

# Social housing policies under changing framework conditions in Santiago de Chile

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Social housing in Chile and its capital Santiago has a chequered history. After the government of Salvador Allende (1970–1973), when emergency quarters were constructed in great numbers and illegal land occupation was tolerated or even fostered, the military government (1973–1989) started with slum clearance and constructed simple family homes, partly with the labour of the future owners, or multi-occupancy houses. The squatter settlements were almost completely demolished. The policy of social housing was continued by the following democratic administrations. It must be noted that the plots made available for social housing are found in ever more peripheral locations and concentrated in poorer communities. While absolute and extreme poverty rates have declined, a new poverty has arisen, characterized by difficult living conditions, crime and drug abuse.

**Keywords:** social housing, policy, segregation, new poverty, Santiago de Chile

## Soziale Wohnbaupolitik unter wechselnden Rahmenbedingungen in Santiago de Chile

Der soziale Wohnungsbau in Chile und seiner Hauptstadt Santiago hat eine wechselvolle Geschichte. Nach der Regierungszeit von Salvador Allende (1970–1973), in der in großen Umfang Notquartiere errichtet wurden und illegale Grundstücksbesetzungen von Landlosen geduldet oder sogar gefördert wurden, setzte mit der Militärregierung (1973–1989) eine rasche Beseitigung der Squattersiedlungen ein, auf deren Territorien einfache Eigenheime, teils im Selbstbau durch die späteren Bewohner, teils als Mehrfamilienhäuser errichtet wurden. Die Hüttenviertel wurden nahezu vollständig beseitigt. Die Politik des Sozialbaus setzte sich auch unter den folgenden demokratischen Regierungen fort. Dabei ist zu beobachten, dass sich die für den sozialen Wohnungsbau zur Verfügung gestellten Flächen in immer entfernterer Lage vom Stadtzentrum befinden und sich in den ärmeren Stadtgemeinden konzentrieren. Während die absolute und extreme Armut auf geringe Raten zurückgegangen ist, gibt es eine „neue Armut“, die durch erschwerte Lebensbedingungen, Kriminalität und Drogenkonsum gekennzeichnet ist.

## Vivienda Social bajo diferentes regímenes políticos en Santiago de Chile

La vivienda social en Chile y en su capital Santiago, ha tenido una historia en constante evolución. Tras el gobierno de Salvador Allende (1970–1973), en el cual una serie de viviendas de emergencia fueron construidas y las ocupaciones ilegales de terrenos fueron toleradas o incluso impulsadas; el gobierno militar (1973–1989) inició un programa de saneamiento y construcción de viviendas unifamiliares en modalidad de autoconstrucción o bloques de viviendas plurifamiliares. Con ello los campamentos de viviendas irregulares disminuyeron considerablemente. La política de vivienda social fue continuada por los gobiernos democráticos siguientes. Es posible observar como la construcción de viviendas sociales se realizó mayormente en locaciones periféricas de la ciudad y mayormente en comunas con altos índices de pobreza. Mientras la absoluta y extrema pobreza declinó, emergió una “nueva pobreza” caracterizada por duras condiciones de vida, criminalidad y consumo de drogas.

# 1 Introduction

Despite extensive literature that has placed the analytical attention on macro-sociological forces – like neo-liberal reforms and ideological settings – to explain and give meaning to the recent reproduction of Santiago's urban landscape (De Mattos, 1996, 1998, 1999; Rodríguez & Winchester, 2001; Romero & Toledo 1998), urban studies in Chile need to advance comprehensive socio-spatial and empirically based views, acknowledging that urban development processes are not deterministically driven by structural forces. Indeed, as a social product, the socio-spatial layout of cities represents the outcome of the practice of distinct urban agents defending particular agendas.

Many studies on the socio-spatial effects of housing policies in recent decades have focused on the continuity of the policies launched by the military government in the 1980s (Nickel-Gemmeke 1991; Sugranyes and Rodríguez 2005; Tokman 2006). Other researchers have argued that market-based social housing policies implemented during the authoritarian regime (1973–1990) have replicated the effects of previous policies implemented under governments that gave the state and its agents an active role in urban planning decisions (Petermann 2006; Tokman 2006). At the micro-level, several studies have emphasized the deficiencies in the construction regulations issued under formal democratic ruling (1990–2006), along with the segregation of poor families in large housing complexes (Sugranyes & Rodríguez 2005; Tironi 2001). These studies are limited in terms of the period considered and the empirical data used. Hence there is a need to undertake rigorous empirical studies on a metropolitan scale in longer spatiotemporal frames. In this paper we pay particular attention to the macro-sociological context framing social housing policies and their consequence for the socio-spatial layout of Santiago between 1950 and the present.

