

Power Relations in Urban Decision-making: Neo-liberalism, ‘Techno-politicians’ and Authoritarian Redevelopment in Santiago, Chile

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Summary. Taking as a subject of study an on-going urban development project in Santiago, Chile, the paper interprets how public and private actors came together in an urban decision-making episode which represented a particular power configuration. To consider both the structural forms of constraint and the differential capacity of actors to exert power, an analytical framework is constructed, derived from Giddens’ structuration theory and from Foucault’s approach to power. The analysis of the specific relationships established between the project’s participants shows how individuals from the central state apparatus and private investors were controlling local redevelopment, relegating the local government (the municipality) and the people living near the project to non-influential positions. The concluding section considers the potentials and limitations of the analytical framework deployed and the degree to which its outcome could be generalised to the Chilean situation.

Why are the deployments of power reduced [by society] simply to the procedure of the law of interdiction? Let me offer a general and tactical reason that seems self-evident: power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms (Foucault, 1979, p. 86).

1. Introduction

In advanced capitalist societies, localised urban redevelopment strategies entailing the manipulation of meaning and the construction of grandiose urban structures have commonly been deployed to attract capital investment (Basset *et al.*, 2002; Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Harvey, 1989a, 1989b; Hubbard, 1996; McGovern, 2003; Roberts and Schein, 1993; Short *et al.*, 1993; Soja, 2000; Ward,

1997). This is not uncommon in the South (see, for instance, Acioly, 2001; Cariola and Lacabana, 2003). In particular, during the past two decades, the city of Santiago, Chile, has experienced an expeditious process of urban change involving a number of public–private initiatives like the construction of high-standard urban and interregional highways, the development of gated communities and ‘enclosed cities’ on the northern edge of Santiago (Borsdorf and Hidalgo, 2004; Hidalgo, 2004; Ortiz and Morales, 2002). Most researchers have properly related these changes and their socio-spatial impacts to the drastic neo-liberal reforms implemented since the mid 1970s (De Mattos, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2003; Dockemdorff *et al.*, 2000; Rodriguez and Winchester, 2001).¹

Following Silva (1995, pp. 190 and 196), the neo-liberal reform initiated by General

Augusto Pinochet stimulated major changes in the political, economic and social realms. While 'political' issues became marginalised, scientific methodology and positivist science acquired a predominant role in decision-making processes. Democratic governments that followed the authoritarian administration (Patricio Aylwin 1990–94, Eduardo Frei 1994–2000 and Ricardo Lagos 2000–06) did not alter substantially the scenario, maintaining fiscal austerity and incrementing opportunities for capital accumulation via free trade agreements signed with the US, the European Union and several Latin American countries. For Valdés (1995, pp. 253–254), Chilean society seems to have reached a surprising consensual course of development that promises to remain stable in the future. The consensus that permeates mainstream politicians—including Lagos' 'third way'—does not question the basis of the economic model.

Economic liberalisation and consensual politics have affected urban development strengthening the market role and promoting the use of strict technical criteria in the evaluation of urban initiatives. This can be read through the formal legislation promulgated in the past couple of decades. The 1979 national urban policy doubled Santiago's urban area and liberalised land markets. In turn, the 2001 'Great Urban Reform' promoted by the Ministry of Housing exalted the role of the private sector in urban development. New regulations enacted between 1997 and 2004 such as the Conditional Urbanisation Areas (ZODUC) and Priority Areas for Urbanisation (ADUP) opened up opportunities for urbanising areas beyond the city limits. Projects realised under the ZODUC or ADUC regulations involved building 'negotiation tables' between private investors and government representatives to discuss technical matters such as how to internalise externalities and mitigation strategies.

The liberalisation of land markets and new regulations has exacerbated Santiago's tendency of horizontal expansion and fragmentation. In 1980, the urbanised area of Santiago covered 33 000 hectares; by 2004,

it had almost doubled to 60 000 hectares (Hidalgo and Arenas, 2003). The Ministry of Housing urban policies gained unfavourable political and academic criticism for stimulating urban sprawl and socio-spatial fragmentation (see Hidalgo, 2004; Sabatini, 1997). Santiago is, at present, facing a dual process: rapid horizontal extension of the upper and middle classes in the northern side of the city and revitalisation of centrally located areas through demand-oriented subsidies and direct public intervention (Hidalgo and Zunino, 2005).

The case study selected—the Portal of the Bicentenary Project—located in the Municipality of Cerrillos is part of the Bicentennial Programme, set up in the year 2000 by the central government to celebrate 200 years of Chile's independence in 2010. Besides providing a landmark to celebrate the progress of the nation, the project represents an effort to balance the centrifugal forces triggered by neo-liberal policies through a state-led intervention. Its goal is to build a middle-class neighbourhood with high infrastructure and environmental standards in a centrally located area. Until 2004 the site was occupied by a civilian-military airport; the 245 hectares (604 acres) vacated have a privileged location in terms of accessibility. The site stands approximately 15 kilometres from Santiago's downtown and a new urban highway system will increase its connectivity to the rest of the city and beyond. Planners expect to build a 'new city' with a population of nearly 150 000 inhabitants before the end of this decade. The residential area surrounding the airport is composed of social housing and marginal settlements; poverty affects approximately 35 per cent of the population of the Municipality of Cerrillos. Although the project will be developed within the city limits and, therefore, does not fall under the ZODUC or ADUC regulations, the number of actors involved and the political implications resulting from being backed by influential political figures (including potential presidential candidates), led to the formation of an informal decision-making entity (a negotiation table) that resembles urbanisation practices beyond the city limits.

To carry out the project and reach its political goals, the central state apparatus created within the Ministry of Housing a special co-ordination office headed by a general manager. This office's specific goals were to co-ordinate a number of public instances, to reach agreements with private investors and to open the project to public participation and scrutiny. In 2003, an informal master plan for the area was approved by the Ministry of Housing and at present the Municipality of Cerrillos (the local government) is preparing the formal land use plan to accommodate the project.

At least at its discursive level, this project has the potential to reorient the urban development pattern towards a more equitable urban

structure, reducing spatial fragmentation and opening opportunities for social integration, making a sharp contrast with the development of gated communities and enclosed urban areas on the northern edge of Santiago (Borsdorf and Hidalgo, 2004; Hidalgo, 2004; Hidalgo and Arenas, 2003). Moreover political figures have exalted this project, saying that it represents the 'work of all' and stressing that an ample range of actors have concurred in this initiative.

Figure 1 shows the location of the project in relation to the traditional location of high-income sectors, the recently urbanised areas in the northern fringe of Santiago and the new highway system.

