

Coyhaique Cultural Center and crowdfunding as a financing strategy

Centro Cultural de Coyhaique y el micromecenazgo como estrategia de financiamiento

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this work is to analyze the possibilities of crowdfunding strategies as financing alternatives to the resource management processes of cultural spaces. For this purpose, the experience of the cooperative partner program Red de Amigos de la Cultura of the Centro Cultural de Coyhaique and its results are reviewed. The review of this case leads us to evaluate the feasibility of the various existing financing alternatives for artistic and cultural projects, such as the Ley de Donaciones Culturales and to reflect on the role of the State in Chile as guarantor of cultural rights.

Keywords

Crowdfunding; Cultural Financing; Cultural Infrastructure; Coyhaique.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo tiene la finalidad de analizar las posibilidades de las estrategias de micromecenazgo, o crowdfunding, como alternativas de financiamiento frente a los procesos de gestión de los recursos de los espacios culturales. Para esto, se revisó la experiencia del programa de los socios cooperadores Red de Amigos de la Cultura del Centro Cultural de Coyhaique, y sus resultados. La revisión de este caso nos lleva a evaluar la factibilidad de las diversas alternativas de financiamiento existentes para los proyectos artísticos y culturales, como la Ley de Donaciones Culturales, y a la reflexión sobre el rol del Estado en Chile como garante del derecho a la cultura.

Palabras clave

Micromecenazgo; financiamiento cultural; infraestructura cultural; Coyhaique.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is review the financial policies of regional cultural spaces and respond to the question about whether micro-sponsorship or crowdfunding is a feasible financing strategy aimed to improve management procedures, offer creation and access facility to programs for different audiences of the Municipal Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique, an entity managing the Coyhaique Cultural Center. To answer this question, a critical review was made of the strategy at hand, incorporated to the Management Plan of the institution since 2018 as an alternative to raising resources, as well as to provide to the compliance of strategic objectives of a non-profit cultural institution located at the far south of the Chilean Patagonia.

Applied methodology is based on research-action basics, because a reflection was made from an experimental point of view on a series of actions to foster social nature transformations as well as the adoption of new management strategies in a cultural space to fulfill strategic objectives intended by the institution. Therefore, an analysis was implemented with techniques of quantitative research methodology, such as the application and systematization of surveys.

In specific terms, secondary nature sources were reviewed on financing models on culture, the reports on the Cultural Donations Act (the Valdes Act), in addition to documents on cultural policies in Chile, and sponsorship as a financing strategy. A Cultural Consumption Survey was implemented by the institution, which produced significant data for the development of the survey;¹ furthermore, the current Management Plan of the Coyhaique Cultural Center was reviewed and an a semi-structured interview with the person in charge of the executive management office of the Municipal Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique when the research was conducted.

The first part of the research includes the concept definition, in accordance with the literature reviewed, that would enable reflection and characterization of the institution's financing policies. In this sense, the crowdfunding concept is analyzed as an expression of a manner of alternative financing which is characterized by

¹ The Cultural Consumption Survey (2020) has a sample of 278 whistleblowers and was conducted between December 2019 and May 2020, by means of virtual forms disseminated on the social networks of the institution, emails to the database of regular audiences and private messaging. An important part of the information was obtained by means of face-to-face surveys conducted with attendees to different shows offered by the cultural space between December 2019 and March 2020. By considering that the total of people attending the activities of the cultural space during 2019 was 17,664, the error margin of the survey is 5.83% with a confidence level of 95%.

collective participation (Pérez-Miguel, 2018; Sastre-Canelas, 2015; Martínez-Cañas, 2012; Hernández-Jiménez, 2015). Later on, a brief contextualization will be done on the history of the Cultural Center of Coyhaique and its previous management, in preparation to the description of the main elements comprising the New Management Plan and its projections.

