

“Resistance and Resilience in the Neo-Liberal City Social and Seismic Movements in Chile after Disasters”

Claudio Pulgar Pinaud*

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(*) EHESS-Paris / University of Chile – Housing Institute INVI

cpulgar@uchile.cl

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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 postdisaster period. The analysis will cover the period 2010-2014, between the earthquake and tsunami of February 27, 2010 in the south-center of the country and the earthquake in April 2014 in Iquique and Valparaiso mega fire in 2014.

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 policy following the 2010 earthquake. We would postulate that the earthquake served as a catalyst for the urban movements in recomposition, in an advanced neoliberal 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 2014. 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

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. At the same time, these processes have served to "advance the agendas of governments" drawn before the disasters, but also for the reproduction and accumulation of economic and financial capital. They also served to trigger opportunities of social organization and social production of habitat processes, but this approach has been neglected in urban studies.

These components enable us to better understand neo-liberal Chile's conditions in the face of the 2010 earthquake and tsunami, by following the "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 "synergies of vulnerability".

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 capital.

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.

The earthquake of 27 February 2010 has affected the entire south central region, between the cities of Santiago and Concepcion, that is to say the area that focuses most and strongest country's population density. In addition to numerous injuries and damage (at least one million affected, damage estimated at 17% of GDP), the earthquake led to a series of social conflicts due to the reconstruction process in the different affected territories.

Thus, the 2010 earthquake acted as a developer of Chilean society. He highlighted the spatial injustices built over the last forty years and revealed the key role of the social players, particularly the settlers movement in their process of organization and resistance. Since 2010, citizenship awoke. The process both telluric and social which began February 27, 2010 has only accelerated day by day: first with solidarity and mutual aid response to the disaster and the fact that the earthquake and tsunami revealed inequality of Chilean society, while allowing people to meet and organize. We choose to call this dual process telluric and social movement.

This process continues with the earthquake of April 1, 2014 that affected the north of the country, especially the regions of Tarapaca and Arica, mainly affecting the cities of Iquique and Alto Hospicio, that is to say one of the areas concentrates the major mining production and export of the country, as well as major ports, with one of the two zones of the country. The earthquake and tsunami that occurred after, left 11,654 homes destroyed or damaged with 45,800 victims, according to estimates from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MINVU). The case of the town of Alto Hospicio is paradigmatic for his new city characteristics, with incredible growth, but without planning. This city ghetto is the result of neoliberal policies radicalized. Its location in the desert, a few kilometers from the city of Iquique, made this town a poor dormitory suburbs. This popular city is the result of self-production, but also of subsidiary housing policy. 60% of social housing Alto Hospicio were damaged by the earthquake, showing the poor quality and the failure of the subsidiary housing policy for the poor.

The mega Valparaiso fire of April 12, 2014, affected 12 of the 43 hill-districts of the city, especially the poorest hills, with 15 dead, 500 injured, 2900 houses destroyed and 12,500 victims. It is the largest urban fire in the history of Chile. The Urban form of Valparaiso is a historic social production of the space, as an informal city with "Tomas de terrenos" and without planning were agents of the synergy vulnerabilities. Valparaiso is registered as a World Heritage of UNESCO and at

the same time (which is also connected), it is a laboratory of gentrification, and one of the cities which concentrates the highest rates of poverty and Unemployment in the country

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 “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 “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 resistance in light of Foucault’s outlook on power relations, where Foucault states that “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1980). This approach enables us to observe the existence of a “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 “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. We are starting from the idea that “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).

Neoliberal urban policy in Chile: segmentation and urban inequalities

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 MINVU¹ 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, 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. 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 “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 (2004) 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”.

The housing policy generated a crisis by creating ghettos of urban poverty, areas of “non-homeless” pobladores (Rodríguez, 2005): “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).

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 “the reconstruction ideology”, a topic that has also been addressed in certain articles and even in special interest stories in the press. In “The

¹ Ministerio de Vivienda y Urbanismo. Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

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 “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.

The rebuilding process began in 2010 with the reconstruction plans made for private companies with interests conflict in the territories, appointed Harvey as "entrepreneurialism". And was incremented with the reconstruction of damaged houses 220,000, with a public investment of 2,700 million, that will turn into a significant percentage in profits for the private sector.

Post disaster reconstruction process in 2014 (the earthquake of Iquique and Valparaiso mega fire) followed the same neoliberal policies of subsidiary and reconstruction of 2010, even as the government changed in March 2014. This demonstrates continuity urban policy and housing in the neoliberal governments of the last decades in Chile, center-left and right. This also shows that the lessons of the 2010 reconstruction experience have not been learned. The reconstruction plans following the earthquake in the north and the fire in Valparaiso are similar to the plan of the previous government.

Several authors have described the post-disaster process as fruitful opportunities well located land expropriation. The "disaster capitalism" is then unscrupulous: its speculative agents start to act almost immediately upon arrival of the first aid to the territories during the emergency phase. The evidence collected in the field a few days after the earthquake of 2010, confirmed by other authors, report the arrival of "real estate agents" who proposed the rapid purchase of land at prices well below their value before the quake. This process then continued in a more generalized manner to be now considered normal, constituting an extension of free land market.

