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# Spatial Frontiers and Neo-communitarian Identities in the City: The Case of Santiago de Chile

**Francisca B. Márquez and Francisca P. Pérez**

## Abstract

This article analyses the different, yet similar, processes of identity-building used by poor and middle-income inhabitants of Santiago, Chile. It is suggested that these identity-building processes express the current type of urban segregation in this city and point to a weakening of the previously predominant model, which was based on the acceptance of social differences and daily exchanges between these sectors. Additionally, it is contended that the notion of 'public space' and values, such as (political) citizenship and social integration, have weakened. Paradoxically, this 'new' urban segregation has paved the way for a practice of neo-communitarian lifestyles, which supposedly reinforce the value of 'us' and protect this 'us' from the danger posed by 'them'.

## Introduction

This article addresses the current processes of identity-building processes in different socioeconomic sectors in Santiago de Chile. Santiago is an extremely unequal and segregated city. The central premise is that, alongside accelerated modernisation and urbanisation processes and growing inequality, the 'fear of the other' has become a central trait of Santiago's urban identity (UNDP, 1998, 2002). Over the course of time, this 'fear of the other' has led to the creation of a nostalgic image and a neo-communitarian myth, which currently goes hand-in-hand with the increasing deurbanisation of city life in Santiago (García Canclini, 1995). The logic behind this nostalgic longing for a rural and community-oriented way of life is the logic of a search for 'warm' identities, which stress the conviviality of social cohesion rather than individuality and urban pluralism.

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One's 'territory' today is no longer 'Santiago'; it is defined as one's *barrio*, or neighbourhood, which is a much smaller unit than the city. It entails a community, functioning as a rejection against the city—a city not appreciated or experienced as 'exciting', but as a discomforting 'anonymous mass'. The community revives the nostalgic notion of a 'self' being well-secured in his or her community, in which it is protected against the threats embodied by the urban individuation process which, only a few years ago, would have been considered normal to the city as a *civitas* (Márquez and Forray, 2005). However, a reversal occurred: the process of individual 'liberation' and the acquisition of individual sovereignty that is associated with living in the modern city, and the process of becoming an autonomous 'citizen' in the public space provided by the city (and unavailable in a *Gemeinschaft*) have taken a u-turn: the city is perceived as threatening and the *Gemeinschaft*-in-the-city is seen as the solution.

This article draws upon the results of two anthropological research projects, which were conducted between 2000 and 2005 with the support of the National Science and Technology Fund in Santiago at two locations. One is a *condominio*,[1] a middle-class housing complex made up of individual units or individual houses. The other location is a *villa*, or 'housing project' for poor residents. Naturally, the identities in both locations expressed the differences between the two 'territories'; differences that are the outcome of exacerbating urban residential segregation tendencies. However, we found that they also expressed the weakening of an urban model and image of social heterogeneity, the weakening of the notion of public space and the demise of values such as 'the politics of citizenship' and social integration.

In our ethnographies, we focused on how individuals construe themselves at the intersection of, on the one hand, the 'safe' confinements of their immediate domicile environment and, on the other, the city. We attempted to understand how identities are built and how identity frontiers are created at this junction. We examined how personal histories and a social and cultural history merge in new ways, in a setting in which one's group, often in contrast to the larger whole of the city, is portrayed as a 'home' and a family circle. Moreover, we looked at how those who live within the confines of such groups portray themselves and how they are looked upon by the 'others'; the 'others' being those who are excluded from one's 'safe home-community'. We observed practices that the inhabitants assume as carriers of their identities, in particular in the *condominios*, the areas where the conditions for community—which are provided by the real estate market, instead of the state or the notion of public space—become the primary reference point. Interestingly, the market obtained this position both for the inhabitants of the *condominios* and for those who are traditionally marginalised, but manage to survive on the fringes of this urban society. For the first group, it is the 'arena' in which they struggle for their income and are 'warriors' and, at the same time, the providers of hamlet-like living conditions. For the latter group, it is the threatening and capricious area where they wrest a living; the area where today state protection has withered.

## Chile: Urban, Modern and Unequal

To understand Santiago and its inhabitants and identities, we need to take a brief look at the changes that the Chilean social fabric has undergone in recent decades as a result of an accelerated economic 'modernisation' process and the return to democracy in the early 1990s. When one compares, for instance, the results of the 1992 and 2002 censuses, the progress in material living conditions and educational and job opportunities becomes evident. In a way, Chile has developed the traits

of a 'developed' country. It is characterised by a high degree of urbanisation, a diverse family composition and an ageing population. Moreover, the educational system has reached the masses; the level of higher education among the younger generation increased from 9 to 16 per cent, although this is still largely restricted to the upper quintile. The majority are accustomed to urban lifestyles and modern sanitary services, cars, refrigerators, washing machines and mobile phones: a genuine modern consumption society!

Towards the end of the 1990s, however, evidence of growing social segregation and discontent among the population surfaced. In its 1998 Human Development Report, the UNDP asserted that indicators of subjective discomfort and uncertainty were rising. At that time, Chileans apparently began to feel that more than economic growth was needed to end poverty and that an 'open economy' was also accompanied by vulnerability. In effect, the Asian Crisis of 1998 hit Chile hard. As a result, the discourse relating to 'success' was met with greater scepticism and there was increasing demand for the state to play a more active role in social policies. Nightmarish visions of past poverty and social crises emerged and people began to question the legitimacy of the incumbent economic (market) model (Bengoa *et al.*, 2000).

During this crisis, evidence of the enormous and even growing social inequality in Chile also became clearer. The belief in a genuine 'meritocratic' society waned. Recent studies confirm this suspicion: family origins still largely determine social mobility, much more so than academic achievements or doing one's best (see for example, Nuñez *et al.*, 2004). The Santiaguinos thus produce complex, multilayered narratives about their aspirations in the midst of their 'modernity'. They hope, suffer and put up with major existential and social tensions (Lechner, 2007). It therefore comes as no surprise that people's accounts of their lives express discontent and mistrust towards a model that, apparently, cannot reconcile 'modern growth' with an equal distribution of opportunities.

The research presented here suggests that under such circumstances the urban inhabitants tend to withdraw into the family; they tend to look for 'gated' spaces and enclaves where they can assure themselves of some kind of affective and material protection—that is, protection against fear of the threatening, anonymous outside world and the city they live in. Such fear is a product of the lack of "an individual's ability to exercise control over their own life and the behaviours and activities of others" and/or "how people experience and interpret urban space" (Bannister and Fyfe, 2001, pp. 808–809). In order to cope with fear, urbanites who can afford it tend to withdraw themselves from society by moving to gated communities (Atkinson, 2006; Low, 2001). New or reinvented nostalgic expressions with regard to 'safe' communities carry the message of a strong desire to reconstruct social bonds, which provide minimal certainties to help one face life's current challenges.

