



CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN INFORMAL SETTINGS

Understanding and Reinforcing Bottom-Up Initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean



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Prototypes of craft workshops

ENLARGING PRODUCTIVE SPACES IN QUINCHAMALÍ

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General information

Sponsor Institution	Universidad del Bío-Bío (UBB)
Partner organisations	Programa Quiero Mi Barrio (QMB) Taller de Barrios SERVIU Región Biobío SERVIU Región Ñuble
Developed by	Benjamín Alvarado (original concept), Ricardo Azócar and Carolina Catrón (architectural project)
Profesors and students (ADAPTO-Chile)	Claudio Araneda, Ignacio Bisbal, Roberto Burdiles, Nicolás Sáez, Nelson Arias, Hernán Ascuí, Constanza Jara (student intern) María Constanza Sáez (student intern)
Community leaders and community members	Gabriela García, Teorinda Serón, Victorina Gallegos Potters: Gabriela García, Teorinda Serón, Victorina Gallegos Beekeeper: Waldo González Poultry farmers: Juana Barra, Leonardo Garrido Canners: Carmela Prado, Juan Valenzuela, Juana Gallegos
Other participants	Javiera Vicario (SERVIU) Soledad Nuñez Chávez (SERVIU) Azocar & Catrón (architectural project)
Micro-project location	Chile, Quinchamalí
Micro-project date	March 2017 – IN PROGRESS
IDRC's base contribution	CAN \$4,000
Other sources of funding	CAN \$45,392 Servicio de Vivienda y Urbanismo (SERVIU)
References	Bisbal-Grandal, Ignacio. Araneda-Gutiérrez, Claudio. Reyes-Pérez, Soledad, Saravia-Cortés, Felipe. (2018). El microproyecto como vínculo con el medio e integración de saberes en arquitectura. JIDA'18 VI Jornadas sobre innovación Docente en Arquitectura. Zaragoza, EINA-UNIZAR. (pp. 528-538).

Summary

The village of Quinchamalí, Chile, is known for its intangible heritage of pottery craftsmanship. However, an analysis carried out by architecture students from the Universidad del Bío-Bío revealed that pottery production and tourism are declining due to the lack of bespoke workshop infrastructure. This initiative aims to consolidate, showcase, and empower the productive capacities of craftswomen, mainly through the design of new micro-spaces for artisanal production and trade. The initiative arises from the “Neighbourhood Workshop” (“Taller de Barrios”), an architectural studio where students design solutions to societal challenges based on extensive conversations with communities and where selected projects are implemented through partnerships with professionals.

In this initiative, the implementation of prototypes of craft workshops is the result of collaborative work between the women artisans of Quinchamalí, the “I Love My Neighbourhood” (QMB for “Quiero Mi Barrio”) program of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the Housing and Urban Development Service (SERVIU), the architectural firm Azócar & Catrón, and the School of Architecture of the Universidad del Bío-Bío (UBB). A significant result is the ongoing formalization of an alliance between the community, state institutions, and academia, which aims at developing collaborative and inclusive approaches to infrastructure development policy that can respond to the needs and opportunities of rural localities in the Ñuble region.

How to cite this work:

Araneda, Claudio. (2021). “Prototypes of craft workshops: Enlarging productive spaces in Quinchamalí” In *Artefacts of Disaster Risk Reduction: Community-based initiatives to face climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Lizarralde, Gonzalo; Smith, David; Herazo, Benjamin (eds). Montreal: Oeuvre durable. <http://artefacts.umontreal.ca/>

Description

Quinchamalí, a village of 1,300 inhabitants in central Chile (Figs. 1 and 2), is known for its intangible heritage of women's craftsmanship, particularly pottery. Craft production is however in decline and the village does not attract enough tourists to sustain the livelihoods of the women artisans. To help alleviate the problem, the Ministry of Cultures, Arts, and Heritage has recently put forth an application to UNESCO for the addition of Quinchamalí women's craftsmanship to its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Safeguarding.