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 “social movement resistance and the emergence of counter-models and debates on the just post-neoliberal city”.

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 15 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 “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.

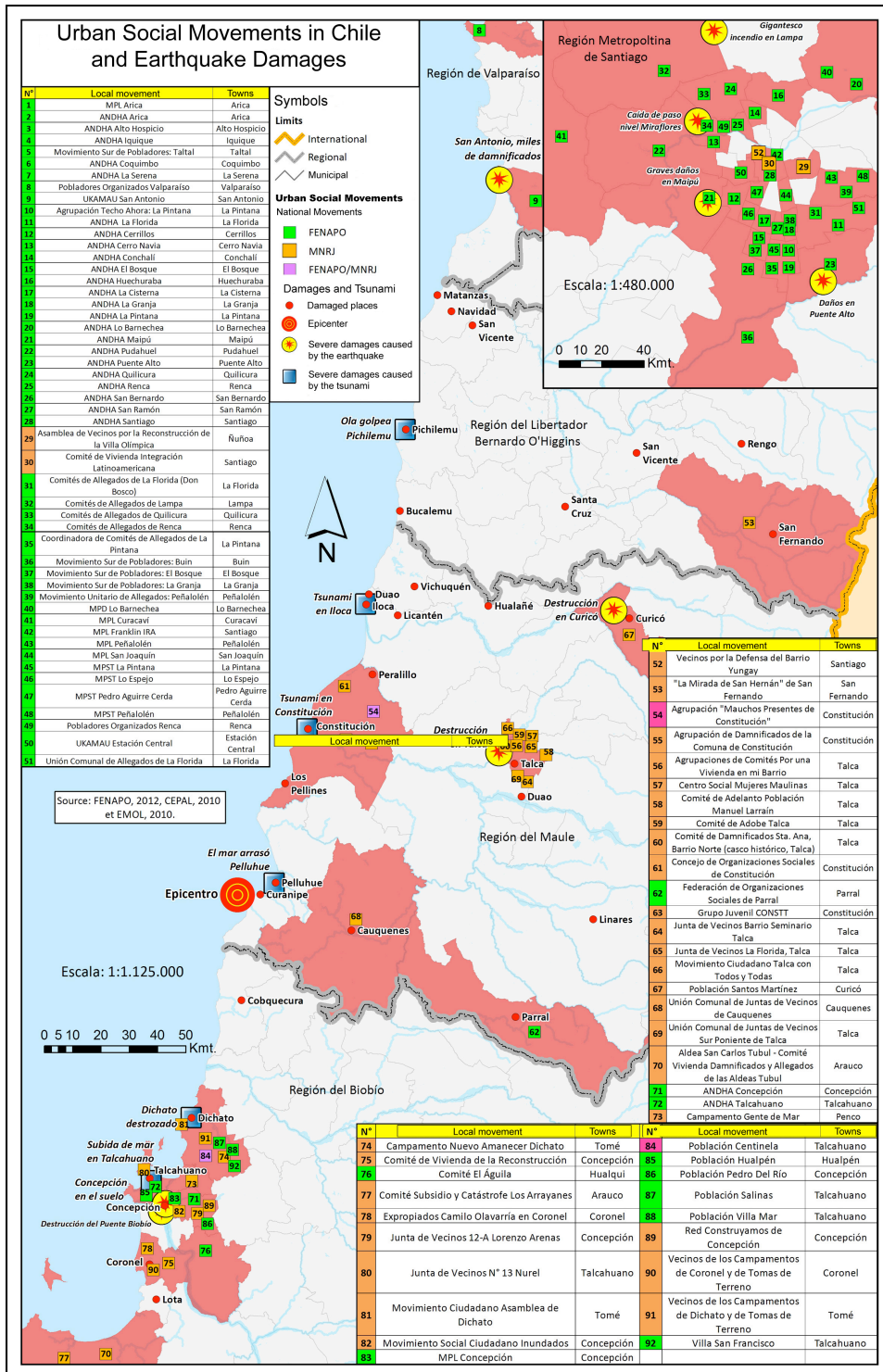


Figure 1. Map of urban social movements and earthquake/tsunami damage

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

Both the FENAPO and the MNRJ are “movements of movements”, “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, “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”², 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” assistance³. 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 “to demand the fulfilment of various commitments and make known its positions on social housing, debt, and reconstruction”⁴. 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 support of the Ministry of Housing to develop a plan for self-managed social housing⁵. 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 “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.

² Allegados: This term designates individuals who, due to lack of housing, are forced to live with family members or rented rooms in a house.

³ 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.

⁴ “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-depobladores-se-movilizaron-en-santiago/>, Consulted on Aug. 24, 2012

⁵ This work was supported by the University of Chile with the FAU consulting firm, architecture, dwellings, community and participation. Online: [Consultorio.uchilefau.cl](http://www.consultorio.uchilefau.cl)

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.

