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The City as a Weapon

Producing space through conflict in Santiago, Chile

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Abstract

The idea of Chile as a “miracle” of neoliberal reform has been extensively confronted since October of 2019 in a large wave of protests throughout the country, by a vast majority feeling excluded from its benefits. Despite this conflict (known as the “Estallido Social”, or “Social Outbreak”) occurring exclusively in cities, previous analyses do not explicitly address the role of urban space in this process. This analysis regards Santiago’s urban space as an active element of the protests, a “weapon” per se, that both shapes and is shaped by the actions and decisions of both protestors and authorities. It frames Santiago as both a strategic element of Chilean neoliberal reforms and the site and object for urban social movements in the country. Drawing from Lefebvre’s ideas of the city, in terms of centrality and mediation, I expose the different ways in how urban space is used and appropriated between the center and periphery of Santiago. The creation of urban space through conflict largely happens through the creation of place. The key example examined is Plaza Dignidad, with significant symbolic value embedded in its location, locale, and sense of place.

Keywords: social production of space; critical urban theory; Santiago de Chile; Estallido Social; semiotics

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1. Introduction

1.1. General background and motivation

As a modern country, Chile is often considered the “poster child” for neoliberalism. It is seen as the first great experiment in building a neoliberal state (Harvey, 2006), and its arguable success distinguishes it from its Latin American neighbors. Current president Sebastián Piñera had this in mind when referring to Chile as a “true oasis” within an “agitated” Latin America (Monzón, 2019). And yet, just ten days from these words, he would find himself declaring a state of emergency in Santiago, to pacify a massive urban turmoil that would last months and mobilize millions. What had started as a fare evasion campaign in the Santiago subway, mainly by students, had pushed this “true oasis” past the point of no return. As a new constitution is written, billionaire and staunch conservative Piñera unwillingly presides over Chile’s biggest defiance of the neoliberal order, or, as it is now known, the Estallido Social (“Social Outbreak”; E.S. throughout).

Analyses of the E.S. primarily focus on its social, political, and economic context, mainly considering the effects of the unrestrained neoliberal model over the last 40 years (see Faúndes, 2019; Jiménez-Yañez, 2020; Waissbluth, 2020). Even though this social turmoil is an overwhelmingly urban phenomenon, Chilean urban space is at best considered as the site in which it occurred. Little attention has been paid to how the E.S. explicitly interacts with the particular dynamics of the cities in which it occurs. This leaves unanswered the questions of how the conflict has been shaped by preexisting urban space, and how urban space itself is produced and reproduced by it.

My research addresses these questions by narrowing down on Santiago's urban space as an active element, a site and object that both shapes, and is shaped by, the Estallido Social. I define the “city” in Lefebvre’s (1970 [2003]) terms, paying attention to the logics of centrality and mediation. In turn, I explore how the E.S. manifests in it, and how each side recreates and weaponizes the “urban” to its advantage. Particular emphasis is made on the idea of “place” as a bottom-up reconstruction of the city to the imagining of protestors, based on their implicit demand of the right to the city.

1.2. Research Questions

This thesis analyses the interactions between the urban space of Santiago de Chile and the protests, riots, and public manifestations that occurred there between October 2019 and March 2020, referred throughout as Estallido Social (E.S.). I draw on an understanding of Santiago as a city strongly conditioned by multi-scalar neoliberal reform. From this, I explore how the conflict between protestors and authorities conditions, and is conditioned by, the pointedly neoliberal urban space where it occurs. My analysis is guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1: How is the Estallido Social shaped by the previously existing urban space of Santiago de Chile?

RQ 2: How does the Estallido Social produce and reproduce urban space in Santiago de Chile?

RQ 2.1: How does the Estallido Social create “place” through conflict?

1.3. Literature contribution

As mentioned above, this research seeks to address a gap in considering urban space when analyzing the Estallido Social. It adds to existing research of this phenomenon by studying how Chilean neoliberal reforms, the target of the protests, have also significantly impacted the site where these occur, and how the characteristics of the city itself are modified and weaponized. In other words, it extends analysis of the E.S. to its urban context. It also provides a valuable empirical contribution by systematizing spatial information and lived experiences of the protests in Santiago.

Empirical analysis of this case can also contribute to research that actively considers urban space in protest (see: Mayer et al., 2016). It extends this vein of analysis to a case of large scale and political significance, and to the relevant context of Latin American neoliberalism. Furthermore, it serves a relevant critical purpose by questioning the narrative of Chile as a “miracle” of neoliberal intervention, where the profound spatial consequences of these reforms are exposed.

1.4. Research structure overview

The research is structured as follows. Section **2.** reviews the theoretical frameworks I draw from. This contains my understanding of how the city can be conceptualized and weaponized from both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Section **3.** describes and critically evaluates the research design, structure, and data collection methods of my analysis. Section **4.** provides the background context behind the E.S. in Santiago, at both national and local scales. I review Chile’s “neoliberal turn”, how this defines and conditions modern-day Santiago, and how this can generate contention from citizens.

The fifth section is dedicated to analysis and discussion, in line with the research questions above. Having characterized Santiago as a fundamentally neoliberal city, I analyze the spatial choices of protestors and authorities as constricted and motivated by it: in other words, the different ways in which they weaponize urban space against each other. In terms of the socially produced space of the E.S., I emphasize the bottom-up places defined by conflict, drawing from the lived experience of protestors in and around the Plaza Dignidad as an epicenter.

1.5. Clarification of key concepts

The term “Estallido Social” in this analysis refers to the confront between protestors and authorities, generated within protests, riots, and public manifestations in Santiago and across Chile. While social media in the English language usually renders this as the “Social Outbreak”, I choose to retain the original Spanish term. I base this on grounds that this term was explicitly negotiated by Chilean society, and likewise accepted and embraced by the protestors themselves. Furthermore, it conveys a particular meaning – from “estallar”, to occur violently, with a loud blast (RAE, 2021) – which contrasts greatly with the term “outbreak”, which seems to imply something unwelcome or unpleasant (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Similarly, I retain original Spanish terms throughout, whenever these cannot be directly translated to English without some degree of loss in meaning (e.g. *campamentos* to “encampments”). These are signaled through the use of italics. For any other terms in Spanish, my own translation is provided and used.