## Urban Segregation in Santiago de Chile

In order to address the question of what shapes these constructions of identity and social relations in Santiago, we need to sketch the 'urban stage' on which the process takes place. This is a stage that was already historically always characterised by residential segregation. It is important to remind the reader here that this research does not attempt to answer the question about the positive or negative effects of residential segregation in terms of employment opportunities or resources. The issue we wish to address is the one about the identity discourses and social practices that are being constructed in these segregated urban contexts. In other words, we try to understand how segregation contributes to, makes sense of or hinders these discourses and practices in one's 'own' territory.

Residential segregation has been the hallmark of traditional Latin America (Subercaseaux, 1940; de Ramón, 2000). In Chile, Santiago is a city that has been residentially segregated for a long time. Ever since the rule of politician Vicuña Mackenna as the district governor (*intendente*) of Santiago in 1850, there have been attempts to differentiate two cities. The 'city proper', in the centre is characterised by opulence. The city of the outskirts, located in the surroundings, is described as a focus of infection and vice. Throughout the 20th century, the construction of new residences for the élite families of Santiago was concentrated generally in only one area, adjacent to the historical centre of the city. At the other end of the social scale, the poor tended to amass in extensive areas of poverty, especially the farthest and worst-equipped periphery (de Mattos, 1999, 1997; Sabatini and Cáaceres, 2001). From the end of the 19th to the mid 20th century, one-quarter of the poor population of Santiago lived in shacks, crowded urban passageways and spontaneous self-built dwellings in the nooks and crannies of the city (de Ramón, 2000; EURE, 2006).

Generally speaking, residential segregation can be defined as the degree of spatial proximity or territorial concentration of families of a similar social grouping, which may be defined by ethnic origin, age, religion or socioeconomic characteristics. Identities and lifestyles, which adapt to or resist these segregational conditions, accompany and thus influence the 'objective' facts about segregation.

What can be observed today is the breakdown of the traditional pattern of segregation in Chilean cities, expressed, on the one hand, in a radicalisation of this segregation tendency for the poorest sectors and, on the other, in new patterns of segregation for the middle-class sectors in the city. The geographical extent of segregation is decreasing, particularly in those areas of the city with dynamic activity in the private real estate and development sector. Simultaneously, segregation is growing in the areas where the low-income families are currently settling. This has resulted in the growth of closed residential communities or *condominios* for middle- and upper-middle-income families, in traditionally poor municipalities. However, it has also resulted in the on-going construction of new housing complexes for low-income sectors on the outskirts of Santiago (Cáceres and Sabatini, 2004; Salcedo and Torres, 2004)

Since the early 1990s, the outskirts of the large Latin American cities have begun to reveal the two sides of this process. On the one hand, there are closed-community housing projects and neighbourhoods, and 'private city utilities' for the middle- and upper-income-groups, which are characterised by strict security measures, controlled access and open-air lifestyles, sports and nature. On the other, *viviendas sociales* (social housing schemes) have emerged with marginal services and infrastructure. These have been built by the national government for the poorest urban residents.

The conditions with regard to housing and neighbourhoods for the different social sectors are not only diametrically opposed in terms of infrastructural facilities, lot size and the quality of services, but also in terms of quality-of-life indicators (Ducci, 1998, 2000). These are in line with simple physical indicators such as the average plot size for houses in high-income municipalities. Lo Barnechea and Vitacura, for example, feature houses of around 200 square metres, while houses in the southern marginal areas of Santiago have a plot size of just 40 square metres. This offers clear evidence of the spatial dichotomy between housing for the affluent and the poor (Rodríguez, 2001; Svampa, 2000; Szajnberg, 1998, 2000a, 2000b).

The links between segregation and social inequality in Latin American cities have been dealt with extensively in recent years (see for

example, de Mattos, 1997; CEP, 2006; EURE, 2006). These studies tend to admonish such progressive segregation, but often refrain from providing a more in-depth analysis of its social and cultural consequences. Some authors suggest that, although segregation is evident, it does not necessarily have a negative effect on general social cohesion. Others insist that the processes of spatial segregation are directly tied to the breakdown of social cohesion and integration (Svampa, 2001; Caldeira, 2000). Our research supports that view.

## Neo-communitarianism And Urban Identity

The relationship between urban identity and community has been extensively discussed in the fields of sociology and urban anthropology. The breadth of semantic interpretation of the term 'community' can be grouped around two conceptual poles, according to which the definition either focuses upon the density of the 'grid' of a community manifestation or concentrates on the historical process. In the first case, the psycho-sociological aspects of the community are highlighted (i.e. the nature of relations between its members). In the second, the institutional and economic dimensions of the community are its determining features. North American anthropology generally privileges the first concept in its studies of local communities, be they rural, or urban neighbourhoods (*barrios*) embedded within modern societies. For Redfield (1965), the essence of the community resides in its holistic character: it is a 'human whole', in which its members live for and by it.

The insistence on characterising the community in its entirety was already present in the conceptual structures of 19th-century sociological thought. The dichotomy between the communal and the non-communal is found in the work of both Tönnies (1887/1995)

(*Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*: community/society) and Durkheim (mechanical solidarity/ organic solidarity). This logic of opposites is inseparable from a scheme of the evolution of human societies and presupposes an inevitable and irreversible development from one type of society (or from one structure of human relations) to another. This step would lead to the disappearance of community relations, a hypothesis that, in Tönnies' case, is accompanied by a nostalgic view of the evolution of social ties.

The hypothesis that suggests that urban life is characteristically dislocating, or tends to lead to the disappearance of the basics of community life, has been criticised and put into perspective by a variety of authors. Today, the hypothesis that in modern urban societies there is no place for such 'primitive' notions as the primacy of blood relationships, the sovereignty of tradition or the idea that collective identity will always reproduce itself, can no longer be upheld. There is no such thing as an inevitable evolutionary step from community to society. Rather, it seems as if community is often 'revitalised' in the face of a society perceived as threatening and disintegrating. The development of industrial society, in fact, has never fully eliminated community relationships. Even Tönnies signals that modern society, through the agencies of the state, has to recreate elements of community in order to ensure social order. All relationships involve both the community and the society (Weber, 1920/1968). In this sense, even the relations established in order 'instrumentally' to attain a specific end can lead to affective relations and vice versa. Community and society co-exist dialectically.

However, things have changed and the 'old fashioned' has returned. Marshall Berman (1988) signals that today modern man has taken a turn towards the past in an effort to rediscover those social bonds, which were once condemned by modernity as being contrary to 'progress'. Moreover, with regard to

Latin America, García Canclini (1999, p. 35) warned that, in the face of the 'catastrophes of modernisation, technologies and anonymous cities, the rural world and traditions are the last hope'.

The modern world continues to debate the unresolved theme of the balance between community and individualism (Nancy, 2000). Nancy points out that the community, far from being what society has destroyed or lost, is what happens to us as a result of finally living in society. In Touraine's words

> From the ruins of modern society and its institutions depart, on the one hand, global production, consumption and communications networks, and, on the other, the growth of a return to community (Touraine, 1997, p. 97).