In the third stage of the development, more detailed discussions will be made on the financing policy of Contributing Partners, implemented by the Municipal Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique, regarding its operation and on how this has favored the management of programs. To finish, the results will be analyzed in accordance with the cultural-institutional framework currently existing in the country.

CROWDFUNDING

A CULTURAL FINANCING STRATEGY

As a starting point, it is necessary to carry out detailed discussions on the crowdfunding concept, which will be understood as “any collaborative and collective activity where project promoters, through an open-public tender, request and receive financing from private individuals” (Camacho, 2016, p. 87). This way of financing is mainly presented in the field of technological and entrepreneurial innovation by means of virtual or face-to-face platforms, which enable an individual to contribute to the development of a business idea. Its incorporation in the world of cultural management has facilitated the existence of collaborative financing for “cultural or social projects that consider or that would be considered as good initiatives, because they improve or transform the society” (Camacho, 2016, p. 88).

There are different ways of crowdfunding, that are classified in accordance with the primary motivation of donors. It is possible to consider four basic types of this kind of financing: donations, rewards, loans and investments. The first one “is, therefore, based on contributions by users by way of donations to support, non-profit, specific social assistance projects” (Rodríguez de las Heras, 2013, p. 108), generally headed by non-profit or individual organizations. In this crowdfunding model, the generation of actions is a priority that would allow contributors to have access, in a transparent and detailed manner, to information on the use of contributed resources, along with the setting up of continuing information channels between the project and its donors for the construction of

trust relationships, considered as a necessary condition for the donation to be sustainable in the long term.

In the second case, an individual who makes an economical contribution for the development of a specific project does this by seeking a non-financial remuneration, which may have a symbolic value, not necessarily comparable to the economic contribution this person made; for example, a meet-&-greet with the performers after the premiere of a play, or under the “advanced payment” mode, where the contributor pays for part of a product or service, the value of that has been agreed in advance, which may or may not include a price rebate.

On the other hand, the loan mode is comprised of collective loans among contributors and promoters of a project or initiative. Generally, under this mode are platforms, whether virtual or face-to-face, that work as a collecting intermediary for the contributions, and who guarantees and establishes conditions for the reimbursement. Lastly, under the investment mode, an option is made for partaking in the capital stock of the promoting corporation. The contributor becomes either a partner or a stockholder entitled to share in the benefits of the corporation, and to receive part of the project gains.

This work makes an emphasis on the first two modes, donation and reward, for they may be mostly found within the field of the development of art and culture. As established, crowdfunding of donations is characterized for being a form of economic participation in a project or an initiative which does not demand a tangible return in exchange, beyond indirect benefits. They have a philanthropic nature, because the persons using this type of donations have social motivations or are in the belief that the project to be financed is a contribution to social, cultural or economic development of a territory, or of a group of persons.

By contrast, in the case of crowdfunding by rewards, donors receive a remuneration as a function of what they contributed: “sponsors contribute an economic amount to support the project; however, in this case, they do get a remuneration. The purpose of the sponsor is to provide economic support to the project in exchange for a reward which is not of a financial nature, it would be material or symbolic” (Crespo-Canovas, 2019, p. 12).

For the case under study, these definitions enable the analysis on how crowdfunding may be one of feasible financing strategies for a cultural institution, germane to the reality of a southern area such as that of Aysen.

CULTURAL CENTER OF COYHAIQUE

ACCESS, CULTURAL CONSUMPTION AND AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

Coyhaique is the capital city of the Aysen region, located in the center of the Chilean Patagonia. It has the lowest figure of inhabitants of a regional capital city in Chile: 57,818 inhabitants (National Statistics Institute, 2019, p. 5); in addition, the Aysen region is the least populated region, with barely 103,158 inhabitants (National Statistics Institute, 2019, p. 4). This situation is in answer to a late population process, which started at the beginning of the 20th Century, the product of complex geographical and climate characteristics of the area, factors not yet having an incidence on the connectivity levels of the region with the rest of the country.