The response of the affected settlers of Iquique and Valparaiso face reconstruction

In the case of the 2010 earthquake, mobilizations for Reconstruction have made a few months to set up, while in Iquique in 2014, they have triggered several days later. This shows that the settlers of organizations have improved their power to act and organization, which is due to the "social climate" in the country since 2010. The main difference is that in 2014, there was no creation or consolidation of new movements of settlers, no federation, and this in Valparaiso as in Iquique. Aside from some groups of victims who are punctual manner, combined with the FENAPO or what remains of MNRJ.

In the case of Iquique, the demonstrations began three days after the earthquake and continued until September. We have found during our fieldwork in Iquique and Alto Hospicio, in October 2014, ie six months after the earthquake, the reconstruction process had not yet begun. As the victims were mobilized well, the government responded by quickly providing rent support during the emergency period, which helped to calm people down and prevent potential resistance. Much of the victims of the earthquake of Iquique as Alto Hospicio lived in social housing built in the last thirty years. One possible hypothesis is that many of them have preferred to do with the existing logic, the solution of "top-down" is the result of years and years of alienating subsidiary policies. Indeed, this strategy is to provide solutions on a case by case basis, trapped collective organization. At Iquique, we got to the establishment of a public-private alliance with a mining company which offered 240 good quality emergency housing. In Alto Hospicio, the situation was less glorious, because six months later, there were still families living in tents. We can explain the lack of mobilization of settlers by the context of synergy of vulnerabilities in Iquique, Alto Hospicio as where the vulnerabilities that existed in addition to clientelism and damage mainly on social housing, meant that the reconstruction also generated a brake and neutralization of mobilizations.

In the case of Valparaiso, and that is the main difference with the case of Iquique, Alto Hospicio, there is a social fabric and a form of social production of very important city, which can be checked with the "urban phenomenon of Tomas in the ravines of terrenos Valparaiso" the very place where took place the mega fire. Once the emergency phase, self-management has played a fundamental role in Valparaiso, which could allow thousands of volunteers to clean up the debris and build emergency housing. The state was quickly overwhelmed by a myriad of volunteers who, moved by the violence of the fire, came by the thousands to help the port. The prior existence of territorial organization such as social centers, cultural organizations of inhabitants, etc., has made that aid has been channeled through the existing fabric. At first, even the state relied on grassroots organizations, but shortly afterwards he forbade volunteering that was beginning to turn into a kind of parallel to the institutional power.

Unlike Iquique, Valparaiso the settlers began rebuilding their own a few days after the fire. Six months later, we were able to verify on the ground the ceaseless process of self-managed reconstruction. It should be mentioned initiatives such as mapping conflicts and cooperative projects, which-and not just because of the incendie- show the capacity of Valparaiso organizations

and their operation "from the bottom back to the top", which allows them to plan for long-term resistance.

Final Thoughts

Understand the reconstruction process, and therefore production of Chilean cities as conflicts between actors who claim to get money, which benefit from the transfer of public wealth to the private sector via the land market and subsidies and actors majority that resist this logic and defend the use value against the market exchange value. The social movements propose to move towards more spatial justice to exceed the subsidiary model of housing and reconstruction so, with cities where there would be a social function of soil, self-management, to deal with the hegemony current market. We see that with concrete initiatives, we begin to build post-neoliberal cities. However, it should put this emergence of urban social movements in a wider historical context and understand that the current movements are part of the historical movement of the settlers in Chile. It is from here that our hypothesis double telluric and social movement, the earthquake is a good catalyst or event that mobilizing processes were underway in an underground way. Proposals and projects, including the FENAPO, claiming more autonomy and self-management based, question the social assistance dependency relationship to the state, reinforced by neoliberal policies. This conflict reflects a dialectic between alienation, resulting from neoliberal policies, and emancipatory processes that begin to arise in the territories. The strength and resilience processes intersect, increasing the dialectical complexity.

In previous work, we studied one of the founders of the movement FENAPO: the Movement of Pobladores fighting, MPL, we wish to highlight as it has developed an advanced degree of self-management and was able to vary his modes Action, housing for urban and even education, demonstrating its capabilities of resistance and resilience. The definition of MPL is to conduct 'struggles without the state, via the control of the territory and self-management against the state, through direct action to erode the dominant order, and from the State, as an anti-strength accumulation ', it offers a complex and autonomous strategy, able to be on several fronts at the same time to exceed assistencialistes requests. It is interesting to observe how this proposal is going in the same direction as Lopes de Souza's analysis of the autonomy of other Latin American social movements advancing "together with the state, despite the state and against the state" especially in the case of Homeless Workers' Movement of Brazil and the piquetero movement in Argentina.

How to link law concepts to the city and spatial justice with the action of these urban social movements in Chile? Soya explains the difference between the concepts of spatial justice and right to the city, the first posing as an analytical approximation that can be "operational" in different ways locally, while the right to the city can be understood as a political horizon common global articulating different claims. We see how the agenda of neoliberalism continues to be in force, while the MINVU discusses new urban development policy at the same time the settlers movement consolidates its vision, as we have seen, has evolved to claim the right to housing to the broader horizon of the right to the city.

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