This initiative aims to consolidate, showcase, and empower the productive capacities of craftswomen in Quinchamalí, mainly through the design of additional micro-spaces for artisanal production and trade. The initiative arises from an alliance between the "Neighbourhood Workshop" ("Taller de Barrios") of the Universidad del Bío-Bío, the municipality of

Concepción, and the "I Love my Neighbourhood" program ("Quiero mi Barrio," QMB) of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. An analysis carried out by architecture students from UBB indeed suggests that craft production and tourism are declining due to the lack of bespoke workshop infrastructure. The design challenge is hence twofold: on the one hand, the new bespoke workshops should foster the artisans' skills and enhance their production, and on the other, they should consolidate a coherent landscape with new, iconic, and readily identifiable architectural objects that can attract visitors and guide them within the village. By acknowledging and honouring women artisans' practice and by gifting them a bespoke project worthy of their efforts, the alliance wants to enhance women artisans' sense of self-worth and uphold a tradition that is based on pure talent and selfless devotion.

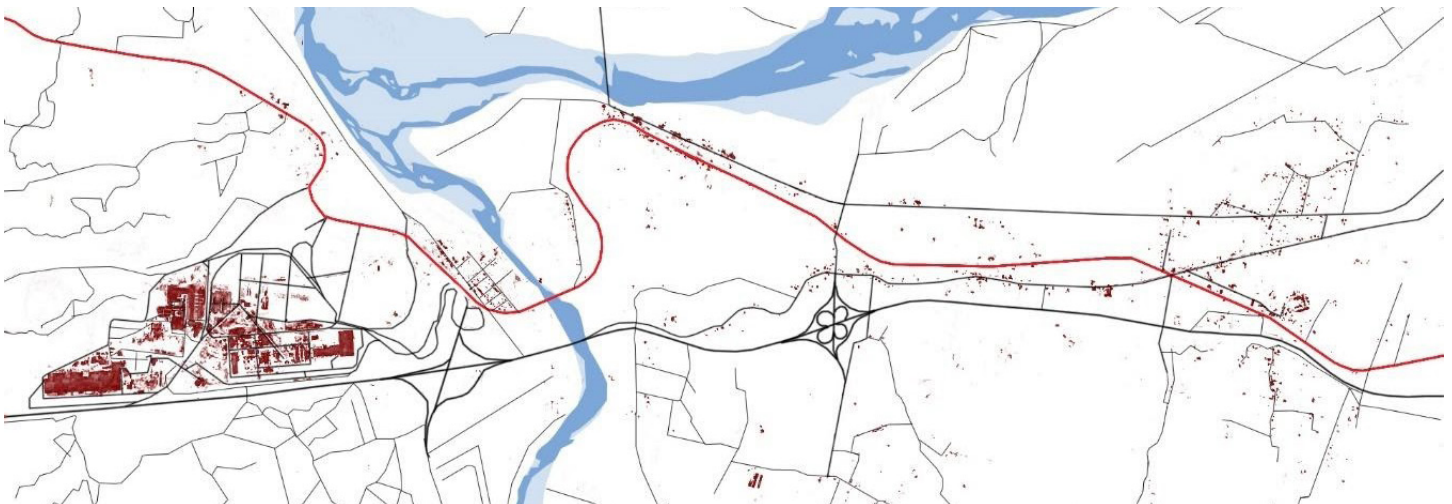


Fig. 1: Ignacio Bisbal, Quinchamalí. Confluence of the rivers Ñuble (East-West direction) and Itata (North-South direction); railroad track (red); highway Route 152 (thick black); main and secondary roads of Quinchamalí and its district (thin black); and buildings (burgundy). The large built-up area to the West of the Itata River is the pulp mill, while the buildings in Quinchamalí are scattered to the East of the river. Own elaboration, 2015.



Fig. 2: Ignacio Bisbal. Quinchamalí. Confluence of the Ñuble and Itata rivers; buildings; and low, medium, and high vegetation. Own elaboration, 2015.