It would seem that

> If once the illusion of modernity sheltered the idea that it was possible to create the citizen of the world, free of atavistic territorial bonds (in a remarkable parallel with contemporary transnational capital lacking in territorial ties), it must be agreed that the crisis of modern rationalism did away with such deficiency. Today, to the contrary, one perceives a movement of 'return to one's native territory' (Boisier, 1996, p. 54).

In the face of the processes and phenomena of globalisation and modernisation, the processes of neo-communitarianism, which is understood as a search for more agreeable surroundings within which people seek to recover a feeling of community, would appear to a way of overcoming the anonymity between individuals and living with those who share common stories and experiences to share processes of identity building (Boisier, 1996; Bengoa, 1995a).

Nevertheless, it is not hard to see that these manifestations of neo-communitarianism, such as the reinforcement of those relationships in the more intimate and immediate spaces that characterise local territory, are reminiscent of what Sennett (1990/2001) has called 'the celebration of the ghetto' or 'the myth of the purified community'. Modern life has taken a turn back towards the intimacy of the family institution, perhaps the only institution that offers stability and security *vis á vis* the fragility of other social contacts (Sennett, 1990). The purified community appears to point precisely to the fear of diversity and the apology for homogeneity; when those who are nearby are more like oneself, the community will be purer and safer.

With this sharp criticism of closed communities, Sennett warns us of the danger of a city comprised of small ghettos made up of equals, who are unable to recognise what is different from them. They are the expressions of a neo-communitarianism which is averse to sharing the diversity of social contact that is offered by the city (Sennett, 1990). With respect to the Latin American context, scholars have noted 'affinity-group urbanism' (Svampa, 2000), or the 'private city', the antithesis of the city as an open space, the city as something collective and public: the city as a space of diversity (Borja, 2000; Harvey, 1989a; Sorkin, 1992). Today, in Santiago, the *condominios*, the *villas* and often also the *poblaciones* appear to be closed neighbourhoods or 'fortresses'. They provide evidence of a city that is fragmented in terms of both territory and functionality.

Some authors speak of the 'privatopia', the love of one's own kingdom shared only with close peers, and 'agoraphobia', an abnormal fear of public places, as being two sides of the same coin implying a 'private city' which tends to restrict the spaces that are fully accessible and avoid public squares, streets and all those spaces where there might be unknown persons (Sorkin, 1992). This private city ignores the responsibilities and the social rights towards 'the commons', the shared urban space. It thus fuels the evolution of a concept of citizenship in which the original citizen becomes void.

The phenomenon certainly seems to have made an *entrée* in Chile. Together with

isolation, these 'neo-communities' also echo the remnants of a yearned-for identity that has strong roots in the countryside. Despite its early urbanisation, and in contrast to other Latin American countries, in Chile the structures which characterised the *hacienda* were reproduced in the urban context and complicated the formation of a modern, urban ethos that would be free to grow organically. Bengoa (1995a) reminds us that the idyllic image of a rural past is constituent of this Chilean culture. A culture developed in the city that attempted to reproduce the rural myth of the past with a strong load of nostalgia and yearning, including elements that perhaps never existed. As a vehicle for the image of 'community', it is, however, most effective.

> The modern world lives the re-encounter of the society and the community: society as the space where the spirit of liberty takes flight through the collective will to build a place for all; and the community, on the other hand, as the space wherein feelings of affection, freely and consciously adopted, (create the environment) in which the spirit of creativity unfolds. Society is a space open to infinite dealings, and community gives sense to those transactions (Bengoa, 1995a, p. 59).

## Neo-communitarism, 'One's Soil' and Citizen Identity

Urban identities, in spite of all the dynamics and 'flow' characteristic of a city, still presuppose 'habitat'—that is, being connected to territory, to land. Territory is connectedness, it is a link, belonging and being, but also occupying and moving to some place. At this place, one creates one's own history, which becomes part of one's identity, just as it does for nations and states. Territorial identity is the total sum of the relations and affections that tie us to our environment. Over time, these harden into behavioural codes which are shared by the (imagined) community

(de Certeau, 1990; Anderson, 1993). Our self-images are intimately connected to the ways in which we connect to and construct our territory.

Territory is thus a socio-cultural entity embodying our 'selves' and the 'power to reside' (Lefebvre, 1972). Moreover, it is also a political entity because it determines the boundaries of 'we' and of state and nation (Babha, 2002; Appadurai, 1996). However, multiple and complex links, tensions and interactions exist between local, national and global levels of territory. Where some identity boundaries become blurred or are weakened, reterritorialisation and neo-communitarianism often emerges—in other words, efforts to counter these tendencies and reaffirm one own 'soil' (Arditi, 2002; Salman and Kingman, 1999).

Where speed and flow increase, slowness and feelings of 'safeguarded belonging' emerge. That is why, for instance, nostalgic imagery of bucolic life and of rural slowness became stronger in Santiago. As we demonstrate, for the poorer *pobladores* these take the shape of the solid solidarity of the *campamentos*, the precarious make-do neighbourhoods of earlier days; whereas for the middle classes, they assume the shape of the tranquil, bucolic-like environments of their youth.

This tendency conflicts with images about the city as a *polis* and as a symbol of emancipation. That is why, in cities like Santiago, we find these 'friction zones', these multiple boundaries between public and private, the interior and the exterior, the included and the excluded. We find both the *condominios*, the gated communities, the ghettos and the metropolis, the megalopolis, in which they penetrate, thus questioning the urban experience as an expression of the *polis*, of the *vita activa* of Hannah Arendt and the emancipatory freedom of Simmel. The taken-for-grantedness of 'being urban' and belonging to the city becomes uncertain;

the enclaves tend to limit and restrict the possibility of turning the city into the *agora* ('reunion and word') and discovering one's urban identity.

## Ethnography and the Research Sites

Our methodology involved an ethnographic focus, the use of observation techniques, in-depth interviews and discussion groups; the latter involved representatives of those living in the two residential areas.

Ethnographic description, or writing about culture, presupposes the direct observation of social behaviour—or, in other words, a degree of familiarity with the groups and individuals that one wants to study. Field-work, observation, the diligent work of estab-lishing a relationship with an 'other', who does not always wish to be observed, form the nucleus of the ethnographic task (Laplantine, 1996). A truly ethnographic description seeks to illustrate richly social phenomena (Mauss, 1989), providing testimony of what is ordin-ary, repetitive and minute.

The ethnographic mapping of the sites inhabited by the subjects of our study was carried out between 1998 and 2003, with the explicit objective of comprehensively de-scribing the contexts of everyday life of the inhabitants. The following dimensions were covered: the socio-demographic and physical characteristics of the localities and residences; the protagonists and public agents present in those territories; the social intermediaries, or community leaders and officials of social organisations; the ordinary lifestyle of the neighbourhoods; the social dynamics and situations that influence identity; the disputes and tensions related to collective projects and identities present in the neighbourhood; and, the relations between the neighbourhood, the state and the real estate market, and their significance.

