



TOWARDS SOCIALLY INTEGRATED HOUSING IN CHILE: ASSESSING CONVIVIALITY THROUGH TWO KEY HOUSING PROJECTS

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Abstract

Social integration is an important goal of contemporary urban policy in Chile. Using the concept of conviviality understood as the “art of living in community” (Esteva, 2012), this work analyses two socially integrated housing developments in Chile. This paper argues that materially interspersing different socioeconomic groups within housing developments is insufficient on its own to achieve the objectives of social integration espoused in the national urban policy. In particular, it leaves aside community and cultural processes and therefore neglects considerations of inclusion, equity, and conviviality. Furthermore, it is insufficient on its own in meeting sustainable cities and quality of life objectives of the National Urban Development Policy. As a result, we raise critical questions for the implementation of national policy objectives to combat the segregation of cities. The concept of assessing conviviality is proposed as a means to further understand social integration.

Keywords: *Conviviality, Social Integration, Housing and Urban Policy, Social Housing, Morphological Transformation.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with the ongoing problem of residential segregation of communities – in particular along socioeconomic lines. In this respect we take as our starting point Henry Shafstoe’s principles for convivial spaces (Shafstoe, 2008), which complement the work of urban theorists from Kevin Lynch to Jane Jacobs, and from Jan Gehl to Richard Sennett, who argue in various contexts for integrated communities (Lynch, 1960; Jacobs and Abad, 1973; Sennett, 2003; Gehl, 1987). In such conceptualisations of the city, it is street level interaction in convivial spaces that provides the essential urban fabric; it creates and maintains neighbourhoods. This interaction may be facilitated (or not) by the design of the materiality of the city, but it is the interaction itself that provides evidence of the urban fabric.

The proliferation of urban ghettos, most infamously associated with the modernist ‘vertical streets’ and mass public housing experiments of the post-war era, led to ‘sink estates’ where crime, deprivation, and decline became a stark visual expression of how not to design and provide housing. One policy goal that emerged from this was the need to find ways to integrate communities across socioeconomic lines and tenures within neighbourhoods in ‘salt and pepper’ arrangements. Side-by-side living of those in housing need with those who were on the ‘housing ladder’ into owner occupation became a policy imperative.

While this imperative was based upon various and sometimes competing logics about class, wealth, access, aspiration, and so on in late capitalist, owner-occupation based economies, it remains a key concern for housing policy across the westernised world, including in Chile, where the case studies reported here are based.

In this paper, we argue that physical integration by materially interspersing a demographic mix of different socioeconomic groups within housing developments offers an incipient measure that is insufficient on its own to meet the policy goal of social integration. It does not in itself deliver inclusion, equity, or conviviality. By implication, we raise critical questions for the implementation of national policy objectives to combat the segregation of cities. The concept of *assessing conviviality*, understood as the “art of living in community” (Esteva, 2012), is proposed as a means to further social integration.

Henry Shafstoe claims that “conviviality is a subjective *feeling*, underpinned by, but not to be confused with, the actual physical state of a place” (Shafstoe, 2008). In Shafstoe’s description, social mix is just one condition among many. He makes a distinction and highlights the need to focus more on *places* (quality of shared spaces) than on buildings, albeit acknowledging that buildings enable these places. Shafstoe asserts that fundamental to their approach “is to mix uses together to create more integrated neighbourhoods” (Shafstoe, 2008), and not the other way around. In this regard, Shafstoe’s

principles for convivial spaces are complementary with those of the aforementioned urban theorists, Jane Jacobs *et al.* The question for this paper is: *How can we assess and recognise convivial spaces as both social and physical expressions of social integration in a housing development (neighbourhood) that is assumed and designed to be socially integrated?*

Our approach to address this question is to examine a case study of purposive attempts to deliver social integration through two new housing developments in Chile. In presenting these case studies, we first review the recent policy and design context (Section 2), before presenting the two housing developments (*Casas Viejas* and *Villa Las Araucarias*) and results of observations and interviews with householders living in these developments (Section 3). The two housing developments have been selected because they are some of the oldest housing developments built under the Socially Integrated Housing Program (SIHP). The SIHP includes a set of design guidelines that encourages the mix of housing typologies ('salt and pepper' arrangements) and relatively uniform aesthetics through the design guidelines to create

homogeneity across the developments (Figure 1). The two projects offer contrasting locations and size: *Casas Viejas* is in the capital city of Santiago with 2088 houses; *Villa Las Araucarias* is in regional Chile with 140 houses.