Implementation and evolution of the initiative

The project was implemented in two phases. In the first phase, the students from the Neighbourhood Workshop at UBB developed a series of prototypes. The Neighbourhood Workshop is a yearly architectural studio taking place every second semester of the academic year where students develop projects in real-life contexts with a view to solving societal challenges in collaboration with communities. For each prototype, the students analyzed in situ the ways in which artisans produce and trade their crafts. The design process involved constant dialogue between UBB students, artisans, and QMB professionals, sustained by regular group visits to the village. As every student produced a project, the architectural studio yielded 12 distinct proposals of workshop prototypes for craft production and trade, all of which were selected by the artisans themselves.

In the second phase, the community and the professionals from the QMB program jointly selected the architectural proposal submitted by student Benjamín Alvarado for further design development and implementation by an architecture firm. Following a grant application process (currently pending), Azócar y Catrón, an architecture firm run by former UBB students, transformed the microproject considerably. The new project featured four variations of a basic module for pottery, jam, honey, and poultry production and trade (Figs. 3, 4 and 5). This process is further explained in the following section. At this stage, the architecture firm has adopted a more traditional approach to architectural design and has transformed the student's original design to the point that it is now unrecognizable.

After the selection of Benjamín's proposal, a group of six students participated in the development of the chosen project as "students in practice." Azócar y Catrón offered the necessary technical support to

transform Benjamín's design proposal into a feasible project. This step required several negotiation meetings to ensure that the needs and interests of the community were taken into account. Then, QMB partners and a representative of the regional office of the Ministry of Housing applied for public funding at SERVIU, the Services for Housing and Urbanization, in the form of a rural housing subsidy. This phase allowed the project to garner great momentum (Fig. 6), as the work of the architecture students from the Neighbourhood Workshop was complemented by the active help of professionals from the different public agencies involved. The contribution of Javiera Vicario (SERVIU) deserves special acknowledgment, as she informed the organizers about the existence of subsidy funds that could be applied for.

One of the funding requirements was that community members should be involved in the application process. Twelve residents that fulfilled the application requirements were selected by the SERVIU team. One of the interesting outcomes of this process was that the group that made it through the selection process was composed not only of pottery artisans but also of small jam, honey, and poultry producers. We carried out another participatory design process in order to obtain new feedback from the beneficiaries. This entailed the development of an architectural proposal that was adaptable to the different kinds of production and trade. This collective work by UBB, Azócar y Catrón, and QMB partners eventually yielded a portfolio of four architectural variations that were fully developed for the funding application. The process of submitting the portfolio to the municipality was time-consuming and slow. Nevertheless, the application was submitted in time for the 2021 deadline and is currently under evaluation by SERVIU. However, the evaluation is being delayed by the social turmoils in Chile and the global sanitary crisis.



Fig. 3: A pottery production space. Photo credit: Azócar y Catrón.



Fig. 4: Azócar & Catrón. Closed prototype. Own elaboration, 2019.



Fig. 5: Prototype of a workshop for the production and trade of honey. Azócar & Catrón, 2019.

Stakeholder participation

As mentioned, the initiative was the result of a novel threefold alliance between the Universidad del Bío-Bío and its “Neighbourhood Workshop” architectural studio, the municipality of Concepción, and the national program “I Love My Neighbourhood”, who in turn work hand in hand with the residents (Fig. 1). The partners signed a mutual cooperation agreement in 2015. The alliance bridges the persistent gap between academia and local government, establishing an intersectoral mode of project governance and cooperation. The alliance was recognized by Quinchamáli residents and QMB program professionals alike as an unprecedented and productive way of working. It helped the stakeholders forge good relationships and, consequently, achieve results that are pertinent and beneficial to all. This collaborative process came with challenges, which slowed the project’s implementation considerably. Furthermore, the aim of constant collaboration and communication was not always achieved. The complex and lengthy funding application process generated many bidirectional conversations between the office and the QMB program. Eventually, the university and the municipality stopped giving feedback.