Social housing policies implemented in Latin America since the 1950s were deeply influenced by the Organization of American States (OAS), which defined the framework for articulating public policies, especially encouraging the self-construction of housing for poor families (Hidalgo 2000; Hidalgo et al. 2008). Following Bravo (1996), social housing can be understood as planned units designed to reduce the exchange value by limiting the basic services provided and the amenities of the surrounding living space. To implement these programmes, the Chilean state has institutionalized a variety of governmental units and applied a range of planning instruments, including construction regulation, minimum hygiene requirements and land-use regulations. Moreover, Chile was the first Latin-American country that implemented a vast plan of demand-based subsidies in the late 1970s as the basic instrument to resolve housing issues, triggering a line of research that has analysed the positive and negative impacts produced by its application in an urban context (see discussions in Gilbert 2000, 2004).

One of the principle claims sustaining this paper is that policy decisions taken by the Chilean state apparatus have played a major role in transforming the physical and social layout of cities. Moreover, the central state, as an active urban developer,

represented by the agency of a range of public officials, has responded differently across time and space to housing needs and infrastructure problems. We argue that although public policies have been relative effective in diminishing housing deficits, they have produced and reproduced a landscape characterized by high levels of social segregation and the development of functional clusters that have fragmented or partitioned the city (see Borsdorf & Hidalgo 2008a and collections of studies in Cáceres & Sabatini 2004).

The externalities of the action of the Chilean state in terms of social segregation and physical partitioning are studied here by examining some key policies and the location of social housing initiatives. To accomplish this task we analysed formal laws and regulations, governmental programmes and socio-spatial information derived from governmental sources. The empirical analysis considered the construction of a data base depicting the location and construction period of housing solutions between 1970 and 2004. As social housing projects we consider those initiatives promoted by the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism (MINVU) for the construction of housing units with an exchange value under US\$ 5,000 (current price) and with a maximum constructed surface of 45 square meters. These units could be up to four storeys high or individual solutions constructed in a linear pattern.

To obtain the basic information we examined the annual reports of MINVU and put together a listing of residential complexes constructed each year in the different municipalities of the Metropolitan Region of Santiago. Once constructed, each project was located in a data based map. If the necessary information to locate the project was not provided in MINVU's annual reports, a research team visited each project and located it using a Geographical Positional System (GPS). To analyse the information across time and space, a Geographical Information System (GIS) was utilized. To relate housing solutions provided by the central state to the socio-economic evolution within the Metropolitan Region of Santiago we used information provided by secondary sources such as surveys conducted by the Ministry of National Planning (MIDEPLAN). We made use of an Index of Social Development (Borsdorf & Hidalgo 2008b) to map the socio-economic status of each local government (municipality) of the Metropolitan Region of Santiago. The variable used to estimate the socio-economic status measured the availability of commodities.

This paper is organized as follows. In the next section we lay down our understanding of the functioning of the state in relation to society and space. Then we give a brief descriptive analysis of housing policies implemented in Chile. Section 4 offers an empirical analysis of the spatial dimension of housing policies, paying particular attention to the degree to which the action of the state in the post-dictatorship period (1990–present) has been effective in modifying previous urban trends that had negative social and urban impacts. In section 5 we discuss the main results of this paper, emphasizing that current policies have mainly reinforced trends that were already consolidated in the 1950s.

## 2 The state – society space nexus

Housing policies are an integral part of the state-society relationship. For Giddens (1984) the social system – defined as a complex web of prescriptions – sets up a number of possibilities and constraints for individual agents, including those representing the interest of the state. The recursive relation between the broader social system and individuals commanding the social construction of cities changes over time. While certain actions might appear as expressions of the autonomy of the self or of a given organization, many, maybe most, decisions and social performances are influenced – but not determined – by forces beyond the direct control of policy-making actors. Furthermore, geographers and other social scientists have made the point that social relations do not occur in a vacuum; they are enmeshed in spatial relations (Gregory & Urry 1985).

We conceive the action of the state not as a result of the deterministic influence of macro-structures but as a result of a set of localized socio-spatial practices and policies, as the means through which certain interests attempt to control urban outcomes. Foucault (1982, 1991) refers to the set of procedures, reflections, calculations, strategies and tactics deployed by actors as ‘technologies of government’ or ‘governmentalities’, through which actors exercise power and produce knowledge and rules, making society amenable to rational control. Housing policies in particular can be seen as a form of social control, aimed at reducing the dangers of civil unrest while providing political and economic elites with upscale environments. In Chile a Foucauldian framework has been deployed to investigate the interests embedded in specific urban redevelopment projects (Zunino 2005, 2006).