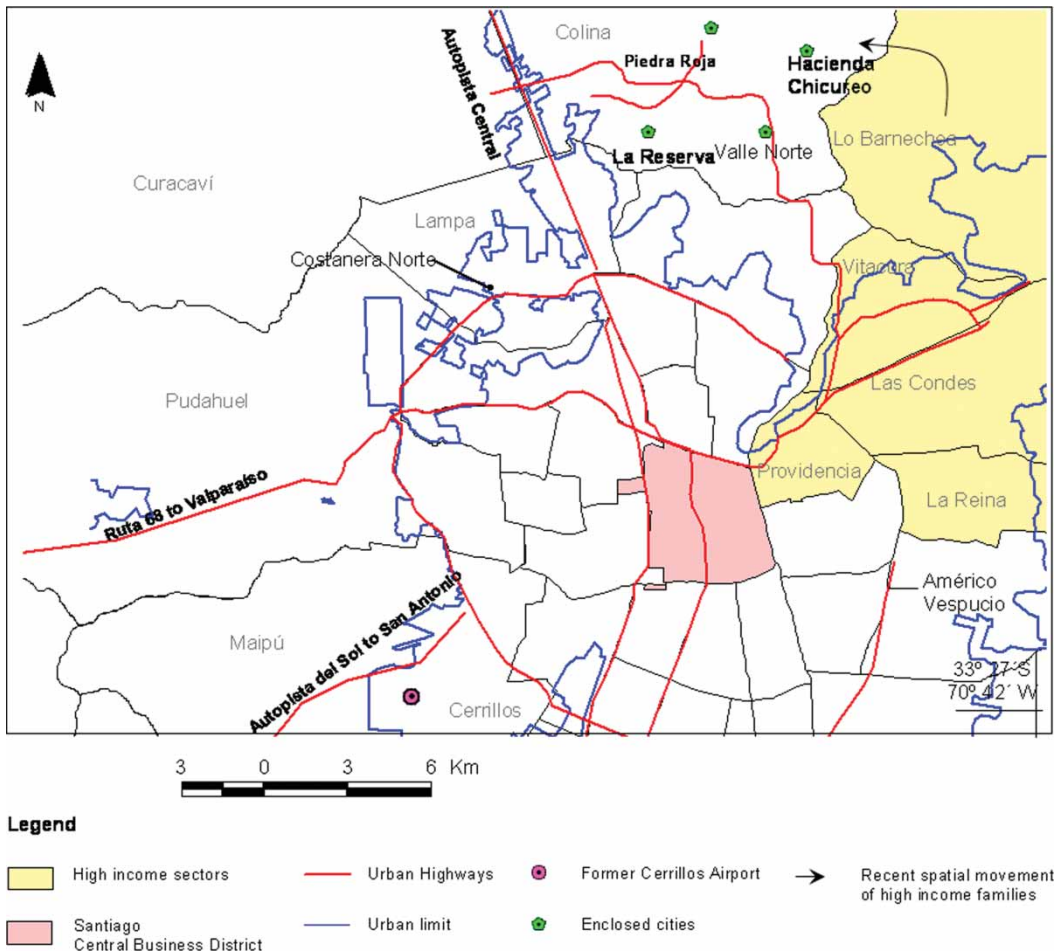


Figure 1. The location of Cerillos within the city of Santiago. *Source:* based on Borsdorf and Hidalgo (2005).

One of this investigation's fundamental arguments is that macro trends, like the advancement of neo-liberal policies, are not enough to explain urban dynamics. Certainly, neo-liberal policies set the stage for decisions affecting urban patterns, but this relation is not quasi-mechanical or easily predictable. In the last instance, cities are built by individuals holding particular agendas and interests. As Marcuse (2000) asserts, cities and places are not 'disordered'; the issue at stake is rather establishing who is ordering the city, for what purposes, in the interest of what. In this case study, to reach such 'progressive' goals as socio-spatial integration and participatory planning, one should expect important levels of co-ordination/debate among the inhabitants of the Cerrillos area, authorities from the local government (the Mayor of the Municipality of Cerrillos and the municipality professional employees), private investors and the Ministry of Housing. Then, it is relevant to ask: who is controlling the decision-making processes? Who is being excluded and by which means? Can this urban governing arrangement be a generalised practice in the Chilean context? What are some of the potential consequences of this intervention on the social and spatial layout of Santiago?

Just as structural influence cannot be dismissed, neither can researchers ignore the role of urban agents. Individuals participating in decision-making bodies do not act in a vacuum; they are part of a broader social system that manages a set of possibilities and constraints. In my reading, a line of inquiry that attempts to consider both structural forms of constraint and how agents can make a difference in the urban development process faces two related challenges: to resolve analytically the tension between structure and agency; and, to decipher the ways in which power is exercised in concrete situations. To account for the recursive relationship between action and structure, in the next section I will employ Giddens' (1979, 1984) structuration theory, which is complemented, in an overtly eclectic but consistent analytical framework, by a Foucauldian approach to power. On the analytical

side, I suggest using Ostrom's (1986) notion of 'social rule' as the heuristic device to interpret the concrete ways in which knowledgeable actors are framed by the social context (constraint and enabled in their decisions).

Social rules are here understood as formal (written) and informal (unwritten) prescriptions set up by actors to reach certain ends. Rules are not confined to a given level of action (the national, the regional, the local): they act across levels. For analytical purposes, I will consider three interconnected functional levels: policy-making (broad political plot lines are given), co-ordination (the level at which certain actors co-ordinate the overall functioning of the project) and operation (where concrete decisions regarding the project are taken). My purpose in establishing connections between structure and action will be to disclose how rules operating at higher levels of abstraction relate to localised practices.

In section 3, I read the rules established at each functional level. At the policy-making level, I emphasise the way in which neo-liberal reforms have impacted on decision-making processes in terms of the information used by governing bodies, the knowledge that is considered as valid and public participation. I then move on to examine, at the co-ordination level, the strategies deployed by the general manager and his/her staff to attempt to control the project's outcome. At the operational level, I analyse the role and purpose of advisory committees—consultancy units that are constituted under the discretion of actors operating at the co-ordination level—and the role of actors working for the municipality (the mayor and professionals). The identification of the rules of each functional level and the interpretation of their interlocking will allow me to define, in section 4, multi-level power relations and strategic nodes in which relationships of co-operation, domination and subordination are being established. In the last section, I consider if the results can be generalised to the Chilean context and revisit critically the analytical framework here deployed.

This line of investigation differs significantly from mainstream urban research done in Latin America, which has related, rather deterministically, urban changes to neo-liberal policies. Without ruling out the influence of such macro processes, I move the analytical attention to the social construction of urban space and to the power relations embedded in multilevel organisations. The politic-administrative structures and power relationships in Latin America's mega-cities have received scant analytical attention (Ward, 1996, p. 54). In Chile, the first major project aimed at relating the emergence of new residential patterns in Santiago and Valparaíso and the power configuration at work will begin in 2006 (Hidalgo and Zunino, 2005).

Underlying this investigation is the premise that, just as cities are in constant transformation, so are the formal and informal rules framing the functioning of governing bodies. Harvey's (1982) argument that capitalism has an intrinsic tendency towards contradiction, making it hard to achieve a 'spatial fix', could be extended to the difficulties in achieving an 'institutional fix'. Indeed, urban governing bodies are constituted by an unstable set of social relationships, in a constant flux of changes as each party deploys strategies and tactics to achieve their particular ends.