In this alliance, the School of Architecture of the Universidad del Bío-Bío and its ADAPTO project team (composed of Architecture and Social Work tutors and students) took a leadership role in the Neighbourhood Workshop. Students and professors participated in the needs assessment for the community of Quinchamáli along with QMB professionals. They also participated in the design of the various proposals. In return, the students—particularly the six “students in practice”—

benefitted from a real-life scenario where they became not only designers but also actors and mediators, working in constant dialogue with citizens and local government representatives.

In the following development stages of the selected proposal, the architecture firm Azócar y Catrón assumed a traditional professional role, deciding on the main design principles and then giving instructions on how to complete the design. Two students, Constanza Jara and María Constanza Sáez, were hired as interns in the architecture firm and continued working on the development of the workshop prototypes. Their participation led to a substantial transformation of the selected design originally developed by Benjamín Alvarado.

Professionals from the QMB program acted as active collaborators and consultants for the ADAPTO project team throughout the project. The neighbourhood recovery program “I Love my Neighbourhood” of the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism was launched in 2006 as a way of improving people’s quality of life. The program uses a participatory process, involving the municipality and the community itself, as a means of facilitating the recovery of public spaces and equipment, in order to strengthening the social fabric. They organized several joint meetings and guided the activities of the UBB architectural studio in accordance with the QMB program’s own development policies. Once Benjamín’s Alvarado’s project had been chosen, they led the application for subsidy funds.

