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## When Spatial Justice Makes the Neo-Liberal City Tremble. Social and Seismic action in Chile: The aftermath of the February 27, 2010 earthquake.

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### **Abstract**

This article proposes an analysis of the forms of production of the city in a profoundly neoliberal context, and in particular, the role of organized social actors, urban social movements and the various actions of resistance and resilience in a post-disaster period. Focussing on the last two years of mobilizations (2011-2012) and addressing the spatial aspect of collective action, the action of two movements that have become the main actors in the social process stands out: the National Federation of *Pobladores* (RENAPO) and the National Movement for Just Reconstruction (MNRJ). Since 1975, a very profound neo-liberal model has been established in Chile, with visible impacts on the cities as well as on government action and social actors. We begin with the analysis of the neo-liberal city, including the urban development and housing policies of recent decades, in order to understand the continuity in the reconstruction policy after the 2010 earthquake. In this context, we assume that the earthquake served as a catalyst for the social movements in recomposition, in an advanced neo-liberal setting. We will examine the resistance and mobilization process by stressing the spatial aspect of the collective action and the example of two national *pobladores* movements.

*Key words: Urban social movements, neo-liberal city, reconstruction, spatial justice and right to the city.*

This article proposes an analysis of forms of production of the city in a profoundly neo-liberal setting and more specifically, the role of organized social actors, urban social movements and the various actions of resistance and resilience in a post-disaster period. In focusing on the last two years of mobilization efforts (2011-2012) and by addressing the spatial aspect of collective action, the action of two movements that have become the main actors of the social process stands out: The National Federation of *Pobladores*<sup>1</sup> (FENAPO) and the National Movement for Just Reconstruction (MNRJ).

Since 1975, a neo-liberal model has been firmly anchored in Chilean society with visible impacts on the cities as well as on government action and social actors. Our starting point is the analysis of the neo-liberal city, including the urban development and housing policies of recent decades, to grasp in this context the reconstruction

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<sup>1</sup> *Poblador(es)*: Inhabitants of a *población* [city]. In Latin America and especially in Chile, this term has a social, and often political, connotation that the work "inhabitant" doesn't. *Pobladores* refers to communities living in working-class neighbourhoods fighting for a space, to have their own neighbourhood, their own street, and their right to the city. The identity of the *poblador* is closely tied to the history of the production of space.

policy following the 2010 earthquake. We would postulate that the earthquake served as a catalyst for the urban movements in recomposition, in an advanced neo-liberal setting. We will examine the mobilisation and resistance process by stressing the spatial aspect of the collective action and using the two national *pobladores* movements as an example. This process can be understood as an illustration of the social movements' resistance and the emergence of counter-models for a post-liberal just city.

Socio-natural disasters are very frequently analyzed through the concept of resilience. Our proposal here is to open this approach to discussion and to complete it with the concept of resistance, based on actions, mobilizations, proposals and emancipatory plans of the *pobladores* movements that arose starting with the 2010 earthquake.

In this article, we propose to analyze the actions of these movements using a spatial justice framework and discussing the latent conflict between the approach in terms of distributive justice and in terms of procedural justice. Distributive justice accentuates the outcomes of the social and institutional structure, which determines unfair distributive models whether of goods, incomes, resources or jobs. Moreover, action by social movements is part of the extension of procedural spatial justice. Through their resiliency and resistance, these movements have produced this other city on a daily basis through self-management processes. At the same time, they are part of public policy (by subverting it) and they penetrate institutional policy by playing in the field of distributive justice. Thus, they do not neglect either field of action, casting themselves in both. We see in this conflict a spatial justice dialectic in the sense that the social produces the spatial and the spatial reproduces the social. Lefebvre's proposals, especially regarding the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1974), remain relevant and we can compare them to the effects of nearly forty years of neoliberalism by using the perspective of spatial justice as a tool for analysis.

The method proposed for successfully completing this analysis is participatory observation, carried out over the course of fieldwork that took place from 2008 to 2012. In addition, we have used various sources of information: current events (press and social networks) and research literature, as well as documents produced by the social actors themselves.