The in-depth interviews and the focus groups aimed at finding characterisations of

the territorial identity which we conceptu-alised as the ascription of and identification with a territory, and the practices giving sub-stance to power and control over that territory. We operationalised this territorial identity using five dimensions in our fieldwork

(1)  *History and time-continuity in the identity-stories about one's territory:* here, the issue of an identity story over time, and the theme of a 'founding myth' were central.
(2)  *Coherence and heterogeneity of this identity:* the issue we studied was whether a specific story was recognised by all and, if so, whether different versions existed.
(3)  *External acknowledgement of the story:* the theme was whether the story was recognised, known and accepted as 'true', outside the community.
(4)  '*Working on identity':* here, we addressed how the inhabitants dealt with conflicts and tensions inside and outside the neigh-bourhood, and how they connected these to identities. Issues such as stigmatisation and discrimination were covered.
(5)  *Practices and projects of territorial iden-tities:* here, the issue of the practices ex-pressing the identity took central stage, as did the questions about the differences between generations and 'new inventions' of these practices over time.

The research was conducted in two socio-geographical settings: in the Municipality of Huechuraba and in the Municipality of Cerro Navia, both in northern Santiago.

The residential complex of El Carmen de Huechuraba, comprising 25 *condominios*, is located in Huechuraba. About 1200 young families live there. Huechuraba is a municipality that was traditionally the home of economically deprived people. Only recently has it seen the emergence of new construction built specifically for the middle and upper-middle classes. This points

to a major break with traditional segregation (residential segregation at the scale of the municipality) and illustrates the advent of what has been called local (intracommunity) segregation. It is thus reminiscent of the 'gentrification' process (Zukin, 1998), a process characterised by the mixing of wealthier and poor housing.

The young couples who buy homes in these new residential complexes are married and have an average age of 36. They have professional degrees and on average two children. Their social background is that of young families coming from middle-class municipalities, looking for future careers that promise a rise in income. Their consumption is therefore expected to become increasingly similar to those of the upper classes. They were born in the high-level municipalities of Las Condes and Vitacura and, to a lesser extent, in Providencia, Ñuñoa, Santiago[2] and Macul. Only 6 per cent come from outside the Metropolitan Region. Some 58 per cent of these families tried to purchase homes in Las Condes, but were not able to do so, due to the excessively high prices of housing there. Huechuraba was only their fourth choice after also trying the (also expensive) municipalities of Vitacura and La Reina.

The ethnography presented in this article concentrates on 1 of the 25 *condominios*, or housing complexes, the one named *El Carmen de Huechuraba,* and includes some data based on observations of two other *condominios*. Additionally, some 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with young families of these *condominios* (ages 25–40 years), a discussion group with 8 couples was established and a review of secondary reference material was carried out.

Villa El Resbalón, our second research site, is also located in the northern part of Santiago, in the Municipality of Cerro Navia, located along the Mapocho River, which is traditionally the home of the most marginal sectors of the city's poor. In 2003, the National Socio-Economic Index indicated that 21.7 per cent of the inhabitants of Cerro Navia were 'poor', while 18.7 per cent of the national population was located below this poverty line.

There are 94 families in Villa Nueva Resbalón. Our observations and the ethnographic description concentrate on the entire residential complex. However, the characterisation and analysis of the social background and everyday relationships are based on research conducted among 45 families. During the 1990s, these families received government-subsidised housing (*vivienda social*). This section of Chilean society is today often depicted as 'the new poor'; that is, the group of poor people who, having resolved certain basic needs such as housing, are presently facing the needs and aspirations typical of their new situation (Rodríguez and Sugranyes, 2005; Tironi, 2003).

*Condominios*, fenced citadels, blossom in cities across the globe and have become established as a way and style of life among the more affluent social sectors of the great metropolises. In Johannesburg, Miami, Paris, Istanbul, Toronto, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Montevideo, Santiago and Bogota these highly protected ghettos, the gated communities, are multiplying (Alvarez-Rivadulla, 2007; Genis, 2007; Huchzemeyer *et al.*, 2004; Preteceille and de Queiroz Ribeiro, 1999; Qadeer, 2004).

The existing literature associates the proliferation of these highly protected spaces with the growing insecurity of urban life. The expansion of life in *condominios* has often been portrayed as: an illustration of the increase and consolidation of social inequality; a signal of the crisis of governance (the state) to guarantee the security and protection of all its citizens; and, a consequence of the ongoing privatisation of social life (Belmessous, 2002; López, 1996; Pérouse de Montclos, 1996; Svampa, 2001; Sennett, 1990).

The loss of control of the urban spaces by their inhabitants, the insecurity, the

weakening of what is public and the rise of a model of 'private citizenry', a citizenry organising its own small nation-state and willing to pay for the security and self-confirmation it guarantees, based on collective self-regulation among peers and individual self-care for one's livelihood, are some of the elements highlighted in the analyses of these new urban spaces which are sometimes even described as 'feudal territories'.

In Chile, the discussion about the phenomenon of the rise of the *condominios*, which began in the 1990s, also emphasised the crisis of the state and the weakening of its regulatory power to guarantee 'citizen security' as one of the principal causes. The main effects were a loss in trust not only in the state, but also in one's fellow citizens. In 1998, the UNDP Human Development Report showed that 80 per cent of Chileans were 'distrustful' and that 87 per cent believed that they would not receive help if attacked on the streets. Referring to this perception of increased insecurity, the fear of the other—even of a neighbour—recent literature has begun to develop a theoretical framework to interpret the current flourishing of and high appreciation of life in a *condominio*. The modern fear of being 'exposed' (Sennett, 1990) and the subsequent quest for enclosure within the intimacy of the home and among equals, has, according to such analyses, gradually become a characteristic of the identity of the modern urban-dweller.

However, the value placed on security behind closed doors and a model of 'protected autonomy' (Svampa, 2000) did not remain confined to these *condominios*, it gradually extended to other spheres of life, such as sports, school, church and even urban services and commerce. Plausibly, the desire for secured places, amidst like-minded people, is a more global phenomenon which also affects the poor. Having lost the state as a reliable helping 'vehicle' for integration, the poor are obliged to take recourse to 'their own kind'—fostered to do so by reminiscences of their collective battles and solidarity—and discouraged from doing so by the disintegration and increasing violence they sense in their neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, it is only the wealthy, who are fenced-in with sophisticated security devices in their *condominios*, who have actually been able fully to provide it.

Enclosed in the *condominio* of wealth, the inhabitants move steadily towards shaping a neo-communitarian privacy or self-enclosure, in which the community is (re)built on traditional foundations such as family, religion, ethnic origin and property. It is an exclusive community that exists exclusively in its own territory. David Harvey (1989b) referred to these examples of neo-communitarianism as 'the community trap'.