For the assessment of conviviality we used in-situ observation, documentation of built form, interviews, and surveys. Of the principles of conviviality, we focused on mixed use, quality of shared spaces, and subjective feelings and cohesion. Section 4 presents reflections and conclusions.

POLICY AND DESIGN CONTEXT

The concept of social integration has acquired a central role in public policy and debate. In Chile, the recognition of the problems generated by the social segregation of cities cuts across traditional political boundaries which has allowed for bi-partisan support for the need for public policies. The flagship policy in this space is the *National Urban Development Policy: Sustainable Cities and Quality of Life* (NUDP, 2013). The (NUDP) as a policy instrument reflects in broad terms the aspirations of the urban theorists cited above, and (at least implicitly)



Casas Viejas, Santiago.



Villa Las Araucarias, La Serena.

Figure 1. Top: Casas Viejas, where it is difficult to tell the difference between social and affordable housing types. Bottom Villas Las Araucarias, where social houses are two-storey and affordable one-storey level and grouped together according to their typology (Source: Authors).

promotes principles of convivial spaces to encourage social diversity and social integration. Prior to the development of this policy, the *Socially Integrated Housing Program* (2006) attempted to promote social integration. Officially this program has produced 12 socioeconomically mixed housing developments throughout the country since 2008.

Internationally, critics assert that while social mix is believed to improve the situation of the most disadvantaged sectors of society, redirecting subsidies to middle class housing markets actually contributes to shortage of housing stock, increasing real estate values, and making housing less accessible for the lowest-income groups (Fincher, et al., 2014, Bricocoli and Cucca, 2014). Furthermore, socially integrated, or mixed housing developments, may carry inherent problems as they could create other forms of inequity and spatial segregation, which could deter innovation in regards to “urban justice” (Bricocoli and Cucca, 2014). In addition, a report produced by the *Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute* (Pawson, et al., 2012) states that “it cannot be assumed that neighbourhood ‘re-engineering’ with the intention of drawing in middle class owner occupiers will necessarily turn out as such” (Pawson, et al., 2012).

Locally, the financial incentive offered to potential middle class residents to encourage them to live with “the poor” was criticised on ethical grounds (Brain, et al., 2007). This incentive ceased to be available to buyers early in 2015 and was replaced with another financial incentive offered to developers, as encouragement to build socially integrated housing developments.

In the context of Chile’s segregated cities, it has been argued that both this financial model and the physical location of socially integrated housing developments is determined by the neo-liberal market model and that regulation of the land market would better serve the objective of reducing segregation (Sabatini and Brain, 2008, Rodriguez and Sugranyes, 2005). In a study of current housing policies in Chile, Paola Siclari asserts that “placing the poor with the less poor is a recipe that could cause greater social gaps instead of integrating” (Siclari Bravo, 2009). In either case, the implementation of this policy lacks the necessary indicators that would allow evaluation (Maturana, 2014, Siclari Bravo, 2009). In a recent positive assessment of *Casas Viejas*, Sabatini et al. acknowledge that “the market itself, without subsidies or special incentives, has produced socially mixed developments” (Sabatini, et al., 2014). Their study recommends to “compliment the policies that support people with others that support places” (Sabatini, et al., 2014).

Aware of the significance of these argu-

ments, this paper focuses upon the notion of *conviviality* as a way to evaluate the achievements of the SIHP, with respect to the objectives of the NUDP. Conviviality is formed and reaffirmed by day-to-day practices, which may include changes initiated by residents to the morphology of the built environment and social practices that reveal the lived experience of households. We argue that this notion offers a tool and a measure that is both spatial and social in its application and its register.

The NUDP has established the significance of social integration as a tool in the sustainable development of the nation and its cities. The NUDP document states that,

“[social] segregation not only affects those who live in those segregated zones, it affects the entire population; it challenges our values and our very concept of society, hence damaging competitiveness and the sustainability of our cities” (MINVU, 2014).

