

(Re) construction of historical memory: identity and urban re-valuation of the first Diagonal in Chile.

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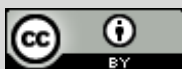
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Abstract

In the process of urban regeneration, the re-valuation of public space and the elements that configure it assume the potential in the regeneration process, integrating elements as the basis components in the consolidation of urban dynamics. Also, the contained memory of the city, understood as public inheritance, is a continuous and participatory process in which we construct the sense of belonging and place.

The (re) construction of historical memory of the Avenue Diagonal Pedro Aguirre Cerda, the first diagonal axis of Chile, has partly defined the structure of the landscape of the city of Concepcion, being a container of social, historical, and natural processes that accidentally occurred.

Unfortunate but ideal scenarios have been the successive earthquakes that have made our country a fertile ground for rethinking and materializing ideas. It is, in the post-1939 earthquake, when the reconstruction permitted revolutionary thoughts coming from modern Europe and that were materialized, with a privileged location in both the historical space and in the physical city.

The appearance of this axis, in the apposition of the foundational Damero's plane, is an innovative project that breaks this historic urban trend, taking into Chile, and more specifically into Concepción, a chance to expound innovative ideas, aimed to change the urban landscape prevailing at that time.

In terms of spatial configuration, this diagonal axis is a superposition of historical layers in their development and materialization that has become a mass of history and that is still in development. In other words, it is dynamic and open, consolidating it periodically as an identity space city landscape, harmoniously uniting both the civic world represented by the square courts with the academics symbolized in the University of Concepción.

It is proposed to unravel and rescue the historical context that adds a value in the configuration and coordination of the various parties in relation to the on-going transformation and constitution of this urban piece and its constant identity re-evaluation in favor of the regeneration processes.

Key words: Public Space, Reconstruction, Memory, Urban Landscape, Urban Regeneration.

Resum

En els processos de regeneració urbana, la revaloració de l'espai públic i els seus configurants assumeix el potencial existent en aquests, integrant-se com a elements base a la consolidació de les dinàmiques urbanes. Així mateix, aquesta memòria continguda entesa com a herència pública, és un procés de construcció continu i participatiu en el qual fem part del sentit de pertinença i lloc.

La (re) construcció de la memòria històrica de l'Avinguda Diagonal Pedro Aguirre Cerda primer eix

diagonal de Xile, ha definit en part l'estructura de paisatge de la ciutat de Concepción, sent espai contenidor de processos, socials, històrics i naturals que es van confabular de manera accidental.

Lamentable i alhora idoni escenari han estat els successius terratrèmols que han fet del nostre país una terra fèrtil per replantejar i materialitzar idees. És, en la reconstrucció post terratrèmol de 1939, quan revolucionàries idees vingudes des d'Europa moderna es concreten, amb una ubicació privilegiada tant a l'espai històric, com a físic de la ciutat.

L'aparició d'aquest eix, en oposició del pla escaquer fundacional, és un projecte innovador que irromp aquesta històrica tendència urbana; tenint a Xile i més específic a Concepción una oportunitat de generar idees innovadores, tendents a modificar el paisatge urbà imperant fins aleshores.

Quant a la configuració espacial, és una superposició de capes històriques que en la seva evolució i materialització, l'han convertit en un cúmul d'història, que encara es troba en desenvolupament, és a dir, és dinàmica i oberta, consolidant-se periòdicament com a espai identitari del paisatge de la ciutat, unint de manera harmònica un món cívic representat per la Plaça de Tribunals de Justícia i acadèmic per la Universitat de Concepción.

Es planteja desentranyar i rescatar el context històric; que posa en valor la configuració i l'articulació de les diferents parts, en relació amb la contínua transformació i constitució d'aquesta peça urbana, i la seva constant revaloració identitària en post dels processos de regeneració.

Paraules Claus: Espai públic, Reconstrucció, Memòria, Paisatge Urbà, Regeneració Urbana.

Resumen

En los procesos de regeneración urbana, la revalorización del espacio público y sus configurantes asume el potencial existente en éstos, integrándose como elementos base en la consolidación de las dinámicas urbanas. Asimismo, dicha memoria contenida entendida como herencia pública, es un proceso de construcción continuo y participativo en el cual forjamos parte del sentido de pertenencia y lugar.

La (re) construcción de la memoria histórica de la Avenida Diagonal Pedro Aguirre Cerda primer eje diagonal de Chile, ha definido en parte la estructura de paisaje de la ciudad de Concepción, siendo espacio contenedor de procesos, sociales, históricos y naturales que se confabularon de manera accidental.

Lamentable y a la vez idóneo escenario han sido los sucesivos terremotos que han hecho de nuestro país una tierra fértil para replantear y materializar ideas. Es, en la reconstrucción post-terremoto de 1939, cuando revolucionarias ideas venidas desde Europa moderna se concretan, con una ubicación privilegiada tanto en el espacio histórico, como físico de la ciudad.

La aparición de este eje, en oposición del plano damero fundacional, es un proyecto innovador que irrumpe a esta histórica tendencia urbana; teniendo en Chile y más específico en Concepción una oportunidad de generar ideas innovadoras, tendientes a modificar el paisaje urbano imperante hasta entonces.

En cuanto a su configuración espacial, es una superposición de capas históricas que en su evolución y materialización, la han convertido en un cúmulo de historia, que aún se encuentra en desarrollo, es decir, es dinámica y abierta, consolidándose periódicamente como espacio identitario del paisaje de la ciudad, uniendo de manera armónica un mundo cívico representado por la Plaza de Tribunales de Justicia y académico por la Universidad de Concepción.

Se plantea desentrañar y rescatar el contexto histórico; que pone en valor la configuración y articulación de las diferentes partes, en relación a la continua transformación y constitución de esta pieza urbana, y su constante revalorización identitaria en post de los procesos de regeneración.

Palabras Claves: Espacio público, Reconstrucción, Memoria, Paisaje Urbano, Regeneración Urbana.

Introduction

The public space and the contained memory or associated with it, lead suppose an open and complex materialization, which is part of a multidimensional and dynamic evolution.

“Ao falar de espaço público pensamos no espaço construído e esquecemo-nos que o espaço público é o resultado de uma síntese muito complexa entre a cidade pensada e/ou desejada, a cidade transcrita num sistema de escritura e, por último, a sua materialização. Pensar/Desejar, Escrever e Construir a cidade e o seu espaço público, nem sempre andam de mão dada” (Remesar, 2005, p. 4).

Regarding the issues raised, the temporality and concatenation of spaces and events associated with the construction and establishment of public space, define its symbolic character, based on the processes of identity and cohesion in urban (physical) terms and in terms of what this means and represents for citizenship and community life. *“The public space is an essential element of the life of cities as a place for coexistence, integration, sharing, leisure, etc.”* (Padilla-Llano, 2020, p. 77).

The memory, that we can be associated with a ‘place’. It is built, by way of a daily story and as part of a daily itinerary

“Muchos paisajes aparecen ante el observador como un magno documento territorial para ser leído e interpretado, herencia transmitida a lo largo del tiempo, producto histórico de la cultura y de la acción humana sobre la naturaleza, fundamentando la memoria de cada lugar (Schama, 1995) y la diversidad cultural del territorio” (Mata and Torroja, 2006, p. 31).

Memory is a fundamental factor for the (re) construction of the urban structure, also for the defense of the habitat conditions of the territories, also for community relations; memory is essential to preserve the identity and the features that define the past, manage the present and project the future in terms of local development (Esparza, et al, 2012).