From a different perspective, Cáceres and Sabatini (2004) consider *condominios* in Santiago and other cities a growing phenomenon which *reduces* the geographical extent of segregation. They observe that this process constitutes a mode of pluri-classist integration which might bring about new possibilities and opportunities for the poor. Both in 'objective' terms (employment, services, urban facilities) and in subjective terms (the perceptions with regard to progress and development), the downsizing of geographical segregation brought about by the *condominios* in poorer districts, would benefit the poor.

To understand the phenomenon of segregation and spatial duality, which is currently developing in Latin America, we believe it to be necessary to consider how these changes are perceived by the middle classes. In contrast to the 'old bourgeoisie' which was loyal to national governance and often characterised by fairly austere lifestyles, the present middle class focuses far more strongly on its ties with the market and is characterised by a more hedonistic lifestyle (Svampa, 2001). The core identity of this new middle class is defined less by national citizenship and its role in public and political realms, but

more by its capacity for consumption and its search for specific lifestyles that increasingly demonstrate the desire to 'return' to one's private space, a sort of withdrawal into non-public, 'confidence-providing' enclaves. At the same time, the middle classes have become increasingly heterogeneous from a social and professional point of view which makes it harder for them to unite on the basis of class interests.

## The Condominios in Huechuraba

Los Naranjos ('The orange trees') is the name of one of the *condominios* that make up El Carmen de Huechuraba (see Figures 1 and 2). It is located in the municipality of Huechuraba in the northern part of Santiago. To the south, it borders the Circunvalación Américo Vespucio highway and to the north lie mountains that separate it from the La Pincoya residential neighbourhood of the same municipality. This *condominio* is comprised of 48 houses with floor areas between 140 and 172 square metres, on plots that are 450 square metres and the values of

which range between 4000 and 5500 UF (US$140 000–192 500).[3]

The residents' stories reveal that they came to live there because of information given to them by friends and relatives. All of them are young, families of professional people who are motivated by the same quest: to get out of Santiago and to build a neighbourhood 'of one's own'. That is to say, to build an identity, to be absolutely sure about the 'us' and the



**Figure 1.**   The entrance of the *condominio* Los Naranjos, in the residential complex of El Carmen de Huechuraba
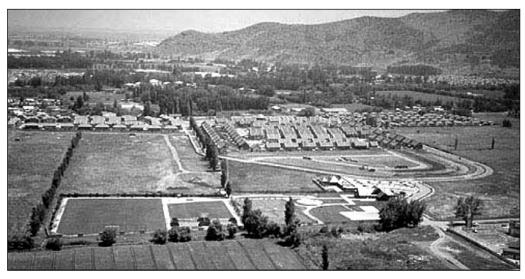


**Figure 2.**   A panoramic overview of the whole of the *condominios* situated in the Huechuraba municipality in Santiago (2005)

'we'. They aimed to achieve a position in which they could, using their own words, recover 'old feelings', past traditions and a lifestyle that breaks away from the models of urban living.

From within one's territory and *condominio*, boundaries are established and fortified, but, above all, an ethos of origins and a rural past is constructed. A yearning for the country life is mentioned constantly in the stories of the residents, stories that build a poetry of spaces in which the past is coloured by bucolic fantasies (Bachelard, 1965). The care given to the gardens and all that is 'natural' reflects this nostalgia for the countryside and a return to the lost community (Bengoa, 1995a).

> All this, in the *condominio*, were orange and lemon trees, really beautiful. They cut them all down—money, of course, was more important. When they started to build all this, it was still really marvellous, we were only a few at the time, it was really like the countryside, it reminded me of the time I lived there, still a child. Today, they keep on selling all the remaining lots, we get piled up here more and more. The lots are small; actually it's a pity the way things look today. Earlier, the old gate, the church, the stables were still there, and cows and horses. It all disappeared—not much countryside left now (Fernanda, age 39 years).

The old farm land on which the *condominios* have been built lends substance to this poetic remembrance of country life. Relics of the past are conserved and displayed for visitors (a grain silo, a cross, a stable). The 'Chilean-style' houses, with their mud tile roofs, include juxtaposed bow windows and 'American-style' gardens to complete this urban picture with rural reminiscences.

Paraphrasing García Canclini (1992), in Huechuraba it is more important to have a neighbourhood than a country or a city. The neighbourhood is the space in which everything that is shared by its inhabitants becomes identical and interchangeable. Thus the neighbourhood is the territory wherein everything is put on display and holidays are jointly celebrated and everyday rituals are dramatised. Those who do not share this territory, who do not live there, do not have the same objects and symbols, the same rituals and customs; they are 'others', they are different, they are actors in a different scene and with a different role to play (García Canclini, 1992). This 'other' is tolerated, but is not habitually included, not even in the most fortuitous aspects of living together. Relations with others, with those who are poor or who live outside the walls of the *condominio*, are only established occasionally, be they service-oriented relations (maids, gardeners, repairmen) or charitable; charity that in this case has the school as the go-between and occurs only in emergency situations.

These are small 'total' communities, or micro-societies, whose identity and sociability are sustained in the homogeneity of their residents in social, cultural, economical, political and religious matters. Protection of the family, solidarity, confidence and sociability among equals are the values on which everyday living and identity within these *condominios* are based. These are values that the residents believe are on the retreat in modern urban society, but which are preserved by escaping from the city and starting the construction of a lifestyle that recovers and protects 'the old traditions of this country'.

Nostalgia, the obstinate search for a life 'like it was when we were young', for warm sociability among equals, for the pleasure of being together: these are feelings that are highlighted in the stories of many of these residents. The 'tribal character' that these families have managed to give to their lives—a character that is certainly facilitated by the architectural and urban design of the *condominios*—fits the aspirations of each of them. The 'bubble', the 'small dome' that they speak of, while not identical to the

'post-modern tribe' that Mafessolli (2000) mentions, is somewhat similar. In the small, protected community they try to 'give our children the infancy that we had'. Confronted with what they perceive to be the brutality of urban individualism, there seems to be only one answer: confinement and safety in the narrow, protected and nevertheless vital boundaries of everyday life among equals

> My motives [to come to live at the Huechuraba *condominio*] were: one, to have the family nearby and, secondly, to find a more humane way of life. In other words: to be much more in a communitarian system; in actual fact we all know each other and we all have children of the same age. All the neighbours know what is going on next door, so if somebody needs something, or if your car is failing: take mine! Or: listen, I'm going to the market —do you want me to bring you something? Or, hey, I am going to the supermarket—do you want something? Or: can you take care of my children for a little while? We all help each other (Javiera, age 34 years).

> We celebrated New Year [in the summer season with high temperatures at night]—we all took out our tables; we all brought something to eat. So we had New Year outdoors, you have something, so you bring it. That is very much a community thing and very family like, it's all mutual helping out (Claudia, age 34 years).