## **1- Spatial justice shakes up the neo-liberal city**

### **Background**

Chile is a country that is constantly struck by natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, fires, floods, volcanic eruptions, etc.) due to its "geography of risk" (Musset, 2009). This characteristic makes society's most excluded segments even more vulnerable. This is a major challenge for both housing and urban public policy because of the inevitable reconstruction processes that follow disasters and the absolutely necessary prevention and mitigation work these policies require. Earthquakes in Chile have

been opportunities to create new public policies, new standards, if not new institutions; they have driven the development process.

The reconstruction processes was examined as a development opportunity. So, the following question is asked: an opportunity for what and for whom? This question may be answered by following Lefebvre's proposal of "social production of space" for the city as a place of conflict, completing it with García Acosta's analysis on the "social construction of risk" (García Acosta, 2005).

These components enable us to better understand neo-liberal Chile's conditions in the face of the 2010 earthquake and tsunami, by following the "[translation] vulnerability perspective due to the key role it plays and particularly its economic and political aspects in the catastrophe process" (Oliver-Smith, 2002). In Chile, the establishment and taking root of neoliberalism and its socio-economic results have acted as synergetic stimulus on the effects of the catastrophe. We can speak of "[translation] synergies of vulnerability": "[tr.] The social and economic models adopted have generated catastrophe risks which, associated with the increase of particularly notable vulnerabilities in certain regions of the world, have exponentially amplified the effects of the natural threats" (García Acosta, 2005).

The earthquake of February 27, 2010 affected the entire central south of the country, between the cities of Santiago and Concepción, i.e. the area where most of the country's population is concentrated and density is greatest. In addition to the human injuries and material damage, the earthquake resulted in a string of social conflicts due to the reconstruction process in the various areas affected. These conflicts can be analyzed as a crisis-opportunity and a driver-mobilizer of social organization and social capital.

Thus, the 2010 earthquake served to reveal Chilean society. It highlighted the spatial inequalities and injustices constructed over the last 40 years and also revealed the dominant role of social actors, particularly the *pobladores* movement, in their organization and resistance processes. So, the earthquake accelerated the social processes in a Chile seemingly grown sleepy after 17 years of dictatorship<sup>2</sup>, and then 20 years of an endless transition to democracy<sup>3</sup>. Since 2010, citizenship has been reawakened. The simultaneously social and seismic process that began on February 27, 2010 only accelerated from one day to the next, first with solidarity<sup>4</sup> and mutual assistance in the face of the catastrophe, and then with the fact that the earthquake and tsunami revealed the inequalities of Chile's society while also enabling people to come together to organize.

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<sup>2</sup> Pinochet governed Chile for 17 years, from the coup d'État of September 11, 1973 until March 11, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> From 1990-2010, four governments were democratically elected, from centre-left parties in a block called "*Concertación de partidos por la democracia*"; [joint action of parties for democracy].

<sup>4</sup> Based on what we were able to observe, there were many more demonstrations of direct solidarity and especially mutual assistance than looting or other antisocial behaviour which although lesser, was nonetheless played up by the media.

Earthquakes occur due to an invisible, constant subterranean accumulation of telluric force, which at a certain point, explodes. This phenomenon could be compared to Chile's social process: years of accumulated frustration, inequalities, and exclusion ended up exploding in the form of a social earthquake which shakes the country today to demand more equality, rights and when all is said and done, justice. We are choosing to describe this process as a dual seismic and social action.

### **Resilience or resistance. Adapt or fight?**

This social process, and in particular the *pobladores* movement that followed the 2010 earthquake, can be understood from the perspective of the dialectical relationship between resilience and resistance. The conflict that we are analyzing does not only concern the struggles "in" the city but also the struggle "for" the city. This conflict takes place between various actors who claim to transform or maintain power relations with an eye to hegemony in the production of the city, and subsequently in the reproduction and accumulation of capital. The city is not a static space but something that is permanently evolving and fluid. It is a genuine "movement" of various forces that work with or against each other based on the time and conditions.