This is what distinguishes my approach to government from studies, like those informed by regime theory (Elkin, 1987; Stone, 1989), which theorise the relative stability of governing coalitions and usually end up with fixed categorisations of governance arrangements. For this reason, I avoid using the terms regime and governance, commonly used in regime literature.² However, even if it is considered difficult to achieve fixed rules, certain social institutions are more permanent than others across time and space. Indeed, as illustrated in the first part of this section, Chile's neo-liberal social order exhibits important degrees of stability, as there is a relation of capillarity (see section 2) between macro-economic decisions taken at the policy-making level and the daily performance of individuals following the rules of the market.³

The findings here presented are based on a broader research project undertaken between 2001 and 2003. The research strategy contemplated identifying 'strategic actors' by examining formal and informal positions and scope rules (see section 2) that give agents the ability and influence to affect outcomes. Next, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 strategic actors or 'positions'. At the co-ordination level, I interviewed the general manager and professionals from his/her staff twice. Also at the co-ordination level, I conducted interviews with actors working for the Regional Government of Santiago. The Regional Government is headed by an 'Intendente' appointed by the President of the Republic. The Intendente is the Head of the Directorate of the Portal of the Bicentenary Project and has the task of co-ordinating the regional offices of the different ministries. At the operational level, I conducted interviews with members of different advisory committees, professionals working for the Municipality of Cerrillos and direct advisors for the Mayor of Cerrillos.

Following the categorisation of social rules proposed by Ostrom (1986) actors participating in the decision-making body at the co-ordination and operational levels were asked how participants are chosen (position rules); under what conditions do participants enter/leave a position (boundary rules); what are each participant's main responsibilities/functions and what activity/ies is each participant required to perform (authority rules); what aspects of the project is each participant able to modify and what decisions are beyond their area of influence (scope rules); how are decisions taken (aggregation rules); what information is considered in decision-making, who provides that information and to whom is this information distributed (information rules); how are the benefits and costs of the project distributed (pay-off rules). The rationale for this line of questioning derives from the analytical framework that I constructed in the next section. To complement the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews, I conducted informal interviews with members of five

neighbourhood associations in the area surrounding the former Cerrillos Airport.

2. Power, Social Rules and the Structuring of Social Life

Examining the process through which manners and customs spread in western Europe since the Middle Ages, Elias makes an important comment

We see more clearly how relatively small circles at first formed the center of the movement and how the process then gradually passed to broader strata. But this diffusion itself presupposed very specific contacts, and therefore a quite definitive structure of society. . . . The process that emerges resembles in form—though not in substance—those chemical processes in which a liquid, the whole of which is subjected to conditions of chemical change (e.g., crystallization), first takes on crystalline form at a small nucleus, while the rest gradually crystallizes around this core. Nothing will be more erroneous than to take the core of the crystallization for the cause of the transformation (Elias, 2000, p. 99).

Elias' work suggests that there is a complex intermeshing between social practices and broader structures. While certain actions might appear as expressions of the autonomy of the self, many—maybe most—decisions and social processes are influenced by forces beyond our direct control. It appears difficult, however, completely to shut off alternatives, forcing human beings to react as machines. In the last resort, human beings have, with few exceptions, the (illegal) option to terminate their existence. Certainly, the structure–agency dilemma poses substantial challenges to social researchers; depending on their point of view, researchers will either search for the 'laws of motion of society' or immerse their inquiry into the individual psyche of subjects to interpret how they take seemingly autonomous decisions.

Debates on the degree of determination of social structures have been at the core of

sociological debate for decades. For some, social structures guide social relations to the extent that actors do not have the opportunity to choose between alternative courses of action. For others it is foolish to deny something as obvious and evident as human freedom.⁴ What Elias is suggesting in his analysis of the diffusion of cultural habits is that, although a social process might appear on the surface guided by a central core (such as the capitalist system, the central state, an élite, a 'general manager'), we can by no means reduce the phenomenon to a core acting deterministically over other subordinated units. The transformation of these units, according to Elias, represents changes in human behaviour and attitudes that are not deterministically driven by an overwhelming force existing 'out there'. Yet, these units do participate in a general process, the trajectory of which is, to a lesser or greater extent, influenced by broader situations. Moreover, cultural diffusion would be impossible in the absence of a social structure defining the channels through which social processes spread. Translating this idea to the project, the general manager appears, at first glance, as the 'core' of the project, but the point is not how this core is impacting on other units (the mayor, professionals from the regional and local governments, political authorities) but rather how other units, through their action or inaction, are shaping specific power configurations. Following the logical consequence of this point is the statement that power is unequally distributed among participants in a decision-making process, but it does not follow that the less powerful, the subordinated ones are mere recipients, subjects of power being exercised over them: they are also an essential part in the reproduction/diffusion of a given social structure; and for that diffusion to occur, they make use of the existing structure.

Elias' concern with structures and the role that individuals and groups play in social reproduction and diffusion, parallels, in important ways, Giddens' theory of structuration. This approach offers a conception of social practice and structural constraint that

can be useful in coming to terms with such contested issues as the notions of agency and social determination. Structuration rests on the concept of duality of structure. Giddens separates conceptually 'structure' from 'social system'. Structures are defined as organised sets of rules (normative elements and codes of signification) and resources (authoritative or allocative elements that can be employed to exert power). Structures exist out of time and space, existing—as a time–space presence—only through social practices: structures have no existence independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activities (Giddens, 1984, p. 26). The social system, in turn, comprises the more durable features of societies; that is, a set of rules and resources continually being reproduced through long time-spans. Those practices that have the largest time–space extension are referred to as institutions, representing institutionalised rules and resources.

An important aspect in Giddens' theorisation is that human agents are knowledgeable, founded basically on practical and discursive consciousness that can be traced through some kind of description actors can make about the situation surrounding them. Actors do understand the possibilities and limitations they face in a given historical and spatial context. Therefore, the properties of the social systems are transformed or reproduced through social practices of 'structured or situated agents'—that is, not slaves or free agents, but actors who are more or less aware of the limits and possibilities for action. The general manager, then, is setting an array of possibilities and constraints for other actors, who are knowledgeable, or can become knowledgeable, about what is going on around them and can take the necessary steps to advance particularistic ends.

Structuration theory has been heavily criticised for emphasising practical over discursive knowledge leading to a weak conception of agency (Gregson, 1987; King, 1999; Storper, 1985), for not giving enough weight to social constraints (Clegg, 1989; Gregory, 1980, 1985; Storper, 1985; Thompson, 1989;

Thrift, 1985), for introducing a non-structural and/or misrepresented conception of power (Boyne, 1991; Storper, 1985), for an inadequate account of spatial relations (Gregory, 1985) and for not being an appropriate device to inform empirical research (Adams and Hastings, 2001; Dear, 1995; Gregson, 1987, 1989; Kellerman, 1989; Moos and Dear, 1986; Mouzelis, 1989; Philo and Parr, 2000; Waterstone, 1995, 1996). However, I argue that if some conceptual issues are worked out, structuration theory can contribute to building a useful analytical framework to investigate the operation of governing arrangements embedded in given social contexts and the power relationships they represent. The issue at stake is how to 'ground' structuration theory. In my view, structuration theory was too rapidly dismissed in the mid 1990s as an appropriate framework to inform empirical research (see, however, investigations conducted by Parker, 2001a, 2001b; Phipps, 2000).⁵

In the context of this investigation, there are two critical issues that need to be tackled: Giddens' problematic approach to power; and, his blurred notion of rule.

Giddens' conception of power seems to embrace, problematically, only the power that emerges from broader systems of domination, restricting the scope of human action and weakening his construction of the situated actor. Giddens claims that power is present in the form of a dualism characterised by institutionalised structures of domination on one hand and power used by participants to succeed on the other. In his words

Even the most casual encounters instances elements of the totality as structure of domination: but such structural properties are at the same time drawn upon and reproduced through, the activities of participants in systems of social interaction. I have argued elsewhere that the concept of action is logically tied to that of power, where the latter is understood as a transformative capacity (Giddens, 1979, p. 88).