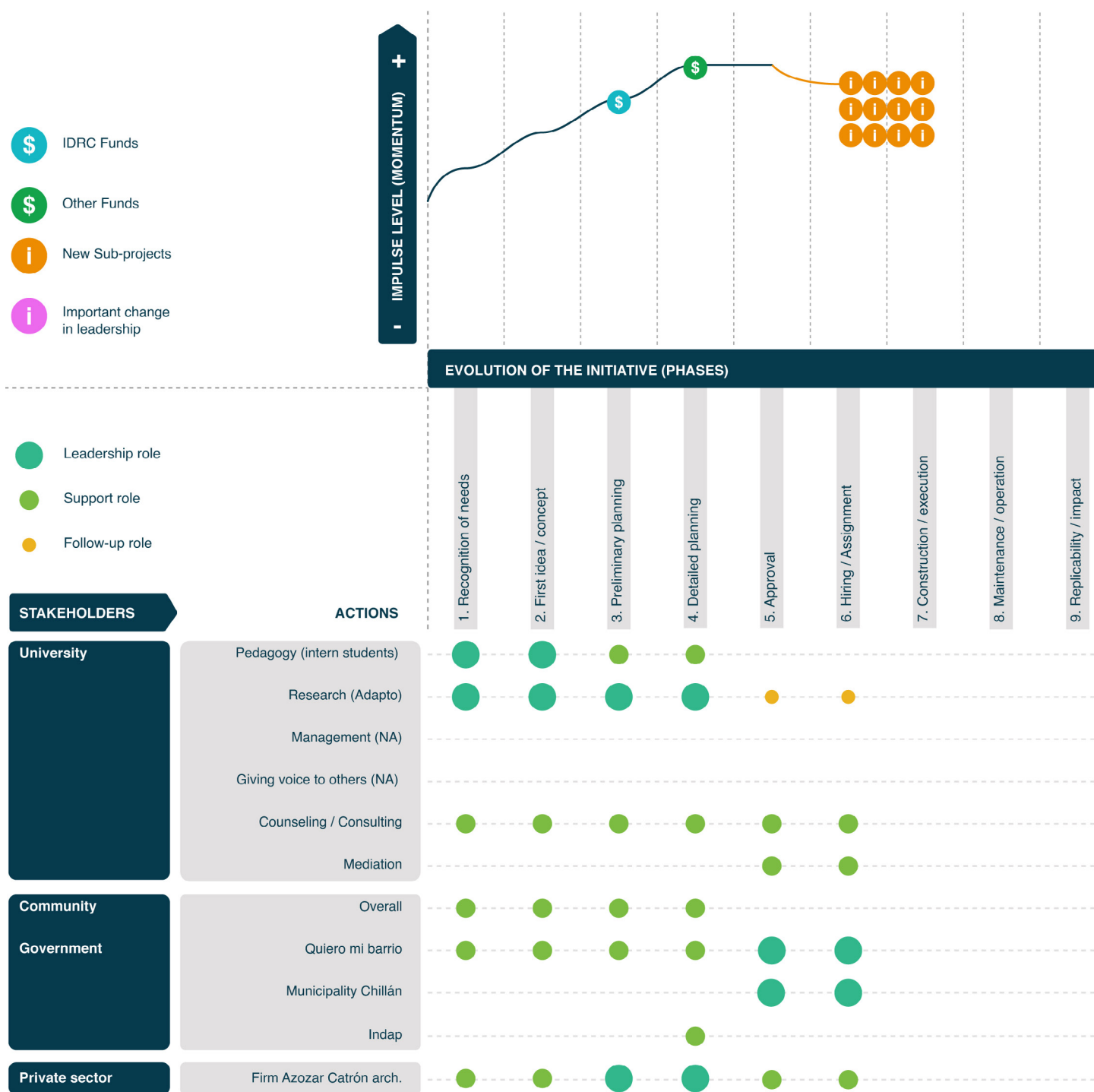


Fig. 6: Development and stakeholder participation of the Initiative.

Results

1

Prepared a needs assessment in the community of Quinchamalí, Chile, highlighting the opportunities for traditional artisanal production and trade, as well as the need to provide bespoke infrastructure for this cultural activity of great heritage value.

2

Proposed 12 architectural prototypes for workshops or productive spaces for pottery, honey, jam, and poultry production, with the direct participation of residents, artisans, and producers from Quinchamalí, all of them women. SERVIU granted subsidies to nine proposals to fund their construction.

3

Generated a hands-on learning experience for the architecture students so they can be better prepared to act as facilitators and collaborators in future social projects.

4

Developed and implemented a novel multisectoral work model, uniting academia, government institutions, the private sector, and the community in the region, improving relationships among stakeholders and producing architectural responses that are pertinent for the community.



Fig. 7: Fraction of the image “A pottery production space”. Photo credit: Azócar y Catrón.

Lessons learned

The project proposes a novel approach for collective work between academia, public service institutions, and the community. The approach is based on what we term “multidirectional” or “threefold alliances,” used as an outreach strategy. However, it is essential that all stakeholders of the newly established partnership maintain constant collaboration and coordination throughout the project process. This ensures that the alliance fulfils its purpose as an innovative collaborative work strategy and consequently, as a model of governance. We learned that when conversations and meetings cease for a prolonged period of time, miscommunications arise. As a result, there is a build-up of mistrust between partners. Mitigating this situation requires that the partnership include at least one person who can perform a complete and systematic follow-up of the whole process. It follows that resources must be allocated for this specific task from the beginning of the project.

Entrusting the technical development of a design project to an architectural office without involving the students who created the design can have multiple impacts from a pedagogical point of view. Unlike the design process for the vertical garden in Bellavista (see “Our seeds are life”), this process resulted in a total transformation of the student’s original design, to the point that it was unrecognizable.

This result was due to the more traditional one-sided approach adopted by the Azócar y Catrón office. Such an approach can be acceptable so long as the student is actively and empathetically incorporated into the design process, which was not the case in this project. Tutors should consider the technical complexity of a student proposal when the selection process takes place, since a more complex proposal can entail significant problems in the technical development phase.

Future work and replicability

The possibility of implementing future actions depends on financial support. As mentioned, the project is being assessed for a subsidy for its implementation in Quinchamalí. It is expected that the project will move to the construction phase following the reception of the subsidy. Provided additional financial support is secured, the architectural proposal of four variations of a single basic module for craft and food production and trade (pottery, honey, poultry, and jam) can also be further adapted to other small-scale productive activities and replicated in Quinchamalí.

Such threefold or multisectoral alliances can be relevant in other regions. ADAPTO partners at the Universidad del Bío-Bío believe the Quinchamalí experience provides insight into potential ways of engaging the public sector and residents in future projects. Alliances can bridge the collaborative, conversational, and research gaps existing between the academic world, government administration, and the population, and can mutually empower all the actors involved.