We understand the concept of resilience from two perspectives, as proposed by García Acosta. The first is "[tr.] understood as the ability to change or adapt to better deal with the unknown" (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1983:196). The second is the ability to adapt or change but change "[tr.] that which is known and accepted" (Terrence McCabe, 2005: 23), risk and disaster being part of an environment one knows how to live with.

Moreover, we understand the concept of resilience in light of Foucault's outlook on power relations, where Foucault states that "[tr.] where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1980). This approach enables us to observe the existence of a "[tr.]disciplinary society", made up of a network of devices and apparatus that produce and regulate customs, as well as habits and social practices alike. In our analysis, we are analyzing disciplinary society from the perspective of the neo-liberal city and the underlying political plan. Moreover, we are studying how resistances appear in the context of power seen as a "network of relations", rather than as an object. This network of relations was especially formed by the public-private coalition in place since 1975 with the neo-liberal structural adjustment.

Thus, if we are comparing the concepts of resilience and resistance, the case we're interested in is primarily based on the action of the organized social actors, namely, the *pobladores* movements. In the official rhetoric, both of the government and international organizations like the UN alike, it is repeated that the poor need to be "resilient". However, we will observe that rather than mere resilience, collective action processes can also be understood as resistance, to various degrees, to an ideological, political, economic, social and cultural model. The *pobladores* movements, beside the fact that they act with resilience, adapting to the situation that follows disasters, begin to produce "resistance practices", that we will link with their role in the "[tr.]

social production of space". In following Foucault's thought, we will understand that resistance is neither reactive nor negative; it is a process for creation and permanent transformation. However, we are also analyzing the forms of "reaction" in the face of the disaster in relation with what we describe as resilience.

## The neo-liberal city in Chile

The "neo-liberal city" concept is important for our analysis of the construction of vulnerability as well as for understanding the role of social actors and the *pobladores* movement in particular. Analyzing the processes of synergetic vulnerabilities in a context of socio-natural disasters augmented by neoliberal policies, we will concentrate on the case of Santiago, Chile's capital, as a model of the neo-liberal city. As we will see below, this "[tr.] process of neoliberalization" was reproduced in other cities and areas of the country, "[tr.] but there are few cases like that of Santiago that show as clearly what happens in a city and to its inhabitants when neoliberal policies are implemented." (Rodríguez, 2004: 4). We are starting from the idea that "[tr.] neoliberalism is not an ideology of State disengagement but the mobilization of the State in a plan for the generalization of market mechanisms" (VVAA, 2012). Using Brenner and Theodore's (2002) neoliberal destruction/creation model, Rodríguez (2009) identifies four periods of neoliberal destruction and creation in the city of Santiago:

**1. Discipline:** The elimination and dismantling of organizations in working class neighbourhoods was carried out during the dictatorship by means of repression, suppression of the traditional political space, and the creation of a general climate of terror. The *poblaciones*<sup>5</sup> organizations disappeared due to the disbanding of political parties, the change in the nature of the State and repression of the *poblaciones'* leaders and activists. As for urban administration, municipal governments were infiltrated through the appointment of mayors who were most often members of the military. The institutions in charge of urban matters were reorganized and a new population control function was entrusted to the city governments.

**2. The market acts as a (de)regulator** with the creation of a real estate market, the elimination of city limits as well as an subsidiary State housing policy.

**3. A blend of discipline and the market: land regularization.** Unlike other similar processes implemented in Latin America that defined land regularization as the transfer of ownership of land to the occupants, in Santiago, this meant retroceding land to the previous owners. To this end, the families occupying informally occupied land (the *tomas de terrenos*<sup>6</sup> and *campamentos*<sup>7</sup>) were moved to partially subsidized

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<sup>5</sup> *Poblaciones*. Term used in Chile to designate neighbourhoods created by the occupation of land, mainly in the 1950s and 60s, or land that has been precariously developed. Most *poblaciones* development is done by its inhabitants, the *pobladores*, and by public policy intervention (Pulgar, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> "*Tomas de terreno*": illegal occupation of land to build houses for oneself or to exert political pressure to obtain housing.

community housing on the city's periphery (or they had to create new *campamentos* on the periphery). Thus, this land regularization was much more than a solution to special cases. It was one of the foundations for the restructuring of the urban real estate market. This was called the "sale of the poor" phenomenon entailing the forced removal of more than 150,000 *pobladores* to the periphery of Santiago (SUR, 1984).

