people for a future happy society



This program aims to train and support local talented inhabitants to reinforce the local cultural ecosystem. Creative individuals trained through this program can then work as project managers in the cultural sectors in Cheongju.

Educational workshops particularly target local university students and recent graduates, aimed at reinforcing their cultural capability through networking, mentoring, and business support. 30 to 40 students are trained yearly. As a result, 6 cultural arts programs have been implemented by former beneficiaries of the programme, among which “the Culture Diary”, which documents the culture of consumption of Cheongju inhabitants, as well as some start-ups. Some beneficiaries have finally been hired by local institutions.

Regarding adolescents, education, creative and cultural activities are conducted once a week for 45 local adolescents yearly. Content includes music, art, play, video, all inspired by the region, increasing the love and self-esteem of adolescents for their region. Some adolescents also did a cultural exchange with Niigata, an East Asian Culture City in Japan.

Finally, for children, the programme aims to increase their cultural sensitivity through the visit of local cultural sites, in close collaboration with the children’s family, in order to stimulate dialogue on culture within families. In total, 32 children have participated in around 10 visits.

Bring life into the closed industrial facilities through arts

Former tobacco processing plant and Dongbu warehouse now hosts local festivals all year round:

- **The Cheongju Craft Biennale** is hosted every 2 years in order to share the value of traditional craftsmanship inherited for 5 000 years. During 40 days, the festival hosts craft fairs, art fairs, forum, etc. In 2017, media industries were introduced, using 64 projectors sponsored by Epson Korea, combining both dynamic and static craftsmanship. It attracted 350 000 visitors (17000 foreigners), 4 000 works were exhibited from 780 authors from 18 countries, and total fair sales amounted to 610 million won. It is to be noted that 11 artists representing the region were appointed as co-manager of the event, to better reflect regional characteristics during this “glocal” biennale.



- **The Chopsticks Festival** is an international event hosted since 2015 by the governments of Korea, Japan, and China in partnership with the civil society. During 10 days, activities, all revolving around the theme of chopsticks, include an exhibition, academy, performance, forum, etc, to explore the development opportunities of chopsticks. In 2017, it welcomed 53 000 visitors (3000 foreigners).
- **The World Cultural Open Festival (Better Together 2017)** is an event co-hosted by Cheongju City and World Culture Open (WCO), a network of global common benefits activist. 500 cultural designers from 50 countries have gathered and shared their vision on the topic of “Designing a culture of sympathy and peace”. This particular event enabled to establish Cheongju as a leader in global culture, and to showcase the city’s transformation throughout the world.
- **The Cultural People Festival** is a people-oriented festival whose purpose is to awaken the self-esteem of local cultural actors. It is organised jointly by amateur clubs, local professional artists, local orchestra and saxophone festivals. The program, which attracted 11 000 visitors, includes movies, opera, and musicals screenings on the outer wall of the tobacco processing plant, in an inclusive atmosphere.

Finally, the building is also used as a cultural facility opened 24/7 for various activities, including life culture club, performances, courses and lectures for local residents, exhibitions, etc.

Solve conflict and recover the community with arts.

“Arts, please take care of Cheongju” is a social integration strategy project aimed to solve local and societal problems with art and culture. It encompasses 4 voluntary programmes:

- Wolhajeongin: Organise cultural events to solve low birth-rate and avoidance of marriages (4 couples were created throughout this programme).
- People in Sachang-dong: Solve the communication problem between local businesses and young artists around the university through co-organising joint cultural project between them.
- Different day for each other: Fight against people’s prejudice towards the disabled.



- Take care of Art Central Park: Transform a park, formerly crime-ridden district, into a place of culture and art.

THERE ARE DIFFICULTIES TO EXTEND THE PROGRAM FURTHER, DUE TO THE LIMITED BUDGET. MOREOVER, THE CENTRALISATION OF THE CULTURAL OFFER IN METROPOLITAN AREAS MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO ATTRACT CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND ACTORS INTO SMALL CITIES LIKE CHEONGJU.

4. Impacts

1.1. Direct impacts

Impacts on the local government

The programme reinforced Cheongju capacity to support and implement, together with civil society, 18 civil voluntary programmes that fit within the cultural ecosystem.

Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

The programme resulted in an increase by 66% in the frequency of cultural consumption, creating a virtuous circle in the cultural ecosystem.

Impact on the territory and population

The integration of culture into people's lives has increased their quality of life and happiness. The programme also created job opportunities for local young people, in addition to helping solve local and societal problems.



1.2. Evaluation

Evaluation was made through an online questionnaire survey sent to the project's participants, and through external analysis by a researcher, using SPSS statistics package. The survey was filled by 1 600 respondents out of 27 262 recipients, as of the end of 2017.

It highlighted that 95.8% of respondents considered that the programme increased local creativity and planning ability, and that their own capability had been reinforced. 95.8% of them said they were now more aware of local culture and had a greater self-esteem.

Regarding the use of Dongbu warehouse and former tobacco processing plant, 91.4% considered that the venue was well-adapted for performances, 91.7% considered it fit for hosting education and cultural activities, and 77.38% for screening movies.

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT CULTURAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE REGION HAVE ALSO INCREASED (THROUGH PHYSICAL DONATIONS, FOR INSTANCE OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, OR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS UP TO 10 MILLION WON).

1.3. Key factors

- The promotion of local creative industries, through a voluntary platform to solve social problems with culture and arts, was instrumental to revitalize the local society and drive local and sustainable growth and development.
- The creation of a dedicated place for people to carry out various cultural activities has been key to establish cultural democracy and improve the living conditions within the community.
- The consideration of regional assets and features in the design of the programme was an important factor to enhance people's love and self-esteem toward the region, so that they feel proud to be residents of Cheongju.



1.4. Continuity

Currently, Cheongju City provides administrative and budgetary support, and the Cheongju Cultural Industry Promotion Foundation, an institution of experts in local culture and arts, implements the project in cooperation with local planners, mediators and the population. By 2020, a Culture City centre will be established, that will be managed by a private director.

To ensure the continuity of this project (administration, budget, etc.), an ordinance of Culture City shall be enacted by 2020, and a MoU for local coexistence shall be concluded between the local and central governments. In addition, open debates for the promotion of “Culture City” shall be hosted every year through forums and civil culture networks.

In addition, the government is trying to follow a bottom-up approach, by introducing “the civil culture fund system”. This system allows people to raise additional funds for the project’s operation, so that even if the budget support from the government is suspended, the system shall be sustained independently by the people.

5. Further information

Cheongju was a candidate for the third “UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award” (November 2017 – May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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