New neoliberal public housing policies: between centrality discourse and peripheralization practices in Santiago, Chile

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ABSTRACT
The lack of geographical equality in the development of neoliberal social housing models is evidence of differing ideological discourses and socio-spatial practices in the production of social housing. Based on a critical analysis of the Housing Policy for Quality Improvement and Social Integration promoted in Chile in 2006—the basis for a set of subsequent policies—this study seeks to identify the link between state discourse promoting further urban centralization of social housing and neoliberal subsidy allocation practices that have shaped the geography of recent residential production (2007–2012). Using an ideological critique and a descriptive spatial analysis to assess the notions of urban centrality, we found that equality and integration form the rhetoric used to legitimate and reproduce practices that lead to peripheralization of the poor. These practices are not limited to the city but have expanded to the extended urban area, creating a larger niche for the real estate industry.

Introduction

Space-generating neoliberal practices in urban settings and their link to the provision of social housing is a marginal research topic, at least with respect to critical urban theory in Latin America. This topic is characterized by approaches that predominantly focus on ‘housing activism’ and reflect on highly relevant issues that centre on ‘spatial’ aspects such as the privatization of state-funded housing, the creation of captive residential markets for lower income families and the persistent de-regularization of land markets (Coulomb, 2013). The lack of ‘geographical imagination’ has meant that the neoliberalization of public housing policies is always pictured or imagined as a fixed regulatory structure with the same socio-spatial results: the peripheralization of the poor.

Let us hypothesize as follows: neoliberalism is implemented as a fixed doctrine, not as a dynamic ideological process based on movements that promote the de-structuring, structuring and re-structuring of institutions and policies. In contexts such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Chile, such policies, which occupy varying organizational spaces depending on the regulatory landscape in which they are inserted (Brenner et al.,...
2011), have been present for more than four decades (Hidalgo et al., 2016a; Lencioni, 2011). Given these circumstances, it is difficult to ascertain whether underneath persistent spatial practices of displacing the poor to the periphery of the city, new strategies have emerged that advocate the centralization of social housing for the middle classes.

This diversification of neoliberal public housing practices is accompanied by a significant transformation of the discourse surrounding the issue, giving new ideological content and meaning to housing policies; in essence, this content has appropriated concepts of social vindication such as ‘spatial justice’ and the ‘right to the city’, converting them into categories devoid of critical content. This practice is illustrated by Swyngedouw (2011), who noted that ‘nature—as filled with new sense and meaning, [is] useful in legitimizing the expansion of private real estate and financial business linked to social housing markets’.

Chile functions well as a laboratory where researchers can analyse the process described above. It has the longest history of developing neoliberal policies within Latin America, evolving through a long process of experimentation with, implementation of an adjustment of neoliberal housing policies. First, the structure of neoliberal housing policies was established between the late 1970s and early 1980s using newly created financial mechanisms such as the subsidization of demand, mortgages traded in the secondary market and the building of a public–private market for cheap housing. These policies favoured the displacement of those who could not afford said houses—through settlement eradication programmes—to the peripheries of the metropolis, drawing a new urban map of Santiago in which its residents were highly segregated in favour of new and attractive spaces for real estate capital (Hidalgo, 2005; Rodríguez and Rodríguez, 2012).

With the return to democracy in the 1990s, market-oriented policies remained in place and intensified to ameliorate the quantitative deficit in housing, leading to the mass construction of social housing in the outskirts of the city, with the intention of socially legitimizing the neoliberal policies of the time: ownership was a good incentive to guarantee political consensus (Hidalgo et al., 2016b). These changes were enough to bring Chile to the forefront of the discussion, acknowledging its success as the archetypal model for housing policies based on the singular development of precarious housing, with more than 900,000 homes built in just one decade (Hidalgo, 2005).

However, there was an event that took place towards the end of the 1990s. Rainfall had caused damage to a polygonal housing block located in the peripheral municipality of Puente Alto (South-east Santiago) and revealed that the decrease in the housing deficit had been achieved by increasing ‘qualitative deficits’. The event itself is referred to as the ‘Casas Copeva’ case, which led to the complete demolition of a residential unit. During the first decade of the millennium, these precarious housing conditions in residential units like ‘Casas Copeva’ were sufficient cause to motivate political urban-based social movements (Hidalgo et al., 2016b).

The socialist governments of Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet sought answers to the increasing social unrest mobilizing against precarity and segregation in large areas of social housing. Both governments tried re-structuring social housing policies, which under the same structural mechanisms—i.e. housing subsidies, promoting private home construction and choosing construction areas in entirely unregulated markets—sought both to increase the living space and quality of the homes in question and to locate those homes close to social services such as education, health and public transport. In subsequent governments, Sebastian Piñera and Michelle Bachelet’s second term in office, officials have emphasized the promotion of ‘equality’ and ‘social mixing’.
Beginning in the year 2000, critical literature on the subject noted a transformation from a ‘no roof’ problem (a quantitative deficit) to a ‘roofed’ problem (a qualitative deficit) (Rodríguez and Sugranyes, 2004). Despite their observations, however, there has been little reflection on the restoration of ‘spatial justice’ and the ‘right to the city’ in neoliberal discourse that conceals, under the guise of a concern for social mixing and increasing access to social housing complexes, the opening of the public housing market to the middle classes (which are the most favoured by new strategies for central social housing) and above all, the reproduction of practices that relegate the poor to the peripheries, not on a metropolitan scale as previously seen in the 1980s and 1990s, but rather on a regional scale.

The previous discussion allows for the following questions: What is the relationship between neoliberal centrist discourse and improving the surroundings of social housing and the existing provision of social housing? In what way has neoliberal centrist discourse co-opted the restitution of spatial justice and rights to the city? Consequently, the objective of this article is to identify the ideological content of notions of centrality and social mixing in the Housing Policy for Quality Improvement and Social Integration, hereafter HPQISI (MINVU, 2006), and to contrast that policy’s discourse with stratified housing subsidies for lower, lower-middle- and middle-income families in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago (MRS) between 2006 and 2012.