Mainly engaged in sheep breeding, the population was mainly formed through state colonization processes, such as the concession of land to private companies for exploitation thereof, and migration processes from territories such as the Island of Chiloe, down the southern center of Chile and the Argentinian Patagonia. A cultural diversity provides an added value to the artistic and handcrafting creation of the region.

In 2006, by contributions from the municipal government, the Cultural Center was formed in Coyhaique, mainly due to the pressure of citizens referring to the non-existent infrastructure for cultural development, except for the old movie theater in the city, managed by the municipal government of Coyhaique, which was not enough for initiatives of artistic and cultural nature of the location.

After two years of regular operation, in 2011, a new building was made thanks to the initiative of the cultural infrastructure program included in the National Cultural Policy of 2005-2010, proposed during the presidential term of Ricardo Lagos. In this document, a guide to cultural policy, the infrastructure was placed as a pillar for development, democratization and cultural participation. Under the government of Michelle Bachelet, the goal of its execution was to reach the bicentennial as a country with a cultural center for each community with over 50 thousand inhabitants.

In the Aysen region, this State policy enabled the qualitative improvement of the infrastructure supply by building a new space dubbed as Cultural Center of Coyhaique, in charge of the recently activated Municipal Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique. Space improvement and its opening to cultural initiatives of a different nature (private, cultural or community) may have had a noteworthy advance in

terms of cultural development for the city; however, there were strong weaknesses in the program, because this did not mean a permanent contribution to new spaces, and it left the comprehensive management of the centers to each municipality.

For the specific case of the Cultural Center of Coyhaique, as of this day, managing resources depend on two main avenues: first off, on a basal contribution made by the municipal government² and, basically, intended for fees, and operational expenditures, such as heating, cleaning, and maintenance of the infrastructure, generally; and, secondly, from proceeds themselves, for leasing spaces, film presentations, and paid workshops. In this context, generation of an own program for staging and musical arts by the institution was practically impossible and, therefore, the likelihood to create initiatives for the development of audiences to project cultural participation.

Attendance information to spectacles created by the Culture and Arts Council -now the Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage- and participation and cultural consumption surveys show the weakness of the program of cultural infrastructure and the resulting difficulty to create the institution's program (see table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of surveyed people who at least attended a cultural activity during the last twelve months in the Aysen region

| Years | Movie theater | Concerts | Visual arts | Theater | Dance |
|-------|---------------|----------|-------------|---------|-------|
| 2005 | 19,7 | 50 | 15,8 | 14,7 | 19,5 |
| 2009 | 12,8 | 35,5 | 14,9 | 16,2 | 23,7 |
| 2012 | 29,7 | 26,5 | 22,1 | 14,7 | 25,5 |
| 2017 | 19,2 | 27,6 | 18,3 | 11,1 | 30,3 |

Source: based on data from the Survey of Cultural Consumption 2004-2005 (2007), the Second National Survey of Participation and Cultural Consumption (2011), and the National Survey of Participation and Cultural Consumption 2017 (2018).

In accordance with this information, it is possible to see that the only artistic expressions on the rise, regarding consumption, include dance and visual arts. Dance went from 23.7% in 2009, a previous period to the execution of the cultural infrastructure program in Coyhaique, to 25.5% in 2012, and then to 30.3% in 2017. In

² In accordance with information obtained from annual public managing accounts of the Municipal Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique, the contribution of the municipal government, since 2017, has been \$115,000,000 Chilean Pesos (157,534 dollars); in 2018, \$169,588,263 Chilean Pesos (232,312 dollars); and in 2019, \$157,875,000 Chilean Pesos (216,267 dollars).

the case of visual arts, a jump of over five percentage points attracts the attention from 2009 to 2012. It is possible to ascribe this variation to the existence of space in the new building in the Cultural Center of Coyhaique, specifically adapted for expos in rooms.

