**Developing a Post-Earthquake Socio-Spatial Analysis of *Barrio Centro Sur* in Talca, Chile**

**Authors:**

Mariana Blondet, MCP 2016; Heather Bromfield, MCP 2016; Lila Rubenstein, MCP 2016; Alana Macwhorter, MCP/MLA 2015; Maitagorra Schade, MCP/MS 2016; Vincent Agoe, MCP/MLA 2017; Michael Uberti, MCP 2016; Charlotte O’Donnell, BA 2016; Hannah Ricker, BA 2018

**Background**

The city of Talca is located in the Maule region of Chile, 255 km south of Santiago, with a population of approximately 200,000 people. In 2010, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake devastated the Talca community. The earthquake resulted in significant physical destruction of the city center, including the historic residential neighborhood, *Barrio Centro Sur.* The ensuing displacement of residents to the scity’s periphery exacerbated socio-spatial segregation and the deterioration of Talca’s economic center. Reconstruction efforts have been insufficient in restoring the historic city center and the regional economy, while the recent September 2015 earthquake has rekindled concerns regarding the vulnerability of high-risk populations to natural disasters.

**Project Description**

Through a partnership between the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley (as part of a Housing and Community and Economic Development studio led by Professor Malo Hutson) and the Universidad Católica del Maule, we identify policy strategies to redevelop the *Barrio Centro Sur* through joint initiatives between the University, the City of Talca, the Regional administration, and local community. In conducting our research, we worked with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MINVU), the Urbanization and Housing Services Administration (SERVIU), Universidad Católica del Maule faculty, and the community-based organization, Sur Maule.

Our research explored opportunities to develop the earthquake damaged downtown area while providing new opportunities for the low-income student population and Talca residents. Together, the university and government agencies will jointly serve as anchor institutions in *Barrio Centro Sur* to create a viable and sustainable downtown and better serve the Talca community.

The city of Talca functions as the post-secondary education hub for the Maule region. Current educational reforms in Chile are redirecting attention to the provision of postsecondary education, raising questions about the extent to which public funding should be allocated to private institutions that deliver social benefits to their surrounding communities and to society. This is particularly relevant to the Universidad Católica del Maule, which serves a majority of the region’s low-income, first generation college students.

**Methodology**

Our research involves three strategies: ***identifying land-use and connectivity opportunities*,** developing ***equitable housing***solutions,and ***integrating services***between university programs and government agencies. Through interviews, surveys, and extensive policy research, we examined the impacts of national, regional, and local regulations on urban land and how they dictate land use and transportation patterns following the earthquake. Our research analyzes the socio-spatial results of these policies and opportunities to better serve the impacted populations and create a functioning urban center.

Our methodology includes interviews with residents of *Barrio Centro Sur*; surveys with students of the Universidad Católica del Maule; informational interviews with City and Regional representatives; and spatial and financial analyses of potential sites for university relocation. Land use and connectivity opportunities were assessed through “on-the-ground” research to identify sites damaged by the earthquake with redevelopment potential, or sites owned by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MINVU) that could be repurposed. This study occurred over a span of six months beginning on June 1, 2015.

**Outcomes**

For the proposed relocation of university programming in *Barrio Centro Sur*, we considered planned State initiatives for subsidized housing in conjunction with identified community needs in order to determine equitable housing options in the area. Recommendations include providing for underserved families who were displaced in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, as well as low-income students who travel significant distances to access educational amenities in Talca. Housing recommendations will be complemented with collaborative opportunities for university and government services to meet the needs of the local population, specifically in the health and education sectors. This collaboration will emphasize experiential learning for Universidad Catolica del Maule students in pre-professional programs while complementing government services in the local community. These recommendations reimagine the established pedagogy of spatial policies and land use management to create an integrated and comprehensive approach to social services.

The condition of the local community creates opportunities to facilitate new synergistic relationships and leverage funding to promote socio-spatial and economic equity in land use management, urban design, and place-making.

In partnership with government agencies, the Universidad Catolica del Maule holds the potential to serve as an anchor institution in the community development of downtown Talca, and as a force for promoting socio-spatial and economic equity in infrastructure, real-estate development, and spatial policies.