The methodology used herein is a discourse analysis based on Žižek’s proposed critique of ideology (2003, 2013), focused less on the deconstruction or interpretation of meaning than on the delimitation of certain practices that state discourse legitimizes as feasible options; indeed, such practices are desirable insofar as they provide social housing in conditions considered ‘equal’ and ‘socially integrated’. A descriptive geographical analysis was then used to identify what discourse conceals in terms of actual practices: the use of limited arguments such as social mixing and equality to legitimize opening social housing markets to the middle classes, these classes’ advancement into urban centrality and the opening of social housing markets to continue displacing the poor to the peripheries of the city, this time on a broader geographical scale at the level of the urban region of Santiago.

In the first part of the article, the ideological model of neoliberal housing provision in Chile is contextualized by comparing Chilean reality with predominant spatial practices in the construction of public housing in advanced capitalist countries. The article then continues to cover the methodological premises that support the ideological critique of the HPQISI and the geographical analysis of where subsidies are granted in the MRS. The article ends with a final reflection on how the new housing policy prioritizes discourse that guarantees centrality—the right to the city—for the middle classes, the policy’s new target demographic, while issues such as proximity to urban infrastructure—spatial justice—are downplayed to ensure minimum distances to said infrastructure, but within a context that consists of a new periphery up-scaled to the regional level.

**Comparing neoliberal social housing models: from ideological to socio-spatial**

Although ideology is a matrix that generates multiple representations, it also contributes directly to social praxis, particularly to concepts oriented towards the production of urban space (Lefebvre, 1976). Ideology specifically manages this by initially defining the limits between practices that are feasible, real alternatives and practices that are not (Žižek, 2003). The reasoning underlying the definition of these limits is of a political and economic nature
(Hidalgo et al., 2016b) and generally remains hidden behind ideological discourse. This is why, although neoliberalism is a fantasy that structures reality (Žižek, 2013)—fantasy built on fiction and myth such as downsizing the state, for example—and is endowed with general features such as individualism, competition and mercantilization, the political and economic criteria used to justify the definition of boundaries between feasible neoliberal practices that produce urban space and housing are a manifestation of diverse political and economic interests with respect to socio-spatial context. Harvey (2008) refers to this concept when describing geographical inequality in neoliberal development.

This concept also explains geographical inequality in the development of neoliberal housing models. To better understand the general characteristics and inherent aspects of Chilean neoliberal housing models, it is necessary to draft a brief introduction that describes the similarities and differences between Chilean models and other models in the Global North. This geographical comparison introduces a discussion of the sub-urbanization of poverty and social mixing in the inner city in the Anglo-Saxon context and its relation to ideological issues in varying neoliberal housing models.

**Between the sub-urbanization of poverty and the gentrifying effect of social mixing: a North–South perspective**

The theoretical debate regarding neoliberal housing in ‘countries of advanced capitalism’ continues to revolve around the tension between libertarian equality and neoliberal libertarianism. In the Anglo-Saxon context, in the early 2000s, the literature began to focus on providing an account of the mercantilizing practices that provide access to housing (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Such practices include the privatization of public housing stock for rental, debt accessibility or financialization marketed as ‘sub-prime’ (Reid 2016), local government dependence on private promoters and the filtering and increase of social polarization (Hedin et al., 2012). These issues have been covered in the analysis of local and national cases or from perspectives that favour universal comparisons that identify generic traits in diverse cases (Blessing, 2016) and to a lesser degree make comparisons through their differences (Forrest & Hirayama, 2009).

In various Anglo-Saxon contexts, the slow and incomplete process of de-structuring Keynesian housing models has led either to social housing ideologies described as hybrid ‘monsters’, as stated by Christophers (2013) in the case of Sweden, or to local versions consisting of adaptations of the ideological precepts of neoliberalism (Hackworth and Moriah, 2006). As a result, a large part of the Anglo-Saxon literature has emphasized the neoliberal structuring of social housing models and their first socio-spatial impressions.

These researchers have begun to see two significant, yet basic trends. The ‘sub-urbanization of poverty’ is a centrifugal process in which lower income groups are pushed out towards the suburbs, caused in part by intense gentrification of central areas in the city. Such is the case in England, where Hunter (2014) found a recent increase in suburban poverty and linked its appearance with social housing for rent. In Scotland, Kavanagh et al. (2016) find that although pockets of the poor continue to live in the interior of main cities, there is a significant dispersion of the poor to the suburbs of Edinburgh that is associated with public housing. The pattern repeats itself in Sydney, Australia, where Randolph and Tice (2014) link it to neoliberal urban policies, in which they also find the provision of social housing. Finally, in the US, a large proportion of subprime mortgages are associated with cheap housing built in lower income suburbs (Covington, 2015).
In contrast, neoliberal social housing policies tend to expand in contexts in which ideology has, in successive waves, become more entrenched in the middle classes. The social decentralization of public housing policies has been driven by arguments—none of which are novel—that favour the spatial centralization of public housing that also benefits from greater social mixing. This is promoted to offer a false sense of socio-spatial heterogeneity, to mitigate existing conflict or the potential conflict of the ghettoization of the lower classes or to legitimize gentrification in public opinion (Lees et al., 2016). Accordingly, it stands to reason that the mechanisms used to connect the provision of social housing for the middle classes and social mixing are the same neoliberal instruments that have led to the greater ghettoization of the poor and their displacement to urban peripheries.

In this sense, Marom and Carmon (2015) identify the neoliberal decentralization of social housing policies in New York and Paris: policies formerly oriented towards lower income families through decentralization have shifted to the middle classes. They note above all the intent to achieve social mixing using market-oriented processes, which in itself implies a direct intensification of gentrification. This is not a trend exclusive to Anglo-Saxon countries, as acknowledged by Ping Wang et al. (2012), who find that in China, the opening of social housing markets to the middle classes has combined with an interest in decreasing project density and increasing the minimum size of homes built for lower income families.