Although Giddens argues that power must be treated in the context of the duality of the

structure, which is inscribed in the activity of participants (see also Giddens, 1979, p. 91), power appears to emerge, ultimately, from pre-given structures of domination and actors can only exert power by relying on resources that carry structural properties. Giddens is quite explicit about this point

‘Power’ intervenes conceptually between broader notions of transformative capacity on the one side, and of domination on the other: but *only* operates as such through the utilization of transformative capacity *as generated by* structures of domination (Giddens, 1979, p. 92; emphasis added).

These arguments convey the idea that there is a sort of underlying power configuration allowing structuration; that is, allowing certain bounded agents to use power to achieve pre-defined ends. Power, therefore, appears divorced from agency, outside the process of structuration and ultimately deterministic. Indeed, in the first few pages of *The Constitution of Society*, Giddens (1984) portrays power as a property of actors, as an ability to make a difference and as something that is ‘prior to the subject’. We can think of this in terms of power containers shaped by structures of domination that appear independent from social relationships and from the structuration process itself. This interpretation is reinforced when Giddens considers structures of signification and legitimisation, which also appear disconnected from social practices.

Secondly, Giddens falls short in providing concrete research tools and his central notion of rules remains undertheorised and vague (see also Kellerman, 1989). Yet, by no means do I consider the notion of rules as a useless concept; quite the contrary, it can be a useful heuristic device to grasp adequately the ways in which actors ‘get structured’: enabled and constrained by the broader system of social interaction. Giddens (1989, p. 255) is certainly right in his assessment that social rules are not “quasi-mathematical”, but he does not immediately follow this by stating that rules cannot be specified. What seems to be missing is an operational or

working definition of rules; one that allows reading, comparing and contrasting the structural properties at a given historical and spatial moment and determining in which ways rules constrain and enable social practices.

I suggest using Ostrom’s (1986) categorisation of social rules as an analytical device to study the functioning of decision-making bodies (see also, Waterstone, 1995, 1996). Ostrom defines rules as linguistic entities that are constructed by a set of individuals to achieve order and predictability in defined situations; that is to say, they are put together by certain individuals to achieve particular ends. Ostrom suggests that implicit or explicit individual efforts to achieve order and predictability entail: setting up a set of positions in decision-making bodies (position rules); defining how participants enter or leave a position (boundary rules); specifying the actions each position is required, allowed or forbidden to take (authority rules); specifying the set of outcomes each position is required, forbidden or allowed to affect (scope rules); prescribing how collective decisions are taken (aggregation rules); defining channels of communication and the types of information to be used (information rules); and describing how benefits and costs are to be distributed (pay-off rules).

Rules can account for what Clegg (1989) refers to as the structural and the agency sides of power: the broader structures of domination influencing (but not determining) social practices and the channels through which actors can wield power to reproduce or challenge existing power configurations and social structures. If we consider rules not as given mono-level prescriptions but as multilayer social constructions, it will be possible, then, by looking at broader-level rules, to examine how actors operating at lower levels ‘get structured’. This approach to rules and power departs substantially from Giddens’ position, embracing a productive conception of power: the deployment of power is a way to create rules that shape social life and to produce a particular power configuration. Rules emerge then as

instruments of power, as instruments to produce, reproduce or dilute a particular social context. When Foucault puts forward the research questions in his book *The History of Sexuality*, he illustrates the productive side of power and how it is inscribed into particular social contexts

In a specific type of discourse on sex, in a specific form of extortion of truth appearing historically and in specific places, (around the child's body, *apropos* of a woman's sex, in connection with practices restricting birth, and so on), what were the most immediate, the most local power relations at work? How did they make possible these kinds of discourses and, conversely, how were these discourses used to support power relations? (Foucault, 1979, p. 97).

In my reading of Foucault, power is not the property of some superstructure 'condensed' in particular power relations at lower levels, nor is power confined to social practices at a single micro-level; there is a relation of mutual dependency between the macro and the micro in the execution of power. Foucault takes a specific historical moment to illustrate this point

But what I meant was that in order for there to be a movement from above to below there has to be a *capillarity* from below to above at the same time. Take a simple example, the feudal form of power relation. Between the serfs tied to the land and the lord who levies rent from them, there exists a local, relatively autonomous relation, almost a *tête-à-tête*. For this relation to hold, it must indeed have the backing of a certain pyramidal ordering of the feudal system. But it's certain that the power of the French kings and the apparatuses of State which they gradually established from the eleventh century onwards had as their condition of possibility a rooting in the form of behaviour, bodies and local relations of power which should not at all be seen as a simple projection of the central power (Foucault, 1980, p. 201; emphasis added).

Even though there is a hierarchical, top-down form of social relation, in order for this social form to exist over time, local power relations must hold a certain degree of autonomy from broader power relations. Then, for capillarity to 'stick' across time and space, the social practices of the actors operating on top of the pyramid must go hand-in-hand with the performance of individuals operating at lower hierarchical levels. If local-level actors decide not to reproduce this social relationship—for instance, by constructing rules that contradict what broader-level rules establish as permitted and forbidden—it would mean a disruption of the existing system. Yet, an important element to consider is that capillarity relations do not entail, necessarily, a conscious reproduction of the social system: passivity, blind obedience, indifference of individuals acting locally are also ways of reproducing the system. Moreover, it could be argued that the more durable features of society—like the contemporary capitalist system or such institutions as the judicial system—are continually being reproduced locally through the daily performance of individuals that just follow the course of events, which is the inertia of contemporary social life.

The degree to which the features of the social system are liable to disruption via rule change is a matter of empirical investigation. From my point of view, movements from above and below are both necessary to challenge effectively the more durable features of society. Structural changes alone (such as modifying general policies) will be unproductive if they do not trigger reactions in the same direction at the local level; seemingly, local resistance will be futile if it is unable to 'scale up' and permeate more general levels. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault complains that movements from below are rarely given the importance they deserve

One remembers the great legal affairs of the 18th century, when enlightened opinion intervened in the person of *philosophers* and certain magistrates: Calas, Sirven and the Chavalier de La Barre, for instance.

But less attention is given to the popular agitation caused by punitive practice. Indeed, they seldom spread beyond a town, or even a district. Yet they did have real importance. Sometimes these movements, which originated from below, spread and attract the attention of more highly placed persons who, taking them up, gave them a new dimension (Foucault, 1995, p. 62; original emphasis).

This quote does not imply that broader movements affecting the general social situation (like the legislation in place) are less important than movement from below: there is a relation of mutual hold between ‘the powerful’ and ‘the subjugated subject’ and it is precisely the nature of this mutual hold that needs to be investigated in concrete social settings to evaluate the potential of disruption and to detect strategic nodes where resistance can be exerted more efficiently to change certain courses of action.

Foucault’s approach allows the consideration of power as a consequence and a necessary condition for structuration to happen: the recursive relation among broader and more stable sets of rules and social practices is the result of the operation of power relationships that are both a pre-condition for practice, enabling and constraining social performance, and an effect produced by the application of strategies, tactics or, more generally, political technologies. In other words, a knowledgeable and situated actor who is engaged in the business of governing others will face a set of possibilities and constraints originating from broader levels and will decide upon a specific course of action—for example, a strategy—that will have consequences in terms of creating a particular set of rules and power relationships, reconfiguring his/her and others’ bases to exert power and creating the conditions to resist, or not, structural features.