This research is politicized and follows the tradition of critical urban theory. I depart from a critical realist philosophy of science, in which I reject a positivist and empiricist approach to what I study. Observable reality is critiqued herein through a fundamentally material perspective, acknowledging the intentions of social actors, and how they transform and reproduce pre-existing social structures (Yeung, 1997). I articulate this philosophy with an extensive consideration of semiosis (the intersubjective production of meaning) as indispensable in the shaping and understanding of said intentions, in line with Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2004).

2. Theoretical framework

The following three subsections review the theoretical concepts central to this analysis. I first establish a working definition of urban space and place as the key elements weaponized in this conflict. The second subsection explores how neoliberal practices of capital accumulation produce and reproduce urban space. I link this to social contention by alluding to the ideas of the right to the city and the exclusion from centrality. In contrast, the third subsection reflects how social movements interact with and recreate urban space, emphasizing the importance of placemaking in this process. For clarity, a fourth subsection connects and summarizes the above.

2.1. Urban space and place

Analyzing how “urban space” and “place” are active elements in the E.S. requires a solid definition of these terms. Harvey (2006a) considers space can be conceived as an unambiguous, fixed grid where calculations are made (absolute space), as relative to the observer’s frame of reference (relative space-time), or as internal to processes, which define their own spatial frame (relational space-time). For Lefebvre (1991), space is thought of as the everyday interactions over a specific material basis (spatial practice), as a frame of reference produced by discourse (representations of space), or as the spatial symbolism that evokes social norms, values, and experiences (spaces of representation) (Schmid, 2008). The understanding of space used herein departs from Harvey’s (2006a) conciliation of both these frameworks, where they are kept in constant dialectical tension. Acknowledging that, for example, differences in collective memories, senses of place, and notions of distance result in different conceptions of space between actors in this conflict, I am in a position to understand their differences in strategically occupying, modifying, and creating space.

Lefebvre (1991) argues space, rather than existing in and of itself, is socially produced through material production, production of knowledge, and production of meaning. Space is only produced by the dialectical, and contradictory, interaction of these processes. Citizens constantly produce and reproduce urban space in everyday practice; the city becomes a concrete practical experience (Schmid, 2012). In line with Lefebvre’s (1970 [2003]) conception of urban space, I focus on the urban as a mediator, with centrality as feature and form.

For Lefebvre (1970 [2003]), the urban creates an “urban situation”, a “concrete contradiction” where processes and places occur and exist in relation to one another. It serves as intermediary, mediating between a proximate dimension, of everyday dwelling, and a distant world order, of institutions and ideologies. Lefebvre sees this intermediary as under attack on both ends, both parceled out under individualistic logic and homogenized by globalized tendencies and rationales. The phenomenon of urbanization, marked by processes of implosion and explosion, moves toward a planetary level, in which he predicts its mediating logic to be ultimately lost (Schmid 2012, Lefebvre 1970 [2003]).

The essential aspect of Lefebvre’s urban space is centrality as its pure form, and the dialectical movement that furthers or destroys it. The city is seen as the virtual negation of time-space distances; that is, where the space-time vector converges to zero. Any point within the city can claim centrality, and become a place upon which objects and people assemble and converge. There is a continuous tendency towards centrality, guided by the relations of production, and poly-centrality, through a rupture towards different centers (Schmid, 2012; Lefebvre 1970 [2003]).

This understanding of urban space is complemented with that of “place”, as theorized by Agnew (2002). While space becomes the field of practice of organizations, condensed in maps and narratives, “place” is where people encounter it. In opposition to the top-down imposition of control by powerful acts, place becomes the bottom-up inscription of the everyday life, the lived experience and meanings of citizens. As analytical elements that constitute place, Agnew proposes its relative position in wider networks and notions of territory (location), the physical settings where everyday life concentrates (locale), and the symbolic identification that distinguishes and constructs its personal identity (sense of place).

In the urban space, widely different worlds and value-systems come together to produce space through materials, knowledge, and meaning. Its places tend to centralize away from one another, and are fundamentally built from difference. The capacity of the urban form to produce space, through the interaction of a top-down order and the placemaking of lived experience, can thus be understood as a “social resource” (Schmid, 2012). In this sense, the following two subsections develop how the ownership of this resource comes to be asserted and contested.

2.2. The neoliberal city and the right to it

In the Chilean context, I argue this top-down order imposed in space is best classified by its fundamentally neoliberal character. As an ideology, neoliberalism believes markets are the optimal mechanisms for economic development, as open, competitive, and unregulated as possible (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). The agency of a neoliberal state is limited to creating and preserving institutional frameworks that best ensure these conditions, withdrawing from existing markets and only intervening to create new ones (Harvey, 2006b).

The concept of “actually existing neoliberalism” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002) helps to characterize how this happens in practice. Neoliberal reforms are embedded in their local contexts, resulting from inherited institutions, policies, regulations, and struggles. By considering the path dependency of neoliberal reforms (that they happen in, and subvert, a given “playing field”), there is a strategic role to be played by the urban, in the remaking of political economic space. Thus, five core elements can be considered in the neoliberal restructuring of urban space: particular capitalist regulations, unstable historical geographies of capitalism, uneven geographical development, state regulations, and the geographies of these.

Neoliberal reforms pick up speed and scale in Latin America from the 1970s, largely in response to the deficiencies of import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies. Chile is the first country to undergo reform (Perreault & Martin, 2005); this process is exhaustively described in section 4 below. In what can be called the neoliberal turn, the ideology “swept across the world like a vast tidal wave” from this period onwards (Harvey 2006b, p. 145). To establish its foundations, this wave destroys inherited institutional frameworks, divisions of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life, attachments to land, habits of heart, and ways of thought (Harvey, 2006).