Changing latitude and heading south reveals certain differences between neoliberal housing policies that stem from the specific circumstances inherent to Latin American contexts. Although neoliberalism in housing projects has also led to the displacement of the poor to urban and metropolitan peripheries (Coulomb, 2013), it cannot be attributed to the sub-urbanization of poverty, much less called a new process. First, the concept of an Anglo-Saxon suburb in a Latin American context does not fit, meaning that the displacement of the poor in critical urban theory for the region is referred to as a peripheralization of the poor. This implies not only a Euclidean departure from urban centres but also the creation of functional, social and political subordination associated with the direct appropriation and overexploitation of the poor in urban settlements through the high cost of transport, social stigmatization, a deficit in urban infrastructure and facilities, etc. (Hidalgo et al., 2008, 2016c). Second, the peripheralization of the poor has been a structural feature of Latin American urbanization, given that most self-constructed housing first appeared in the outskirts of the city (independent of whether urban expansion has swallowed these areas and enmeshed them into the city’s established network).

Regarding the debate on the ideological restructuring of neoliberal social housing policies, in Latin America, the analysis of decentralization in favour of the middle class and the new discourse on centrality is as yet in its beginnings. In countries that underwent late neoliberalization in the 1980s, housing policy analysis continues to revolve around the initial model structure (Coulomb, 2013; Cuervo, 2012; Jaramillo, 2013; Coulomb & Schteingart, 2006). Only in Chile, where the process has advanced enough to prove the contradiction of decreasing the quantitative deficit and increasing the qualitative deficit, have researchers begun to study the process.

Existing literature describing the Chilean situation takes two different approaches. The first describes the manner in which recent policy has failed; policies have sought to increase the centrality of the construction of social housing (Dohnke et al., 2015; Maturana et al., 2016; Rasse, 2015) without pausing for a more in-depth study of the ideological reason for the interest in housing projects or the mutated discourse that appropriates and redefines
the goals of spatial justice and the right to the city used in neoliberal politics. The second approach and its exploration of these elements was triggered by an attempt to insert neoliberal housing projects into a broader restructuring of the neoliberal state, an initiative that strives to legitimize the state's policies using a supposedly humanizing ideological veneer that humanizes already-mercantilized housing policies (Hidalgo et al., 2016c).

The framework mentioned above has adopted a new discourse on social justice in which spatial dimensions have been reduced to Euclidean terms; these terms consider a home socially worthy if it is located a minimum distance from collective, urban and other facilities (Hidalgo et al., 2016b). This paper is considered part of the second approach. Herein, researchers contrast the ideological mechanisms driving the concepts of equality and social mixing with the actual practices inherent to current social housing that continue to displace the poor to the peripheries, framing the process in the larger re-structuring of the neoliberal state in Chile that actively aims to reproduce capitalistic efforts in the now-vital field of the built environment.

*What drives ideological re-structuring or neoliberal housing efforts: reproducing capitalism through the creation of built environments*

If one of the functions of ideology is to structure reality using certain fantasies (Žižek, 2013) that mark the boundaries between the gamut of possible socio-spatial practices and the impossible, the real and unreal or desirable and undesirable (Žižek, 2013), then why has neoliberalism been restructured in territorial contexts where its policies are long lasting? This is a broadly encompassing question that deserves a response, at least insofar as the construction of social housing is concerned.

The ideological function of social housing as a key element in reproducing a workforce controlled by the state, intended as a means of facilitating mass consumerism and part of what Merrifield (2014) calls the old urban question, has given way to a new question. The new question, in conjunction with other forms of the urban built environment, is key not only in reproducing the workforce and indirectly capitalism but also in reproducing capitalism directly through real estate.

This implies the even greater strengthening of connections between financial capital and real estate capital through a process Pereira (2008) calls real estate restructuring, in other words, a process in which financial capital has more actively invested in the built environment (buildings and infrastructure), reconstituting the structure of the real estate sector, which is to say that it provides organization, agents that implement it and strategy that governs it. Although the close relationship between finance and real estate has historically been a characteristic of capitalist-driven built environments (Harvey, 1985, 2008), the predominance of financial capitalism over production (Chesnais, 2003; Harvey, 2014), globalization and the financialization of contemporary capitalism has led to large monetary surpluses circulating through a globally integrated capital market looking for areas for profitable reinvestment (De Mattos, 2007).

These circumstances hint at a trend appearing in multiple contexts, extending to include large urban economies in Latin America. In these economies, real estate takes on a new structure in which the capital prevalent in built environments is highly concentrated and centralized (Lencioni, 2014), where the market has expanded for this type of goods via either new mechanisms of consumption, the expansion of production niches or product diversification and innovation (Pereira, 2008, 2013).
The provision of social housing is one of the new production niches for private capital in Latin America, precisely, as some have indicated, in metropolitan regions in Latin America such as Sao Paulo (Shimbo, 2010), Mexico City (Coulomb, 2013), Bogota (Ortiz, 2014; Santana, 2013) and Santiago. The neoliberalization of state and urban policy that roughly began in the 1980s—in Chile, they date back to the 1970s—has facilitated a change in the role of the state from the direct promoter of real estate, responsible for funding, land management, construction and resources allocated to urbanization, to the facilitator of private initiatives—the subsidizer—based on a set of regulating and deregulating strategies intended to make the new ‘social housing market’ more attractive, even going so far as to promote a new ideology of habitat that opens up these housing projects not only to the poor but also to the urban middle class.

The recent construction of these capitalist markets for social housing in Latin America has produced a new set of urban contradictions that occur for the following reasons:

- The reproduction of a quantitative deficit that remains significant even in contexts in which labour market flexibility combines with burdensome mortgages, brilliantly described (at least in part) by Davis (2007).
- The creation of a qualitative deficit that is becoming increasingly evident in countries undergoing neoliberalization such as Colombia (Ortiz, 2014; Santana 2014) and Mexico (Coulomb, 2013) and is already a reality in Chile, where it was first expressed in the low-quality housing built en masse under capitalist rationale and criteria. Rodríguez and Sugranyes (2004) coin the latter as the problem of having a roof.
- Beyond the qualitative deficit and home surroundings, people living in social housing have had their rights to the city cut-off—their right to centrality, simultaneity and heterogeneity (Lefebvre, [1973] 2014). Their right to inhabit—the day-to-day appropriation of the city—has been restricted to precarious housing, or ownership of a home that is often of very low standards (Lefebvre, [1970] 1980). This is a problem coined as affecting those with no city.