On the other hand, the value of each configurator (construction, furnishings, tree planting, etc.) is relative to the polyhedral and multi-dimensional character of public space (Reyes-Schade, E. 2021) . It stands in the capacity and ability to contribute to a common, readable³ and imaginable⁴ account, as well as the combined capacity of bind and define a piece or

1. *“When talking about public space, we think about the built space and forget that public space is the result of a very complex synthesis between the planned and/or desired city, the city transcribed into a writing system and, finally, its materialization. . Thinking/Desiring, Writing and Building the city and its public space do not always go hand in hand”* (Remesar, 2005, p. 4).

2. *“ Many landscapes appear to the observer as a great territorial document to be read and interpreted, a heritage transmitted over time, a historical product of culture and human action on nature, underpinning the memory of each place (Schama, 1995) and the cultural diversity of the territory”* (Mata and Torroja, 2006, p. 31).

3. *“With this expression, we show the ease with which [parts of the urban landscape] can be recognized and organised in a coherent pattern “* (Lynch, 1960, p. 11).

4. *“The quality of the physical object that gives it a high probability of arousing a vigorous image in any observer.”* (Lynch, 1960, p. 19).

recognizable space, container of social and cultural processes as referents of an inherited landscape.

In that sense, Hannah Arendt (1958) defines the landscape as an inheritance without testament, dynamic and changing as it transforms and modifies. In this sense, the process of transformation of an urban landscape lies in the recognition of the shared memory. Memory is the symbolic thing that people preserve to structure their identity, both individual and collective, against their human nature and against the place and space where their lives unfold. The symbolic is a citizen's right, says Remesar (2020), which for Arent (1997) would be political life and public life that has to do with understanding individual identity and sharing with others (Habermas, 1999), to from that common context, guarantee the preservation of memory.

General context of the earthquake, the definition of an axis

The area where Concepcion is situated, arises first to Western history with the sighting of the Captain Juan Bautista Pastene on September 27, 1544, of the bay which is termed as the province of Concepcion; however, this first contact is only by sea.

Then, Don Pedro de Valdivia is immersed in its campaigns of conquest in 1546, treading these lands to try to consolidate the advance of his troops. It should be noticed that the first position in this area, is the place where today the town of Penco lies (figure 1), it is determining on March 3, 1550, where the first building can be seen in the area, to finally consolidate, this settlement with its foundation on October 5, 1550, by the Spanish conquistador. However, several misfortunes, much as the hostile attacks of the Mapuche natives, as the earthquake and subsequent tsunami of Concepcion that hit the town in 1751, which makes the move of the Spaniards to the city among January and March (1765) their current settlement; the Valley of Mocha (figure 2).

This company of conquest by the Spanish colonists makes feel Hispanic influence early on the area, being regarding construction, an area we are interested in. In where it becomes obvious and breaks through the named 'Modelo Damero'⁵, as a model for urban construction; furthermore, the rest of our current country.

5. "Damero or cuadrícula (streets cut at right angles): the proposed layout for the new cities of the New World. For the foundation of a city there was a legal procedure, for the planning of the same, some ordinances of Philip II for the layout of the cities of the new world: the Laws of the Indies, 1573: they respond in general to the urbanistic ideas of the renaissance" (Arellano, 1988, p. 24).. Grid composed of the same elements that make up a regular pattern, in which one of these items was not built for generating a plaza, from which the buildings and main streets of the city are created.

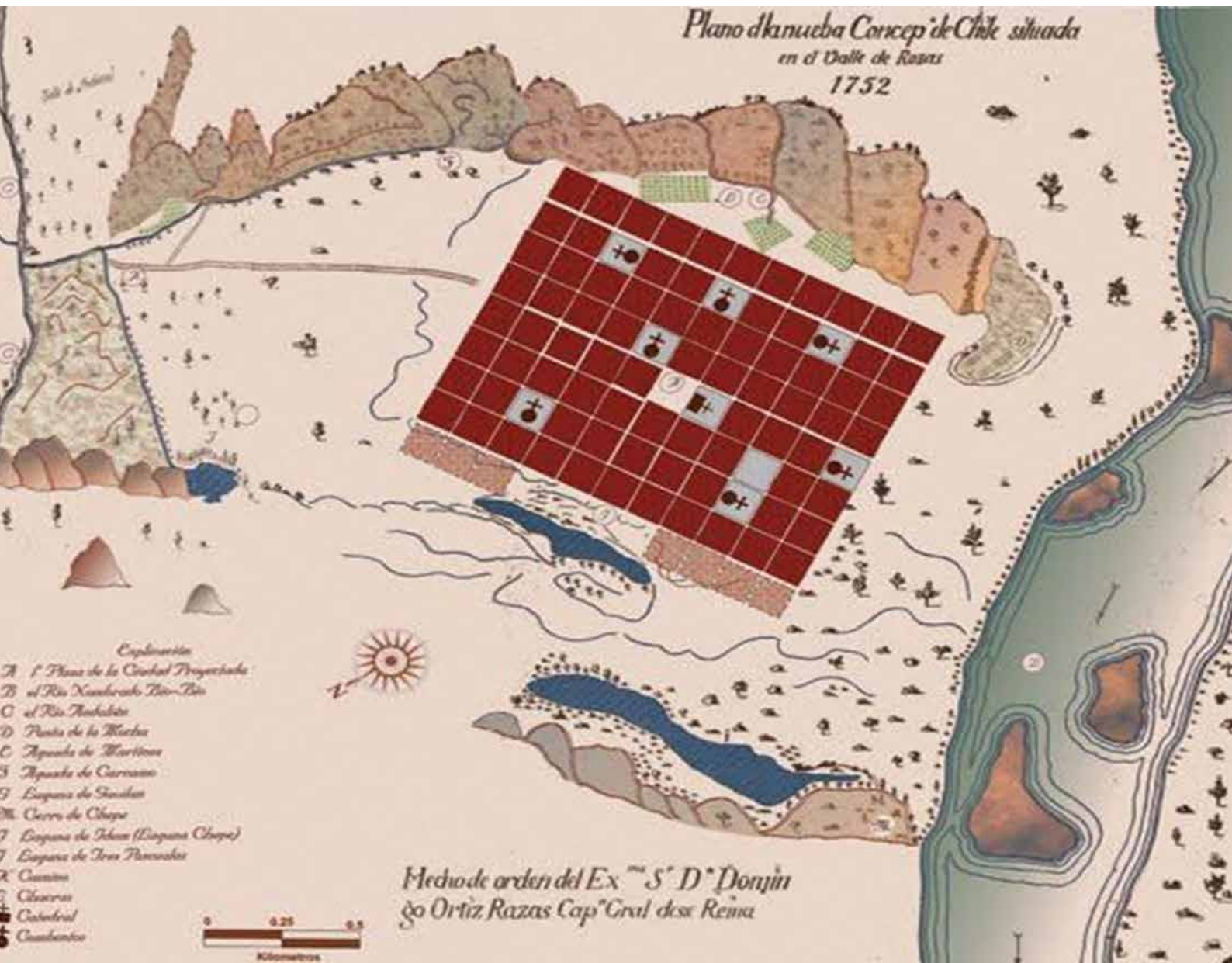


Figure 2. Location, Valley of Mocha. Source: LEU, University of Bío Bío, Chile

The development of the foundational structure of the 'Modelo Damero' (tax) has a powerful and a solid progress of urbanization in either case: the colonial, independence, and Republican era of Chile. However, there are multiple factors that trigger a point of inflection in this trend.

On January 24, 1939, it was almost at the end of that day, at 23:32 to be exact; the devastating earthquake in Chillan occurred. Its effects are titanic in the urban landscape of the area being Concepcion nearly entirely devastated. But this time, it would not be the transfer of place the action that penquistas⁶ would take, but rather the change would begin by a modification in its design. What is more, the removal is not physical rather a relocation to new influences of urban development.

