



culture 21
Agenda 21 for culture



UCLG
United Cities
and Local Governments

**ACTIVA
TALCA**
Corporaciones Municipales



TALCA

Leading City 2015 • culture 21

Leading City 2015 for Agenda 21 for culture
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY IN TALCA

PUBLIC REPORT

Antoine Guibert

Consultant, Expert for the implementation of the new Agenda 21 for Culture - UCLG

Antoine.G.Guibert@gmail.com

23 December 2015

RESILIENCE QUALITY CULTURE FOR EVERYONE OF LIFE COLLABORATION PARTICIPATION IDENTITY PLANNING RECOVERY INNOVATION LEARNING

Talca has been part of the Leading City programme of the Committee on Culture of UCLG for the implementation of Agenda 21 for culture and of "Culture 21: Actions" since 2015. Within this program, Talca has decided to work on the "Heritage, diversity and creativity" thematic area of "Culture 21: Actions" and to receive external support in order to do so.

This document presents Talca's experience and some recommendations for work on this thematic area.

TALCA, CULTURE IN RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKE

Talca is the capital of the Maule region, a region in central Chile with a strong identity and rural tradition, which is notable for its traditional products and gastronomy. The city is the region's administrative, economic and cultural centre and has over 250,000 inhabitants.

Talca is located in an earthquake zone and it has been destroyed by major earthquakes regularly throughout its history, particularly in 1928 (when 75% of the city's buildings were destroyed) and, more recently, in 2010, by the strongest earthquake in its history. In response to this earthquake, the Municipality decided to develop a significant range of cultural initiatives with major events, aimed at revitalising social life and restoring happiness to people's daily lives in a city that was severely affected by the earthquake. Large-scale events, such as the Independence Festival in February and the Fiesta del Chanco Muerto [Dead Pig Festival] in August, bring together hundreds and thousands of people each year, and they have helped to boost visibility, pride and entertainment on a local level. Cultural initiatives in Talca are a very recent development, but they stand out for their dynamism, and the work carried out in a very short space of time should be emphasized.

As a result of the cyclical earthquakes, Talca has suffered from a significant and repeated loss of its physical heritage. Following each earthquake, the city undergoes major periods of rebuilding, which deeply affect the territory, and it has to reinvent itself each time. In 2015, a lot of buildings remain in ruins and have not yet been rebuilt, which also has a major impact on the city's identity and environment. There does not seem to be a very well-defined model for each "wave" of rebuilding, which means that the territory has gradually lost its historic fabric, its identity, and it seems to lack coherence and harmony in its forms, colours or architecture.

The disruption that the earthquakes have caused to the heritage and territory, along with the city's sociological changes, has led to a certain loss of the local identity. At present, the challenge seems to involve fostering a local identity based on culture and heritage that brings the population together, encourages resilience and promotes an attractive territory and a feeling of belonging and pride among the population.

In 2015, the Municipal Cultural Authority of Talca started the "¿Qué Talca tu patrimonio?" [How is Talca, your heritage?] campaign with the cooperation of the Fundación Proyecta Memoria [Project Memory Foundation] and Somos Aldea [We are the village]. The campaign begins the work of preserving and showcasing the municipality's urban/rural heritage and its tangible/intangible heritage. This campaign is extremely original, since most of Talca's physical heritage has been destroyed. The "¿Qué Talca tu patrimonio?" [How is Talca, your heritage?] slogan is intended to generate a dialogue with everyone and the campaign organizes many activities focused on memory and cultural heritage, for example, with participatory identification activities, heritage routes, forums for public debate, exhibitions or photography competitions.

HERITAGE IN TALCA, HERITAGE IN MOTION

Due to the repeated destruction of the city, Talca has gradually lost most of its tangible heritage. It has been possible to restore some of the city's buildings, but many of them have been destroyed and other new buildings rebuilt on the plots that they occupied. As a result of the earthquakes reoccurring every 20-30 years in the city, some buildings have been destroyed and rebuilt several times, sometimes completely differently. Some areas have repeatedly undergone significant transformations and radical changes, sometimes acquiring a new identity during each cycle of destruction/rebuilding. For example, many of the city's old churches have been destroyed, and housing was built on the plots that they occupied, thereby changing the purpose and function of these areas in the city. The destroyed heritage is often physically "erased" and nothing on the site recalls what was there before the destruction. This situation prevents Talca from having a territorial identity and clear historical fabric, as there are many gaps without anything to act as a reminder of what was there before the destruction.