The aforementioned contradiction of those with no city is one of the aspects Merrifield (2014) deems a neo-Haussmannization: capitalist accumulation based on the construction of a built environment led by the financial elite and linked to the deprivation of diverse social groups from their right to the city via the search for private valuation perspectives (Hidalgo et al., 2016c). The following section describes the methodology by which the present researchers performed a critical analysis of the discourse on the centrality of social housing and the practices underlying the actual provision of such housing.

**Methodology**

Critical discourse analysis has two variants: one linked to social post-structuralist theory, which focuses on interpreting the semantics and semiological forms used in discourse, and the other based on a Marxist ideological critique (Lees, 2004). This article opted for the second variant because it allows the researchers to focus on both the discourse and the practices mobilized by the ideological vehicles contained in social housing policies. Ideology is presumed to be a category, albeit representational, that leads to certain practices, which is why this particular category is labelled a ‘generating matrix’ (Žižek, 2003, p. 7) that frames real, feasible and desirable socio-spatial practices in the provision of social
housing. Therefore, the critical analysis of the discourse proffered in this study was centred on describing which centrality generating and politically desirable practices are proposed in the HPQISI and plotting the temporal axis along which it has developed.

It then becomes necessary to identify the correspondence between feasible practices for the construction of social housing endowed with urban centrality and existing practices. By making the construction of new homes the centre point, some of the programmes comprising a part of the policy were not taken into consideration, particularly the Rural Subsidy, which is granted to lower income families, and the Family Estate Protection Programme, which was created to restore and improve social housing, common areas and public spaces in existing parks. Leasing for middle-income areas was also not considered.

Therefore, attention was paid to the allocated subsidies given that the numbers for the construction of social housing tend to be somewhat separate from the continuous formulation and reformulation of categories in public policies:

- Solidarity Housing Fund I, a full subsidy—with no mortgage—allocated to 20% of the country’s poorest people; the data are available from 2007 to 2012 and include two data points: the construction and the acquisition of new homes.
- Solidarity Housing Fund II, a partial subsidy—requiring a mortgage—allocated to 20–40% of the country’s poorest citizens; the available data are for a shorter interval from 2008 to 2012.
- Supreme Decree (S.D. henceforth) 40, a middle-class subsidy instrument compatible with saving efforts and mortgage credit with long-term development, which means the data stream continuously for the period between 2004 and 2014.

The spatialization of housing practices cannot be broached using quantitative geo-statistic criteria such as those used to support studies of the suburbanization of the poor. Instead, they should be approached from the zoning aspect, a more qualitative and administrative reasoning that coincides with action taken at the municipal level (Figure 1). Under this approach, the Metropolitan Area of Santiago consists of the following:

- A central municipality (Santiago).
- Eleven municipalities bordering the centre of the city (Providencia, Ñuñoa, San Joaquin, Macul, San Miguel, Cerrillos, Pedro Aguirre Cerda, Estacion Central, Quinta Normal, Recoleta and Independencia).
- Thirteen municipalities in the inner metropolitan periphery (Vitacura, Las Condes, La Reina, Peñalolen, La Florida, La Granja, San Ramon, La Cisterna, Lo Espejo, Lo Prado, Cerro Navia, Renca and Conchali).
- Ten municipalities in the outer and more distant metropolitan periphery (Lo Barnechea, Puente Alto, La Pintana, El Bosque, Maipu, Pudahuel, Quilicura, Huechuraba, Colina and Lampa).

There are 17 municipalities in the regional periphery, some of which are already enmeshed in the Santiago social housing market:

- Tiltit, San Jose de Maipo, Pirque, Buin, Paine, Alhue, San Pedro, Melipilla, El Monte, Isla de Maipo, Talagante, San Bernardo, Calera de Tango, Padre Hurtado, Peñaflor, Maria Pinto and Curacavi.
Figure 1. Study area divided by level of centrality. Source: authors, 2016.
All the municipalities named above together form the Metropolitan Region. Given the extreme inequality caused by neoliberal political and administrative decentralization during the military dictatorship—in which social services underwent municipalization, as did the provision of infrastructure and urban facilities (Hidalgo et al., 2016a)—the municipalities with the greatest urban central qualities are those in the centre itself, pericentral municipalities to the north and pericentral municipalities in the south-east (Ñuñoa, Providencia, La Reina, Peñalolen and La Florida). The rest, whether they are in the inner or the outer peripheries, suffer from grave deficits in public services and infrastructure, with the exception of a few higher income municipalities such as Las Condes, Vitacura, Lo Barnechea and Colina, which have enough services, many of which are provided by private entities.

Although the data represent a short lapse in public policy, they were analysed using thematic cartography and descriptive statistics—frequencies, variations and percentages—to provide evidence of the general trends caused by the social housing policy of 2006 among the lower income class (SHF I), the lower middle class (SHF II) and the middle class (S.D. 40) in all the municipalities and areas mentioned so far.

Integration or social mixing and socio-spatial equality: from the discourse of centrality to real peripheralization practices

The disruption created by the military coup in 1973 affected public institutionalism and similarly affected housing policies implemented during the 1970s and 1980s, with a continued impact on democratically elected governments in the 1990s. The destructuralization of the previous social housing model was based on disassembling the character of housing from being a right and re-structuring a new neoliberal policy that transforms the home into a consumer product, accessible in a market focused on the poorest, while the middle class had to provide for themselves with no help from the state (Hidalgo, 2005).