In the next section, I read the set of interlocking social rules framing social practices and producing power relationships in the governing arrangement that promotes the Portal of the Bicentenary Project, considering for

analytical purposes three functional or institutional levels (policy-making, co-ordination and operation). I begin by examining the policy-making level and then move on to analyse how the rules operating at this level set possibilities and constraints for decision-making at lower levels. In section 4, I examine the power configuration at work and the particular capillarity relation existing in the Portal of the Bicentenary Project. I end the paper by discussing whether the situation encountered can be generalised to the Chilean context and the consequences of this kind of urban development for the socio-spatial configuration of the city of Santiago. I also revisit critically the analytical framework employed.

3. Techno-politicians at Work in Neo-liberal Chile

3.1 The Policy-making Level: Chile’s Neo-liberal Order and Social Rules

In his critical account of Chile’s neo-liberal model, Nef illustrates how many conservative groups think about the country

For those mesmerised by the magic of the marketplace and the ‘end of history’, contemporary Chile constitutes a remarkable demonstration on the inevitable triumph of economic and political liberalism. Democracy and capitalism seem to flourish. Official circles as far away as Eastern Europe, establishment intellectuals, and the mainstream media have praised the country as a model for Latin America, the developing world, and beyond (Nef, 2003, p. 16).

For neo-liberal thought, the discipline of economics is not value-based, reasserting the role of positive science and elevating the economists to an unquestionable position of intellectual and political superiority (Valdés, 1995). The notion of freedom becomes limited to the option of choosing within an open market. Following Valdés, the return to formal democratic rule in 1990 did not mean renewed state controls on economic activity, rather, the return to democracy has been

conducted with strict adherence to macroeconomic equilibrium, the promotion of economic growth, the attraction of foreign investment and the stimulation of national savings. In contemporary Chile, then, decision-making is a depoliticised practice, as decisions are conceived as the outcome of rational procedures (see also E. Silva, 1996; P. Silva, 1998).

For E. Silva, (1995, p. 200), the military government left an enduring legacy of technocratic political style, the 'management of things' being the hallmark of the new democratic government. Technocrats now focused on political demobilisation and élite politics as the means to consolidate democracy, stressing expert economic management as a fundamental tool for consolidating democracy and achieving social equity. Following Galjart and Silva (1995), I will regard technocrats as individuals with a high level of specialised academic training, particularly in economics and engineering, who are based on the principle that most of the problems of society can be solved by scientific expertise rather than through politics and political awareness in society.⁶

In terms of rules, the implementation of a neo-liberal agenda has meant putting in place a complex web of prescriptions. The most pervasive effect of neo-liberalism has been to restrict the type of information to be used in decision-making processes, regarding as valid only information derived from the application of strict technical procedures (information rules). For example, public projects are evaluated following the prescriptions contained in a technical manual that is annually updated with the latest economic indicators by technocrats working for the Ministry of National Planning. Despite some attempts in the early and mid 1990s to incorporate social and environmental criteria in the evaluation of public projects and to promote civic participation, the technoeconomic machine remains and nodes of power constructed under the authoritarian regime have been reproduced under formal democratic ruling. As technocratic thought penetrated deeply into public administration, the old bureaucracy was partially replaced

by 'flexible' public workers, professionals with short-term contracts or acting as part-time advisors or consultants, marking an important shift in terms of boundary rules and blurring the public-private divide.

Political technologies deployed in contemporary Chile can be interpreted through the social rules implanted by the multiple (and anonymous) designers of the system. Technocrats hold important scope and authority rules in the state apparatus: they have the power to affect directly projects' results by conducting negotiation, setting the agendas, framing the problems and creating positions through a set of boundary rules. With regard to aggregation rules, decisions are taken by following a strict economic rationale and by meeting consensual solutions among political and economic élites. While the use of economic rationale derives directly from the premise of dominant ideology, to explain the ascendancy of a deeply engrained consensual style of policy-making, it must also pay attention to recent political developments.

Chile's peaceful transition to democracy (1988-90) was facilitated by a negotiated settlement between Christian Democrats (centre party), segments of the socialist left (the 'reinvented' socialists) and portions of the economic élites who supported the authoritarian regime of General Augusto Pinochet. According to Cavarozzi (1992), this settlement was possible, in part, because of a political deadlock in the late 1980s with two infeasible maximalist proposals that could be overcome only through negotiation among members of the economic and political élites.

For E. Silva (1995), the democratic administrations were unable to modify the social structure (the rules in place) because the 1980 constitution instituted several mechanisms to guarantee conservative parties a majority of representatives in Congress and a dominant role in decision-making, at least in the 1990s. These mechanisms included establishing constitutionally ranked principles and formal rules that only could be modified with 65 per cent of the votes of parliamentarians and senators, giving, in practice, a power of veto to the conservative forces in Congress. As a result,

political élites are framed by the political rationale of reaching consensus among participants. Conflict avoidance through élitist dialogue and not engaging in ‘political’ discussions are two of the main technologies of government employed in contemporary Chile to reproduce the structural context and to advance a variety of interests, including those emerging from urban projects. Although no formal (written) rules frame this situation, informal rules encourage élitist consensus and permeate the work of public officials, private investors and the population as a whole.

In relation to public participation, both the use of technocratic knowledge in decision-making and a policy-making style favouring consensual solutions have acted jointly to reduce citizens’ level of engagement in projects affecting their future. As Carruthers (2001) puts it, contemporary politics in Chile is characterised by a decline in public participation and the reconsolidation of élitism, both elements dictating that policy decisions take place in close negotiated processes between intellectual and political leaders. In the reading of Galjart and Silva (1995, pp. 3–4), the knowledge of economists aimed at providing recipes for growth has led to an oligarchic manner of filling leadership posts, illustrating how technocracy turns out to be a substitute for democracy (see also Taylor, 1998). As Silva suggests

In trying to ‘clean up’ the state (by concentrating attention on state finances and quality of the administration) this technocratic approach has almost totally neglected civil society. State technocrats believed that economic problems had to be resolved by ‘experts’, without the ‘interference’ of the citizenry which would represent an ‘obstacle’ for the achievement of economic goals (E. Silva, 1995, p. 28).

As illustrated in the introductory section, at policy-making level, the use of economic rationale and consensus between real estate developers and bureaucratic élites is the leading force behind urban development trends. Yet, this does not impact deterministically over individuals and groups; rather,

actors keep their power to choose among different courses of action and deploy strategies that have effects in terms of producing or reproducing particular power configurations. Although the structural scenario sets a number of restrictions for co-ordination and operational-level actors to conduct the Portal of the Bicentenary Project, there still remain channels to challenge the urban governing coalition and the system. It becomes critical, then, to analyse how co-ordination and operational-level ‘structured agents’ respond to defined situations encountered.