**4. The reorganized city (at the administrative level):** The previous administrative and territorial structure of the municipalities disappeared. Santiago, which had been divided into 14 administrative districts, was broken into 32 territorial units. The former municipal territories were modified and their boundaries redrawn. They were subdivided for the purpose of achieving socio-economic homogeneity allowing the administration to function better as well as political control of the inhabitants. The management of public services such as education and healthcare was partially transferred to the municipalities as one phase in a process culminating in the privatization of these government services. New labour legislation was enacted, reducing workers' ability to negotiate. Privatization of social security then made possible the creation of large investment funds – the AFPs (*Administradoras de Fondos de Pensiones*), pension fund administrative bodies – which today have a major role in the urban real estate market and the expansion of the city. These funds are the driving force of real estate development to the extent that they expand the long-term capital market, making it possible for households without capacity for indebtedness to finance the purchase of housing.

### Neoliberal urban policy in Chile: segmentation and urban inequalities

"[tr.] Urban policies depend on specific situations. At given times, they also have overall characteristics that cannot be boiled down to a single society. The policies correspond to the contingent interpretation of transformation models, in situations and periods. Each development model has a corresponding urban model, and each development policy has a corresponding urban policy" (Massiah, 2012: 11).

The intensity of the realization of neoliberal reforms in Chile is to be blamed on the iron hand of a ferocious dictatorship. Sabatini (2000) analyzed how the reform of real estate markets in Santiago had significant effects on the price of land and on residential segregation. This liberalization policy was based on three key principles: urban real estate is not a limited resource; the market is best placed to assign various uses to the land; land use must be governed by flexible provisions that are determined on the basis of market requirements.

Evident in official MINVU<sup>8</sup> documents between 1978 and 1981, the liberalization of city land brought about by the 1979 elimination of "city limits", sought to use the market to lower land prices by increasing the supply - according to the official narrative. But the effect was the opposite, since prices went up. Land speculation,

<sup>7</sup> Organized shantytown arising from the illegal occupation of land (*toma de terreno*) by a homeless group organized into a "*sin casa*" (homeless) committee.

<sup>8</sup> *Ministerio de Vivienda y Urbanismo*. Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

which an overnight administrative decision included within the city limits, was crucial in the evolution of the prices. Social housing was gradually distanced from more central locations toward areas outside the city due to the phenomenon of speculation that still exists today.

### **Housing policy in neoliberal Chile**

According to the argument put forward by Gilbert (2003), Chile's housing policy was not imposed through the Washington consensus. To the contrary, the radical neoliberal Chilean technocrats – the “Chicago Boys” – went beyond Washington's policies to make Chile the model that was copied and disseminated by international organizations. Gilbert explains that after the coup, “[tr.] the military government immediately got rid of the socialist housing program, even if it didn't replace it with anything. However, in 1975, a new housing model was beginning to take shape. The new system would be guided by the market and would be integrated into much more competitive economic and financial systems. On the supply side, public housing would no longer be sponsored by the state but built by the private sector based on signals sent by the market. Rather than the developers building based on orders from the public sector, they would be competing to produce what consumers wanted. The State would therefore be reduced to a “subsidiary” role (Gilbert, 2003: 138).

The subsidized housing system, which is still topical, represented a major change because it directed the demand of those in need to the market. In addition to the necessary indebtedness of the beneficiaries, this system introduced the idea of targeting according to which “[tr.] housing would be a good that could not be obtained except through individual effort; the State subsidy would be reserved for the neediest in the guise of compensation for their efforts” (Chilean chamber of construction, 1991: 90-91). Rodríguez and Sugranyes (2005) affirm that subsidized housing in Chile does not constitute a housing policy per se, but “first and foremost a financial mechanism supporting the private real estate and construction sector”. Undergoing full structural adjustment during the 1980s, the Chilean government's top priority was to stabilize the private construction sector. The strategy for doing this was the privatization of the entire housing production system. The Chilean Chamber of Construction, an employers' association that brings together the largest construction companies, played (and continues to play) an essential role in determining and implementing this policy.