It is in this manner that the housing policies and programmes in place prior to 2006—and even those in place later on—were true to the spirit of the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism’s 1975 restructuring and led to the creation of an instrument (S.D. Nº 188) to subsidize demand that was oriented towards lower income families with some capacity to save and access credit. Housing became a reward for personal effort (savings in the financial system) that was assigned by the state but produced entirely by private entities. The tool required prior savings, a direct and implicit subsidy (a liquid amount that depended on the cost of the house) and a second subsidy hidden in a mortgage (with lower interest rates than those offered on the regular market). These subsidies were assigned through a voucher or certificate leaving the consumer (supposedly) free to access the housing project of his or her choice (MINVU, no date). Stemming from this policy, a series of instruments was introduced, mainly through Supreme Decrees, which ultimately established the trend towards private markets for social housing (the funding, design, construction and even management of existing housing units) and relegated the state to the role of managing targeted subsidies.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the return to democracy brought new decrees intended to improve the existing system. Among them, S.D. Nº 140, which was issued in 1990, created the progressive housing programme; S.D. Nº 159, which was issued in 1994, created the free choice private basic housing programme, and S.D. Nº 5, which was issued in 2002, created dynamic and debtless social housing (for poor families with no
access to financial credit), among a bevy of other, smaller programmes that consolidated the state’s role as subsidizing agent and contributed to revitalizing the housing market for this segment of the population. It was only in 1998, nearly 20 years after the initial neoliberalization of the housing model and almost a decade after the return to democracy in Chile, that the Chile Barrios programme appeared with the goal of an integral improvement in quality of life. The programme is a pioneering effort in initiatives involving intervention that goes beyond a housing solution. This led to the creation of programmes designed to reclaim neighbourhoods and the subsequent versions existing today.

Finally, the role of the state in the last 40 years has been to generate the conditions for a market that ensures social housing, with subsidies structured around the supply of said housing; therefore, the state acts as the benefactor of the associated real estate business. This transformation and its consolidation over the years is fundamental to understanding the current state of affairs in public housing in Chile and its effects on quality of life in urban settings, segregation and social conflict in Chilean cities. Despite an awareness of the limits of this type of policy and the existence of programmes that directly contradict these policies, the trend leans towards reproducing the neoliberal model, making it all the more difficult to redefine the state’s role in these matters. As described by De Mattos, Fuentes and Link (2014), the progressive trend towards metropolitan expansion is not limited to Santiago, despite redensification efforts in central areas. On the contrary, parallel and complementary processes continue to configure urban metropolitan systems that displace the poor towards the regional periphery.

In this scenario, many authors have recently discussed the evolution of housing and urban policies (Arriagada, 2004; Greene, 2004; Greene et al., 2010; Hidalgo, 2005; Simian, 2010). From their research, it is possible to ascertain some of the focal points for these policies in the present, which helps us understand the logic behind the social production of public housing in Chilean cities. Five trends form current urban and housing policies:

- A predominance of efforts to reduce the quantitative deficit weighed against the design of policies that focus on quality.
- A greater emphasis on housing and less on the neighbourhood as an intervening agent.
- A change from focusing on vulnerable social groups to incorporating the middle class.
- A move from delegating and distributing roles to focussing on market agents.
- A shift from state assistance and accompaniment to individualism and competition (applying for a subsidy implies competing with other families).

As shown in Table 1, since 2006 and within the framework of the HPQISI, the government has implemented a series of housing and urban policies, the following of which stand out: the Neighbourhood Recovery Programme (since 2007) and the integrated housing subsidy programme (since 2011) that modifies the function of previous subsidy systems. In 2012, a new pilot programme for the recovery of social condominiums appeared, a policy that for the first time considered the possibility of demolishing existing homes. Finally, and complementary to the aforementioned policies, there is a series of smaller programmes oriented towards maintaining the home or focused on specific sectors of the population. The following is a discourse analysis executed from the perspective of ideological critique.
Table 1. Housing, urban and transversal policies in Chile since 2006.

| Year | Policy Description |
|------|--------------------|
| 2006 | **Family Estate Protection Programme:** SD N° 255 of 2006  
Subsidy for environmental and housing improvement and expansion aimed at social housing owners or heirs. Savings are required  
**Public Space Bidding Programme**  
S.D. N° 312 of 2006  
Programme aimed at new buildings or restoring old buildings to recover historic neighbourhoods and consolidated emblematic urban areas and improve public spaces around poor urban neighbourhoods. |
| 2007 | **Neighbourhood Recovery Programme**  
S.D. N° 14 of 2007  
Intervention strategy on a neighbourhood scale to improve and revitalize collective public spaces and social networks in neighbourhoods |
| 2008 | **Sanitation and Regularization of Subdivisions**  
Law N° 20.234 of 2008  
Establishes a process for the sanitation and regularization of subdivisions within a period of 24 months  
**Pilot Plan for Social Condominiums**  
Developed by the Executive Secretary of Neighbourhood Development (MINVU), the goal of this plan is to provide solutions to problems that have arisen throughout the years in social condominiums, generating improvement and strengthening their organization based on co-property law. The purpose of this plan was to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of social condominiums, who have problems such as weak social relationships, a lack of organization and damaged common goods. This process was performed through the formalization of social condominiums and the creation of improvement plans in whose operation the citizens played a major role |
| 2010 | **Subsidized Housing Programme for Senior Citizens**  
S.D. N° 104 of 2010  
Targets people over 60 from the three lowest-income quintiles  
Depending on income, housing can be provided based on commodatum or without renting requirements  
**Direct Assistance Strategy for Social Condominiums affected by the 2010 earthquake**  
Improvement and repair projects for housing complexes damaged by the Feb 27 earthquake under four modalities: housing repair, improvement and repair of common goods, demolition and de-densification 3x2) |
| 2011 | **Integrated Housing Subsidy System**  
S.D. N° 1 of 2011  
Regulates the integrated housing subsidy system  
Targets the middle and emerging class. Replaces the FSV II and SD 40. Includes the Integration Subsidy  
**Global Shantytown Plan 2012–2013**  
Global plan to address the needs of families in shantytowns with the support of different departments and institutions, working collectively to face this challenge. This plan began a cadastre of shantytowns at a national level |
| 2012 | **Solidarity Fund of Housing Choice**  
S.D. N° 40 of 2011; D.O. 26–04–2012  
Targets socially vulnerable homeless families. Allows them to purchase new or previously owned houses  
Only savings were considered. Individual and collective applications were accepted, with or without a project  
**Exempt Resolution N° 7663 of 2012**  
Pilot Programme for Social Condominium Recovery: Second Chance  
This programme allowed families to access housing solutions under the standards of the new housing policy |

Source: authors.
**The discourse of centrality: feasible and desirable practices defined in the HPQISI**

The contextualization of the *Housing Policy for Quality Improvement and Social Integration* reveals that although the policy is intended to address the qualitative problems inherent in the current provision of social housing that result from a neoliberal housing model based on decreasing quantitative deficits, it continues to operate under the most basic principles of land market deregulation and redefines the state as a facilitator. Taking a closer look, critical discourse analysis of the policy uncovers key ideological aspects that reveal intent to restructure the neoliberal model for the production of social housing.