3.2 Redeveloping Cerrillos: The Co-ordination and Operational Levels

Given its dimension and political significance, the Portal of the Bicentenary Project (PBP, hereafter) is being managed directly by the national office of the Ministry of Housing (MINVU, hereafter) through a ‘general manager’. This technician was appointed by the MINVU in the early 2000s and kept regular contact with high-ranking public officials to achieve co-ordination among a variety of governmental units. The general manager acted, primarily, at the co-ordination level, using formal and informal authority rules to make strategic decisions regarding, for instance, the type of studies to carry out, what kind of information to produce, at what moment, how to handle and distribute the information produced and when to form special boards to work out controversial topics (advisory committees).⁷

Co-ordination-level actors responded directly to the central state apparatus and the way decisions were taken created a subtle tension between the general manager and professionals from Santiago’s regional government. As a professional from the regional government illustrated, critiques were not uncommon

We must bear in mind that this project emerged from a strong political will, not from the recognition of real market opportunities. Here, the state intends to convince private investors that the master plan will

guarantee interesting economic returns. . . . Before the project, no one saw Cerrillos as a space that could accommodate a large-scale urban project. The studies that we have done demonstrate that the only realistic thing to do there is social housing (translated by the author).

On top of PBP's hierarchical pyramid there is an informal instance called 'The Directorate of the Portal of the Bicentenary Project', presided over by the Head of the Metropolitan Government of Santiago (Intendente) and constituted by several ministers or their representatives. Although the Intendente, as president of this Directorate is empowered to make decisions, his/her role has been relatively passive. He/she realises that PBP is MINVU's project and will not interfere. A professional who works for PBP as an external consultant stated

The Intendente will always support the Minister. He asks us where he can make a difference; then lets the project flow. The Directorate is not a formal entity. What the central state and MINVU wants from this Directorate is to give the impression that there are important people supporting a good project, not a foolish idea. The people who constitute the Directorate will never say no to a general manager proposition; they know he speaks on behalf of the minister (translated by the author).

Yet, this Directorate has never met, existing only virtually in the minds of decision-makers. Thus, critical decisions did not consider the effective participation of any entity beyond the Minister of MINVU and the general manager.

At the co-ordination level, the general manager and his/her small staff worked as a unit to store information and used it to move the PBP forward. The PBP central office in Santiago represented a repository of information which was used to construct the technical justification for the project and to create political effects that help certain politicians to move their interests forward. The concentration of information was one of the

technologies of government used by the general manager to control operational-level actors. Indeed, since operational-level actors were not experts in economics and did not manage technical discourses, it was difficult for them to challenge proposals coming from co-ordination-level technocrats. Given the close professional and political relationship between the general manager and the Minister of MINVU, other public authorities did not interfere in the project.

At the operational level, the main discussion arenas were the advisory committees. In the past couple of years, several committees have been formed to discuss specific issues. The membership of these boards differed, depending on the types of problem put on the agenda by co-ordination-level actors. The informal boundary rule at work prescribed that the general manager invited individuals and/or organisations to attend the negotiation table and reach consensual agreements. Positions were selected on an *ad-hoc* basis to discuss particular issues, such as how to reconcile the project with Santiago's transport plan or how to evaluate the economic feasibility of alternative courses of action. Although there were no formal aggregation rules prescribing how to build consensus, advisory committees played a critical role in validating the point of view of participants holding important political or economic resources. In particular, investors had an open instance for negotiating alternatives that meant differential economic returns. The general manager of the PBP commented on the function of these committees

We have formed several advisory committees to talk over a variety of topics. After the general guidelines of the project were defined, we had an internal debate about what were the next steps to be taken, what elements to consider in the master plan and the adequate timing for the realisation of the different phases of the project. To integrate the first committee, we invited the private sector. This was not a formal instance; it was a *task force* that had a very specific function, what we did was an

ample convocation of course. We invited two real estate investors, an entrepreneur in close relation with the environmental scenario, people from SECTRA [a governmental entity in charge of public transport] ... The committees did not take decisions but they influenced quite a bit. We were not fooling around. We invited them to talk, to take them seriously, not just to hear them and say: OK, that is it. We are not inventing something that has no real connection to the ground (translated by the author; original emphasis).⁸

The statement “We are not inventing something that has no real connection to the ground” illustrates that the project became feasible only if the private sector was willing to invest (authority rules), which is the reason why the general manager granted them a position with enough power to influence on the project.

One key aspect to the functioning of advisory committees is the absence of formal rules defining each participant’s action range and the way resolutions or recommendations were to be taken. The general manager and his/her staff played a number of central roles, such as gathering the necessary information, framing the problem to be resolved, suggesting solutions, evaluating options and suggesting a course of action to advisory committees, the Minister of MINVU or, eventually, to the Directorate of PBP.

Following the rationale of the general manager, one of the main achievements of these committees was that “people began to realise that this was an open project, not responding to the intention of one person, but open to receive proposals and good ideas”. Yet, considering the existing boundary, scope, authority and information rules, actors from the local government (the mayor) remained alienated from the project. A direct advisor to the general manager commented on the internal functioning of these committees

We have periodic meetings, generally on a weekly basis, convened by the general manager. The municipality is usually

incorporated. Decisions are taken round the negotiation table based on a number of specialised studies: investment plans, infrastructure developments and how the investors sense the project. In the final instance, however, it is the Minister of MINVU who approves or rejects ideas (translated by the author).

In relation to the role played by committees, a professional working for the Regional Government stated

The committees do not ‘cut the cake’ [Chilean colloquialism for not having any decision power], they only recommend. Look, do you really want to know what the general manager wants? He wants these committees to exist so he does not appear as the only one taking decisions. He always wants to ask lots of people, so he just goes on and calls them. ... The general manager comes to the negotiation table with a proposal and he wants everyone to listen to him. And, since he has lots of friends, he already has a strong backup and is able to tell the minister: yes, we went over this and we did it *all* together (translated by the author; original emphasis).

In these two statements, the last one with an important dose of sarcasm, it is possible to read two critical functions of the advisory committees and the political technologies used to control a key decision-making instance. First, they functioned to engage potential investors in direct dialogues and gather the necessary technical information to frame the project in accordance with what investors wanted. For that purpose, positions relied on information facilitated by investors and technical studies conducted by private consultants, hired directly by the co-ordination office of PBP. Secondly, advisory committees played the decisive role of legitimising the project by enabling the construction of a discourse claiming that the PBP is ‘the work of all’, including the local government (the municipality).

The statements reproduced above make it possible to access indirectly the finer details about how these committees function. The general manager was backed by a number of individuals, organisations and public officers. The claim that “since he [the general manager] has lots of friends”, suggests that channels of negotiation operating outside the formal organisation were in place and used to reach a consensus among élites and face the ‘open’ negotiations with a more or less settled proposition.

Since the Municipality of Cerrillos holds the authority rule to elaborate land use plans, the general manager needed to align the mayor and his/her technicians along the axis of the project. However, the municipality’s degree of influence was quite limited. Although a position was always granted in the advisory committees, there was little space left to exert influence (scope rule). One major explanation for the municipality’s modest scope is that it did not possess the resources to conduct its own studies and generate information and technical knowledge to challenge the ideas constructed by highly qualified co-ordination-level technicians. According to the general manager, the municipality participated in “each and every instance”, since this project was “ample and open”, in his/her words

When we decide about the master plan, the municipality will be there. We will analyse all the information coming from the Ministry of Public Works, Santiago’s General Transport Plan, etc.

Q: Including information from the municipality?