6. Gentilic of the city of Concepción, derives from its first location; Penco.



Figure 3. Earthquake in Concepción, 1939. Source: Photographic file, Sr. Alejandro Mihovilovic. Municipal library Concepción

Think and wish the city

Committed to the national modernization, as part of the center-left coalition of Pedro Aguirre Cerda's government (1938-1941). The State assumes the complex economic situation facing in the Chilean cities during the 1930s and gradually undertakes the "*responsabilidades directas e indirectas en los planes de fomento y localización industrial*

y en la construcción masiva de vivienda infraestructuras y equipamiento comunitario” (Gurovich, 1985, p. 64).

Against this background, the dissemination of Rationalist’s concept brought by the urban planner Karl Brunner - take the existing city as context where it can be implemented by its interventions, without ascribing the formal principles of modern urbanism - were welcomed by Chilean architects as a condemn and criticism on the situation of the city during the season (figure 3).

In this favorable historical and political context, the opportunity of a catastrophic event as the earthquake in 1939. That has on the concretion of a shared desire for modernity; it has been implemented and materialized in a determining human piece in relation to the projection of the city thought, which is managed from the potentiality of the territory and the pre-existing structures that have defined his character.

Pre-existence of the territory

The vision of establishing a unifying element that recognizes the landscape conditions, it goes through joint structuring elements imposed by the founding City (damero) that underlie agreements in the territory, generating a daily journey, which consolidated a route that extends, and complements programmatic and functionally of this urban piece (figure 4).

Given the destructive capacity of the earthquake that left the city in ruins and thus the opportunity to create a new city with characteristics of a modern city, Concepcion became the focus of attraction of urban planners and architects of the time. The urban vacuum that left the earthquake mainly in the area of extension of the grid Foundation, next to the responsibility acquired by the State- understood as the transcription of the city intended and desired- are fertile ground for the development of a proposal for a city.

The diagonal reflects a shared desire for modernity that is reflected by the different proposals for the regulatory plan of 1940, which led to the reconstruction of the city. The new plans represent the first approaches to urban development and architecture for the city, establishing new forms of communication at both the territorial level as local, allowing for socialization and equipping of public spaces such as the support of the public sphere, a reflection of a society in the process of modernization and consolidation.⁸

7. *“direct and indirect responsibilities in industrial development and location plans and in the massive construction of housing, infrastructure and community facilities”* (Gurovich, 1985, p. 64).

8. Just as it happened, in the past, in Barcelona the Diagonal became, and even in current times, a structuring element of the city’s morphology, a container element of the city’s modernity and its contemporaneity, in the case of Barcelona the Avenida Diagonal has the history of the city, it is a marked line from its landscape and the skyline of its various architectural aesthetics and the features of the society that inhabits and has inhabited throughout the history of the city: *“The Diagonal Avenue is one of the most emblematic streets of Barcelona, has been a fundamental axis of economic and urban development of this important*

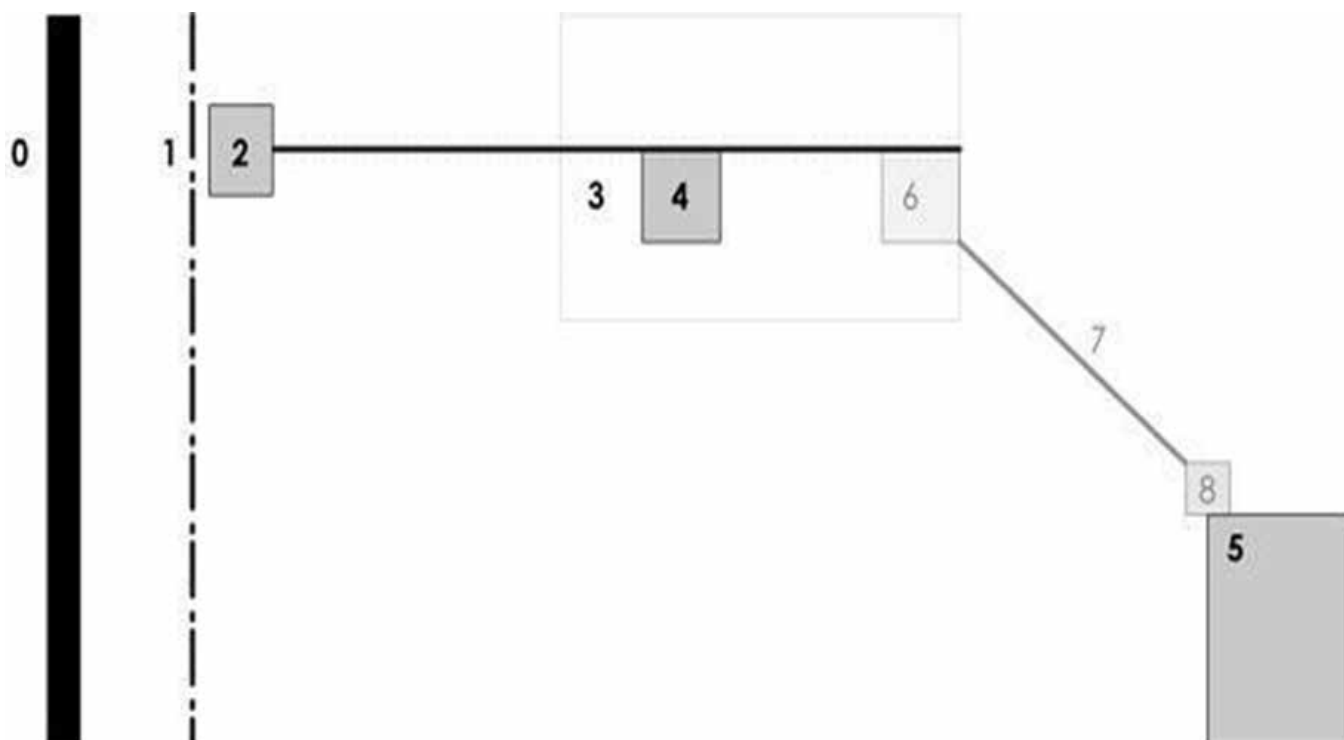


Figure 4. Pre-existence: 0. River Bío Bío; 1. Train Station; 2. Plaza España; 3. City Centre; 4. Plaza Independencia; 5. University of Concepcion. Diagonal Project: 6. Plaza O'Higgins (actually Plaza Tribunales); 7. Diagonal Avenue, Pedro Aguirre Cerda; 8. Plaza Perú. Source: Own elaboration.

Write about the city

1940 Regulatory Plan

It corresponds to the first instrument of planning and management of the city of Concepcion, and it is established based on a modern thought,

“... había llegado de Europa algunas innovaciones dadas a conocer principalmente por el arquitecto Karl Brunner en Chile. Estas ideas consistían en que la ciudad fuera más humana, higiénica, agradable y comprensible para el habitante. En una palabra configuraban lo “moderno” en la urbanística” (Mahias, 1986, p. 16)

For the elaboration of this plan, the Government creates the Corporate Reconstruction and Relief, directed by Luis Muñoz Maluscka¹⁰, entity that is responsible for the preparation

European city. A container of history, witness of the citizen's life from the nineteenth century to actuality. It has been a most important laboratory of urban design in which practice and experience have left a large inventory of architectural interventions and in public spaces, which have given a particular image to the city. The architecture, for example, gave it a singular elegance, its urban design extolled its landscape, the diverse equipment, and civics buildings, revitalize the movement and interaction of the population, its length and width awarded it the preferential hierarchy that makes it one of the main civic and mobility axes of Barcelona and its metropolitan area”. (Padilla-Llano, 2016).