Regarding musical arts and movie theater, the figures show that infrastructural renewal of space did not have any major impact on the cultural consumption in these disciplines in the region. In respect to activities linked to film presentation, it is not possible to ascribe these figure variations to the existence of a new space such as the Cultural Center of Coyhaique, because the municipality had a permanent film exhibition at the Municipal Movie theater until mid-2018. It is important to highlight that, for the musical, visual and staging art cases, the Cultural Center of Coyhaique is the only one space with the facilities suitable for carrying out these disciplines.

By the end of 2017, there was a change in the executive direction of the space. Through a diagnostic and incorporation process of the new human capital to the project, a New Management Plan was prepared, because there was no strategic planning on the use of the space and on the production of artistic-cultural activities.

The New Management Plan has two specific objectives: 1) to create its own space program in order to not exclusively depend on circulation projects of the then Culture and Arts Council; and 2) to link the community and to manage the resources by means of this linkage. On the first objective, the first measure implemented included workshops of art to enable the generation of proceeds, which was not the case before. This income of resources is invested for the fulfillment of the second objective: obtaining resources by means of linking the Cultural Center and the community.

NETWORK OF FRIENDS OF CULTURE

SEARCHING FOR FINANCING ALTERNATIVES

Within the framework of complying with this objective, The Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique has launched the Network of Friends of Culture, a call to citizens to be part of the Collaborating Partners, who may enter by making a contribution of fifteen thousand pesos, approximately. By this, they could be entitled to get a discount ID card for presentations and spectacles managed by the Cultural Center;

likewise, there is a discounts agreement with seventy commercial stores in the city. Although these benefits may be considered as a “reward” to whoever wishes to give an economic contribution to manage the Cultural Center, according to the Executive Office of the institution, current members of the Network of Friends of Culture, mostly contribute to support the cultural development of the city of Coyhaique, and value the work done by the Cultural Corporation in this undertaking.³

Regarding different audiences at the Cultural Center, people who were largely called by the proposed crowdfunding program include persons between 25 and 45 years of age, mainly women who are residents in the city urban center, where the cultural space is located. Its main economic activity is related with occupational sources in public services, both government and community. Mostly, they have completed their college studies, and a relevant part have completed post-degree studies. Therefore, it is possible to assume they have a high cultural level, both regarding their studies and their consumption habits. This is an informed segment on programming the cultural space, who are aware of how it works.

Cultural consumption of this audience, called “regular”, is related with the offer of performing arts, especially, theater and musical arts. It is also a segment that constantly participates in training activities, such as workshops and artistic laboratories offered by the institution.

By 2019, there were about 700 members in the network, and an amount of \$6,018,500 Chilean pesos were collected.⁴ This profit margin has enabled them to manage their own programming without depending on contestable funds, such as Family Film Projection Cycles, from 2018 to the date when, due to climate characteristics of the city, in order that they be implemented, needs resources for daily heating of the main auditorium and, on the other hand, to finance production expenses such as fares, transfers and accommodation of the staff, companies and artists during 2019. Thus, the profits obtained by the Network of Friends of Culture facilitate managing first-rate theatrical plays:

In this case, by way of example, the price of a theatrical [show] is posh, including transport, accommodation, et cetera, \$3,000,000 (4,000 dollars), taking into account that there are 200 seats. This means this would cost us, per seat, \$15,000 (twenty dollars), which is an absurd value to convey it to the audience, I mean. Then, by the funds from contributing partners, we sell the show in \$5,000 (seven dollars) or \$7,000 (ten dollars), in accordance with the

³ Although this the opinion of the interviewee, it will be corroborated in accordance with information from the *Cultural Consumption Survey* conducted by the Municipal Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique (2020). A synthesis of this information will be presented in a further section in this article.

⁴ 8,133 dollars, approximately.

quality of the audience. If this is a Contributing Partner, \$5,000, and if it is the general public, \$7,000. Thus, we pay half the show, and with the collection from contributing partners, we pay what is missing. Therefore, we assure a quality avant-garde program (C. Rojas, personal communication, 2018).