The HPQISI has redefined socio-spatial practices that provide access to social housing to mean practices that are feasible from a legal and financial standpoint; it has also redefined what are considered desirable socio-spatial practices, which must be legally and financially feasible (Table 2). These redefined practices are based on new semantic content categorized under ‘social equality’ and ‘social integration’, transversal concepts that connect and integrate recent public rhetoric regarding the issue of housing. The result of these changes is the creation of an ideology that gives new meaning to urban centrality and residential segregation, legitimizing the reproduction of neoliberal practices in the social housing model.

Social equality is pursued by assigning complementary subsidies to access housing in established areas in the city for low-income segments of the population generally located in pericentral areas and middle classes in central areas. The latter can apply for subsidies to buy or rent property (Table 2). The equality aspired to in the HPQISI is simply and plainly an offer of the same facilities for purchasing a home within consolidated urban areas, favouring the expansion and diversification of the social housing market.

Subsidies dependent on location are neoliberal creations given that they allow the petitioner to cover the surplus cost of central locations. At the same time, they negate fairer socio-spatial practices for access to housing, such as those that could be aspired to if the state were to regulate the land market and actively participate in the founding of land banks in every geographical urban area. This continues to be a transfer of resources, not necessarily to financial capital or the promoter, but to landlords or letting agencies.

Social integration is implemented here through the concept of centrality and segregation. Subsidies for location and the Quality Assurance Programme have promoted improvements in minimum size and building materials for social housing by transferring the cost and responsibilities to those applying for social housing. They have provided the option of extending their homes to increase living space, created location standards for social housing—minimum distances to transport, education and health—and strategies for spatial cohabitation between groups from different income levels.

Subsequently, urban centrality is defined under Euclidean terms; integration of families living in social housing is achieved provided logistical aspects are fulfilled, such as minimum distances to health, education and transport. At no time does the right to live in a central or pericentral area belong to everyone, as evidenced by the greater variety of subsidies available to the middle classes, allowing them to reside in the centre of the city. The policy seeks to mitigate segregation by creating mixed neighbourhoods for the cohabitation of middle, lower middle and lower income families, who often resort to a range of funding options for social housing available to them. Spatial justice is reduced to minimum linear distances from urban services and other social groups.
Table 2. Feasible and desirable socio-spatial practices for social housing in the HPQISI.

| Feasible practices                                                                 | Instruments in the HPQISI                                                                 | Desirable practices                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Additional subsidy that operates in conjunction with the traditional subsidies of SHF I and SHF II (and others) for the middle classes, allowing them to access or remain in central and pericentral locations | Differentiated Subsidy for Location for the SHF; the Territorial Interest Subsidy, Estate Interest Subsidy for home acquisitions for the middle classes; and housing leases for territorial and estate interests for existing homes available to the middle class | Residential permanence in the neighbourhood in which they reside to preserve social networks and family support |
| Family Estate Protection Programme: subsidies that facilitate neighbourhood improvements in areas with existing social housing | Neighbourhood recovery programmes; participative pavement; public space programme      | Restore homes and common areas within housing units                                  |
| Increase in the number or requirements of quality standards in the area, quality of construction for new projects, and location standards defined as a function of their proximity to transport, education and health services | Quality Assurance Programme (QAP): control of real estate promoters over issues regarding minimum living space (granting the possibility of home extensions), a decrease in the scale of housing projects and incentives for construction in pericentral areas that comply with the following conditions: 1 km from educational facilities (primary and secondary school), 2.5 km from primary health services, less than 500 metres from public transport and access to a main road | Social equality for homebuyers in social housing units is guaranteed by increasing minimum standards, the quality of the home and its location |
| Programmes that favour social mixing in neighbourhoods, the introduction of projects for several different social groups within the same neighbourhood | Social integration mechanisms: construction of social condominiums for diverse social groups within the same neighbourhood: middle-class groups (SD 40), lower middle-income groups (SHF II) and lower income groups (SHF I) | Spatial proximity between middle-income, lower middle-income and lower income groups |

Source: MINVU authors (2006) and Negrete (2012).
In rhetorical terms, these arguments promise access to services in service-providing cities (services that are generally privatized) for the consumer, and they are used both to politically legitimize the State’s continuing role of subsidy manager and to humanize neoliberalism, which is supposedly responsible for reducing the quantitative housing deficit (Hidalgo et al., 2016c). Neoliberal housing policies in Chile have appropriated the restitution of the right to the city and spatial justice, converting them into mechanisms that favour urban consumerism and residential segregation on a micro scale: cohabitation with no interaction. The following is a description of the existing practices resulting from the HPQISI in the MRS, Chile.

Urban-regional geography of subsidy provision: despite the change in discourse, peripheralization of the poor continues

In the early 2000s, the priority of public policy for social housing in Chile was to concentrate subsidies in ‘the most vulnerable’ segments of the population with income in the bottom 20% by eliminating mortgages for this group. In parallel, the policy also began to introduce participation, integration and social equality into discourse via concrete mechanisms in 2006 that reflected—as indicated throughout this study—a broad diversification of mechanisms that, contrary to its priorities, allowed not only the most vulnerable segments of the population but also emergent groups to buy subsidized homes. This was a result of medianization that the country—and particularly the metropolitan area of Santiago—was undergoing at the time (De Mattos, 2015).