9. *“... some innovations had arrived from Europe, made known mainly by the architect Karl Brunner in Chile. These ideas comprised making the city more humane, hygienic, pleasant and comprehensible for the inhabitant. In a word, they shaped the ‘modern’ in urban planning”* (Mahias, 1986, p. 16).

10. Luis Muñoz Maluscka, Chilean urban planner, had extensive work in areas devastated by the earthquake

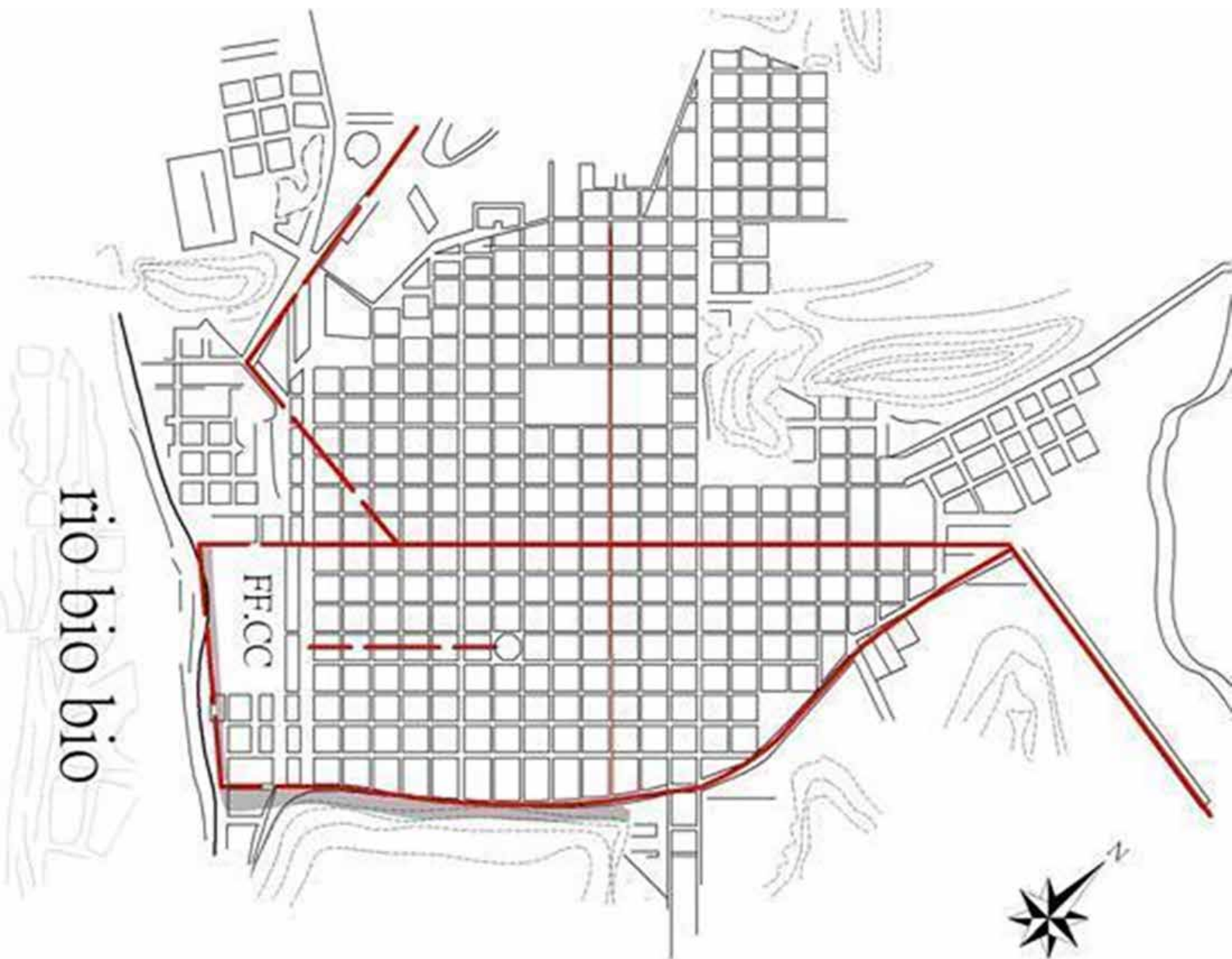


Figure 5. Proposal for the Regulatory Plan, 1940 Source: Own elaboration.

and execution of the technical and administrative aspects, which give effect to the plan. *“Se fijaron ideas para el ensanche de calles y avenidas, para la formación de diagonales y, en general, se estudiaron todos los problemas de la reconstrucción de la ciudad con los modernos principios del urbanismo¹¹.”* (Oliver and Zapatta, 1950, p. 385).

The Multiple diagonals that arise are an instrument of management that recognize and articulate one way or other relevant elements of the landscape of the city: railway equipment, access to the city, natural areas (Lakes, parks, etc.) utilities and city center (figure 5, 6 and 7).

in 1939, acting as the main creator of the flat controllers in 1940. Together with other professionals in charge he carried out more than 140 planes between 1940 and 1952 for the devastated zone, among which created the controller plane for the city of Concepcion.

11. *“Ideas for the widening of streets and avenues, for the formation of diagonals and, in general, all the problems of reconstructing the city according to modern town planning principles were studied”.* (Oliver and Zapatta, 1950, p. 385).