The massive construction of housing for the poor – although of poor quality and located in the periphery – managed to quiet social demands for many years. Sugranyes (2012) asserts that between 1990 and 1997, the MINVU managed to “[tr.] build as many homes as Germany after World War II, achieving an absolutely outstanding annual rate of ten units per 1,000 inhabitants. This record level was maintained for a number of years, providing home ownership to most applicants from the poorest sectors”.

In the last 30 years in Chile, public policies on subsidies have succeeded in converting

the poor – considered marginal, vulnerable and excluded – into simple, assisted beneficiaries (and not actors) of social programs, and target-objects (and not subjects) of public policy. However, the housing policy generated a crisis by creating ghettos of urban poverty, areas of “non-homeless” *pobladores* (Rodríguez, 2005): “[tr.] *The world of marginality is in fact built by the State in a process of social integration and political mobilization, in exchange for goods and services that it alone has the power to give*” (Castells, 1986).

This housing policy reflects the concept of alienation, understood as the result of public policies and as a situation “[tr.] *imposed on all facets of the individual’s daily life by institutions and organizations that do not allow participation in the providing of services*” (Ruipérez, 2006).

### **The reconstruction policy: same recipe?**

Various reports (MNRJ, 2011a; Rolnik, 2011; INDH, 2012; UN Mission-HABITAT, 2010) by human rights organizations after the earthquake have shown “[tr.] the reconstruction ideology”, a topic that has also been addressed in certain articles and even in special interest stories in the press. In “[tr.] The ideological failure of reconstruction”, Pérez (2011) suggests that this model (of reconstruction) is shown to be an approach that the State dismantles, transferring its powers to private actors, deemed to be “[tr.] brilliant, powerful and prominent”. In the reconstruction process, emphasis was placed on the allocation of subsidies, simplification of the bureaucracy and private sector facilitation, while the victims were to be assigned housing of mediocre quality, were segregated, far from their daily and social lives, and designed as an emergency solution.

These various components underscore the importance of the role played by social movements in general in Chile today, particularly by the *pobladores* movement, in resistance to a hegemonic development model.

## **2- Social movements and the struggle for the city, between power and action**

It is our theory that the earthquake served to detonate urban social movements that were rebuilding in an advanced neoliberal setting. We will examine the mobilization and resistance process by considering the spatial aspect of the collective action and by taking the example of the two *pobladores* movements at the national level. This process can be understood as an illustration of “[tr.] social movement resistance and the emergence of counter-models and debates on the just post-neoliberal city” to echo the call for contributions for this issue.

## The *pobladores* movement and its acceleration after the earthquake 2010-2012

The recent period – from 2010 to 2012 – is a change in the course of Chilean society (this process is still in progress at this time), and in the *pobladores* movement, mainly for three reasons related to the following circumstances:

1. The change of the government coalition: the switch from centre-left to the right. In January 2010, during the second round of the presidential election, businessman Sebastian Piñera, a right-wing candidate, won with 51.61% of the votes defeating the “Concertation” [tr.: joint action] candidate, Eduardo Frei. Power was handed over on March 11, 2010, a few days after the February 27th earthquake. The ceremony moreover was interrupted by a strong second earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter Scale, triggering a tsunami alert. This movement of the ground symbolically announced the unsettled years to come. In addition, the change of government is tied to a representational crisis in the political duopoly. The new government maintained the neoliberal policies despite a few attempts at accelerating and deepening the “model” by the same actors that had founded it in the 1980s.
2. The February 27, 2010 earthquake and tsunami. This was the second strongest earthquake recorded to date in Chile and the sixth strongest in the history since the means to measure have been available. It is also the earthquake that caused the most damage: at least 1 million disaster victims and damage estimated at 17% of the GDP. While this actual geological and a social upheaval put housing, the city and the *pobladores* at centre stage, it especially turned the spotlight on the country’s inequalities and vulnerability. It is our theory that this point is tied to the third reason, which follows.
3. The 2011 explosion (Pulgar, 2012a) (and which is ongoing in 2013) of a larger social movement that is the most “[tr.] significant in the last twenty years” (Garcés, 2012), after the resistance movement against the dictatorship in the 1980s. This is primarily a student movement but includes citizens, ecologists, *Mapuches*, people from the regions (Magallanes, Aysén, Calama, Freirina), *pobladores*, sexual minorities, feminists, victims of the 2010 earthquake, and workers. According to our hypothesis, this is tied to the two preceding points and the “model’s” structural contradictions. Some commentators recently described this period as “[tr.] the collapse of the model” (Mayol, 2012), while a major group of social historians defines it as an “[tr.] anti-neoliberal revolution” (VVAA, 2011). It is important to emphasize the territorial development of this social movement in which the *pobladores* movement played a decisive role. The slogan “No to more profit!<sup>9</sup>” created by the student movement, is common to all the movements, whether in the housing sector, the city, health, the environment or social rights in general.

In addition to these three points which affect Chilean society as a whole, other structural processes of longer standing are related to the very establishment of neoliberal policies in the 1980s, to a “low intensity” democratic political system, and

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<sup>9</sup> In Spanish: ¡No más lucro!

to the consequences in terms of inequalities and exclusion, to which we would add vulnerability to risks.

The development of the *pobladores* movement is tied to three more reasons:

1. The recomposition of the citizen and territorial movements of the last 10 years, and especially since the 2010 earthquake.
2. The crisis of the neoliberal city model, reflected by growing inequalities, exclusion and vulnerability. This has been stressed with the reconstruction policy crisis, which followed the previously established model. The housing shortage, as well as poverty (Soto, 2011), increased with the earthquake.
3. The post-earthquake reconstruction process is considered an opportunity. But for whom? Is this yet another shock strategy to implement new accumulation processes through dispossession, or are we witnessing resistance and emancipation processes?

### **The spatial aspect of collective action: comparison of two movements, FENAPO and MNRJ**

We will examine two social movements on the one hand, because they stand out due to their sudden emergence and novelty, and on the other due to their connection at the national level and their ability to negotiate and make proposals in various areas. These are the National Federation of *Pobladores* (FENAPO) and the National Movement for Just Reconstruction (MNRJ), both serving as umbrella organizations for local movements.

After years of disjointedness, social and territorial organizations have been making a fairly strong re-emergence in the last 10 years. Many new movements have appeared with various features, which we will analyze based on their origins, social aspect, their plans and how they are evolving. How can we link the concepts of the right to the city and spatial justice with the action of these urban social movements in Chile? Soja (2010) explains the difference between the concepts of spatial justice and right to the city, the former presenting as an analytical approximation (diagnostic) that can "[tr.] be operational" in various ways locally, whereas the right to the city can be understood as a common global political horizon that links various demands.

Figure 1. Map of urban social movements and earthquake/tsunami damage



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Source: Elaboration by author from the register of local movements MNRJ and FENAPO

Both the FENAPO and the MNRJ are “movements of movements”, “[tr.] networks of networks that are beginning to construct a new historical, plural and diverse topic” (Houtart, 2010). In the case of the FENAPO and the MNRJ, “[tr.] they have gone from being strictly protest movements to also being movements that propose solutions, often benefiting from the technical support of NGOs, academics and graduates in various fields. Their demands are also expanding. Far from limiting themselves to specific matters directly related to their local needs, many of these movements are beginning to criticize the development models. The fact of organizing themselves into networks partially explains the broadening of this local vision toward a more inclusive, universal vision” (Brasao Texeira, 2010). The urban social movements are at the same time transforming themselves into informal education spaces for civil society, as Gohn (2002) suggests.