One of the analytical consequences of this approach is that the attention moves from the preconditions of action to the concrete mechanisms (like urban policies) that generate order and predictability in defined situations. In an urban setting, for instance, a non-Foucauldian approach to power might claim that a given land use regulatory instrument possesses power, say ‘power of a plan’ (Healey 1995). From Foucault’s perspective, a plan represents a particular form of political technology embedded in power relations, the application of which produces or re-produces power (see also Bevir 1999; MacKinnon 2000; McGuirk 2000).

This paper’s methodological entry point are the housing policies implemented in recent decades in Santiago by the Chilean state, questioning how they intermesh with the socio-spatial outcomes in Santiago. We acknowledge that this work reduces the inquiry of spatial formation to the action of the central state apparatus in regard to social housing, leaving aside, for the moment, a more detailed analysis of other social practices unfolding at different levels of analysis. In particular, this paper does not consider the role of private initiatives. Such issues are currently studied in a separate large-scale project (see Hidalgo et al. 2005). Nevertheless, a study like the one we offer here is wanting, given that much of the literature on urban processes has placed the accent on broader social conditions affecting urban outcomes while ignoring the role of concrete social and political practices. As a consequence, the influ-

ence of housing policies on the socio-spatial structure has received little attention. A framework to conduct detailed studies on governmental arrangements representing particular power configuration can be found in Zunino (2002, 2005, 2006). This paper represents a continuation of this line of inquiry.

### 3 One century of housing policies in Santiago

One of the first regulations in relation to popular housing issued in Latin America was the Chilean 'Law for Workers' Housing' of 1906. This legislation encouraged the construction of low-cost housing units through direct governmental intervention. The main effect was the demolition of *conventillos*, small but crowded low-income residential complexes built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the core of the city. This policy was enacted during a period of civil unrest. The main socio-spatial consequence was the gradual expansion of the urban boundary as poor families migrated from the city centre to peripheral locations on the southern, eastern and northern fringes of Santiago. At the same time, land rents in central areas rose significantly, triggering an invasion of middle-class families who replaced lower-income families. The upper class tended to migrate to the eastern edge of the city, creating what is known as the 'high-income cone'.

The Chilean state steadily acquired more responsibilities in regard to social housing. It intervened by establishing construction standards, encouraging private initiatives, regulating rents, attempting to prevent the negative effects of speculation, promoting the creation of housing associations and by directly constructing new housing complexes for those in need (Hidalgo 1999). The sheer scope of the measures, along with the need for intra-governmental coordination, led the government in 1936 to create the Popular Housing General Fund, which played a major role until 1952, when a formal institution was created to deal with housing needs. Between 1936 and 1952 the fund administered the construction of 43,410 units. These urban interventions are linked to a modernist concept that favoured the construction of large residential complexes for poor families on the periphery. In this period the first signs of large-scale spatial segregation appeared. Inhabitants of these complexes lived in very deprived conditions, lacking even minimal infrastructure and having to take long journeys to their work place.

In the 1950s the Housing Corporation (CORVI) was created in connection with a thorough reengineering of the Chilean public administration, promoted by governmental coalitions that attempted to strengthen state interventions in housing policies. Innovations included the rationalization of public resources and controlling public expenditure, along with optimizing and coordinating a variety of public offices related to housing issues. CORVI took on the challenge of implementing urbanization programmes and establishing procedures for the construction and reconstruction of neighbourhoods as framed in the Land Use Plans developed by the Ministry of Public Works (see Godoy 1972).

Similarly to the Brazilian case, the creation of a powerful public agency relates to the operation of a developmental state, which promoted policies that had the effect of creating a strong national industrial sector. This process went hand in hand with rural to urban migration, which impacted heavily on the creation of informal / illegal settlements on the periphery of the main cities. At the same time that CORVI took institutional shape, the Ministry of Public Works put in place the Housing Plan of 1953; a basic strategy to articulate public-private collaboration in an effort to meet increasing housing needs. During this period measures were taken to increase the role of private agents in housing policies to face the economic crisis of the 1950s. Formally the Housing Plan was realized in a number of regulatory and economic norms. This initiative established a number of tax incentives to generate the conditions for private investment and motivate auto-construction efforts for low-income families as well as for those who had achieved a minimum economic capacity (Haramoto 1983). Under these circumstances, peripheral locations were the site that offered the best condition for capital accumulation and large urban complexes were constructed. These privately-driven initiatives intermeshed with informal settlements built to cope with the rural-urban migration, a situation that contributed to shaping Santiago's urban landscape. Therefore the agents of the state played a major role in triggering segregation, which finds its spatial expression in the social fragmentation of Santiago's metropolitan region and the exclusion of a large proportion of the population from the consolidated and modern city. The city boundary expanded considerably during the 1950s and 1960s.