The Network of Friends of Culture financing policy is presented as a crowdfunding case of a citizens' nature, appealing to a participatory economic contribution of a specific community or territory, which strengthens management of a Cultural Center.

It must be emphasized that a case was found with the features of a donation mode, when verifying an interest to contribute in an uninterested manner to support the cultural development of the city, in accordance with the *Cultural Consumption Survey*, conducted by the institution during the first semester of 2020. This survey shows that 77.2% of surveyed contributing partners make the suggested contribution because they want to support management of the Cultural Center of Coyhaique, and believes that rewards of benefits offered are of a secondary nature, whereas 19.3% identified that the main motivation included discounts in local businesses, which makes this reward a needless offer in the program (see chart 1).

¿What was your main motivation for becoming a cooperating member of the Municipal Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique?

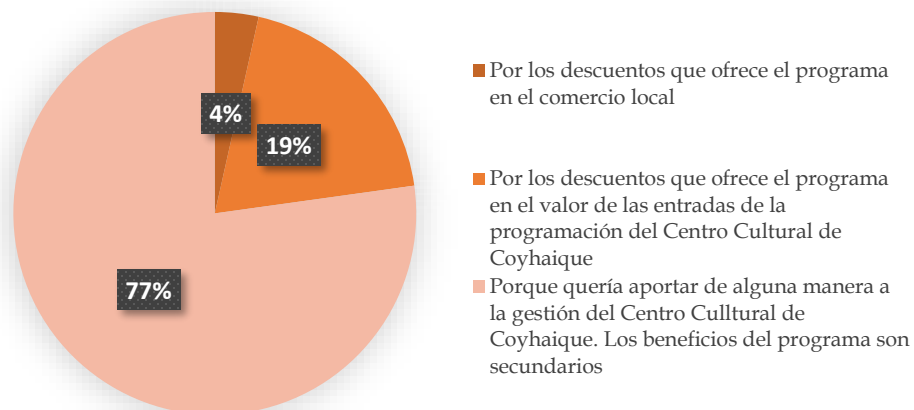


Chart 1. Main motivation of contributing partners to be part of the program.

Source: self-made, based on the results of the 2019 *Cultural Consumption Survey*, of the Municipal Cultural Corporation of Coyhaique.

This is relevant because the kind of connection created by the contributed “donation” is closely related with the distance of the partners in respect to the project, in accordance to a study conducted on crowdfunding in artistic entrepreneurship at the University of Toronto, where the analysis of contributors in different initiatives reported that people who were closer to the geographical place where the project was placed, contributed twice as much the contribution of people who were more distanced (Ajay, Catalini & Goldfarb, 2010). This is a relevant situation in the smallest regional capital of Chile, per its number of inhabitants, because the emotional linkage and the proximity with the space may be understood under the perspective of a city with a network with close social and community relations.

When performing an evaluation of other sources of financing, in addition to nominating contestable funds, within the New Management Plan a form is incorporated to offer a stable and own programming, which includes both domestic and regional artists, called *Bordeau 80/20*, that implies facilitating space, executive production and publicity of the show at the price the artist deems necessary, in accordance with a price table for tickets approved by the board. The model suggests that, from the collection, 80% is to pay the fees of artists and 20% to pay operational expenses, as a result of using the spaces of the Cultural Center.

The management team also identifies the Cultural Donations Act, or Valdes Act, as a financing alternative, which was created with the purpose of supplementing the state contribution to the private financing for artistic and cultural projects; this is a tool to foster the creation, dissemination and implementation of the value of artistic and cultural objects in Chile which, under the current laws, has been governed since 2014; furthermore, this is a mixed financing instrument where public and private resources converge, where the donating private institution makes direct contribution to a project which is part of a list selected by the Cultural Donations Qualifying Committee, and the State grants tax benefits to the donor, like a reduction on the payment of taxes.