The mechanism by which neoliberalism survives and reproduces can be described as creative destruction: “the (partial) destruction of extant institutional arrangements and political compromises through market-oriented reform initiatives, and the (tendential) creation of a new infrastructure for market-oriented economic growth, commodification, and the rule of capital” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 362). Four main identifiable

strategies achieve this: privatization of public assets, speculative predatory waves of financialization, management and manipulation of crises, and subverting the state to regressively redistribute wealth to the wealthiest. The ultimate consequence becomes the restoration of power to a wealthy, capitalist class, or the creation of conditions for it (Harvey, 2006).

Neoliberalism manifests in urban space by marketizing land according to the highest rate of return, fostering property speculation and imposing fiscal discipline on local governments. The state withdraws financing from urban public goods, and only intervenes to brutally repress any opposition (Harvey, 2012). Local urban policies lose their social focus and function, falling into short-term interspatial competition, place marketing, and regulatory undercutting. Cities become targets for neoliberalism, and “institutional laboratories” for its experiments (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). The commodification of urban life extends to the quality of life itself, threatening urban identities, citizenship, and belonging (Harvey, 2012).

Thus, careless appropriation and commodification of urban space through neoliberal reform comes at the expense of its average citizens; in other words, the “social resource” of the city is produced by, but not owned by, its society. This natural grievance manifests itself as the “right to the city”, first advanced by Lefebvre (1968) as both a cry and demand for a radical restructuring of social, political, and economic relations in urban space, through shifting the power relations of its production (Purcell, 2002). It can simply be understood as the right to participate in the transformation of urban space, and controlling investment in it (Schmid, 2012). For Marcuse (2012), it is simultaneously an exigent demand, by those deprived from the basic material and institutional rights that urban life offers, and a future aspiration, by those who feel urban life alienates them, and limits their true potential for growth. It is both a moral claim and a political right over a system where the benefits of urban life are fully and democratically realized.

Harvey (2012) frames this in materialist terms as a claim to the shaping power over urbanization forces. Under capitalist accumulation processes, urbanization grows in parallel with output. Capitalism requires perpetually producing a surplus product, and continuous urbanization requires a surplus product to absorb. Since this process is global and geographical uneven, he argues for the demand of democratic control over the surplus, and the collective command of its connection with urbanization.

One key element of Lefebvre's "right to the city" concept is construing urban citizenship as a (working) class, in which citizens demand their right to surplus value in a more fluid, fragmented, and disorganized form than previous notions of the "proletariat". In practice, he suggests the imagination and reconstitution of a different city, through vigorous anti-capitalist movements that are capable of transforming daily urban life (Harvey, 2012). Drawing on this idea, Harvey argues that a collective focus on this right is itself capable of united the fragmented social spaces and locations of the urban working class. The "city" then becomes an object of desire, which ultimately reflects who its citizens want to be.

The "right to the city" cannot be understood without relating it to the form and features of urban space. If the constant pull of centrality concentrates resources and power in the core of urban spaces, this core can be systematically controlled, exploited, and commodified by an exclusive elite. As citizens are dispersed, displaced, and excluded from the centralized benefits of urban life, the right to the city becomes a rightful demand (Schmid, 2012). On the other hand, these processes slowly erase the mediating dimension of the urban, and its centralizing form; thus arises a longing for its restoration, and an impulse towards centers as a place to articulate the cries and demands of the city (Harvey, 2012).

This is key to understanding how protests of anti-neoliberal nature, as is the case of the Estallido, implicitly incorporate the right to the city in its spatial dynamics, something best analyzed by Harvey in *Rebel Cities* (2012). Reconceptualizing "class" as the urban working class requires also redefining the terrain for class struggle as the urban space. This terrain is not just the site or network where protests and struggle happen, but can become a weapon itself through physical and social reengineering. On one side, established political actors can reorganize urban space around the consolidation of elite power, as shown above; on the other, increasingly disruptive, volatile, and large-scale protests can slowly erode the institutional and material supports of capital until it collapses (Harvey, 2012). These struggles are urban in nature, and therefore incorporate the demand for centrality, and the spatial dialectics of center and periphery (Schmid, 2012).

For Harvey, the key element by which urban social movements produce and reproduce urban space is that of "commons": malleable, non-exclusive, and non-commodified social

relations involving a social group and the environmental aspects crucial to it (Harvey, 2012). The collective activities and struggles lived in urban space thus create a “common” social world. In the context of urban social movements, urban commons are formed around public spaces, such as streets, squares, and plazas, in a social world made for and by protestors, turned towards socialization and political action. In this sense, the following section looks at how the spatial properties and routines of (urban) social movements can form new urban space in “commons” relationships.

2.3. Urban social movements in space

Analysis of social movements and protests has largely been a task of contentious politics scholars. Contentious politics are a form of collective political struggle: “episodic, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when a) at least one government is a claimant, object of claims and a party to the claims and b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants” (Tilly 2000, pg. 137). Contentious politics can be defined as either contained or transgressive. The latter variety is particularly of interest when analyzing the Estallido, as it disrupts spatial routines and deliberately occupies, reorganizes, and dramatizes public space (Tilly, 2000).

Urban space in contentious politics literature is often overlooked, or merely interpreted as the site where events unfold. Therefore, rather than exhaustively reviewing this literature, this subsection is narrowed to the key insights it can provide in relation to space, namely on how to observe, analyze, and interpret the spatial features of urban protest.

Routledge (1996) is among the first contentious politics scholars to incorporate spatial thought in social movements. These are framed in a web of contested power and knowledge relations, as multiplicities within terrains of resistance: “Sites of contestation and multiplicity of relations between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic powers and discourses, between forces and relations of domination, subjection, exploitation and resistance” (Routledge 1996, p. 516). The importance of framing (urban) social movements in their cultural, historical, and spatial context becomes a building block for my analysis, where its strategic force and meaning is understood as produced from the materials, practice, and knowledge of everyday life.