An earlier government publication (MINVU and CEHU, 2009) associates social integration with physical integration, equity and conviviality. It also introduces the notion of social cohesion as a more sophisticated form of social integration (CEPAL, 2007) and “a condition for a sustainable urban development” (MINVU and CEHU, 2009). “Social cohesion purports the necessity to inscribe social integration discussions within the city dimension” (MINVU and CEHU, 2009). Likewise, the NUDP suggests that social integration ought to be tackled at neighbourhood, municipality, and city scales. It further states that, while social integration plays a role within the policy objectives, the main objectives are quality of life and sustainable cities, whereby “urban growth and transformations of our cities should be subject to the concept of sustainable development” (MINVU, 2014). Cities should be understood as “complex organisms where small actions affect the entire system” (MINVU, 2014). It is within this conceptual framework that social integration emerges as a tool to achieve the objectives of the NUDP and not an aim in itself.

What these policy documents have in common is an acknowledgment of the problems generated by social segregation in cities and an ambition to articulate the relationship between social integration, segregation, and social cohesion. What these policies do not include is *how* these objectives will be achieved in the neighbourhood, municipality, and the city. This is the missing link identified through this research into the SIHP program as the main part of the regulatory framework under which the first socially integrated housing projects were built.

It is important to note that while the NUDP

stresses the need for social integration in new housing developments, this should not only consider the cost of land and buildings, but “the benefits and costs for the future residents and society in general” (MINVU, 2014). Thus, the NUDP recommends building these housing developments in integrated ways, in central locations, using high quality design and finishes. Furthermore, independently of the type of government subsidy, *dignified living* (Salama, 2011) should be provided through design and construction that considers the future aspirations of residents and access to infrastructure, services, and transportation.

FINDINGS: CASAS VIEJAS AND VILLA LAS ARAUCARIAS

Taking *conviviality* as a measure of social integration, the interviews and surveys at the two developments of *Casas Viejas* and *Villa Las Araucarias* provide insights into the relationships between neighbours and within the neighbourhood. The physical changes undertaken to the built form offer an indication of the relationship between the private and the public, the individual and the collective. Of the indicators of conviviality, we focused on mixed use, quality of shared spaces, and subjective feelings and cohesion.

Mixed use

The two case studies are designed as single use housing developments with basic levels of urban infrastructure. As with all of the 12 developments under the SIHP, mixed use is neither planned nor present in any significant extent (Figure 2). As shown in Figure 3, the design of *Casas Viejas*



Figure 2. *Casas Viejas*, consisting of 2088 houses within a single use development (Source: Authors).

(2088 houses) includes a school, health centre, and variously sized green open spaces (a park and interior squares for playgrounds). *Villa Las Araucarias* (140 houses) includes only a large open space (a park) with a community facility, and a sports field (Figure 4).

Both case studies are surrounded by similar single use residential housing developments. For services such as health, financial, education, and retail, residents of the case study developments must commute. The nearest urban centre to *Casas Viejas* is a distance of 3.5 km and from *Villas Las Araucarias* this is 6 km. Both housing developments are poorly serviced by public transport. These locations and single use factors within the development exacerbate the disadvantage that is inherent in the demographic mix. As noted by the survey, 57% of household in *Casas Viejas* and 41% in *Villa Las Araucarias* have a car.



Figure 3. Urban infrastructure in *Casas Viejas* indicating planned services and open spaces and home businesses established by the residents (Source: Authors).