This specific situation of a "heritage in motion", a heritage which is created and destroyed continually, requires an adapted intervention strategy that is different from traditional heritage policies. The Leading City process allows us to develop the premises for a specific post-earthquake intervention methodology, which could serve as a model for other cities in a similar situation.

IDENTIFY THE DESTROYED HERITAGE AND RESTORE THE HISTORICAL FABRIC

It is remarkable that, in Talca, it is as if the heritage that was destroyed never existed. With the aim of restoring the historic fabric, it is essential to identify and characterize the destroyed heritage, in order to have adequate knowledge of what existed in the past. Although many elements of Talca's tangible heritage have been destroyed physically, the intangible dimension

associated with the heritage continues to exist in an abstract way in people's consciousness and memory, both on an individual and collective level. However, the transmission of this heritage is more difficult and fragile, and it may disappear easily as its material form no longer exists.

In Talca, this intangible dimension associated with the destroyed heritage needs to be recovered and restored in a somewhat tangible form. In this respect, restoring the city's historic fabric seems to be a line of action that is essential for recovering the destroyed cultural heritage and, in doing so, fostering a local identity that is more closely connected to its history. In order to re-establish this historic fabric, it is important to physically mark the territory with what existed in the past, for example, with photographs, marks on the ground or symbolic



elements which recall the destroyed heritage. Memory should be reintegrated into the physical spaces and people's daily lives in order to perceive and experience that which has disappeared, and, in this way, recreate a certain continuity in the public spaces.

An example of the loss of the territory's historic fabric and identity.

Photograph: Proyecta Memoria Foundation

TAKING ON AND VALUING THE “EARTHQUAKE IDENTITY”

The successive earthquakes which have shook Talca throughout its history have had a profound effect on the territory, sparking a process of destruction/rebuilding which (re)shapes the space, buildings and the current urban landscape. The impact of the earthquakes is present everywhere, both the earliest earthquakes which shaped the city and the most recent one in 2010, whose trace is still very visible in the city with the high amount of rubble, empty and disused spaces, and buildings damaged by the earthquakes which are yet to be rebuilt. The issue of earthquakes is also very present in people's individual and collective consciousness, since they are events which deeply affect the society. In this regard, earthquakes may be defined as the main factor influencing the construction of the territory and they form the basis of Talca's territorial identity. In other words, earthquakes are part of Talca and its identity, however painful that this may be.

This specific characteristic can be turned into something remarkable, valuable and positive, as well as attractive to people from Talca and further afield. Making this happen would involve restoring the historic fabric, accepting that the earthquake forms part of the city and transforming this fact into something that is a source of aesthetics, distinction and pride. This specific characteristic is also a symbol of the strength of the people of Talca and of their capacity to pick themselves up each time, and this capacity should be transmitted in order to treat those collective traumas and strengthen the community's future resilience. Earthquakes are cyclical in Talca, and there is no doubt that they will occur again; it is therefore necessary to use them as a source of growth for the city as opposed to a perpetual decline.

MAKE USE OF THE RUBBLE AS PUBLIC SPACES AND ARCHITECTURAL WORKS

Rubble and earthquake-damaged buildings should cease to be treated as mere rubble which must be “cleaned”, and rather as elements which are part of the city’s heritage and identity. It is extremely important to carry out work to identify, recover and assess the rubble and earthquake-damaged buildings of interest.



There is a lot of rubble in Talca which could be turned into public spaces and architectural works. The Fundación Proyecta Memoria [Project Memory Foundation], a group which was formed after the 2010 earthquake, has developed very interesting and relevant concepts for transforming the rubble into living spaces. This would allow the “earthquake identity” to be reintegrated into the city and aesthetically and symbolically transform this heritage into something positive, valuable and attractive.

High-quality architectural works could be built from the rubble and, by doing so, transform people’s living spaces while incorporating a striking part of their history and identity. The trace left by the earthquakes could be left visible in the restored buildings, as part of their history. There are also many spaces in Talca which have been left empty or in disuse as a result of the earthquake and which could be used as public spaces, spaces for life, leisure, creation, etc. Artistic expression could also be a very effective way of symbolically reclaiming ownership of the rubble and heritage remains, with artistic activities that are as participatory and community-based as possible. For example, a festival involving “rubble art” or public artworks, which would enable the public space to be recovered, give it new meanings and foster the “earthquake identity” in the territory in a positive way.