The *pobladores* movements (including the homeless, or “*allegados*”<sup>10</sup>, the indebted and disaster victims) grouped under FENAPO had planned to announce their recommendations for urban housing policies in March 2010, when businessman Sebastián Piñera, supported by the right-wing coalition, was going to assume the presidency of the country. But due to the February 27, 2010 earthquake, their recommendations were made a few weeks prior to the new president taking office. Thus, their direct action, their organization and development were built on the basis of humanitarian action in aid of the disaster victims, which they themselves described as “people to people” assistance<sup>11</sup>. This action demonstrates an aspect of organic resilience with regard to the mobilization of resources.

So, FENAPO appeared publicly in April 2010 during its first street mobilization in front of the presidential palace, to demand a meeting with the president of the republic, then in June 2010 through mobilization in the streets “[tr.] to demand the fulfilment of various commitments and make known its positions on social housing, debt, and reconstruction”<sup>12</sup>. Between October and November 2010, a string of demonstrations took place in reaction to the announcements of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, aiming to modify the housing policy in effect, by lowering subsidies and increasing household contributions. After a series of major mobilizations, in January 2011 the movement succeeded in holding a working group directly with the Minister at the time and his closest advisors. The negotiation resulted in a stop being put to the ministry’s announcements and the commitment to the

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<sup>10</sup> *Allegados*. This term designates individuals who, due to lack of housing, are forced to live with family members or rented rooms in a house.

<sup>11</sup> The FENAPO collected assistance with its own resources and four days after the earthquake, the leaders in Santiago left for different areas that had been affected. A relationship began to be formed with many local organizations and has been maintained over time. Many have joined the FENAPO.

<sup>12</sup> “700 *pobladores* belonging to FENAPO mobilized in Santiago”. Newspaper *El Ciudadano*. On the internet at

<http://www.elciudadano.cl/2010/06/04/22980/700-pobladores-de-la-federacion-nacional-de-pobladores-se-movilizaron-en-santiago/>, Consulted on Aug. 24, 2012

support of the Ministry of Housing to develop a plan for self-managed social housing<sup>13</sup>. The success of this resistance strategy highlighted the social movement's capabilities.

Concurrently, earthquake and tsunami victims' movements connected in a broader movement called the National Movement for Just Reconstruction (MNRJ). One of the movement's significant events was the "[tr.] First national victims meeting" which took place on October 5, 2010, as part of World Habitat Day organized at the Olympic village in Santiago, which included the participation of many organizations working on reconstruction in their areas.

Figure 2. Demonstration of MNRJ and FENAPO "1 year without reconstruction" next to the presidential palace La Moneda in Santiago. Source: Photo by the author, 08/03/2011



Many of these organizations participated in the "National Meeting: Citizens' experiences for just reconstruction" in Talca in January 2011. Two important events occurred during this meeting. First of all, the foundations of the first recommendations and citizen demands document were laid for reconstruction in a document entitled "[tr.] National Demand for Just Reconstruction" (MNRJ, 2011b) which was officially submitted to the presidential palace on March 7, 2011, one week

<sup>13</sup> This work was supported by the University of Chile with the FAU consulting firm, architecture, dwellings, community and participation. Online: [Consultorio.uchilefau.cl](http://Consultorio.uchilefau.cl)

after the commemoration of the first anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami. Secondly, the participating organizations decided to create the National Movement for Just Reconstruction, which became one of the main citizen referents for the protection of the earthquake victims and which made it possible to make these issues visible at the national level.

As part of the emergence of these two new collective actors, the FENAPO is the “heir” to a historic social movement, namely, the *pobladores* movement in Chile. On the other hand, the MNRJ appears to be a reaction to the reconstruction process, the reaction of the earthquake victims allied with components of the historic *pobladores* social movement.

These new social movements appear in the context of a contested neoliberal, subsidiary State. In the face of its obvious limits, new social demands are arising for more autonomy, freedom and self-management.

### **Conclusion: The exhaustion of the Chilean model: Social challenges and public policies based on spatial justice**

After the 2010 earthquake and tsunami, many authors, academics, and journalists spoke about “an earthquake after the earthquake” or alternatively, of a “societal earthquake”, especially in connection with the looting that followed in the hours and days after the catastrophe. This narrative led three days later to the militarization of the affected areas in response to this supposed chaos, which brought back images of the Pinochet military dictatorship to the inhabitants of these areas, with an imposed curfew, arrests and even deaths caused by military repression for maintaining “public order”.