Responding to a more socially-driven political agenda, the main measure taken in the 1960s was the creation of the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism, MINVU (República de Chile 1965). This institution took command of Chile's urban policy and the coordination of diverse institutions with the power to enact norms related to housing issues. Within this framework, the national authority mandated MINVU to guide and control housing programmes, distribute public resources for the construction of affordable housing, plan the urban development and provide neighbourhoods with social infrastructure and sanitary facilities. In the midst of the political turmoil of late 1960s, urban social movements became major players in pressing authorities for solutions. During those years housing demand increased due to two interrelated factors: (a) natural population growth and (b) rural to urban migration. Although the state continued with its approach to the housing problem, the social and political context demanded rapid solutions, as the number of illegal occupations of urban and peri-urban areas increased rapidly. In 1970 a left-wing Marxist coalition of political parties took control of the formal state (the Popular Unit). One of the leading principles for this coalition was that a living space was not a privilege but a right for all people. Under this approach, the state attempted to play a direct role in the provision of housing for low-income families. Illegal occupations of parcels of land acquired new characteristics and dynamism. Supported by some political parties of the governing coalition, fractions of the social movement formed paramilitary organizations to confront the capitalist system and defend the revolution initiated



under the Popular Unit (1970–1973). Illegal occupations were particularly encouraged on the outer ring of the city to create ‘workers’ rings’ to help control spatial dynamics and, eventually, defend the government against reactionary forces (Borsdorf 1980).

The military coup of 1973 had impacts on the society as a whole, instituting new forms of society-individual interrelations. The neoliberal revolution initiated by general Pinochet required a radical transformation of the economic and social structure of the country, not simply the suppression of parliamentary institutions and civil liberties. The goal was to found a new society based on the rule of the market, introducing scientific methodology and rigorous analytical practices and professional ethos (Cavarozzi 1992). Indeed, neo-liberalisms rejects the idea that ‘true economics’ is value-based, reasserting the role of positive science, a process that paralleled the predominance of economic science in public life and elevated the economists to an unquestionable position of intellectual and political privilege within society (Valdés 1995; see also E. Silva 1996; P. Silva 1998)

One of the first measures taken by the military government was to radically renovate the administrative structure of the country, which led to a reorganization of MINVU. In 1978 a housing policy based on demand-based subsidies was the chosen alternative for tackling the immediate needs of the poorer population. This policy meant the construction of 122,078 units in the period 1978–1995 alone. This housing solution was based on establishing minimum standards for affordable housing defined for bathroom, kitchen, living room and bedroom. These standards constituted the basis for designing housing solutions during the 1990s. Homogenized social housing complexes became a symbol of Chile’s main urban centres in the 1980s and have remained largely unchallenged in post-military Chile (Hidalgo 1997a, 1997b).

In the political sphere, the 1990s marked the reinstitution of formal democratic ruling. For Silva (1995) the military government has left an enduring legacy of a technocratic political style, the ‘management of things’ being the hallmark of the new democratic governments. Technocrats now focused on political demobilization and elite politics as the means to consolidate democracy, stressing expert management of economic policy instruments as a fundamental tool for consolidating democracy and achieving social equity.

Consequently, housing programmes continued the trend established during the last phases of the military government, but significantly increased the number of housing solutions realized. At present, some initiatives are being put forward to integrate the construction of affordable housing complexes within the overall functioning of the urban system; that is a more comprehensive approach to urban and social planning. However, plans for the repopulation of Santiago’s urban core remained marginal, as social housing complexes continue to be located in peripheral municipalities. Auto-construction programmes have also continued, constituting one of the programmatic bases of the coalition of parties now in power.

#### 4 The socio-spatial dimension of housing policies

One main critique made of the 1980s and 1990s urban policies is their effect on increasing the levels of social segregation. Figure 1 shows the location of affordable housing units constructed for poor families in four time periods: 1970–1980, 1980–1990, 1990–2000, 1990–2000.

The figure shows how the actions of the Chilean state apparatus through the intervention of CORVI and MINVU has reinforced the pattern established in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, social housing has traditionally been located on the fringe of urban areas, taking advantage of low-cost land and the fact that the state owns significant portions of land. In Chile, rather than urbanizing areas within the consolidated urban space, urban policies are replicating the historical process put in motion since the implementation of first housing policies.