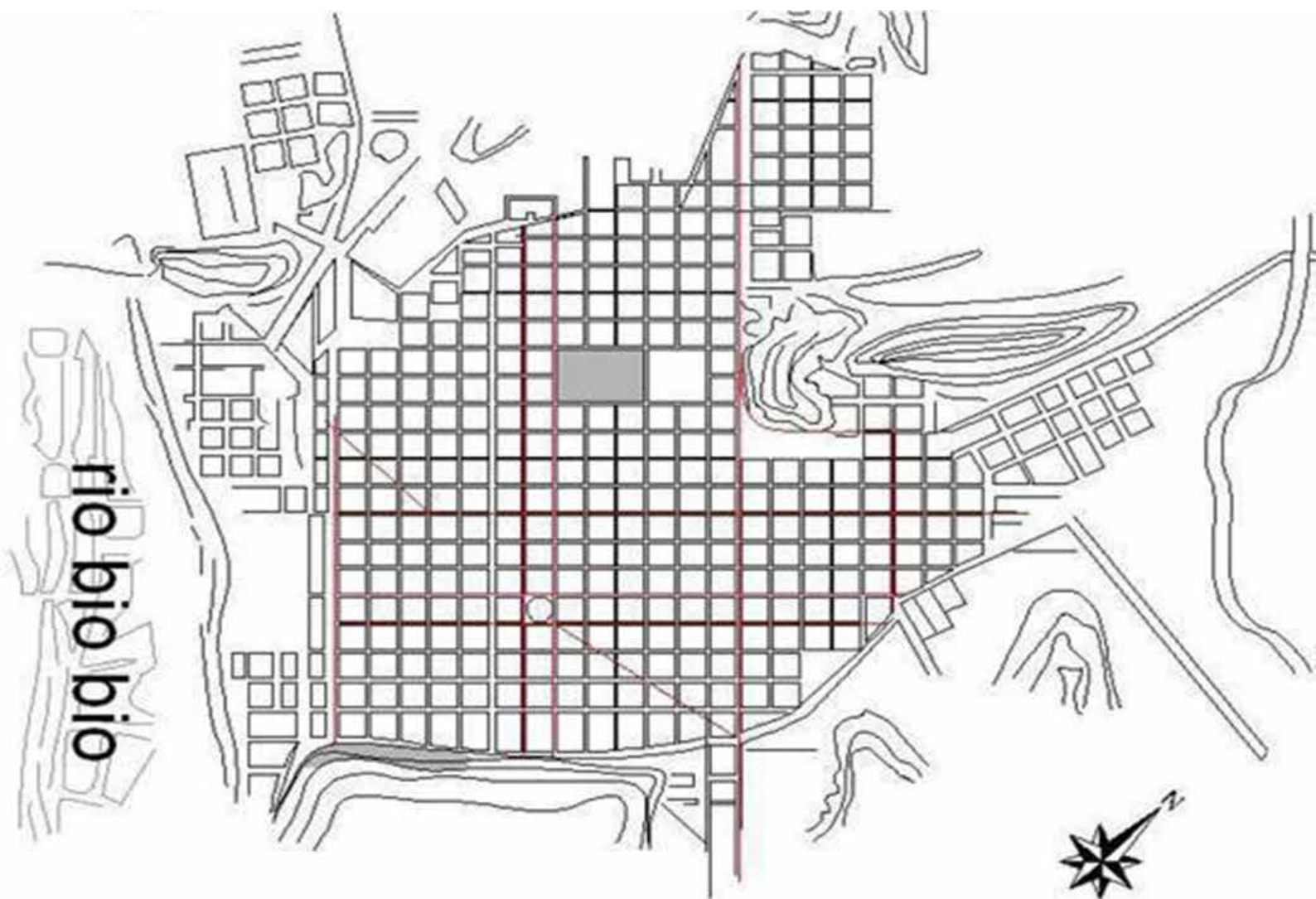


Figure 6. Proposal for the Regulatory Plan, 1940 Source: Own elaboration.

Plans structured on the basis of layouts, combining linear paths topped by squares or articulated with paths in another direction. This first plan physically demonstrated the major changes that transformed the public space in the centre of Concepción, generating spaces with a significant quality and generating history. (Perez and Espinoza, 2006, p. 37).

One of the main guidelines set out by the regulatory plan of 1940 (figure 8), is the consolidation of the urban center, integrating the Barros Arana's axis and the Universidad de Concepción as part of a daily path. Where the diagonal, which is acting as a joiner element, responds to the complementarity of both pre-existing areas.

Parallel to the approaches for the development of the diagonal, that reinforces the condition of centrality of Barros Arana shaft from the mid-40s and progressively, through commercial magnification of the center of Concepcion by the establishment of galleries and programmatic diversification both in the use of land and building. From modern thinking, the progression of galleries and the diagonals over time, this has been influenced by different currents or movements. Rationalization and contextualization of these

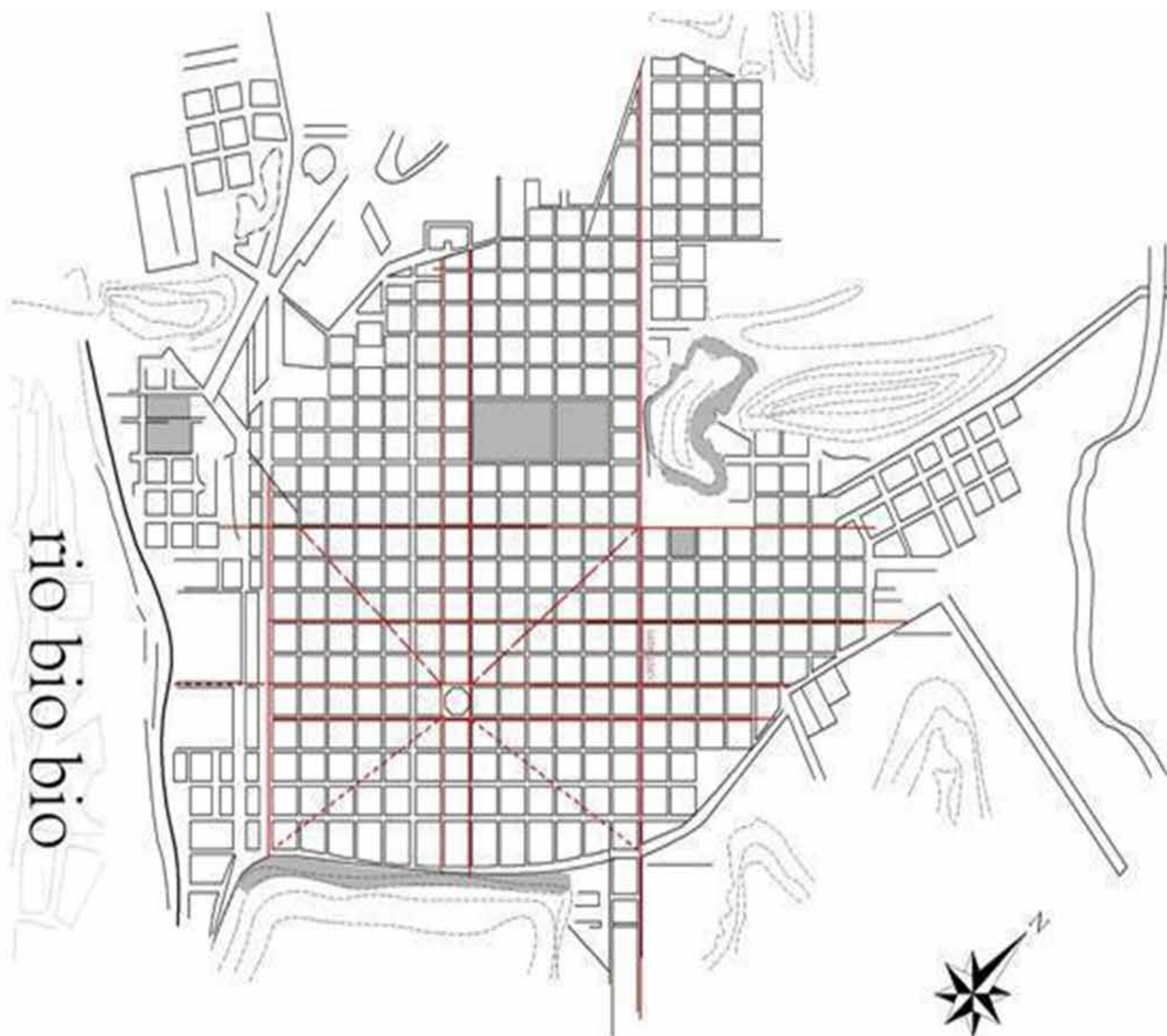


Figure 7. Proposal for the Regulatory Plan, 1940 . Source: Own elaboration.

currents according to the constraints of the landscape, which can be climatic, geographic, natural disasters, etc., redefine them as particular elements of the territory.

Pre-existence

The University of Concepcion, main educational stronghold in the South of Chile, which attracts a large audience to live in the city, it is concentrating an important part of its displacement. At that time, it manifests itself as the urban area of greater cultural value, which despite its proximity to the central city, the peripheral condition of its dependencies. It occurs due to the homogeneity of the 'damero fundacional' and its non-existent hierarchy in relation to the distribution of the structuring elements of the landscape.