For Routledge, mass co-presence of actors in space can be theorized into packs and swarms, with corresponding strategies to use, claim, defend, and abandon space. Packs, moving secretly and in smaller numbers, use unpredictability of movement to their benefit, while swarms territorialize space in larger numbers. The dynamics of both are widely featured throughout; swarms are particularly emphasized as possible preludes to, or causes of, large-scale social movements, featuring particular targets, trajectories, leaderships, goals, terminations, and overall logics of creation and destruction (Routledge, 1996).

Space matters in social movements as a depository of durable and particular social relations, as the built environment that constraints or enables collective action, and as a component of daily routines, creating or created by contentious politics (Auyero, 2006). This naturally extends to urban space, where its social production and reproduction (Lefebvre, 1991) guides the sites and dynamics of contestation (Martin & Miller, 2003). Urban spaces become places through the conflict between power structures and local practices (Routledge, 1996). Places are embedded in webs of meaning, which urban struggles contribute to and develop around. Meaningful arenas are both site and object, “context and stake” (Auyero, 2006, p. 10). The spatially bounded social relations of places have nested effects in the overall constraints and opportunities of movements around social contention; thus, space, place, and scale both contextualize and constitute it (Martin & Miller, 2003).

I consider the insights of two empirical papers in this regard, both contextualized at least partially in similar Latin American settings. Auyero (2003) proposes the 1993 riot in Santiago del Estero, Argentina, as both geographically structured and structuring. The outcome is dependent on both space and place, as both relate to constrain and facilitate protests, and both structure urban space through creative actions, experiences, and imbued meanings of protestors. Auyero particularly notes the widening political distance between protestors and the objects of their demand, due in part to the increasingly transgressive contention strategies of established actors.

Salmenkari’s (2009) topics of analysis, in a systematic inquiry of strategic choices of protest across Buenos Aires and Seoul, also provide a starting point for my analysis. These geographies of protest were influenced by protest cultures, preexisting city layouts, social and historical factors, and the usage of state power. She implicitly aligns this with

the right to the city by claiming demonstrations are “short-term incursions into city space by groups that have little say about the city’s configuration” (Salmenkari, 2009, p. 257), and argues the power displays between protestors and state open something close in nature to a “public sphere”, paralleling to some extent Harvey’s (2012) idea of commons.

2.4 Key theoretical conclusions

The theoretical framework above is condensed and outlined in this subsection, for the sake of clarity. In the first subsection, I first take the notion that space is socially produced, rather than objective and pre-made. Different social actors perceive, produce, and reproduce space differently. Second, I consolidate a framework to understand urban space, where the urban mediates different value systems that produce space in relation to one another. It is a **social resource** in itself, produced through difference. It takes centrality as its form, tending towards the cancellation of distance around any number of cores. Third, I emphasize the importance of **places** in negotiating the tensions of these differences, each with a location, a locale, and a sense of place.

In the second subsection, I first describe a worldwide shift towards elite-led neoliberal reforms, path dependent on the local contexts where they are applied. Here, the neoliberal reformation of urban political economic space becomes a strategically necessary element. I examine how this production and reproduction of urban space happens through the process of **creative destruction**. Lastly, I bring forward the idea of the **right to the city** as the bottom-up response to the deprivation and alienation these urban reforms cause, and the important role of urban social movements in recreating the city, by reclaiming centrality and establishing non-commodified, place-bound relations.

The third subsection narrows down on this process, by acknowledging social movements as spatially constrained through social relations, the built environment, and everyday spatial routines. The production and reproduction of their space is done through conflict between powerful actors and the everyday dimension. Social movements have their particular spatial logic, structuring and structured by spatial routines and relations, in which places are created, or transformed, as sites and objects of struggle.

3. Research design and methodology

The scope of this research required me to adequately establish its design and logical structure beforehand. In other words, I had to decide what type of evidence was necessary to answer my research questions convincingly (De Vaus, 2001). As my line of questioning is inspired by a given case, I structure this research as a single case study: an exhaustive analysis of a naturally occurring case, with information gathered and analyzed about a large number of its features (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000). I cover both the phenomenon at hand and its contextual information, within which the former's causal processes are understood. This departs from the implicit assumption that the latter contains important explanatory information, or the boundaries between the two are not clearly evident (Yin, 1993). The social object study I study, the Estallido Social, takes a unitary character (Goode & Hatt, 1952) which I interpret in light of the context and subjective meanings brought by individuals to their situation (De Vaus, 2001).

I restricted my research geographically to the Gran Santiago region, as defined by the Chilean National Statistics Institute. This corresponds to the contiguous urbanized land within Santiago Province, as well as the urbanized areas of seven neighboring communes (INE Chile, 2017). These borders provide a satisfactory approximation to the current contours in Santiago; "Gran Santiago" also largely matches the administrative borders at commune level, making it effective to capture local government responses (e.g., curfew orders). While I acknowledge that the E.S. is a national-level phenomenon that rippled in urban space well beyond Santiago (Waissbluth, 2020), an extensive overview of these dynamics is beyond the scope and resources of my analysis.

In this setting, I analyze the spatial manifestations of the E.S. between October 2019 and March 2020. Likewise, I recognize that the conflict is not strictly limited to this time period, but argue that its development and effects in space become less clear due to the onset of pandemic-related lockdown orders (Heiss, 2020).

This case study acts as a piece of explanatory research, where I explore the two-way relationship between the Estallido Social, as a conflict between a bottom-up lived experience and a top-down order, and the neoliberally reformed urban space of Santiago. While a large portion of this research is descriptive, in terms of how this urban space came to be and the subsequent events through which it is changed, I argue this is a valuable and indissociable part of my research project, as only good description can

successfully provoke the “why” of explanatory research (De Vaus, 2001). It aims at a well-rounded account of the facts and mechanisms behind a single conflict, in a single city, and is therefore fundamentally idiographic. To derive causal laws from observing the E.S. would require ignoring its uniqueness and vast complexity. Consequences in terms of validity are discussed in subsection **3.5.** below.