Participatory work, involving citizens, architects, artists and urban planners, etc. could be very useful for finding creative ways of adopting and valuing this “earthquake identity” in the re-building of Talca.



Photographs: Proyecta Memoria Foundation

MOBILIZATION AND EARTHQUAKE MEMORY ACTIVITIES

activities are being carried out in Talca focused on activating the memory of the earthquakes with the Fundación Proyecta Memoria [Project Memory Foundation] and Aldea [We are the village]. For example, in 2015, a campaign commemorating the 1928 earthquake in Talca was run, in-

cluding a memorial activity: firefighters set off the city's sirens and young people from the city painted yellow circles on the ground to represent the earthquake's epicentre. These innovative initiatives seem to be very positive ways of activating memory and releasing the emotions connected to the earthquakes.



Photograph: Proyecta Memoria Foundation

CREATING A UNIQUE IDENTITY AND TERRITORIAL DYNAMIC

It also appears to be important to give Talca its own image that would allow the city to take on a specific territorial identity. Assuming and valuing the “earthquake” identity and restoring the city’s historic fabric may itself give Talca a very specific dimension. It is also necessary to identify elements which would give the territory a united fabric, aesthetic coherence and a specific identity, in a very simple and accessible way, by respecting this character of a city that is constantly in motion. Furthermore, there are still many buildings left to restore or rebuild which could benefit from architectural guidelines that would make it possible to highlight a local identity or innovative expression. After the 2010 earthquake, the historic quarter suffered a major loss of vitality, and culture could restore its role as an attractive living space. The numerous cultural events that the Municipality organizes in the historic quarter, in addition to the project to create a cultural quarter, contribute to this revitalization. It also seems to be important to encourage the active participation of citizens in the (re)building of their territory; for example, with participatory urban design, participatory public art, participatory architecture, etc., with the aim of enabling the citizens to take ownership of the space and for it to reflect the local vision, values and identity.

CREATION AND CULTURAL LIFE FOR RESILIENCE

It seems that creation and cultural life in Talca are a central tool for fostering a strong local territorial identity and for furthering social cohesion, the community's resilience and sustainable development. In Talca, cultural events are aimed at promoting a balanced evolution of the local identity and a continuity between past, present and future. The Fiesta del Chancho Muerto [The Dead Pig Festival], for example, combines one of the region's very traditional and typical dimensions (the traditional rural slaughter of the pig) with a more modern dimension by inviting chefs from various parts of the country and the world offering more contemporary cuisine. This event gives hundreds and thousands of people the opportunity to taste these gastronomic creations and encourages a dynamism that is very highly valued in social life. Talca also has a very wide range of crafts, which are given importance during these local events. In addition, community cultural activities aimed at the population have been developed, as well as initiatives with the indigenous communities, such as Mapudungun lessons or the building of a traditional Mapuche ruca and cultural exchanges with the city's children. All these activities and cultural events help to create a shared local cultural identity and foster social cohesion in the city.

New lines of action have been identified in order to continue this work. The expansion of community cultural activities, especially to the peripheral areas of the city, and active participation in cultural creation seem to be key tools that should be enhanced with the aim of advancing a collective identity, building shared values and rebuilding social cohesion. Talca lacks cultural facilities that were destroyed by the earthquakes and are still waiting to be rebuilt, such as the library. It is proposed that the range of cultural initiatives will take over all public sites and spaces, for example, the street, squares, shopping centres and arcades, in order to reach people in their daily lives and to respond to the lack of cultural infrastructure in a very simple, accessible and quick way.

CONCLUSION

The reflection on heritage, territory and cultural creation undertaken in Talca during this process is unique and very innovative in the context of an area with cyclical earthquakes. It demonstrates that the territory and heritage are living elements that are in constant motion, and which are not trapped in the past. It also shows that creative responses can be found to any situation, however difficult, to improve citizens' well-being. The work that is being carried out in Talca could be a very valuable intervention model for cities in the same situation.

CONTACTS

For additional information about this report, please contact:

Municipal Corporation on Culture of Talca

Rafael Muñoz Canessa, Executif secretary : rmunoscanessa@activatalca.cl

Cristina Zúñiga, Director on culture : czuniga@activatalca.cl

Web: www.activatalca.cl/2015/cultura/

Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

Email: info@agenda21culture.net

Web: www.agenda21culture.net

Tw: [@agenda21culture](https://twitter.com/@agenda21culture)