No, no, no. How many times do I need to repeat it! No information is coming from the municipality; we will be looking mainly at studies from professionals hired as consultants. It is not the case that the municipality has to deliver specific information; they go hand-in-hand with us. They are our partners in this entire story (translated by the author).

In this statement, it is possible to read a paternalistic relationship between the general manager and the municipality: the role of the municipality was limited to being informed about the project’s progress and to follow the voice of the general manager. Given that the local government did not have its own voice, it lost presence at the operational level and was ‘pulled up’ to the co-ordination level where it stood as a subordinated unit. This strategy was aimed at moving the project along a fast track, avoiding problems with the municipality in the elaboration of the local land use plan. Indeed, since the municipality “participated” in “each and every meeting”, it would be difficult for actors from the local government to challenge directives coming from the co-ordination office of the PBP. An advisor for the Regional Government approached this issue explicitly

The project must incorporate the municipality. The idea is to collaborate with the municipality from the beginning and then to inject resources to modernise it, so as to generate a sort of ‘fast track’ and to deal rapidly with all the paperwork involved in obtaining all necessary permits. If you are generating powerful instruments to manage the area, you need to get around the fact that the municipality takes forever to elaborate local land use plans or to grant permits. Then, evidently, the PBP will work closely with the municipality (translated by the author).

With regard to the impact of the PBP, a direct advisor of the Mayor of Cerrillos commented

The Portal of the Bicentenary Project is, without doubt, a spectacular transformation from the urban and social standpoints. Our municipality will become a growth pole, a rich municipality. ... The project will trigger the allocation of commerce and high-standard housing. ... All this will help us to attract investments and fresh revenues (translated by the author).

Municipal officers lacked, in general, a critical view of the project and they could say little about the specific ways in which

the municipality embarked on this initiative or about the impact on the poor communities surrounding the airport. My informants from the municipality had an implicit belief that new investments are always good and will benefit all. A co-ordination level member of the general manager's staff reflected on how the municipality takes the project

The municipality will never be against this initiative, they are very interested, they will not offer resistance. Dream: if the project becomes a reality the Municipality of Cerrillos will become a rich municipality. . . . No one could be against an initiative aimed at increasing the quality of life, benefit the physical and mental health of the people, decontaminate, a series of things, all very ample and good objectives (translated by the author).

Following Contreras (2004), a strong economic rationale dominates in the PBP and no input from the surrounding community or municipality was considered in any meaningful way. Although advisors for the Municipality of Cerrillos claimed that the project "actively involves the neighbours", no evidence supported the idea that neighbourhood associations of the area had a role in the decision-making process. Almost without exception, neighbours could only articulate their views about the project based on media reports. Their understanding remained restricted to very general notions about the project's main features. Although the mayor is part of the team that can, eventually, influence decisions, there are no instances of communication between municipal officers and the affected community. As Contreras suggests

The internal participation process within the Municipality is restricted to the Mayor informing the heads of different Municipal Departments through memorandums (Contreras, 2003, p. 7).

No evidence was found that the municipality promoted the creation of local instances to analyse and discuss the implications of the PBP.

4. Power Relationships in the Portal of the Bicentenary Project

The backbone structuring PBP's decision-making is a techno-politician, the general manager, holding a range of boundary, scope, authority and information rules that allows him/her to deploy specific government technologies to control key decision-making nodes and tightly regulate the production and storage of information. The operation of these rules gets concrete expression in the formation of a decision-making arrangement focused on reaching technical consensus between the general manager and private investors.

The participation of the private sector in urban planning decisions appears to be consistent with rules derived from the predominance of a neo-liberal mentality and with the politics of consensus prevailing in the country. Yet, the close relationship developed between investors and the general manager of PBP is not explained only by broader rules, but also by the personal history of the manager, who has been active in academia, as a consultant for real estate investors, and in the contingent political sphere. The *tête-à-tête*, the direct and personal connection that exists between the general manager and the investors, suggests that the public-private division is not as clear-cut as it is sometimes portrayed in the literature.

In the interaction with the affected community (formally represented by the municipality) the principal governmental technique deployed by the general manager to control the decision-making process was to 'pull up' the municipality from the operational level to the co-ordination level by assigning it a position in advisory committees and making it work as a close 'partner' to the general manager. This movement provoked, intentionally or not, a disconnection between the municipality and the affected community. At the co-ordination level, the municipality entered an arena of discussion where the language of the economists and experts prevails over other voices (information rule), relegating non-technical voices to secondary positions and binding the municipality to a

given course of action. This illustrates, indeed, the deep penetration of economic rationalities and how in contemporary Chile technocracy is a substitute for democracy (see also Galjart and Silva, 1995).

Citizens living near the Project's site remained isolated from decision centres and conceived the project largely in abstract terms, as something external that would not directly affect them. One evident reason for this situation is that the Cerrillos airport remained as a self-contained area and ordinary citizens sensed no danger or opportunity. However, just as the Mayor of Cerrillos has been active (and responsible) in producing, reproducing and legitimising the set of rules giving shape to an élitist and technocratic policy-making style, 'ordinary citizens' are also part (and also responsible) of the machinery reproducing this situation. Despite the lack of incentives for public participation and involvement, the project is 'out there'; it is not hidden behind impenetrable walls. The project is open for scrutiny, for resisting manipulation attempts and for challenging economic and political élites. The actions and decisions of the general manager cannot then be considered as acting deterministically over powerless individuals and marginalising them from decision-making: the general manager is just setting the broader context of possibilities and constraints for action, not eliminating options.

5. Final Remarks

To read the power relations embedded in governing arrangements, I suggested examining the social rules operating at different functional levels. This analytical construction is not aimed at disclosing the constellation of rules constituting more stable institutions or institutional transformation over time (see Child, 1997). Rather, the analytical focus is on how governing arrangements are created and recreated by 'situated agents' operating under given structural scenarios. In the case study under scrutiny, actors operating at the co-ordination level took command of the project's implementation giving form to a particular power and rule configuration. The

strategies deployed by the technically and politically skilled general manager to dominate key decision-making nodes consisted of framing in technical ways the issues discussed; controlling the information storage, production and distribution; and integrating the municipality at the co-ordination level, where it stood as a subordinated unit with little power to affect the outcome. To move the project along a 'fast track', the general manager tried to compromise capital investment and put his/her efforts into avoiding conflicts with municipal actors and neighbouring communities.

The principal limitation of the analytical framework here deployed is the difficulty in disclosing informal rules operating backstage. Although one can infer that informal channels of negotiation existed between the general manager and private investors, there is no hard evidence that sheds light on how these negotiations unfolded and their consequences. Yet, this framework is capable of interpreting power relationships that remain hidden to more structurally driven frameworks. Even if the results may appear general, they do offer important information about the strategies deployed by each party, the key decision-making nodes taken and the points where resistance can be more effectively used to change or transform existing power configurations. As in any study using qualitative/interpretative methodologies, the results are influenced by what informants are willing to express and the interpretation is necessarily predisposed by the researcher's point of view. From my perspective, more than being a limitation, this is an unavoidable issue that any investigation about the social construction of space should recognise.