The walled-in area, with its guards, alarms and electrified fences that separates and protects them from the *pobladores* (lower-class residents of the adjacent poor neighbourhood), has its correlation in terms of identity. People have enough of anonymity and the neighbour's Argus-eyed watching

> I feel that Huechuraba evades this, because it's like the people of the countryside. They all know each other, the whole world shares with each other. In Santiago, you saw your neighbour only once, and often never again. And this has happened because of this competitiveness, because the woman also had to

go and work outdoors—and I believe this eradicated the family thing, the warmth, the tenderness of the family, the family concern (Maria Laura, age 32 years).

In the community of equals, there are scarce references made to an imaginary community, or, in Anderson's term (2000), a nation-state. The principles of integration begin and end with the face-to-face encounters, with the boundaries of the *condominio* and the community of equals, of a strongly 'privatised citizenry' where the real estate development company and its administrative office take the place of the state. In the *condominio*, repairs of things in the 'public space', the payment of electricity and maintenance bills, the protection from evil, the delivery of the mail, are all taken care of by the real estate company's office. The Chilean state is absent and, more to the point, superfluous.

The neighbourhood is an artificial one and that avoids the risks of the outside world, with residents of a community of equals who conserve and defend individual and private spaces. A magazine that reported on and praised the area states

> The home should allow a type of life that makes activities in a group easy but also favours the individual: sharing with the family and at the same time provides personal space and space for the couple. ... to favour the neighbourhood community where there are shared spaces (public squares, or *plazas*, and social meeting places), but independence from the neighbours as well (separate homes, at a distance that allows visual privacy) (Time, 2000).

Here, it is not the state that is required to endorse and project the principles of integration, on a nation-state scale; it is the community of equals and, certainly, 'out there'—the market, where money is made. Furthermore, although the state, in people's accounts, rarely appears as an identity reference or a source of aid, when it is invoked

it will always be the state of equals, the state 'to us'. It is not of all Chileans; all Chileans include those whom one wants to exclude

> I feel hardly inclined to stand up for my country... Ay, what a shame I am saying what I am saying! It is so selfish, but ... well, I don't know ... This is the first time in my life that someone asks me this ... Sure, I am a Chilean, but in my life, really, my identity is my family. Actually, it does not go much further than my neighbourhood: obviously, if I need to help my fellow human being, I will help him (Maria Pía, age 35 years).

Life in these *condominios* has something of 'paradise lost' and something of the ghetto. It is reminiscent of tribal relations; on an empirical level, the *condominio* reflects the human need for feelings of belonging—to a place or a group—as an essential basis for all social life.

## Social Housing: Identities in the Community of the Unequal

In 2000, the poor population of Chile comprised about 81 000 people; 20.6 per cent of the Chilean population as a whole. Their conditions have, beyond doubt, improved. Indeed, the housing deficit is decreasing for the first time in decades. This makes Chile an exception in Latin America. In Chile, today, the poor have a roof over their heads and they generally live in solid rather than makeshift houses. Furthermore, new houses have been constructed as a consequence of the process of densification. Building high-rise blocks facing one another was the strategy adopted to deal with scarcer and more expensive land. At the same time, however, Chilean families still generally prefer family houses (Palmer, 1985).

More importantly, the main complaints were not about the (often not too well-built) housing, but about the neighbourhoods (Palmer, 1985). The desire to move out is most directly related to discontentment with the way of life and the sociability that people felt was imposed upon them by the building mode. Current policies have, more than other sectors, condemned the poor to housing conditions that reaffirm their feeling of being ghettoised, which has strengthened the tendency towards social fragmentation.

From the 1990s onwards, the literature refers to a new type of poverty, which is seen as a product of changes in the socioeconomic and occupational structure. The 'new poverty' (Rodríguez, 2001; Rodríguez and Sugranyes, 2005) or 'modern poverty' (Bengoa, 1995b), is characterised by new needs as well as its resistance to the scant current social policies. It emphasises the difficulties the poor have in benefiting from the features of the model of modernisation and economic growth which dominates the country's current development. It also points at the feelings of abandonment these 'new poor' experience as the state withdrew from a series of tasks, interventions and responsibilities formerly associated with its redistribution and protection duties.

In addition, the prejudicial consequences, which spatial segregation has always had on the poor, have become more acute. The effects of residential segregation have increased with respect to social prejudices. There are greater correlations between one's segregated position and indicators of social problems. In contrast to the 1970s, when the density of the population in poor neighbourhoods was often 'translated' into higher degrees of organisation and the collective promotion of the interests of the inhabitants of those poorer areas, the capacity to negotiate with the state for access to services has weakened. More generally, the creation of strong social networks to support insertion into the urban economy has now made way for a type of segregation that intensifies social problems and negatively affects the residents' awareness of the fact that they live in a 'ghetto' (Ducci, 2000;

Rodríguez and Sugranyes, 2005; Márquez, 2005). In sum, internal disintegration and external rejection have increased while organisational capacities have decreased.

To make things worse, an inventory of the social housing 'products' of the past 20 years reveals the major architectural deficiencies in terms of urban design and connectivity, and the deficiencies of the local public transport policy. The substantial investments in houses have not been accompanied by a sufficient degree of investment in public services. Housing projects are often located far from schools, health services, parks and public spaces. This results in a dramatic increase in feelings of being separated, cut off from the city and 'marginal' (Rodríguez and Sugranyes, 2005).

Taken together, these processes exemplify a new stage of urban segregation, which is accompanied by serious social problems. Social housing may provide an improved quality of life at the material level, but it also undermines the customs and socio-cultural logic of the poor in their everyday and productive lives (Ducci, 1998; Skewes, 2002). The currently prevalent style of shelter-provision fosters disintegration and the dissolution of previously dominant types of sociality among the poor. This is clearly evidenced by the high degree of intrafamily violence (Rodríguez, 2001).

The increase and consolidation of social inequalities, the loss of control of their territory by the group to which this territory belongs, the withdrawal of the state from its role as a proactive guarantor of security and protection for all of its citizens, the insecurity people perceive in their daily lives, the rise of a model of 'private citizenry' among the middle and higher classes and the resulting privatisation of 'social life', are all elements that need to be taken into account when analysing the features of urban segregation today. The urban 'fault lines' (Agüero and Stark, 1998), the frontiers within the very interior of the city, thus appear as both the expression of and a resource for 'decentred' integration and identification within the groups to whom specific bits of the territory belong. Yet it also signifies exclusion or disconnection from the rest of society. The process leads to both a factual compartmentalisation of different social groups and, consequentially, an increase of feelings of 'fear of the outside'. In the case of the wealthier, in their *condominios*, it materialises in 'withdrawal' from politics and the state, in group shielding and cocooning, and increased reluctance to interact with the poor. In the case of the poor, it materialises in a mixture of yearning for community and group confidence, disappointment in the state's absence, continuous longing for national integration and apprehension about the outside world. This study confirmed that the problems people experience are not in the first place those of 'survival', but those of mutual trust, of living together and being forced to share territory and identity.