Although this alternative form is part of the New Management Plan, it was not a priority like the formulation of projects for managing resources through contestable funds of the Culture Ministry or the Regional Government:

We made the decision that from the projects we formulated and that will not be eventually financed by the funds, we are going to upload them as projects by the Donations Act. But we do not currently have the human capacity to have someone formulating projects in both platforms (C. Rojas, personal communication, 2018).

This prioritization is the answer to two closely related reasons. The first one is related with the regional reality, because it is not a tradition of the private sector to make donations in the territory for cultural purposes. In addition, they may be featured as small and medium-size companies without big profits, that would enable making donations for these purposes. For this reason, and in accordance with the annual report of the 2019 Cultural Donations Qualifying Committee, the Ñuble and Aysen regions have the least number of projects financed by this Act (Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, 2019). The second reason is of a centralized nature in Chile, because most of the companies willing to finance cultural projects are based in the central zone.

Additionally, companies are well centralized and, indeed, they generally have the possibility of financing large cultural institution projects. Big companies aim in that sense, because they have larger media repercussion. What we can do from Coyhaique is very little in relation with the media impact that may cause the [Santiago] a Mil Festival or another kind of event. So, we know that we are competing with that (C. Rojas, personal communication, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

This case study presents two interesting cases. First off, we are facing a cultural financing proposal by means of donations from contributing partners, that may be categorized as crowdfunding. As it is analyzed in detail, we find that, although there are crowdfunding elements of donations and rewards, the main motivations of contributing partners are related with the recognition of the Cultural Center of Coyhaique to support the social and cultural development of the city, and not necessarily by means of discounts in local businesses and shows, and other benefits offered by the program.

This motivation may be interpreted as a public sign of interest who regularly go to the space to practice their right to culture through an effective contribution in the management of a cultural space, whether administrative or programmatic. The partners' program contains a strategy that may get to be successful for financing cultural initiatives (if the contribution is deemed to have included the generation of profits in this manner for the autonomy and diversification of the programmatic offer of the Cultural Center of Coyhaique), as well as an opportunity to make progress in the inclusion of different audiences in the decision-making process or co-programming.

In the second place, it is possible to criticize the Cultural Donations Act, especially from territories that may be considered to be on the outskirts, because, in spite that this is a useful tool for cultural financing, it is mainly focused on the central area (metropolis). Even when there are projects financed on the outskirts, it is necessary to consider that they pertain to those resulting from the so called “sacrifice areas”, upon which large investments have socio-environmental impacts forcing companies to have a more proactive Entrepreneurial Public Liability department as a compensatory policy; this is not the case of the Aysen region.

Because of this situation, it is vitally important, from the cultural policy, to aim to decentralize the investment of companies through the Cultural Donations Act, with the amendments that imply, for example, the increase of tax benefits, to include territorial characteristics of cultural projects available to be financed.

In spite of the economic contribution entailing the enactment of the Valdes Act for the development of arts and culture in Chile, it is possible to infer that the purpose of the private sector, as it contributes to the financing of an artistic, cultural or heritage project, is motivated by two reasons: tax benefits offered by the act and the possibility to include the donation as part of a brand positioning strategy. If the analysis of the collective financing strategy is compared to donations of the private sector, we are facing large-scale motivational differences: on the one hand, an active community interested in exercising their right to partake in the artistic, cultural and heritage development of the territory they dwell in and, on the other hand, a corporation which, in a narrow sense, does not make a donation, but an investment.

Finally, it is worth wondering, in spite of marked differences: are both strategies effective as a form of financing for the arts and culture in Chile? A likely answer is that they are a feasible alternative for financing the activities, especially for self-managed spaces or organizations; however, the number of resources that may be managed and the likelihood of being awarded with a project under the Cultural Donations Act, make it possible that these channels replace the duty of the State, as access to culture and the exercise of a creative act are guaranteed. In this campaign, Chile is indebted.

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