The assessment of subsidies granted between 2007 and 2012 confirms that public action is in essence oriented towards funding housing for the middle classes, as revealed in Table 3; the S.D. 40 subsidies granted between 2007 and 2012 represent 65.1% of the total, whereas Solidarity Housing Funds I and II subsidies together only constitute 34.9%. That notwithstanding, the amounts involved in the SHF are considerably greater given the SHF’s inherent characteristics, particularly in comparison to the resources assigned to S.D. 40. Even though one could single out the proportional increase by 11.1 points in SHF I between 2007 and 2009, and 2010 and 2012, and associate it with the relative success of focused efforts, it must be noted that the relative improvement could be related to the drop in lower middle and

| Type of subsidy per socio-economic group | Percentage of total subsidies (2007–2009) | Percentage of total subsidies (2010–2012) | Variation 07–09 to 10–12 |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| DS 40 (Middle Class)                   | 25,424                                   | 17,533                                   | −31.0                  |
| FSV II (Next 20% of the poorest)       | 3031                                     | 2,422                                    | −20.1                  |
| FSV I (Bottom 20% of the poorest)      | 7858                                     | 9,685                                    | 23.3                   |
| Total                                  | 36,313                                   | 29,640                                   | 100.0                  |

Source: authors.

*Includes categories I, II and III type subsidies.

Includes subsidies for home acquisition, as it does not register a category for self-construction, data start in 2008.

Covers purchase and construction. Source: created for the purposes of this study using data from MINVU (2014).
middle-class subsidies—both highly dependent on mortgages—as a result of the financial and real estate crisis of 2009.

Regarding the spatial distribution of the different subsidy categories, subsidies from SHF I between 2007 and 2012 were highly concentrated, with only eight municipalities receiving more than 60% of the available funds. In order of municipalities receiving the most to the least, they are as follows: San Bernardo (11.9%), La Pintana (11.7%), Maipú (7.1%), El Bosque (6.4%), Renca (5.3%), Puente Alto (5%), La Florida (4.8%), Quilicura (4%) and Lo Espejo (3.8%). For SHF II, subsidies were even more concentrated, with only six municipalities receiving a little more than 60% of the available funds, mainly San Bernardo (19.3%), Puente Alto (19%), Maipú (8.4%), Pudahuel (6.2%), Quilicura (5.5%) and El Bosque (5.2%).

Figure 2 clearly illustrates the reason for the difference in spatial distribution between the two subsidy funds: SHF I funds are less concentrated in the study area, not by virtue of greater integration of social housing projects in established city areas, but rather because they are more concentrated in peripheral municipalities in the Metropolitan Region such as Melipilla (2.3%), Paine (1%), Peñaflor (1.9%) and Talagante (1.2%), not just in the inner peripheries to the north-west, west or south. In contrast, subsidies from SHF II were mostly distributed among the municipalities of the inner periphery (San Bernardo, Puente Alto and Maipú, for example), but it would be remiss not to mention the launch of SHF II subsidy projects in central and pericentral municipalities such as Santiago (1.4%), Independencia (3.7%), Conchali (2%) and Quinta Normal (3.7%), and in several peri-urban municipalities such as Curacavi (1.2%) and Lampa (3.9%).

When analysing the spatial-temporal variations of distributed subsidies from SHF I and II and S.D. 40, it was possible to identify certain changes in their relative distributions, confirming progress regarding the placement of social housing projects in central and pericentral municipalities. However, this does not constitute a significant trend when using hard numbers. For example, between 2007 and 2009, and 2010 and 2012, SHF I (Figure 3) registered a set of positive variations in peripheral municipalities in which the total number of allocated subsidies were in the mid to low range, such as Buin, Paine, Melipilla, Isla de Maipo, Curacavi, Padre Hurtado, Lampa and Lo Barnechea—the only municipality in the north-eastern area with subsidies of this type—and in central and pericentral municipalities such as Santiago, Recoleta, Ñuñoa, La Reina, Peñalolen, La Florida, Macul, La Granja, San Joaquin, San Miguel and Pedro Aguirre Cerda. That notwithstanding, it must be clarified that a slight overall increase in municipalities with a low number of distributed subsidies may exaggerate the effects of the SHF I inter-urban subsidy allocation.

Variation in the SHF II reflects the absolute and relative decrease in the allocation of this type of subsidy, at least between 2008 and 2011 (Figure 4), as only six municipalities in the area registered a positive variation: Caracavi, Lampa, Talagante and San Bernardo in the metropolitan periphery and Santiago and Quinta Normal in the city per se. Eliminating the programme was the solution to its failure, which was caused by lower middle-class dependence on home mortgages when opting for the subsidy during the real estate crisis. In 2011, a new adjustment to housing subsidy categories (S.D. N° 1, issued in 2011), the 'Integrated Housing Subsidy System', was subsumed and diluted into a policy oriented towards expanding the subsidized social housing market to cover 60% of the most financially vulnerable.

The data on middle-class subsidies, formerly known as S.D. 40—also modified and subsumed into the 'Integrated Housing Subsidy System' in 2011—are much more extensive and
Figure 2. Percentage of allocated SHF I and II subsidies in the Metropolitan Region. Source: authors, 2016, based on data from the MINVU (2015).
Figure 2. (Continued).
Figure 3. Percentage of change of the SHF I during the 2007–2009 and 2010–2012 periods. Source: authors, 2016, based on data from the MINVU (2015).
Figure 4. Percentage of change of the SHF II in 2008 and 2011. Source: authors, 2016, based on data from the Housing Observatory (MINVU, 2015).
Figure 5. Percentage of change in the allocation of Supreme Decree 40 subsidies between 2007 and 2009 and 2010 and 2012. Source: authors, 2016, based on data from the Housing Observatory (MINVU, 2015).
Figure 6. Combined spatial distribution of SHF I, SHF II and Supreme Decree 40 subsidies between 2007 and 2009. Source: authors, 2016, based on data from the Housing Observatory (MINVU, 2015).
Figure 7. Combined spatial distribution of SHF I, SHF II and Supreme Decree 40 subsidies between 2010 and 2012. Source: authors, 2016, based on data from the Housing Observatory (MINVU, 2015).
complete. Although the figures on allocated funds reveal that subsidized housing for the middle class is the most attractive segment of the 'social housing market' or 'public interest housing' and that such housing is mainly located in urban municipalities in the Santiago metropolitan area, specifically in central and pericentral municipalities, the state’s lesser participation in the housing fund and its dependence on private real estate agents made it vulnerable to economic crises such as the financial collapse of 2009, a slightly delayed effect of the previous year’s global crash.