José Luis Ugarte, a Chilean academic, wondered a few days after the earthquake, “[tr.] Why is it that in Chile, when order disappears – when the arm of the law stops terrifying – the poorest find that it is legitimate to loot and take that which they cannot by other – legal – means?” He replies saying that “[tr.] The feeling of injustice and exclusion clearly shared by the working classes, which has been so often defined as being a “scandalous inequality” – causes our society to be bound by the same [quality of] cement as our new buildings that are collapsing today... The earthquake lays bare capitalism in Chile by shamefully demonstrating its feet of clay. Neither our best propaganda nor that of financial organizations can hide the fact that at a time for sharing advantages among everyone, we look much more like African countries than the first world countries we would like to compare ourselves to” (Herreros, 2010).

Thus, in this article we have shown that the earthquake laid bare the country by showing its very significant inequalities. Some international media shared this diagnosis in the days immediately following the disaster, with headlines like “Despite economic strength, the earthquake has exposed Chile’s social debt” (Vregara, 2012) or “The earthquake exposes a profound social gap in Chile” (Fuentes, 2010).

However, the emergence of these urban social movements must be situated in a broader historical context and it must be understood that both current movements (FENAPO and MNRJ) are part of the historic *pobladores* movement in Chile. This is the basis of our hypothesis of the dual social and geological upheaval, the earthquake being a catalyst or mobilizer of processes that were going on “underground”. The recommendations and plans, notably FENAPO’s, demanding more autonomy and based on self-management, challenge the relationship of dependency on the state, reinforced by neoliberal policies. This conflict bears witness to a dialectic between alienation, resulting from neoliberal policies, and emancipation processes which begin to emerge in the territories. The process of resistance and resilience intersect, increasing the dialectic complexity of the problem.

The discussion in progress today concerns the social movement’s plans, its impact on the country’s public policies and overall policy. Barozet (2010) concludes one of his recent articles by affirming that “[tr.] *the impact of these mobilizations on the institutions is still limited. The local social movements in Chile, despite their diversity and combativeness, have not succeeded in creating a significant impact on the political system or national or local public policies, as they have not yet managed to establish new institutional logics nor do they seem to respond to a genuine transformation of the structure of political opportunity*”. This position is debatable because as we have explained in this piece, the action of social movements has definite social impacts, although these impacts are neither definitive nor structural. We are therefore seeing that a new political cycle is beginning, with the social movements unquestionably actors.

We have thus shown the resilience of social actors in facing the catastrophe but especially the social movement’s resistance in the face of neoliberalism. These two processes are related if we look at the trajectories of the two *pobladores* movements of recent years. It would be a good idea at this time to see what their impacts will be in the medium term, especially in a context affected by social demands and a significant crisis of political representation.

The recent convergences of various social movements must be considered as a new variable. In a recent statement, *pobladores*, students and organized workers declared, “[tr.] *Our struggles may seem scattered but they have the same origin: Chile’s social, political and economic model, with its burden of injustices and suffering. Until now, the lie of the democratic game of the Concertación [party] and the right had managed to contain the tremendous desire for justice and equality of the Chilean people. However, today organizations are emerging and joining one another that are recommending direct struggle, in the street, with the strength of reason as the only road to conquering those who use power for personal ends*” (VVAA, 2012b). This convergence is connected with the birth of the political party *Igualdad* (equality), which arose from the *pobladores* movement. We will have to wait and see what the short- and medium-term impacts of these convergences will be, and if the social movements’ strategies of participating in representative democracy will bear fruit.

The crisis of the urban model and the housing policy shows how the neoliberalization agenda continues to be in effect with, for example, the attempts to extend the city

limits of the Santiago metropolitan region to the advantage of speculators. While the MINVU is discussing the new urban development policy, the *pobladores* movement is consolidating its vision which, as we have seen, has evolved from the demand for the right to housing towards the broader horizon of the right to the city.

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