In the remainder of this section, I elaborate on the steps taken to maximize the quality of the research. Subsection **3.1.** introduces how I operationalized the theoretical frameworks into data that can be observed and analyzed. Consequently, subsections **3.2.** through **3.4.** elaborate on my two choices for data collection methods: document reviewing and qualitative interviewing. I close the section by reflecting on the validity, positionality, and ethics attributes of this research, on subsection **3.5.**

3.1. Operationalization

While section **2.** extensively features nominal concepts, my analysis requires “descending the ladder of abstraction” (De Vaus, 2001) into operational concepts, that can then be observed and measured. In short, my analysis requires putting together how a global order has initially reconstructed Santiago urban space, in terms of space-bound social relations, routines, and the built environment. Then, it requires observing the spatial characteristics of the bottom-up driven protests, consisting of routines, relations, and co-presence in space, in relation to the centrality and mediation features of the city. Finally, it requires understanding the production of reproduction of non-commodified place, as a site and object of struggle.

To obtain this information, I provide an extensive case background, while also conducting document reviews and qualitative interviews. The background section situates Chile and Santiago in a historical, social, political, and economic context. At a national level, I examine how neoliberal creative destruction manifests mainly through market-led differentiation of space and administrative border reforms. At the Santiago level, I detail processes of dispossession, segmentation, and peripheralization of the “urban working class”, changes in rhetoric and social relations, and the spatial dimensions of corresponding protests.

A document review then assembles the spatialities of the E.S., through the extensive use of media reports. Along the timeline of protests, I examined the locations and attributes of public space occupations, fare evasion campaigns, violent forms of protest, damages

to public property, and repressive actions, as well as routes taken by marches, temporary and permanent alterations of built environment. Patterns in this data then reveal which locations were targeted, made particularly vulnerable, or turned into “places” as site and object of struggle, each with its own location, locale, and sense of place. Such patterns also capture the social, political, and economic centrality considered by protestors and authorities, and where and how the private and global orders are mediated.

Qualitative interviews, with participants and spectators of the E.S., are used to confirm, contrast, and complement the above. They are primarily used to understand the creation of place, drawing directly from the citizens’ lived experiences, sentiments, perceptions of change, testimonies of events, social relationships, and associated meanings that collectively define “place”, and particularly focus on Plaza Dignidad as the epicenter of protests and their key modification of urban space.

3.2. Document review

My document review condenses the recreation of space and place in the process of the Estallido, where on-the-ground reports by Chilean news outlets were considered as the most logical and feasible source. For this purpose, I draw from 109 online news articles by well-established media outlets, both local and national, all written and posted between October 4th, 2019 and March 15th, 2020, as well as some blog posts, Twitter posts, and press releases.

A document review requires systematically finding, selecting, appraising, and synthesizing documental data. Documents are ‘social facts’, recorded without the researcher’s intervention (Bowen, 2009); artifacts that are made according to a social convention to fulfill a social purpose (Coffey, 2014). They prove useful in understanding the context and sequence of events over time (Bowen, 2009), as well as how individuals, groups, settings, and institutions represent and account for their practices (Coffey, 2014). The facts and conclusions gathered from this process could then feed into interviews by setting up topics of discussion, as well as critically triangulate data into credible and objective evidence between both perspectives (Eisner, 2017).

The advantages and disadvantages inherent to this method are addressed below. In this context, they are useful in terms of efficiency and availability, as most public events are likely recorded in the public domain and can then be selected. Documents also avoid issues of obtrusiveness and reactivity, since they are not affected by the researcher or the

research process (Bowen, 2009). However, especially when working with news media, they carry the risk of “biased selectivity” (Yin, 1994), where specific agendas or corporate policies might determine their uneven emphasis across different topics. The depth of coverage, and the way events are framed and analyzed, may also be biased (Lazaridou and Krestel, 2016).

Biased selectivity was particularly evident in the early stage of sample collection, as I quickly observed some newspapers placed greater emphasis on my themes of interest, and became overrepresented in the sample. Some newspapers would also repeatedly assign the same reporters to cover the Estallido’s events. An effort was made to avoid this issue by flagging down these cases, contrasting them with other news items on the same subject, and including them whenever available.

The issue of bias also required a critical outlook over media outputs so as to ensure their meaning, relevance, authenticity, credibility, accuracy, and representativeness (Bower, 2009). News outlets are socio-politically embedded institutions that participate actively in social processes, rather than reporting detachedly on them (Costera Meijer, 2010). Through news media, a given dominant group of people hold symbolic power to name and define elements, which influences what gets reported on, and how (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014). Moreover, modern social life has become indissociable from media and mediated experiences – we live “in” media, rather than “with” it (Deuze, 2011). This is accounted for by following a text-in-context approach, considering how stories are produced, played out, and negotiated within broader social processes (Barnett et al., 2007). To further avoid biases, and whenever possible, I included original documents and statements, as well as favoring news articles with clear video or images of the events they report.

Sample collection began by a blog page named *Estallido Social*, where a timeline of news articles had been progressively organized independently. This initial sample was then widely extended to other established news sources, to ensure objectivity and a well-rounded account of events. At this stage, I collected a chronology of 303 news items, which were then analyzed across two main strategies. In an initial first pass content analysis, I skimmed and read through these articles to identify meaningful, relevant, and recurring elements (Bower, 2009). These are extensively described above and mostly include the spatial properties of the E.S. protests, as well as its overarching social and political context. In this process, I recursively filtered and added sources based on

perceived bias, credibility, relevance, and usefulness. Due attention was paid to sources and connotations (Krippendorff, 2009).

After preparing a filtered timeline, I conducted a thematic analysis, where I recognized patterns within the data and turned them into themes and categories for analysis (Bower, 2009). I acknowledged the social and textual contexts of these documents, and how they form their own temporal structure by contextualizing, recontextualizing, and decontextualizing events (Coffey, 2014). Themes had in mind the elements I wished to operationalize, as well as an objective and sensible integration of this data with that of qualitative interviews (Bower, 2009).