## Social housing and Identity in Cerro Navia

Ninety-two families live in the Villa Nueva Resbalón de Cerro Navia, in apartments with floor areas of between 47 and 63 square metres, and that cost between 50 and 60 UF (US$1750–2100) (see Figures 3 and 4).[3] The residents of this housing project came to live there as a result of their participation in government-subsidised housing programmes. Many of them knew each other before they came to live there, and shared a history as residents of the *campamento* El Resbalón on the banks of the Mapocho River. These *campamentos*, most of which were established in the 1960s and early 1970s, are a product of the squatting of unoccupied land on which the squatters erected precarious shelters of wood, sheet metal and cardboard. The name El Resbalón (The Slide)

derives from a dirt road (probably muddy on rainy days), which connected the rural properties that used to exist there. The area has a rural and folk-imbued origin that, here again, allowed some of the residents to build a nostalgic tale of its past

> It was a little hamlet here, El Resbalón, three buses a day came by, at the time, one at eight, one at one o'clock and one in the afternoon, really a tiny little hamlet it was. A little further away there were farms; here was a piece of arable land, where the bus-stop is now, and the bakery. Down there were other fields, there was a tiny police-post and chapel, it was really like the countryside; we were happy then. I rented quite a large lot, with an apricot tree on it—today everything is becoming *villa*. In those days, if people did not have money, they'd go to the fields, work there a couple of hours, and bring home fruit, vegetables ... there, over the bridge, were all fields, today it's all *villa*; I don't like that (Yolanda, age 65 years).

For those residents who lived in this *campamento*,[4] life was organised through networks of confidence and privileged social relationships of obligation and favouritism. Undoubtedly it *was* to a certain degree and *is*, in current recollection even much more so, a universe of solidarity and mutual help. The concept, or idealistic image, of the *campamento* is also expressed through nostalgic references to rural existence, conserving traces of 'rural life', which in actual fact was an effective defence against hunger because it was always possible to cultivate the land, garden or even engage in agricultural labour.



**Figure 3.**    Social housing in Villa Nueva Resbalón, in the municipality of Cerro Navia, Santiago (2005)



**Figure 4.**    Social housing in Villa Nueva Resbalón, in the municipality of Cerro Navia, Santiago (2005)

The wish to migrate or return to the *campamento* one senses today is directly connected to the discontentedness with the life and sociality that have been imposed upon people who see themselves as being forced to live 'among equals'. Nonetheless, the nostalgia for the countryside is a mere metaphor, also applied by people who did not migrate. It is a story constructed over the generations and does not wither now that migration from the countryside to the city has actually diminished. The nostalgia for the life in the *campamento* and the disenchantment with the present conditions mainly point to a weakened community. The absence of solidarity and of a pleasant daily interaction increases to worsen the effects of persistent poverty; and the state withdrew after handing over the new houses. It strengthens the feelings of living in a ghetto, rather than in a community.

> In the *villa* our identity was lost, in the *campamento* there were nicer people. Someone would start something, and many would join in. We did lunches together—today that could not take place anymore. People were more modest back then, much more a community, someone would really talk to one's neighbour, and today they don't even say hello—because they obtained what they were after, a house. 'I've got it now, and I don't care about the rest', that what's going on between neighbours today. Before, it was like in the countryside, people would help one another without even being asked—as it should be between those born on the same soil, the same land (Juan, age 45 years).

Those neighbours who did share the experience of the *campamento* portray it as a life of trust and brotherhood. And this romanticising of the *campamento* is expressed in terms of nostalgia for a more 'rustic', country life, where no-one would ever go hungry because there would always be fields in which they could work nearby.

In contrast to Huechuraba, in the Villa El Resbalón obtaining a home marked the loss of community: the loss of the *campamento*. Everyday life and routine in the *villa* are hardly peaceful sharing processes. Many others, from outside the *campamento*, came to share life in the new *villa*. The diversity of personal histories, perceptions and points of view with respect to the environment and the conditions one would need to achieve social integration, make it hard to find agreement. A lack of social confidence, generalised fear and insecurity characterise people's situation. Set on the periphery of their municipality, Cerro Navia, and on the fringes of Santiago, the residents of *the Villa El Resbalón* worry about the terms of their integration in urban society. They aspire to be part of the city and want to be reassured by this integration. Instead, they experience exclusion, concern and anxiety.

> In this *villa*, no matter what day of the week, the settlers prefer their children inside, and not to go out and play outside. With all that is going on here, people are afraid to send their children out. Sometimes people one has never seen before enter the *villa*, and so there is this fear people have, especially in the night, with the streets and alleys all dark. People won't risk putting light-bulbs on the outside their houses, because they get stolen—small wonder mothers are terrified to know their boys are out. Here, the weekends are especially hard; they already entered this house to steal things, they entered the neighbourhood centre and various houses. We need more vigilance here, especially because of these people that are not from here, because one does not know them; you recognise the ones not from here. The current leader [of the neighbourhood council] suggested that everybody should have a whistle, and that every time you witness something uncommon, you should blow the whistle and then somebody should call the *carabineros* [Chilean military police] (Juan, age 45 years).

The procedure of distributing housing and locating the families created a certain degree of segregation among them from

the outset and also led to an inclination towards continuous vigilance and control towards all others. There are always disputes about the terms of living together and the codes of social integration. The conflicts strengthen impermeable boundaries between neighbours.

For those residents who arrived from the surrounding *poblaciones* and obtained a house thanks to their own savings, living with families from the *campamentos*—who have often benefited from the programmes helping the 'very poor', the ones without resources of their own—establishing relations with these 'completely impoverished' is hard. The behavioural norms of those from the *campamento* express, in the 'eyes of the better-off', a culture of marginality. It makes them feel that the fulfilment of their own aspirations for social integration is endangered. Their priority is to care for their surroundings, keep them clean, have 'good manners' and to live indoors as 'decent', well-educated citizens.

> As for the house, I won't complain. It is all right, but, frankly, I expected another thing [moving here, for instance] that my daughter would have relationships with another kind of people … I am afraid that she'll make friends with these people here, that is a terrifying idea. Of course, they are only children, nevertheless, I made her see that there are people who are good and bad people… As long as they don't teach her bad things, no problem, she can make friends with whomever she likes, but still, only up to a certain point. What I have in mind is this: once I have paid half of the house, I'll sell it and buy another one someplace else. That is my big dream. For instance in Vitacura [a high-income district], I want to buy the plot and build the house myself. That's because of the kind of people over there, see? (Claudia, age 28 years).

On the other hand, for those whose origins are in the *campamentos*, the aspirations for social integration are based on a very different idea. Their concern is to recover the lost community, their combative features and to defend their ('demanding') relationship with the state. They are less concerned about privacy. Although the majority are satisfied with their homes, there is still nostalgia for that 'community way of life' on the banks of the river and for the protection given by the state, albeit after fierce protests. Community and the state are the two basic sources of support for integration into this society. They are reference points for the protection networks, which are necessary for those whose aspiration for integration is less focused on individual sacrifice. They are aware of the fact that they are poor and stigmatised; despite having been transformed into *pobladores* by their move towards the *villa*. Today, they miss the proactive state to help them and, instead, face stigmatisation and discrimination not only from outside the community, but also from their own neighbours.