Table 1 shows the total number of units constructed between 1978 and 2002 at municipal level, subdivided into periods of six years. For the period as a whole, the municipalities receiving the higher number of affordable housing units were all located on the periphery: Puente Alto (15.58%), La Pintana (11.54%), San Bernardo (9.11%), La Florida (8.07%), Maipú (6.89%), Pudahuel (6.11%), Renca (5.83%),

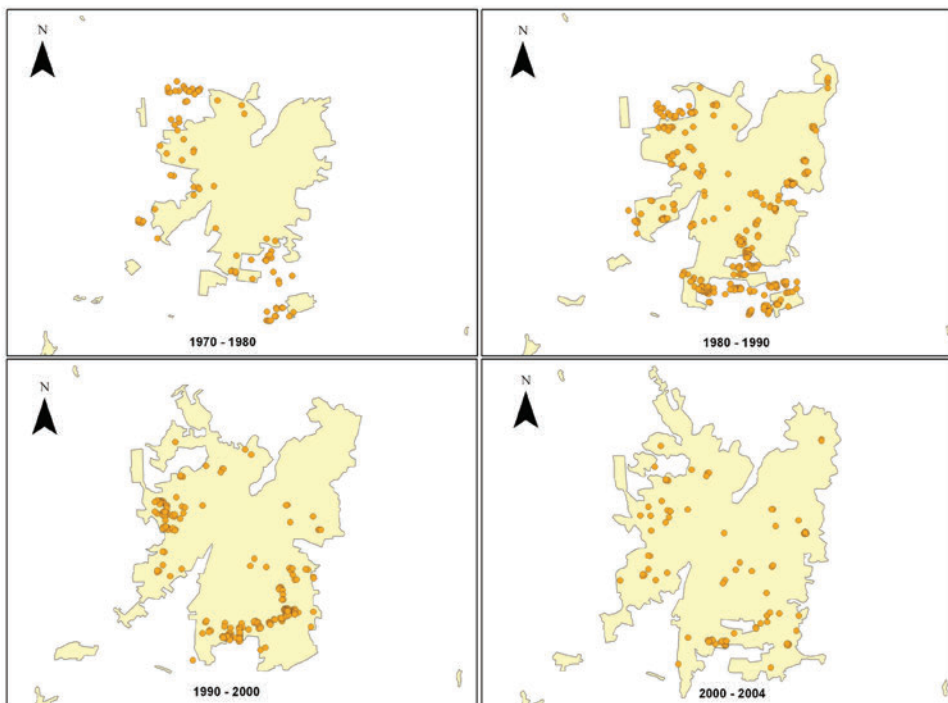


Fig. 1: Social housing complexes built between 1960 and 2004. Compiled by the authors, cartography: Gastón Aliaga