3.3. Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviewing conceptualizes the conversational process of knowing, and can therefore serve as an objective method of qualitative inquiry (Brinkmann, 2014). It essentially involves a conversation with the purpose of constructing data, within a flexible structure around certain themes and topics. It is largely informal, but never entirely without form (Mason, 2017). While a widely used method in social sciences, the adequacy of its use should not escape critical evaluation.

Interviews are primarily used as a tool to understand the sense of place within the E.S., of which their narratives, conceptions, and lived experiences become key elements. In practical terms, this data cannot be directly observable or feasibly generated through another method (Mason, 2017), especially considering current limitations on fieldwork and the impossibility of participation. By co-constructing data through conversation, the interviewer and interviewee produce a subject locally (Roulston, 2010) that could not be studied otherwise.

As mentioned before, interviews are used alongside other methods to achieve some form of methodological triangulation (Eisner, 2017). The lived experiences of protestors can serve to critically evaluate and corroborate what is reported of them, and vice-versa. Their highly personal and meaningful experiences provide depth and information beyond the documents reviewed, while also giving participants an indirect role in shaping research about the case that concerns them. Ultimately, the nature of *place* is both collective and particular; its analysis benefits from the nuances and contradictions of combining both representations. However, this carries a key limitation: the construction of this knowledge

becomes dependent on people's abilities to synthesize their lived experiences within the interview process (Mason, 2017).

The sampling criteria used is as follows: I looked for participants, of any age or background, which identified as Santiago citizens and that had a significant level of lived experience within the context of the Estallido. I was specifically interested in reaching out to people who either witnessed or participated first-hand in these occupations and interactions with public space. This is difficult to ensure before the interview, but I attempted to confirm this upon first contact with participants, and the vivid experiences they provided seem to confirm their adequacy. I conducted "snowball" sampling, where each participant was asked to refer potential participants, and so on. While I also reached out to several "grassroots" pages, blogs, associations, and institutions that had directly been involved with the E.S., I received no reply from these.

Four interviews were conducted online, all of which between May and June 2021. I use pseudonyms (representational names) to refer to them, a choice discussed at greater length in section 3.6.3. By chronological order, I interviewed Carlos, who had attended the protests daily and had coordinated a choreographed intervention; Alonso, who reported on protests for a foreign news organization; Agustín, a student who repeatedly attended protests in and around Plaza Dignidad; and Sofía, who also participated sporadically, while mostly reporting on protests for a large Chilean news outlet.

All interviews were conducted individually, and in semi-structured form. Given the time zone difference between Sweden and Chile, and the time constraints involved, I offered participants the choice between a Zoom videocall or an asynchronous interview by email, where they would send their written response whenever it suited them. Carlos and Alonso were available for the former, while Agustín and Sofía opted for the latter. This subsection concludes with the reasoning, strengths, and shortcomings of these options.

The semi-structured form of interviewing is considered as the most widespread in social sciences (Brinkmann, 2014). Interviews were structured with enough flexibility to actively involve interviewees, but still along thematic lines that could be linked to the research questions and remaining data. Questions mostly targeted descriptions of meaningful lifeworld experience, rather than thematic reflection. The semi-structured form provided interviewees the chance to be fully involved, and to shift dialogue to the experiences they prioritize. This was useful to establish rapport and actively engage

interviewees, who then provided useful and unexpected information. These dynamics are harder to replicate in asynchronous interviews, but this was attempted by tailoring the interview questions to what I knew of the interviewee beforehand, and emphasizing the structured questions were flexible enough that they could add or remove themes as they wished.

Synchronous interviews allowed me to read extralinguistic cues, and for better conversational flow and coherence. I could also exercise a greater role in knowledge production, by provoking and steering ongoing conversation as necessary. However, asynchronous interviews allowed participants to reflect in depth and at their own pace (Hewson, 2014). Furthermore, these interviews only contain the exact information participants wish to share, maximizing their level of control over the interview.

When conducted online, the data quality of both methods may be impacted from the difficulty in establishing good rapport with participants, the increased possibility of deception (Hewson, 2014), and differences in internet access and fluency across demographics (Mason, 2017). I acknowledge interviews were conducted online out necessity, but highlight in turn the “democratizing” effect of online communication (Hewson, 2014) as a positive. It avoids intrusion into the personal space of participants, who can end their participation with a single click. This equalization in the relationship between researcher and researched allows for increased self-disclosure and candor (Hanna, 2012), and helps to assert the control of participants over knowledge of themselves.

Conducting synchronous interviews also required me to consider my role as interviewer. Questions were tailored on the spot around participants, with flexibility and sensibility to what was being said; for example, picking up a thread from a previous answer and building on it (Mason, 2017). However, in line with the idea of maximizing the control of the informants, I generally chose to adapt a more receptive role. During the process, I attempted to follow a standard conversational flow, as suggested by Brinkmann (2014): posing a question, negotiating meaning, obtaining the answer, interpreting it, and having it evaluated by the participant.

3.6. Validity, positionality, ethics

3.6.1. Validity

The quality of a research design can be thought of along Yin's (1994) suggested parameters of construct validity, reliability, internal validity, and external validity. As the first two are reflected upon in previous sections, I now evaluate the latter two.

Internal validity requires considering how the structure of the research allows unambiguous conclusions, that is, eliminating potential alternative explanations. It requires removing the influence of the variables that are not of interest by accounting for them (De Vaus, 2001). A case study that provides full and contextualized understanding of a case can have good internal validity, by including other factors in the wider context of history and maturation behind events (De Vaus, 2001). By collecting data well after the time period analyzed, I also ensure this process does not change during the construction of my research.

External validity is commonly linked to the idea of generalizability, as the view that conclusions should be drawn from this case to a general phenomenon, or a wider number of cases. Case studies are thought to develop, refine, and test theories through replicating them in similar conditions, and witnessing consistent behaviors (De Vaus, 2001). This conception of generalizability is naturally limited in my research; at the very least, given how unique the E.S. is, it is quite hard to assess. Instead, I argue this restrictive conception does not match the contemporary role of applied social science (Donmoyer, 2000). The value in this single-case study draws from naturalistic generalization, where experience develops into tacit knowledge (Stake, 1978) as I provide "vicarious experience" of this particular phenomenon (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000).