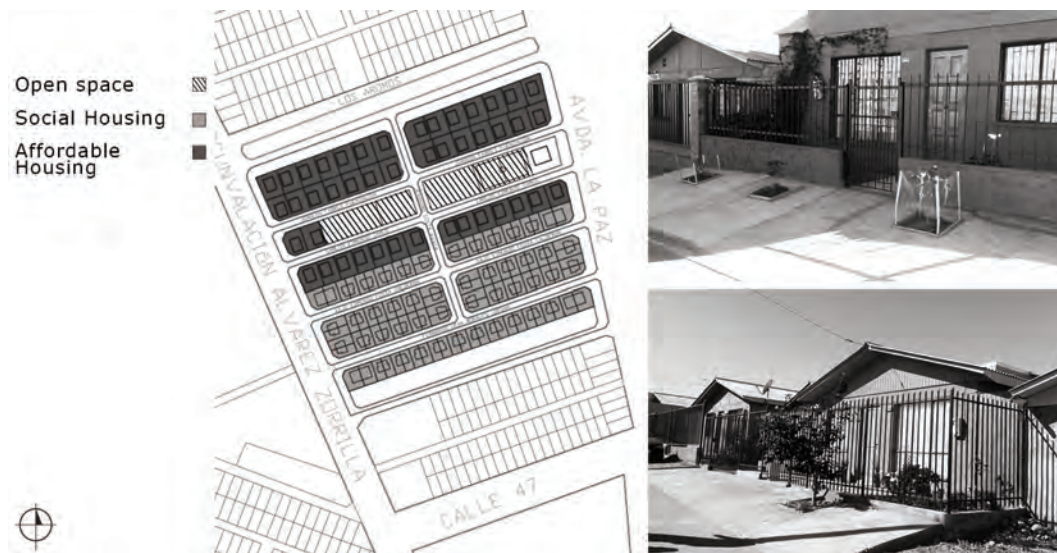


Figure 4. The plan shows that the open space is not effectively accessible to social house residents. The random photographs at the right show that people tend to look after the front of their homes (Source: Authors).

It is customary in Chile for residents of low and lower-middle classes to supplement their household income through a home business, such as a milk-bar or workshop. These businesses bring a social dynamic to the street and the neighbourhood, creating connections between residents.

Seven years since construction, *Casas Viejas* has had home businesses distributed throughout the development (Figure 3). In this regard, it looks like any other neighbourhood in the area. After approximately the same time, *Villa Las Araucarias* has had virtually no home businesses functioning although there have been attempts. The absence of these in *Villa Las Araucarias* indicates something of the precarious social conditions in the neighbourhood and surrounding areas.

"...a gang of them came here and we had to close all doors and windows, they threw stones and broke windows. They drink silly, sing loudly, and shoot in the air. It is terrible" (Interviewee No. 3, *Villa Las Araucarias*).

Quality of shared spaces

Such social problems may not only deter small businesses, but also affect the use of open spaces and the way people perceive the connection between their house and public space.

In *Villa Las Araucarias*, the spatial division along the lines of demographic housing types compounds the social problems expressed in shared open spaces. In addition, there is a problem of crime and violence associated with drug trafficking throughout the local area.

The mandatory design guidelines were not followed in *Villa Las Araucarias*. The urban and

housing design physically separates the two housing typologies (social and affordable or middle-class housing types). The only open space in the development is situated within the middle-class housing (Figure 4). Rather than integrating the two social groups, the park becomes a point of friction and dispute among residents and as a result is poorly used and maintained.

"People are argumentative here. They insist that the park is theirs ..., also the community centre. There is a dispute between the ones here and the ones over there ... There is only one community centre for the two groups!" (Interviewee No. 2, *Villa Las Araucarias*).

In contrast, it is important to note that most residents take care of the street and public space immediately in front of their houses (Figure 4). At a superficial level, *Villas Las Araucarias* is socially integrated in terms of the demographic mix within this neighbourhood. However, the complexity of social cohesion is not expressed or experienced in the public spaces of this development. The physical state of place in such spaces is, at this point in time, not convivial.

In *Casas Viejas*, the original design included a network of small open spaces each surrounded by approximately 30 houses in a cul-de-sac. Nearly all of the cul-de-sacs have been gated by residents which changes the social dynamic (Figure 5). Residents living on the main streets of the development complain that they have no access to the open spaces within the cul-de-sacs. The general state of these open spaces is good and they are well maintained. Outside the cul-de-sacs, open spaces, such as those in main streets and on the



Figure 5. This shows a standard gate used in Casas Viejas to close the cul-de-sac to the outside (Source: Authors).

periphery of the development, are poorly maintained.

Residents have modified the fences of their homes in Casas Viejas by increasing the size of the original fences and, in the case of Villa Las Araucarias, where the houses did not have fences, the residents have built high fences. Our study established that the permeability of fences was an indicator of the relationship between residents and within the neighbourhoods. Low permeability of fences indicates a lack of trust and conviviality and high permeability demonstrates a regard for social connection (Figure 6).

The installation of gates to cul-de-sacs and the construction and modification of fences is a common occurrence in non-integrated housing developments in their immediate surrounding areas. As such, this is not an indicator in itself of the underpinning or undermining of conviviality. Neighbours outside the cul-de-sac describe these actions and structures as “micro-segregation” (Interviewee FS1.4R, Casas Viejas). Collectively, residents within the cul-de-sacs express a feeling of security. In Villa Las Araucarias, the houses were built without fences and residents have since con-



Figure 6. The diagram shows the percentage of different visual permeability of fences in Casas Viejas. In Villas Las Araucarias, the results are similar (Source: Authors).