Table 1: Social housing construction in Greater Santiago 1979–2002

Municipality / year	1979 –1983	%	1984 –1989	%	1990 –1995	%	1996 –2002	%	Total	%
Puente Alto	2,674	7.05	5,740	8.34	12,831	23.22	9,812	26.26	31,057	15.58
La Pintana	4,179	11.02	9,283	13.49	7,103	12.85	2,439	6.53	23,004	11.54
San Bernardo	645	1.7	6,795	9.88	2,994	5.42	7,734	20.7	18,168	9.11
La Florida	2,893	7.63	11,579	16.83	1,608	2.91	0	0	16,080	8.07
Maipú	2,342	6.18	2,544	3.7	5,134	9.29	3,725	9.97	13,745	6.89
Pudahuel	1,892	4.99	4,992	7.26	4,748	8.59	542	1.45	12,174	6.11
Renca	1,868	4.93	6,942	10.09	652	1.18	2,166	5.8	11,628	5.83
El Bosque	2,781	7.34	4,162	6.05	3,358	6.08	463	1.24	10,764	5.4
Peñalolén	1,966	5.19	1,811	2.63	4,283	7.75	1,114	2.98	9,174	4.6
Quilicura	565	1.49	738	1.07	5,042	9.12	1,660	4.44	8,005	4.02
La Granja	4,030	10.63	1,853	2.69	1,109	2.01	156	0.42	7,148	3.59
Lo Prado	1,810	4.77	1,637	2.38	996	1.8	1,009	2.7	5,452	2.73
Macul	3,052	8.05	1,368	1.99	144	0.26	330	0.88	4,894	2.45
Cerrillos	454	1.2	0	0	0	0	3,347	8.96	3,801	1.91
Cerro Navia	0	0	2,970	4.32	140	0.25	646	1.73	3,756	1.88
Lo Barnechea	148	0.39	1,670	2.43	1,250	2.26	582	1.56	3,650	1.83
San Ramón	2,038	5.38	806	1.17	480	0.87	266	0.71	3,590	1.8
Conchalí	1,908	5.03	572	0.83	0	0	60	0.16	2,540	1.27
Lo Espejo	0	0	275	0.4	1,608	2.91	75	0.2	1,958	0.98
Estación Central	0	0	1,470	2.14	136	0.25	0	0	1,606	0.81
Las Condes	396	1.04	324	0.47	0	0	537	1.44	1,257	0.63
P. Aguirre Cerda	0	0	0	0	852	1.54	0	0	852	0.43
Huechuraba	0	0	0	0	429	0.78	279	0.75	708	0.36
Santiago	513	1.35	0	0	178	0.32	0	0	691	0.35
La Reina	334	0.88	263	0.38	0	0	0	0	597	0.3
San Joaquín	112	0.3	422	0.61	0	0	60	0.16	594	0.3
La Cisterna	0	0	588	0.85	0	0	0	0	588	0.29
Ñuñoa	393	1.04	0	0	129	0.23	0	0	522	0.26
Providencia	492	1.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	492	0.25
Recoleta	0	0	0	0	64	0.12	367	0.98	431	0.22
San Miguel	338	0.89	0	0	0	0	0	0	338	0.17
Quinta Normal	85	0.22	0	0	0	0	0	0	85	0.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,908</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>68,804</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55,268</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>37,369</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>199,349</b>	<b>100</b>

El Bosque (5.4%), Peñalolén (4.6%), Quilicura (4.02%) and La Granja (3.59%). Within the boundaries of these 11 peripheral municipalities, 80.7% of the total number of social units was constructed. In other words, of the 34 municipalities comprising Greater Santiago, 11 municipalities contain more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the housing solutions offered in the last 24 years. Spatially this has meant concentrating populations of similar socio-economic background, often functionally linked to the city but socially isolated and lacking basic urban infrastructure. The same table illustrates that the number of housing solutions realized in Greater Santiago fell progressively between 1984 and 2002; from 64,804 units between 1984–1989 to 37,369 units between 1996 and 2002. This can be related to decreasing housing demand due to the apparent success of the housing strategy, along with the increasing participation of the private sector in offering housing solutions.

Based on the information shown on figure 1 it can be argued that the allocation of affordable housing units on the fringe of the city has led to an uncontrolled horizontal extension of the urbanized area. The data in table 2 show that in the aforementioned 11 municipalities 3,467 units were built between 1978 and 1983, 5,575 between 1984 and 1989, 10,628 between 1990 and 1995, and 9,076 between 1996 and 2002.

Most analysts of spatial and social effects of the state action on social housing described in the current literature have concentrated on the negative aspects. The emerging city structure has been related to the consolidation of social 'ghettos' characterized by progressive physical deterioration, lack of urban infrastructure (schools, health facilities, community centres, etc.), lack and deterioration of open space, threats to safety and the presence of undeveloped urban space (see Ducci 1997; Sabatini 2000; Sabatini et al. 2001).

In a similar vein, the minimum standard of the solutions offered to poor families – in terms of size and services – is not considered adequate to maintain the traditional life cycle of Chilean families or to accommodate new family members. These negative externalities have been referred to as the "dark side of the housing policy in Chile" (Ducci 1997). Although it could be argued that housing policies have advanced in resolving the most immediate aspect of the problem (lack of living space), there still remains controversy about the impacts on the quality of life of people. In fact, poor families now located on the periphery face a variety of problems ranging from inadequate levels of services to low-quality housing that is rapidly deteriorating.

As regards the effects of the spatial concentration of housing, some investigators have noted that state policies have exacerbated social segregation, disintegrating personal links among individuals (e.g. Sabatini et al. 2001). Precisely in poor sectors where housing has been provided by the state, a subculture of poverty and disintegration seems to reign. In this context Chilean sociologist Sabatini points out that although objective indicators might indicate the opposite, poor families 'favoured' by governmental actions have been the segment of the population most negatively affected by the neoliberal reforms, giving birth to a 'new poverty'. This cannot be cor-

roborated by official statistics, which document a steady decline of the poverty and extreme poverty rates in quantitative terms since the 1980s, but can be observed in a qualitative way and in the widening income gap between upper and lower classes.