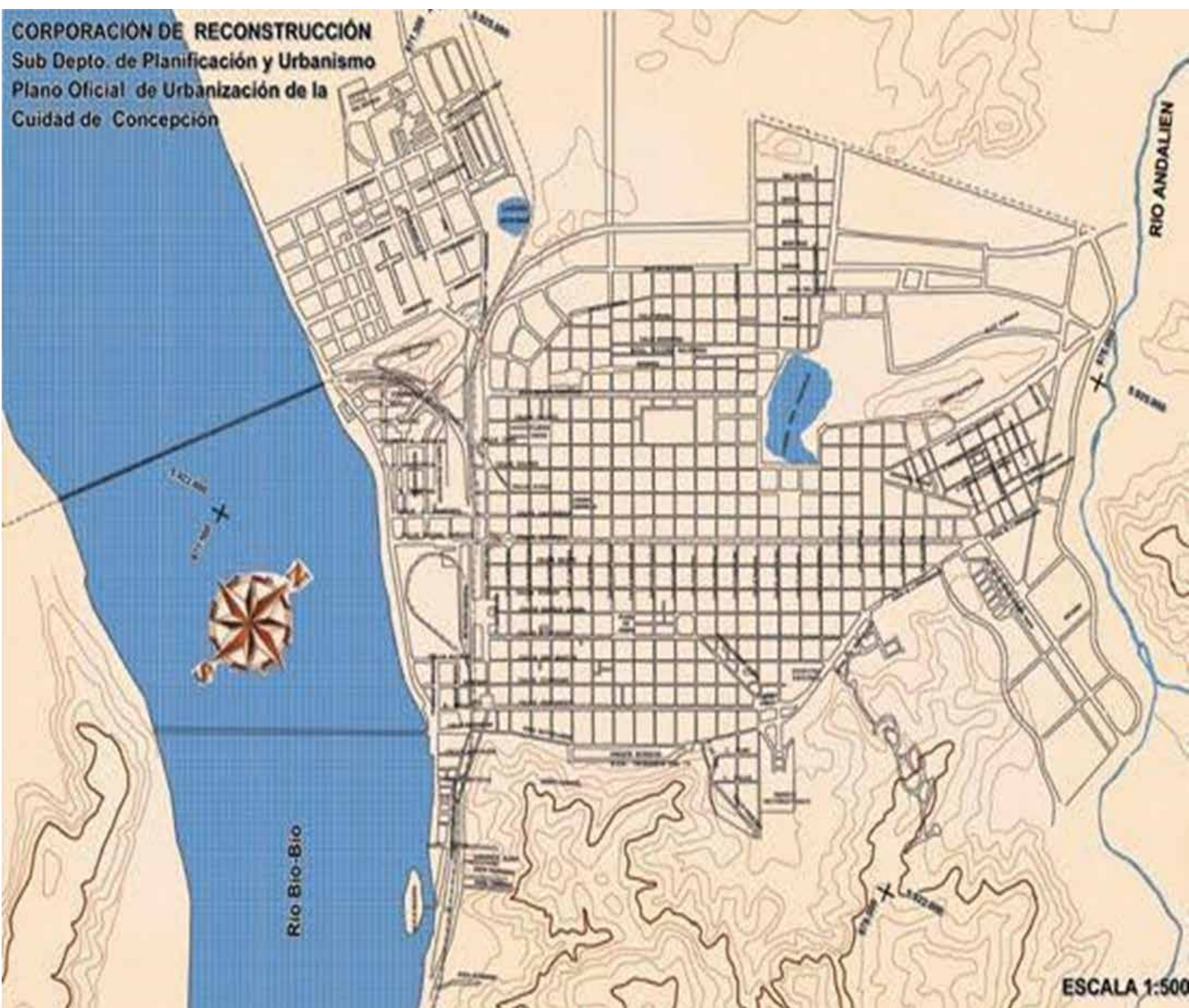


Figure 8. Regulatory Plan, 1940. Source: LEU, University of Bío Bío, Chile

Barros Arana's axis, it is the structuring axis of the center of the city and the 'damero fundacional', concentrates the main institutional buildings, shops and public services (railways, Plaza España, Plaza de Armas, Cathedral, shopping center, law courts).

Another element that determines the realization of the diagonal in the regulatory plan of 1940- as it happens mostly in disasters like these- It is the immediacy of responses to basic services, where the measures of planning that attend to long-term improvements are subject to economic determinant¹². In an interview in the newspaper "El Sur", the architect Schneider (1939) refers to

12. Expropriation for diagonals running costs could not be assumed by the Government, since the economic precariousness- product of the crisis in the 30s and the destructive magnitude of the earthquake - were little feasible and viable.

“La municipalidad debe tener como divisa las palabras: Facilidad y Rapidez y es de opinión de no trazar nuevas calles diagonales y tampoco de calles de mucho ancho, y para ello hace ver los inconvenientes que se presentan para la instalación de los servicios de agua potable, alcantarillado, luz eléctrica, a lo cual me remito agregar que hay edificios costosos que no han sufrido daño alguno por el terremoto y que se encontrarían en las líneas de trazado de dichas avenidas o calles, que tendrían que ser expropiadas y demolidas, lo que significa grandes gastos que me atrevo a calificar de superfluos. Por otra parte, la cantidad de millones de pesos que se gastaría en esas expropiaciones, demoliciones y nuevas construcciones se aprovecharía para ir en ayuda de los propietarios que apenas han quedado con el terreno, ya que sus construcciones se han perdido por completo. También debe tomarse en cuenta que la aprobación de los planos que se trazarían, demorará mucho tiempo y mientras tanto la ciudad seguiría en ruinas y los habitantes sin techo seguro para vivir¹³.” (Diario el Sur, 1939, p. 12)

Given the national and local realities, the diverse proposals planned for the city in 1940, they imply utopian ideas for its actual implementation, thus the project assumes its effectiveness. It is based on its structure from the existing reality, taking into consideration not only formal aspects but also economic, social and cultural aspects, which means, those who are closer to the Brunés’ proposals, in relation to modernity.

Guidelines of the regulatory plan for the avenue diagonal

Thereby, the regulatory plan of 1940 established details for the new avenue that contemplates general guidelines for the relations in the configuration of the street and its elements and its environment.

There is a formal criterion related to the section of the street in their vertical and horizontal relationship that responds to the proportion 1:3¹⁴. According to Allan Jacob (1993) this proportion is found within the parameters to produce a sense of defining the street,

13. *“The municipality should have as its motto the words: Ease and Rapidity and is of the opinion not to lay out new diagonal streets and neither of streets of much width, and for this it makes see the inconveniences that are presented for the installation of the services of drinking water, sewerage, electric light, to which I refer to add that there are expensive buildings that have suffered no damage by the earthquake and that would be found in the lines of layout of said avenues or streets, that would have to be expropriated and demolished, which means great expenses that I dare to qualify as superfluous. The millions of pesos that would be spent on these expropriations, demolitions and new constructions would help the owners who have barely been left with the land, since their constructions have been completely lost. It should also be taken into account that the approval of the plans that would be drawn up would take a long time, and in the meantime the city would remain in ruins and the inhabitants without a safe roof over their heads”.* (Diario el Sur, 1939, p. 12)

14. According to the Ordinance of local urbanization of Concepcion, which was published by the newspaper ‘El Sur’, on August 7, 1939, defines the following guidelines in reference to Diagonal Avenue: in the Art.3 point f) residential area of continuous construction. Third chapter. Art-15 of maximum and minimum heights 3.60, 6.20, 9.20. Eighth chapter. Art-42. The final width for streets and avenues. 17 Avenue of the University in its entirety: 24.50 meters.

which at the same time is consistent with rates set by Jim Mc Cluskey (1979), regarding the “good impression of recollection”. In turn, a continuous group and a homogeneous alignment like a consistent pattern propose the definition of the facade where different elements are identified in the definition of Post Street.

A way to obtain a part of articulation between the pre-existing sets this avenue to complete programmatically both situations, through complementary mixed-use activities: housing, student residence, trades, services (public, cultural, social). According to Augusto Rivera Parga¹⁵ (1940 p.8):

“Hay que recalcar la importancia social, económica y urbanística de esta gran avenida y que guarda relación directa con la importancia comercial, industrial, fabril y con el espíritu público que anima a los hijos de esta ciudad. El concurso de la diagonal que tiene sello característico de una obra de urbanización de primer orden, es el más grande en realizarse en el país y seguramente en Sudamérica.