Figure 7. New fences built by residents change the streetscape of the housing development in Villa Las Araucarias (Source: Authors).

structed high fences with similar range of visual permeability as in Casas Viejas (Figure 7). However, combined with an absence of home businesses operating at street level and the disuse of the single shared open space, the physical state of this place undermines conviviality.

The design of the houses and public spaces of Casas Viejas complied with the design guidelines of the SIHP and achieved a relatively homogeneous streetscape (Figure 1). The residents’ home extensions and modifications have been enacted in a haphazard and often illegal way that affects the quality and experience of the streetscape’s shared public spaces. While the compliance and enforcement of the design guidelines in the original design attempted to create social cohesion between residents, the idiosyncratic streetscape individually created by each resident expresses a low level of interaction among and between neighbours or with the authorities responsible for planning, design, and construction.

Subjective feelings and cohesion

From the design, scale, and resident-initiated modifications in Casas Viejas, we could assume a certain level of social cohesion amongst the two socioeconomic groups. However, this review of the program and in-situ observations of the built form is qualified by interviews and surveys with residents about their choices and levels of satisfaction. In Casas Viejas, families living in social housing tend to send their children to the municipal school within the housing development and those living in middle-class housing send their children further away to private or non-government schools. According to the surveys undertaken, there is little interaction among residents particularly in participation in local activities (Figure 8). Here, neighbour interaction could be described as superficial but generally cordial. By way of example, a resident who lived in La Pintana (one of the poorest munic-

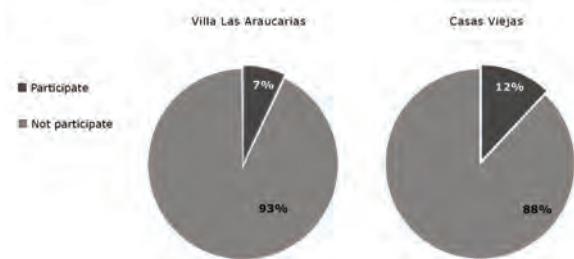


Figure 8. The diagram shows the percentage of residents from each housing development who participate in local activities such as gyms, church, social clubs, activities organised by schools, the municipality, or others. In both cases, the percentage of participation is very low (Source: Authors).

ipalities in Santiago) before moving to Casas Viejas describes their interaction in the following terms:

Q: Any friendships?

A: No. Greeting, yes, of course we say hello, but more than that no.

Q: And before, when you lived in La Pintana, was it the same?

A: No, there I had my neighbours. My neighbours who I talked with, and my neighbours that looked after my plants. It was different.

Q: Why there and not here? Perhaps you have not been here long enough?

A: No, I don't think that is the reason. I think we are just different people. (Interviewee DS40.3R, Casas Viejas)

Despite the problem of the lack of social cohesion, the interviews and surveys generally show that there are relatively high levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhood (Figure 9). This satisfaction tends to be slightly higher among social house residents, than among middle-class housing residents.

"I like living here because it is quiet. I don't know, I feel secure here. I always wanted to live in a place like this, quiet because you see too many things outside. It was very different where I lived before" (Interviewee DS1.6R, Casas Viejas).

While Casas Viejas could be said to demonstrate better social cohesion than Villa Las Araucarias, the stigma of subsidised housing remains as a form of discrimination. The level of social cohesion in Villa Las Araucarias is represented by divisive social interaction, where neighbours from different socioeconomic groups are referred to in pejorative terms. When asked about social interaction, a resident comments:

"No, never. From the beginning they opposed us because we were 'vulgar' and rough; we were poverty. We were of the houses donated by the gov-

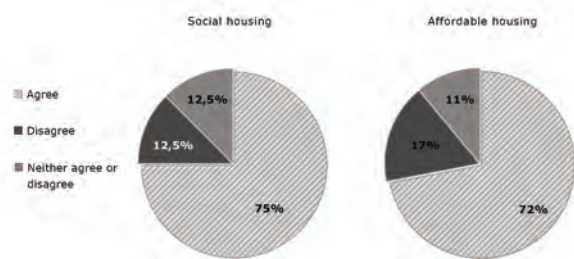


Figure 9. Levels of satisfaction of interviewees with their neighbourhood among social and affordable housing residents in Casas Viejas (Source: Authors).

ernment. But we paid something" (Interviewee No.4. Villa Las Araucarias).