Recent studies following the line of investigation proposed by Sabatini (2000) claim that the neighbourhoods where social housing is concentrated are the physical manifestation of what he calls the 'new poverty'. At the same time it has been emphasized that the municipalities with the most newly constructed social housing have experienced a positive dynamism in terms of land prices and of the total square feet constructed. However, these indicators do not immediately translate into benefits for poor families living in these sectors. In fact, housing complexes constructed under the guidance of governmental programmes are reproducing negative social pathologies such as crime, drug abuse and high truancy rates (Tironi 2003; Rodríguez & Winchester 2001; Sugranyes 2005).

One important element complementing these assertions is the fact that the municipalities with the higher number of social housing units are also the ones where the total size of housing complexes is higher. Of the approximately 700 housing complexes constructed between 1978 and 2002, 36% were erected in low-income neighbourhoods with more than 300 housing units. The strategy used by the urban agents aimed at increasing the economic outcomes per erected square foot by developing large and cheap parcels of land. Such sites could only be found in peripheral municipalities where social housing was concentrated. What worries most in the Chilean context is that this social housing is not only irrationally located but also designed to the same pattern, not considering the culture of the people that have to use of these spaces.

The strategies used by private enterprises reflect the absence of a comprehensive housing policy, in particular, and a comprehensive city planning policy, in general. Bigger residential complexes accumulate poor people in segregated sectors, often separating families and disconnecting people from their jobs. International experience shows that such solutions based on purely architectural rationalism have failed to resolved social problems, as illustrated in the demolition of high-density complexes in the United States and Europe.

Using governmental sources, figure 2 depicts the distribution of the population by socio-economic level. It is clear that in 1990 the low-income sectors concentrated on the periphery, except on the eastern side of Santiago, where a high-income cone is clearly recognizable. In 2003 the high-income families tended to migrate to gated communities on the northern fringe and in sections on the south-eastern side. This spatial behaviour is related to policies since the mid-1990s that have deepened the market liberalization initiated under the authoritarian regime and have allowed the extension of the high-income sector to non-urban areas.

The location of social housing on the periphery is not merely one more factor to be analysed. It is an effect of the operation of land markets and of the absence of a comprehensive territorial planning policy that considers how social housing inserts itself in the overall functioning of the city. The location of social housing complexes