En su aspecto externo presenta un conjunto imponente que subyuga a todos los visitantes. La diagonal consulta una parte comercial que está en los extremos y un sector residencial que está en el centro. No ha descuidado también el aspecto social y también contiene la construcción de un teatro, donde se realizará gran parte de la vida social y cultural de Concepción.... Se podrán hacer modificaciones en la disposición misma de los departamentos a condición de no cambiar la estructuración misma de la diagonal, estos estudios los harán los interesados en conjuntamente con los arquitectos encargados de la ejecución de la obra.^{16”}

The new urban part prolongs the condition of centrality and integrates an edge as the natural landscape to the city. All this darns the urban fabric by defining its borders with regards to the orthogonal plot, and ultimately becomes about visual and functional both the landscape and the reconstruction of the city.

Final configuration of this new Avenue motivated the need for a sectional plan (figure 9), which was called to contest in 1941 and was won by the architects Aranguis, Ovalle and Ugarte. *“El plan seccional era coherente con el plan regulador y acorde con la idea de modernidad que la sociedad penquista de la época tenía en relación con el nuevo urbanismo^{17”}* (Mahias, 1968, p. 16).

15. Vice President of Corporate Reconstruction and Relief.

16. *“The social, economic and urban importance of this great avenue must be emphasised, which is directly related to the commercial, industrial and manufacturing importance and to the public spirit that animates the children of this city. The competition for the diagonal, which bears the hallmark of a first-class urban development project, is the largest to be carried out in the country and certainly in South America.*

Externally, it presents an imposing ensemble that captivates all visitors.

The diagonal has a commercial part at both ends and a residential sector in the centre. It has not neglected the social aspect and also contains the construction of a theatre, where a large part of the social and cultural life of Concepción will take place..... Modifications can be made to the layout of the flats on condition that the structure of the diagonal itself is not changed; the interested parties with the architects in charge of the execution of the work will carry these studies out”. (El Sur newspaper, 1940, p. 8).

17. *“The sectional plan was coherent with the regulatory plan and under the idea of modernity that the Penquista society of the time had in relation to the new urbanism”* (Mahias, 1968, p. 16).



Figure 9. Proposal sectional plan (model). Source: Diario El Sur, 1940

The meaning of this avenue and its implementation in Concepción (province) comes to represent a range of high civility to the city, placing it to the levels of the capital, Santiago de Chile. On one hand, the Government came to rebuild a city in ruins; on the other hand, it provides a range of important urbanity, planning to introduce aspects of modernity, which on behalf of the society is reflected in high levels of ownership and identity.

A relevant contribution of the proposal on the definitions established by the regulatory plan, which are referred to the architectural object itself proposing a spandrel area as a response to inclement the climate of the city, establishing with the network of galleries from the center of the city a common language.

Materialization of the written city

In the materialization of the rebuilding process that we can interpret as ‘to do city’ or how J. Borja (2000) has suggested the reference to the urban regeneration of “hacer ciudad sobre la ciudad¹⁸”. It is not necessarily defined by orderly development, correlative and consistent with what was expected, desired or written, because the very nature of the events (earthquake) does not necessarily respond to the reason. However, it recognizes the existing value as the basis from which the required city is projected.

18. “making a city over the city itself.”

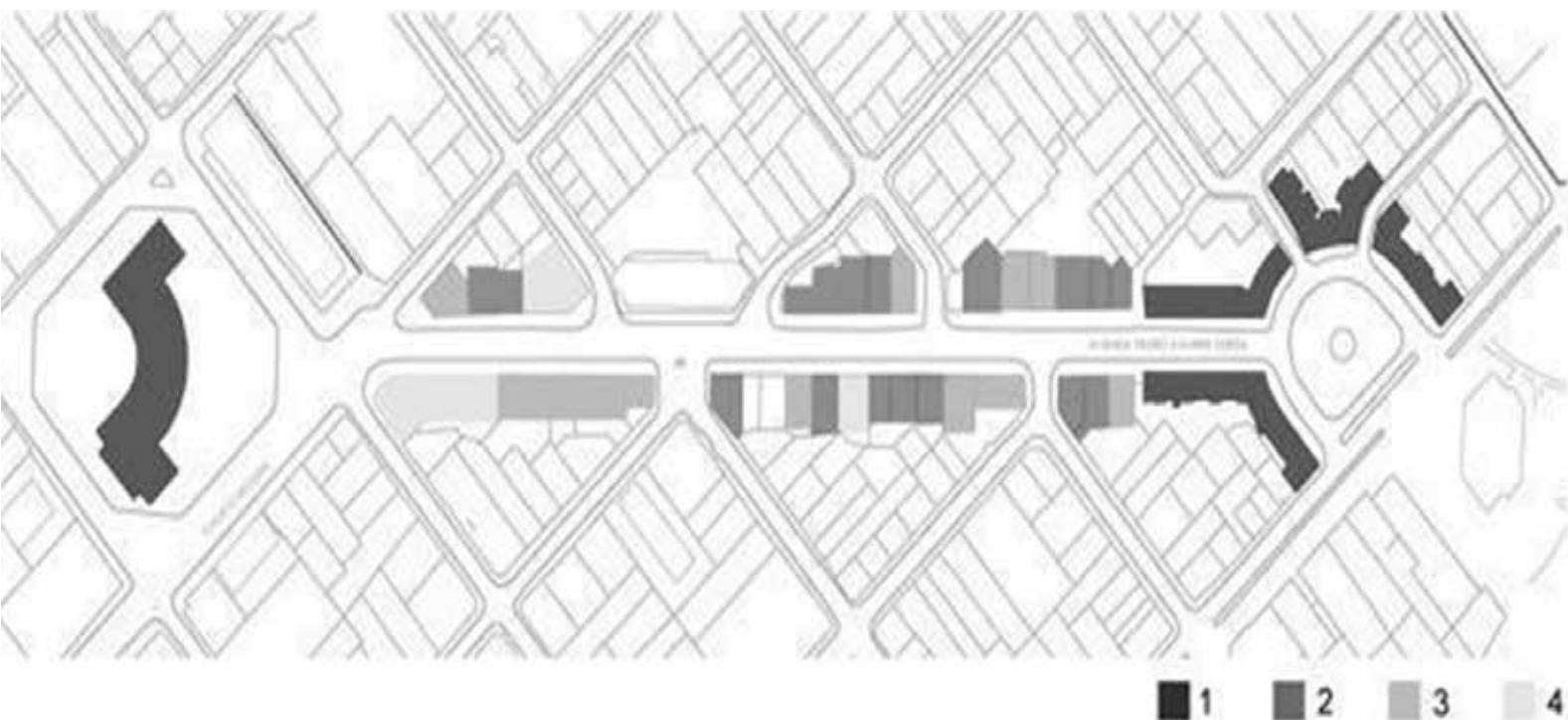


Figure 10. Materialization of the Diagonal Avenue: 1. 1940s; 2. 1950s; 3. 1960s; 1970s. Source: Own elaboration

The construction of an urban piece articulated and cohesive, in conclusion a system

“un conjunto de elementos heterogéneos (materiales o no) de distintas escalas, que están relacionadas entre sí, con una organización interna que intenta estratégicamente adaptarse a la complejidad del contexto, y que constituye un todo que no es explicable por la mera suma de partes¹⁹” (Montaner, 2008, p.11).