This result is illustrated in Figure 5, which shows how, until just before the impact of the global crisis was felt in the local real estate market, the majority of the municipalities in the SMA had positive variations in the allocation of S.D. 40 subsidies: central municipalities (Santiago); pericentral municipalities (Providencia, Ñuñoa, Macul, San Joaquin, San Miguel, Independencia, Recoleta and Quinta Normal); municipalities in the SMAs inner periphery (Puente Alto, La Florida, El Bosque, Cerrillos, Maipu, Las Condes and Lo Barnechea) and still others in the outer periphery such as Buin, Talagante, Isla de Maipo and El Monte to the south-west; Maipu and Cerrillos to the west; Tiltil, Lampa and Colina to the north, and San Jose de Maipo to the east, all of which have witnessed significant suburban development in the last decade.

However, between 2007 and 2009, and again between 2010 and 2012, the previous trends reverted entirely, with negative variations in practically the entire metropolitan region. Only the pericentral municipalities of Providencia, Macul and Cerrillos and Talagante and Padre Hurtado in the metropolitan periphery had significant positive variations, although other municipalities such as Nuñoa, San Miguel, La Cisterna, Estacion Central and Independencia also had positive variations, but to a lesser degree than during the previous year (Figure 5).

The map in Figure 5 reveals that a large part of the growth and stagnation of the housing market in Santiago is linked to the production of middle-class housing, and the recent densification of pericentral municipalities and suburbanization of the periphery is linked to the state’s subsidy action and inaction through the Housing Policy for Quality Improvement and Social Integration. In Figures 6 and 7, it is evident that social integration promoted by social housing policies in the last decade have only had an impact when there are coexisting middle-class and lower class residential projects in certain municipalities of the metropolitan periphery—mainly Maipu or Puente Alto—whereas, S.D. 40 allocations are notably predominant in pericentral municipalities.

Therefore, one can see that socio-spatial integration promoted under strictly Euclidean premises—minimum distances to transport, education and health services and the social mixing of groups located in the same municipality (Hidalgo et al., 2016b)—has been strictly limited to inner peripheral municipalities in the SMA and generally is not present in pericentral and central municipalities in the city. Even when considered in perspective, the maps in Figures 6 and 7 indicate that the aforementioned spatial trend, regardless of the rhythm of real estate investment in the construction of social housing, is stable, and there are no signs that it is being modified.

Conclusions

The analysis of subsidy allocation linked to the Housing Policy for Quality Improvement and Social Integration (MINVU, 2006) reveals that the spatial contradiction of the capitalist production of social housing in Chile has been to reduce the quantitative and even
the qualitative deficit at the expense of expanding the problem of the ‘cityless’—that is, the expulsion of lower income groups from the city centre. This expulsion results from a lack of effective mechanisms managing land supply in the consolidated city, where residents have a right to appropriate urban living standards, centrality, simultaneity and heterogeneity—unlike in the surrounding suburbs (Hidalgo, 2005), where socio-spatial fragmentation at the municipal level prevents residents from enjoying the same benefits (Link et al., 2015).

The discourse surrounding the social and spatial integration of Chilean housing policies in the last decade implemented in an effort to resolve this contradiction without altering the mechanisms that produce it—namely the deregulation of land markets and the lack of quality land production mechanisms for social housing—has been ineffective in redirecting 40% of the poorest population back into the city, but it has been effective in expanding the public housing market to the middle classes and creating a greater variety of ways to transfer public resources and applicant salaries to real estate, construction and financing agents. Naturally, the latter dynamic shapes a risky market subject to the fluctuations of private real estate production, making the ability to pay for land the discriminating factor that determines location.

The role of social housing in the production process of urban areas in Latin America has been widely discussed in relation to the expulsion of lower income groups to the urban periphery. However, its relation to the expulsion of poor populations to the fuzzy edges of mega urban regions and, in the case of Santiago, the combination of increasing expansion and densification processes (De Mattos et al., 2014), has not been as widely analysed. The effect of the medianization of public housing on the restructuring of real estate and the spatial processes of high-density concentration and low-density de-concentration also lacks exploration.

In this sense, the overall objective of this study was to identify and discuss the ideological content and socio-spatial practices surrounding ideas of centrality and social mixing in recent Chilean housing policy. We observed a significant gap between discourse and practice; this gap translates into urban development inequality consolidated through massive housing distribution in the newly urbanized area of the case study. Nevertheless, a model for ‘unifying’ state-supported diversification exists but does not point to effective redistribution that integrates criteria for socio-spatial justice. Although the data and subsequent data analysis do not allow for more than one descriptive evaluation, it is clear how the specific urbanization pattern defining the character of a segmented city such as Santiago is formed, only now on a new scale.

Finally, new research perspectives have emerged: on the one hand, further spatial analysis of housing policies, and on the other hand, study of the discourse analysis contained in the definition of the urban housing policy itself. Based on the collected evidence, the dual analysis of these dimensions yields conclusions about the spatiality of the contemporary urban process in Santiago.

Notes

1. A subsidy for the partial cost of housing requires the applicant be able to access a mortgage from a banking agent. The mortgage in this case works well as a means to access a home, the definition of which no longer constitutes a right but rather a consumer good, and dependency on this type of bank credit is what Lapavitsas (2016) calls the financialization of income and personal consumption.
2. The camps are temporary housing solutions made out of precarious materials, built after land
grabs that tend to be public but can be, to a lesser degree, private.
3. We do not address the practices of improving existing social housing stock because the focus
of this policy, at least in proportional terms, is the allocation of subsidies for the production
of new residential units.
4. The buyer of social housing is subject to the existing supply; this supply, when governed by
market mechanisms, tends to decrease production costs by searching for cheaper land, in
other words, land in urban peripheries. Perhaps the only freedom given to the buyer is the
ability to choose the municipality of the urban periphery in which he or she wishes to reside.

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