3.6.2. Positionality

Identifying as active and reflexive in generating data requires me to analyze my own role in the research process to enhance its quality (Mason, 2017). I found it important to reflect on my position as a researcher fluent in Portuguese and English, with an advanced control over Spanish. All the data generated for this analysis was entirely in the Spanish language, which means its translation is my responsibility alone. It is inevitable that some finer meanings or colloquial expressions (many of which unique to Chilean Spanish) are partially lost along the way, or interpreted according to similar words in my native

Portuguese. My lack of complete Spanish fluency may have also impacted data collection by influencing questions posed and search keywords used. Nevertheless, I recognize that being able to mediate between these languages puts me at a unique position to conduct this research, one that similar researchers might not have, and acknowledge this responsibility in what is conveyed and portrayed.

I am also aware of my responsibility in imposing theory from a Western research tradition to analyze a case embedded in the post-colonial, Latin American context. I recognize the obvious need to value and incorporate the knowledge that Chilean and Latin American researchers produce about their own contexts. I am aware of the possibility that, being Portuguese, I may have deeper tacit knowledge of Latin America than I would otherwise. While constructing places from the voices of participants helps in this matter, I take special care in drawing as much possible from the empirical work of Latin American scholars in my case background section.

3.6.3. Ethics

In terms of document analysis, the key ethical concern is the issue of visibility in documentation, as different agents can show or translate the same things in different ways (Prior, 2003). Beyond the issues of translation or possible biases, which are mentioned above, this entails explicit responsibility in the way I convey the data gathered and construct my research with it, so as to not distort them for my own research goals, or so as to harm any specific agents involved.

From an ethical perspective, qualitative interviewing required me to obtain the informed consent of participants, which itself should address and explicitly convey any ethics issues that involve them (Mason, 2017). These can be synthesized as privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Participants should at all times preserve boundaries around the information they give and receive. They should be aware of and agree with how their data is processed, and the final output should not contain information that could directly identify them (Sieber, 1992). This is especially the case given the arguably sensitive content of the interviews, which could include acts of transgression against the Chilean authorities. It was important to ensure that no information used could legally implicate them, and that no questions posed could distress them (Mason, 2017).

I took particular care in gaining this informed consent, while handling their privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity to the best of my abilities. Before every interview, I made

efforts to explicitly agree with participants on their role. They were assured participation was strictly voluntary and could be terminated at any time, as well as an estimate of the time this would take. I ensured the data they provided would be stored locally and securely, and that they could review it if desired (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). This consent included my right to use their data in this context only, which could be withdrawn at any time (Mason, 2017). Finally, I use representational names when examining their data, carefully avoiding any identifiability while preserving the “human” character of the lived experience they provide.

4. Case background

4.1. Chile: *whose miracle?*

This subsection broadly describes the neoliberal reform of the Chilean political economy, and its implications for urban space. Chile is commonly painted as an inaugural testing ground, and an “archetype” of sorts, for neoliberal reforms (Harvey, 2005; Klein & García, 2007), whose results are labelled the “miracle of Chile” by supporters of neoliberalism (Friedman, 2000). I review this neoliberal reform from a path dependent perspective, and subsequently analyze how these structural conditions reflect in present-day, democratic Chile.

Given the above, it is interesting to consider that Chile was once considered a pioneer in socialist reform. In November 1970, Salvador Allende was the first socialist elected president of a Latin American liberal democracy (Winn, 2005). Allende initiated a vast wave of top-down socialist reform, building on already progressive reforms by his antecessor, Eduardo Frei. These ambitioned a structural redistribution of both wealth and political power from ruling class to dispossessed majorities (Martínez & Palacios, 2009). The associated expansion of healthcare, education and housing meant Chile had some of the highest levels of social development in the region (Rotarou & Sakellariou, 2017). In the urban, the state was tasked with planning and social housing, explicitly focusing on spatial equality through accessibility to the city (Navarrete-Hernandez & Toro, 2019).

Allende’s antagonization of ruling classes and foreign interests incited a military coup on September 11th, 1973, led by general Augusto Pinochet (Devine, 2014). The United States’ economic sanctions of Chile, and the perceived failures of the Keynesian model, had resulted in a severe economic crisis by then. In response, Pinochet implemented a wave of technocratic reforms, influenced by the Chicago economics tradition. Healthcare, education, and housing were almost entirely privatized and marketized. The state was limited to subsidizing and regulating, with extreme poverty as its single social concern (Martínez & Palacios, 2009). The Chilean model rapidly shifted from protected industrialization to an open economy built on agricultural extraction exports (Silva, 1993).

Neoliberal reforms were shaped by the military’s government high degree of autonomy, as well as shifting coalitions of capitalist classes (Harvey, 2005; Silva, 1993). Their initial

gradualist character, drawn up between the military and civilian advisors, would then be accelerated by radical internationalists from 1975, backed by a favorable international economy. A more pragmatic approach, tolerative of reflationary policy, followed in the early 1980s, after an international debt crisis brought this deregulated financial system to a collapse (Silva, 1993). This can be understood in tandem with the phases Brenner and Theodore (2002) identify in the creative destruction process: initial proto-neoliberalism, a strong roll-back, and a roll-out for sustainability.

In the rural setting, farmland was privatized, parceled, and differentiated according to its international competitive advantages. Non-traditional agricultural exports became a pillar of the economy, growing 47-fold between 1971 and 1994. Export-oriented farmers, with large economies of scale, thrived at the expense of traditional, horizontal farming. This resulted in sustained population loss, monoculture vulnerability, and widespread precarity (Murray, 2002).