The residents of the Villa El Resbalón aspire to social integration, which will allow them to feel that they are inhabitants of their municipality, their city and their country with equal rights and status. Nevertheless, the principles and the moral codes that motivate that legitimate hope differ. Some believe that integration and the achievement of social recognition are mainly a personal struggle, an achievement for which one's personal efforts, one's work and 'civil' family privacy are crucial. Others emphasise the unity of the community, the solidarity and mutual confidence, and proximity, as formulae for achieving those ends to at least a minimal degree.

All of them are aware of the fact that they are, at present, *excluded* residents of the city. They live on its edge. Yet their remedies differ. Some still dream of this unified 'community' of likeminded people, sharing a history of hardship and fighting it with 'the poor man's reciprocity', whereas at the same time they keep up the aspirations for social and civil

integration. This community evaporated once they started to live in Villa El Resbalón. The 'others' they now share their habitat with, prefer the 'petty bourgeois' strategy of climbing the ladder of status, income and integration. In a way, both groups miss the community—but some want a community as a closed, combative group demanding that the state takes care of the vulnerable and others want a community of hard-working, obedient, poor but virtuous Chileans.

## Conclusions

An important conclusion is that Santiaguinos live a contradiction: they are part of modern urban life characterised by subways, malls, urban highways and advanced communication technology, but at the same time they embody the inclination to 'wall-oneself-in', to construct a territorially segregated and socially segmented city. Santiago's modernity has not been able to sort out its relation with segregation and fear of the other.

Santiago's modernisation has been unable to counter tendencies towards segregation, both caused and reinforced by phenomena such as mutual suspicion and fear between the inhabitants of the city. Moreover, feelings of insecurity increase when incomes are lower (see Rodríguez and Sugranyes, 2005). All inhabitants of Santiago, however, feel very insecure when going to the city centre—the very place that ought to represent the city's diversity and its public space.

Whether it be in a *villa* or *condominio*, what is certain is that in Santiago, as in other Latin American cities, the urban fault lines, large or small, illustrate the consolidation of a pattern of 'proper' ways of life within groups, which are homogeneous both socially and in terms of their identity. The current fault lines additionally illustrate the dwindling of an 'urban model' based on heterogeneity, the flow of interaction between different

actors, the notion of public space and values such as a 'politics towards all citizens' and social integration.

The city tends to become an archipelago. This city of walls and boundaries ceases to be *one* city. While some people are able to create a setting reflecting their lifestyle among equals and a 'sociability among ourselves' and to establish a private 'urbanism of affinities', for others the manifestations of inequality and frustrated desire for integration permeate and affect their individual mobility projects and poison their daily encounters.

Whilst social identity in the *condominios* of the upper and middle classes is privatised and the ethos of a neo-communitarian lifestyle obtains, in the housing complexes of the poor a positive collective identity and the ambition for a 'community life' are frustrated. 'Life among equals' is realised only in a negative sense: it is the condition of being excluded that people share. Becoming a community in a more positive sense remains a mere desire. Whereas in the *condominios* the relationship with the market (the real estate development company) replaces the state, as the guarantee for being able to build one's 'life project', in the social housing projects the state is still called upon to attain minimum quotas of social integration and cohesion. Yet it largely fails to deliver. Caught halfway between the old client relationship with the state and the current image of the 'self-help' *nuevo poblador*, the residents of the *villa* are reappraising the terms of their relationship with the state.

In the closed *condominios* of the middle-upper class, the image of the community identity omits both the state and the nation. It is based primarily on privatised social surroundings. National identity is valued to the degree that it permits the reproduction of certain cultural codes, ways of talking, uses and customs that strengthen the nostalgic yearning for an idealised rural past. A national responsibility, however, is lacking. Privatisation

and the rupture with the national project and identity are the expressions of this erosion of national integration.[5]

In the poor *villas*, on the other hand, the daily struggle for a definition of the terms of social integration endures, even if it is here also mixed with nostalgia for the countryside. However, for those who seek integration into the city and its public spaces, the consolidation and increasing impermeability of the urban boundaries embody the loss of a nation, of a 'national us'. It underlines their condition as being 'mere' inhabitants of the city's margins. They see their search for an improved quality of life colliding against the 'iron' manifestations of inequality and experience the stigmatisation that goes hand-in-hand with their history of poverty. The disputes between 'poor equals' and the precarious terms of their social contract reveal a weakened 'us'.

In Chile, as in other modern societies, national identities are becoming more privatised and less relevant in familial, economic, social and cultural dimensions of life. The state and the nation have weakened as cornerstones for building identity. Instead, the strong boundaries of the communities of equals—the family and those most intimately close—are being established as the principal and often only reference and refuge. The social and cultural unity provided by the state and a shared national history have ceased to be elements generating attachment, integration and cohesion towards the whole of society. They are no longer the parameters that protect and pull the society together.

The risk we have identified is not so much the existence of these poor *villas* and the wealthier *condominios*, but in the de-urbanising effect they appear to have. They are symptoms of a city of fears, and of a city that gave up the wish to participate and voice one's mind, to accept silence, submission and anxiety about public space. Segregated territory has become something that jeopardises sovereignty and public space. Segregation can, when taking specific forms and levels of intensity and rigidness, also destroy the city.

## Notes

1. We will use in this article the Spanish word *condominio*, to make sure to avoid connotations with the specific uses of the term in other languages such as the American condominium. In Chile, *condominios* are closed, gated or fenced-off communities of middle-class houses, privately administered and under private maintenance.
2. 'Santiago' is used to denote the Metropolitan Region of Chile, or the 'Santiago Metropolitan Region', comprised of 6 provinces and 52 municipalities. One of the provinces is Santiago, with 32 municipalities or *comunas*. 'Santiago' is also the municipality of the central part of the city, and, of course, 'Santiago' refers to the nation's capital. Anywhere outside Santiago, or the Metropolitan Region, is commonly referred to as 'the provinces'.
3. The *villa* is located in a municipality that illustrates the territorial concentration of poverty in the city of Santiago. In 1998, the average monthly income for the family (monetary income) was $540 in Cerro Navia, $1135 in the Metropolitan Region as a whole and $888 dollars nationally.
4. *Campamento* refers to a spontaneously erected grouping of basic living units, constructed by the occupants and improved over time, often built on a site without authorisation by the owner; frequently, the site has been public land. It is an expression of marginality and the word is used disparagingly.
5. Some would argue that the 2006 elections in Chile demonstrated huge national commitment, civic responsibility and a fully intact, well-educated citizenry. However, appearances are untrustworthy here: underneath discipline (voting is mandatory in Chile) is often fear, and underneath acceptance of one's victory or defeat is a fierce rejection of political opponents, of 'the rich' or 'the poor'. Chile is a country upholding its institutional rigour, but it is a deeply divided people, motivated by phobia and paranoia.

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