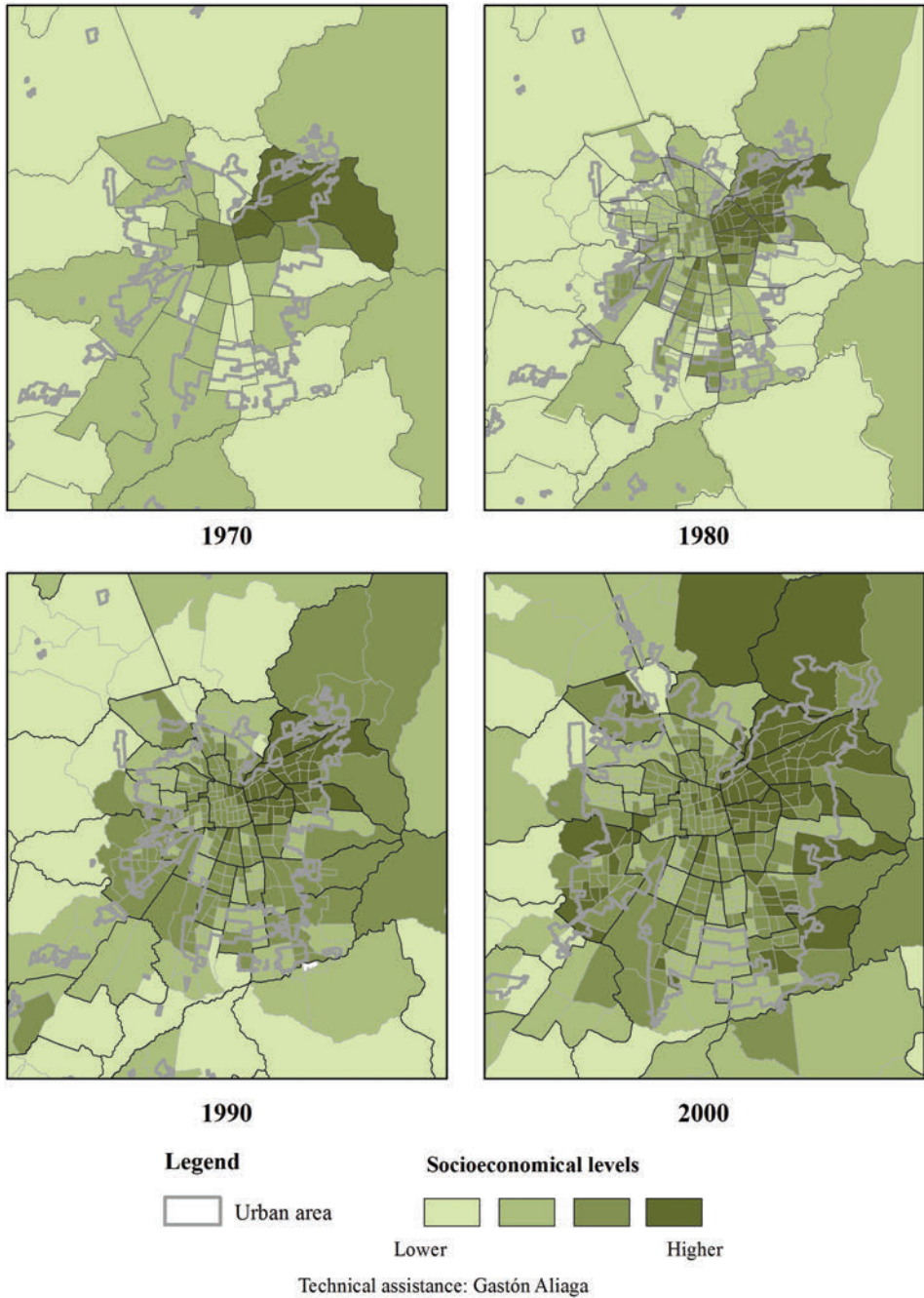


Fig. 2: Socio-economic levels in Metropolitan Santiago's municipalities 1970–2000. Compiled by the authors, cartography: Gastón Aliaga

is not just a descriptive fact but a central element in explaining the effects of broader economic and urban policies.

Investigations conducted in the mid-1990s found that the location of social housing complexes was one main explanatory factor in the evaluation of the satisfaction of the people who benefited by governmental programmes (see Hidalgo & Zunino 1992). Using the notion of residential satisfaction as a tool to evaluate the acceptance of the housing solution and its location they found that the beneficiaries of housing solutions in peri-urban areas returned lower residential satisfaction scores than those located in central or peri-central areas (Hidalgo 1997a). In this context, the location of social housing is a factor to consider in designing and implementing urban policies that adequately respond to the needs of the people.

## 5 Conclusions

The historical analysis of urban development policies provided here demonstrates that the trends toward horizontal extension, social segregation and physical fragmentation have remained unchanged for over half a century. In fact, recent policies, framed by a consolidated market economy and a liberal democracy, have had the effect of maintaining the urban development pattern induced by the national policies implemented in the mid-1950s and the market-driven initiatives taken during the authoritarian regime. Along with broader macro-sociological conditions, political regimes and ideological dimensions, the externalities created by public policies relate to a given planning mentality embraced by public officials and reflected in the action of public offices. This mentality places the discursive accent on offering a given number of housing solutions rather than producing an articulated and socially integrated urban system. The absence of a clear spatial dimension of public policies shows a lack of consideration for integrating low-income people in the functioning of the urban system. Achieving minimum levels of urban functionality – i. e. a connected spatial system – will require spending significant economic resources on linking functionally deprived areas on the outskirts of the urbanized area to the rest of the city.

In short, the challenge for the state apparatus on urban issues is to reduce the housing deficit estimated at 400,000 units and, at the same time, to improve housing standards and integrate poor families in the overall urban system. Urban policies should not be solely guided by market forces but should take into account the wants and needs of the affected community. It is in this context that issues like public participation, inclusionary policies and proactive initiatives for class integration should take predominance over a technocratic mentality that reduces the housing problem to degrees of deprivation. On a more theoretical level, our analysis shows that, alongside broader structural factor affecting the physical layout of the city, attention should also be paid to the agency of public officials and the discourses framing their actions and decisions. The urban landscape is, in the last instance, constructed by people operating under the possibilities and constraints imposed by a given social system.

## 6 Final remark

This paper was written to honour the great personality of Christoph Stadel. He dedicated his life to the regional geography of the Andes, but even more to justice for and empowerment of the poor. We know that he did remarkable research on intermediate cities and other urban topics, but because of his engagement in rural areas, the lower classes in urban environments have not appeared in his publications, even though this topic has figured in his teaching, especially in the joint field trips with one of the authors. With this paper we want to expand his interest towards an interesting topic in the urban geography of Andean capitals. It also is to acknowledge the cooperation of European and Latin-American researchers, which always have been a quality of Christoph's field work.

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