CONCLUSIONS

Through the design of Casas Viejas, we have an example of broadly distributed small public spaces that, within a single use neighbourhood, produce a paradoxical conviviality. In the urban design of Villas Las Araucarias, this basis of conviviality is undermined by a single, poorly located large open space. The two case studies offer two completely different opportunities to examine conviviality as a measure of social integration, better described as social cohesion.

The design of the houses similarly undermines and undermines the level of conviviality in each of the developments. In Casas Viejas, the attempts to create visual homogeneity between houses designed for different socioeconomic groups only prove to amplify the problems in a single use development. In Villas Las Araucarias, the blatant distinction between both the form and distribution of the two housing typologies introduces a double spatial division in the physical state of place for conviviality.

The design guidelines for the SIHP, if applied, can partially establish the qualities of public space needed as a base for conviviality. Within the limitations of a market economy and its land distribution, the capacity of housing and urban design in these socially integrated housing developments holds a potential to focus on the quality of places rather than houses. However, the single use and isolated location of these developments sets the quotidian experience of residents within a challenging context. Casas Viejas, in scale and design, holds prospects for the formation of a social fabric within its public spaces. Villas Los Araucarias, in contrasting scale and design, affords no such latency.

The enclosing, opening or grouping of houses, respectively through fences, small business-

es to the street, or the gating of street entrances to cul-de-sacs, is a response to the design intent. The latter creates a collective privatisation of public space in *Casas Viejas* and presents a contradictory conviviality for the neighbourhood. The conflict created by the location of the open public space in *Villas Las Araucarias*, appears insurmountable and the response is a two-fold abandonment by one group and a domination by the second.

The modifications of the house fences in *Casa Viejas* represents a social practice that responds to the faults in the urban design while maintaining a sense of neighbourhood through the permeability of these mitigating structures. In *Villas Las Araucarias*, a similar response to the given urban and housing design produces a similar variation in conviviality. The small businesses opened in *Casa Viejas* demonstrate how resident activities, initiated though need, manifest aspects of conviviality. In *Villas Las Araucarias*, the establishment of a base level of social cohesion is thwarted by the scale, design, and location of this development and is expressed in the inability of small home businesses and the associated daily street activity to take root.

These responses reflect the subjective feelings of place and the level of social cohesion in each of the housing developments as a measure of conviviality. In both case studies, conviviality, underpinned by the physical state of place, is confirmed and contradicted. The high levels of satisfaction with the housing and neighbourhood, particularly expressed by residents of social housing, may reflect the relative improvement in the quality of life achieved in moving to the new houses within the SIHP. These levels of satisfaction are lower, though still high, among residents of affordable (middle-class) houses for the same reasons, but with the added spatial aspect of achieving a larger house than their social housing neighbours.

It is the relationship between the house and public space where these subjective feelings are verified by the day-to-day social interaction with neighbours, in the neighbourhood, and the municipality. In addition to the varying degrees of visual difference between housing types, the social interaction between residents in the same development is divided, socially and spatially, along socio-economic lines.

The research methods of this investigation have afforded a critique of the *Socially Integrated Housing Program* (SIHP) in relation to the *National Urban Development Policy* (NUDP) policy objective of social integration.

The two case studies, like all developments of the SIHP, are situated on the outskirts of their respective cities and impact the segregation of cities by creating a new typology of segregation through

social integration. The proportional mix of low and purportedly middle class residents used to assess social integration in the SIHP program constitutes a feeble indicator. This concept and measure of social integration does not assist in achieving the objective of the *National Urban Development Policy: Sustainable Cities and Quality of Life*. In the implementation of the NUDP objectives to combat the segregation of cities, assessing conviviality is proposed as a means to further social integration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper and the research upon which it is based form part of a current 3-year research project entitled "*Viviendas de Integración Social y Sustentabilidad Medioambiental: una investigación de dos proyectos claves en Chile*" (FONDECYT No. 11130636). Special thanks to Hal Pawson, City Futures Research Centre, UNSW, Australia, Scarlet Romano and Anthony McInnery for their contribution to this work.

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