Therefore, the analytical framework here developed shall not be taken as a rigid formula to arrive at a fixed and objective relation; rather, one must look at it as a strategic device that can help in signalling the most noticeable points at which power relationships are being established and/or reproduced. The notion of social rules is specific enough to identify the channels used to exert power over population and urban

space. One important element is that the notion of social rule can be a useful heuristic device to conduct comparative work and to fill a gap in urban literature in relation to how mega-cities and urban projects are managed across different structural contexts. A researcher must come to terms with the so-called structured–agency debate to achieve this.

Although structuration theory created enthusiasm as a framework to resolve the structure–agency tension in the 1980s and 1990s, it was prematurely dismissed as a device to inform empirical studies, given its limited conception of power and Giddens’ difficulties in providing concrete research tools. Through the combined use of the notions of social rules, functional and ‘situated actors’, I suggested here a way to advance in relating structural elements and the power of actors to make decisions. The structural conditions at the policy-making level were interpreted using the same set of rules framing—but not determining—the performance of co-ordination and operational-level actors, enabling the relating of macro processes and micro situations. In the case study, structural elements derived from the deep penetration of neo-liberalism into Chile’s social body influenced decision-making procedures by reducing the scope and reach of the local government and by de-stimulating public participation. These two situations are not the result of neo-liberalism; on the contrary, actors operating under a neo-liberal mentality were able to deploy effectively strategies to control local governmental instances and put in place a given agenda and power configuration. Then, the passivity of neighbours and the mayor is responsible for creating a particular form of capillarity, one in which local-level actors reproduce, maybe unconsciously, the general structure of the situation.

To what extent is this outcome generalisable to the Chilean context? To date, we only have partial evidence. A study conducted in the city of Concepción shows that poor families successfully deployed strategies and tactics partially to control an urban project outcome and avoid eradication (Zunino, 2005). In Santiago,

an exploratory study conducted by Cortes (2005) shows that in the Municipality of Pudahuel (east side of Santiago) private investors are controlling the production of urban space through very specific and multi-level tactics and strategies, which have relegated the municipality to being a spectator of urban and industrial developments. Based on these studies, one can conclude that the power configuration shaping urban decision-making entities varies from place to place, depending in the specific conditions in which projects unfold.

Although the constitution of governing arrangements may vary spatially, given that actors do not react mechanically to structural forces, the influence of general conditions must not be dismissed. In the case of Chile, as the case study illustrates, the neo-liberal structural context offers certain actors operating at the policy and co-ordination levels ample channels for the regulation of local government engagement in urban projects and for reducing the incentives for public participation. Yet, more extensive empirical work is needed to permit generalisation, without losing sight of the fact that the potential to resist structural features and thus to depart from the general trend always will exist: urban governing arrangements are a volatile achievement in a constant flux of change. This does not mean that some structural features are more permanent than others across time and space.

Considering the deep penetration of neo-liberalism in Chile’s economic and social life, one could be tempted to read the Portal of the Bicentenary Project and its power relationships as a ‘condensation’ of broader structural situations. However, like human creation, structures are subject to sudden changes and transformations. To insist on a central issue, there is no determination of urban projects’ outcomes: there are always open opportunities to choose among different courses of action, to resist going along with the designed rituals. For example, the mayor held a position within advisory committees, but he/she did not use formal scope and authority rules to challenge the political and economic élites articulating the project. Rules gave the

municipality the authority to formulate land use plans, but no attempts were made to use this in a strategy to change the situation by, for example, demanding the redefinition of channels through which information was disseminated (change of aggregation and information rules) or demanding more resources from the central government to face the new challenges derived from the PBP (pay-off rules regarding the distribution of resources from the central government). In the case of the Ribera Norte Project in Concepción, Chile (Zunino, 2005), poor communities were able to organise themselves, generate their own information and effectively exert pressure over co-ordination-level actors.

In section 2, I developed the notion of capilarity to explain the mutual hold that usually exists between individuals operating at different hierarchical levels. In the case studied, no evidence was found that the local community or the local government were resisting or challenging in any significant way decisions coming from broader hierarchical levels. In this case, the mutual hold is being sustained by a passive community which, through its inactivity, is reproducing and validating the system in place. The consequence of this situation is a project sustained by a strong technical and political mentality, but with no grounding within the local community. Despite the claims that the project is 'the work of all' and the 'progressive' goals it embraces (such as socio-spatial integration), in practice we are witnessing a project that responds to the interests of particular economic and political élites.

As shown in Figure 1, the development of 'fenced cities' has been restricted to Santiago's northern fringe. In a situation where local authorities appear functional to the goals of decision-makers on the top of the pyramid, the project appears to be on course for creating an enclosed environment, replicating in the inner city the trends that are unfolding in the periphery. Indeed, to make this project attractive to middle sectors, private investors might intend to create enclosed forms of development (gated

communities, condominiums with controlled access, private parks), which might reduce spatial segregation—the relative proximity of different social groups—but which will maintain important levels of social segregation. Despite the lack of major studies, the work of Cortes (2005) shows that Santiago city is developing under parameters defined by business interests, relegating local communities to non-influential positions. This is certainly not particular to the Chilean context, what is specific here is the channel used by actors to control, subordinate other actors and take command of the social construction of the city of Santiago.

Notes

1. For studies in other Latin American cities, see Acioly, 2001; Cariola and Lacabana, 2003; Ciccolella, 1999; Keeling, 1999.
2. As I argue elsewhere (Zunino, 2004), the notion of structure of governance can be a more consistent conceptual device to capture the recursive relation between action and structure in urban decision-making. Since I do not develop here the notion of structure of governance, to which I ascribe a very specific meaning, I have opted for using more general concepts like decision-making instances and governing arrangements.
3. Resistance to the neo-liberal model is restricted to marginal anti-systemic movements, while mainstream politicians, including the 'renovated' socialists now in power, hold similar economic programmes. This is not the case in other countries in Latin America like Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, where counter-discourses are engrained in the political agenda of major political parties and there are strong movements against the neo-liberal social order.
4. Despite its metaphysical overtones, in Steiner's work (1976), I find a stimulating discussion about social constraint and a non-conventional explanation of freedom (see, especially, ch. 1).
5. Since the research questions leading these investigations differ from the ones posed here, I do not discuss how the authors' use structuration theory. As I argue elsewhere (Hidalgo and Zunino, 2005), in recent structuralist work there is a tendency to over-emphasise structural forms of constraint, which is related to Giddens' underdeveloped notion of power.

6. One *caveat* is in order. Technocratic mentality is not an exclusive phenomenon of countries that have undergone neo-liberal reforms. It is also relevant under different ideological systems. In the Chilean case, intellectuals and technocrats with close links to political parties have shaped policy demands and actively participated in policy formulation in a number of political experiments: from reform over revolution under Christian Democracy (1964–70), to revolution over reform under the Chilean Popular Unit's road to socialism (1970–73) and to neo-liberal economic and social restructuring under military rule (1973–90) (see E. Silva, 1995, p. 196). What distinguishes technocracy under neo-liberalism is its disdain of other systems of knowledge.
7. This organisational structure departs from the way other projects in the Bicentennial Programme are being conducted. In the conventional case, there is a Direction of Urban Projects (DUP) in each region. Through this, regional actors decide which projects to embark on and how to move them forward. According to one of the main advisors for the general manager, the PBP is a 'presidential' or 'ministerial' project, one that escapes the scope of interests of any particular region.
8. The term 'task force' was used in English by the interviewed.

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