In this sense, even though it is contradictory to the issues raised, the materialization of this urban piece conceived and written, it is often the result of adhesion of various parts that are configured in time, as the resilient components respond to a unique structure, a situation that is replicable to the conformation of the diagonal Avenue (figure 10).

A linear building processes

Although the hypotenuse traced on the ‘damero’, the new diagonal Avenue generated volumetric and spatial articulation problems, which come to realize and concatenate a structure that enriches the travels of Concepcion by connecting two important poles of the city. The responsibility acquired by the State is specified for this case, with the construction of the extremes of the diagonal Avenue - points of contact with the pre-

19. “a set of heterogeneous elements (material or not) of different scales, which are related to each other, with an internal organisation that strategically tries to adapt to the complexity of the context, and which makes up a whole that cannot be explained by its mere parts” (Montaner, 2008, p.11).



Figure 11. Plaza Perú and University of Concepción, 1960s. Source: Photographic file, University of Bío Bío

existing – defining for both as a typology of the articulation: the plaza, where each of these responds to the logic that composes those particulars. In the Plaza Peru, the building sets a semicircular vacuum, making a powerful access to the University of Concepción (figure 11), in the Plaza O’Higgins (current Plaza Tribunales); the articulation is given through the building of Tribunales de Justicia, as an iconic element, as a visual model and as an ending of the Diagonal (figure 12).

The innervation of the initiative in the concretion of the diagonal towards the subsequent years, that it is reflected in the slow construction and definition of the pertaining Avenue in its central link, given that the State loses preponderance on the implementation of the project.

In a comparative analysis, which relates the realization of the public space and the materialization of the Diagonal, the regulatory plan in 1962 as in 1940 was characterized



Figure 12. Plaza Tribunales, 1960s. Source: Photographic file, Sr. Alejandro Mihovilovic. Municipal library Concepción

by a new disaster (earthquake, 1960). Both schemes have been fruitful in relation to its structural value to path level; as well as the generation of significant spaces with a meaningful burden for 'penquista' inhabitant identity.

The proposal of the regulatory plan in 1962 for the definition of the space, that passes to preserve the scale of the pedestrian and a better definition of the street. Situation that is empowered to the level of the use, establishing urban organizations (university campus, densification, and diversification of uses in the center and its commercial function) that intensify and diversify thereof, by stimulating its pedestrian character. Furthermore, for the definition of the profile of the street, that separates the vehicular traffic of the pedestrian moving the circulations and uses in different plates. A public commercial plate (1, 2, and 3 levels) where one lives the pedestrian scale; and above it, isolated and recessed towers by residences and offices (15 to 30 meters) complementing in a harmonious form in the scale of the city.

In the field of public space, unlike the issue raised in the previous regulatory plans, the regulatory plan of 1982 based his approach almost exclusively in the uses of soil, giving



Figure 13. Diagonal Avenue, late 1960s. Source: Photographic file, Sr. Alejandro Mihovilovic. Municipal library Concepción

consequently the stagnation in the evolution of the same. In addition, the absence of buildings that can qualify by the generation of losing its spatial, structural, and symbolic attributes; frequently is a reflection of decades of political and social conflict.

In reference to the materialization of the Diagonal project, progression between both periods associated with the plans mentioned above, maintained the compositional axis representation and its symbolic nature. Independent to the formal modifications of the elements associated with trends that marked its long process of construction (figure 13).

The Metropolitan Regulatory Plan of Concepción (PRMC) 2003 recognizes the existence of a structural network of public spaces; namely, takes up again its qualifying function in the configuration of the center of the city. Notwithstanding, its conception has an enfeeblement in the creation of the new spaces that can complement this structure, being one of the few significant operations the attempt of prolongation of the Barros Arana's axis and its articulation to the Bío Bío River (toward the opposite side of the city).



Figure 14. a) Old view of the Diagonal. Source: Heritage Archive, Bio Bio University and b) Wide view of the Diagonal path, 2022. Source: Own elaboration

The PRMC as of 2003 has been in force up to the present time. The aforementioned has undergone 11 modifications, which implement improvements to the public space in the metropolitan area through the “Regional Bio Development Strategy 2015-2030”, which includes guidelines, strategic objectives, and lines of action. Likewise, Decree 494, on the 15th amendment of the Regulatory Plan of the Municipality of Concepción, in force since 2021, expressly mentions the guidelines for public space in the center of the city of Concepción.

In this context, given the urban importance of Avenida Diagonal as the backbone and identity of the inhabitants of Concepción, the Avenida Diagonal Reform Plan was drawn up between the years 2012-2017, changing the image of the public space that it had maintained until then. The said plan was justified by the poor condition of the road, green areas, deterioration of its pavements, oversized vehicle lanes, poor lighting, and lack of adequate road furniture to support the diversity of uses of the avenue, in brief, a space that privileged the car to the detriment of pedestrians, despite a significant pedestrian flow.

In general terms, the reform aimed to recover the public space for the inhabitants, highlighting the heritage value, promoting the diversity of uses that add benefit to the whole, the importance of the pedestrian, as well as granting spaces of permanence along the route. In this way, the reform rectifies the change in the proportion of pedestrian mobility to increase the pedestrian space over vehicular space. The intervention was carried out in two stages, the first between 2012-2013 (on the side of Plaza Perú) and the second in 2015 (on the side of Tribunals) with financing from the municipality and the regional government.



Figure 15. . a) y b) Activities carried out on Avenida Diagonal, 2022. Source: Own elaboration. c) y d) and d) Views of social movements of 2019, Plaza Perú. Source: Yabel Arevalo.

The expansion of the pavement on the north side allows the recovery of spaces for people and pedestrian mobility to support the commerce associated with this area (supermarkets, bookshops). On the south side, the construction of the boulevard (a typology that accompanies the entire shaft) includes a large flow of pedestrians who move in large numbers along the road, to and from the university district. Space is given permanence in different sections, with the inclusion of distinctive street furniture for this area of the city. The use of terraces associated with the restaurant and bar trade is also encouraged, which increases in the section from the central area to Plaza Perú. The road space (Zone 30) is reduced to a two-lane roadway and a calming zone.

A special mention in the Reform plan is given to the improvement of green spaces and trees along the road. Tree planting is increased, and planters are inserted into the street furniture, which in turn serves as a separating element between the promenade and the

road. Lighting has been increased and renewed along the entire length of the road and universal accessibility requirements have been included to ensure pedestrian inclusion and safety.

Plaza Perú, like Avenida Diagonal, has undergone a progressive evolution over time. Although it retains its residential character, it is now the central point of leisure and commercial activities, surrounded by cafes, bars, restaurants, mini-markets, and bookshops. It is a meeting point for neighborhood organizations, artistic performances, relaxation, and recreation, as well as an important venue for social events.

As Halwachs used to say (Halwachs, 1997) “*A collective memory that finds in space a place of action and concretization that gives the collective that stamp that gives it meaning*”. The natural disasters that on a regular basis affect the country- that do not represent something innovative from the point of view of our historical geography- which have defined and redefined the urban landscape, stimulating the transformations and the resurgence of the memory that is contained in the main structures of identity in a reinterpretation of the same process.

Periodically reviewing the process of thinking / desire, write and realize, where it has allowed us to reflect on the meaning of public space in the construction of the city and its own memory, as a tool where “*memory is nothing more than the representation of an irretrievable absence*” (Ricoeur, 2004). Even when the constant is the reconstruction, from this space is exemplified in Pedro Aguirre Cerda’s diagonal avenue. It maintains its structural character and identity as part of a daily round. Independent of the urban project, both the immediacy of reconstruction operations, and the different transformations, are arising from the interventions of urban reconstruction, which leads us finally to recognize and reconsider the value of a heritage, common and quotidian.

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