The core of market-led spatial differentiation, however, takes place in the urban. The military government's 1979 National Urban Development Policy (Política Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano) sustains that urban land is not a scarce good, but its scarcity comes from inefficient land market restrictions. In the urban, the state is a subsidiary and land is allocated to the highest rate of profit use (Trivelli, 2009; Carraro, Visconti & Inunza, 2021). Urban limits were suppressed, to incorporate peripheral agricultural plots and subdivide them for residential use (Rodríguez, 1983). Existing public housing was commodified and defunded, while urban public services were privatized without subsidies. Already here, the general withdrawal of the state from urban life creates a poor urban class, priced out of centers, both excluded and alienated from the opportunities and quality of urban life (Navarrete-Hernandez & Toro, 2019).

This differentiation according to resources was also part of the military government's reorganization and regionalization of the administrative map. A strict, vertical hierarchy was imposed between the government and its 13 regions, 51 provinces, and 335 communes. Municipal elections were replaced with "alcaldes" directly nominated by the regime, which acted as enforcers of top-down policy. Municipalities were deprived of their mediative dimension between government and citizens, and ultimately their political meaning. As aggravation, municipalities were now also responsible for both costs and operation of all its services, equipment, and development (Rodríguez, 1983; Hardy, 2009). This administrative reform creates a recursive system of spatial inequality, where

inhabitants would self-categorize based on the capacity to pay, along homogeneously wealth centers and poor peripheries (Navarrete-Hernandez & Toro, 2019).

The 27 years of rule by Pinochet thus had immense costs on the welfare of Chilean society. The dismantlement of the national healthcare system, and the decentralization and commodification of health into public and private “tiers”, has resulted in a structural inequality of access and quality (Rotarou & Sakellariou, 2017). Education was similarly marketized; poorer municipalities were discriminated against, as primary and secondary schools were left dependent on local resources. Towards the end of the military government, in 1987, the top 10% of Chileans raked in 40% of national income, while 38.1% of households lived in poverty (Gómez Leytón, 2009). Living conditions had overall deteriorated for low- and middle-income earners, stemming from rampant unemployment and low real wages (Martínez & Palacios, 2009).

Chile would transition towards democracy in 1990, through negotiation between the military regime and a spattering of center and center-left parties. These are known as the “Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia” (“Coalition of Parties for Democracy”), which would rule the country for the following twenty years (Garretón Merino, 1995). An important point of contention is that, over this period, the neoliberal model above suffered little structural change, instead being consolidated and institutionalized (Gómez Leytón, 2009). The targeted interventions in favor of lower-income groups, portrayed as “neoliberalism with a human face” (de la Barra, 2011), are still guided by market logic, as is the case of voucher schemes for basic services, or public housing units built through private contractors (Pérez, 2017). As Gómez Leytón (2009) argues, the only political choice in Chile is between the neoliberal right and a “neoliberal left”, that ignores the traditional leftist placement over the issues of wealth concentration and income distribution.

In terms of rural policy, the *Concertación* began state-mediated efforts to shift productive resources away from sectors that were no longer internationally competitive, something that has seen great levels of failure (Murray, 2002) and overall does not address the Pinochet-era structural vulnerabilities mentioned above. The rural remains organized around exports and economies of scale, which largely fall on the hands of an (urban) elite, and no significant agrarian concessions are done in democracy. I deliberately mention the rural to emphasize how it subordinates to the urban, which becomes the key terrain of struggle. In cities, any shortcomings of neoliberalism were left unaltered, or tapered

through voucher schemes, corrective services, and (limited) inter-municipal transfers. Concessions and public-private partnerships became the norm, further displacing low-income inhabitants from centers through market interests (Navarrete-Hernandez and Toro, 2019).

The consecutive decades of neoliberal policy have made its mark in Chile. While GDP per capita in 2019 was nearly 2.4 times that of 1970, the top 10% now rakes a colossal 60.4% of national income, compared with a dismal 6% for the bottom 40% (World Inequality Database, n.d.). Its benefits are not distributed equally, even if a “human face” is put on it. Current president Sebastián Piñera, elected 2010-2014 and 2018-present, has done away with neoliberalism’s “human face” altogether, by again destroying the state’s social and urban roles, deregulating urban land, commodifying housing, curtailing local services, and reinforcing regressive taxation. Urbanism policies are “entrepreneurial”, on paper geared towards middle-class housing demand (Navarrete-Hernandez & Toro, 2019). His push for public-private partnerships to rebuilt south-central cities following earthquake damage in February 2010 was mired by deficient state leadership, weak legitimacy, low public participation, and the general lack of interest of private capital in the affected areas (Imilan & González, 2017).

4.2. Santiago: *chaos, order, and conflict*

I now analyze how these reforms specifically played out in Gran Santiago, paying specific attention to the dynamics of settlement and displacement negotiated between the “urban working class” and the top-down order. This is done in order to understand the Santiago of today, how this urban space is structured, and who has access to its centrality, while reviewing how urban social movements have historically asserted their response.

Santiago’s urban space has a long history as site and object of struggle. As early as the 1950s, families expelled from the center by urban remodeling would spontaneously regroup and build informal and precarious housing in spaces with no immediately economic rentability, central or peripheric. These “mushroom” (“*callampa*”) settlements were, at the time, instrumental in demanding adequate housing policies. Over the following decade, these processes began being conducted by a politicized and organized population, known as “*campamentos*”, claiming strategic locations and articulating explicit goals in defense of urban interests (Duque & Pastrana, 1972; Rodríguez, 1983). In Santiago, they start succeeding as a political tool from 1967, targeting communes both

central (La Reina and Ñuñoa) and peripheral (San Miguel, Renca, Conchalí, La Cisterna, La Granja). In 1971, these housed 54,710 families, or an estimated 10% of the metropolitan population (Duque & Pastrana, 1972).

As a bottom-up political claim, and a defiance of public property, *campamentos* ran directly counter to the idea of urban space defended by Pinochet's military government. They were largely eradicated between 1979-1985, through displacing 130,000 inhabitants and extorting "fees" from those who stayed behind (Rodríguez, 1983). As a result, population density significantly rose in the far peripheries of La Pintana, Pudahuel, Renca, Peñalolén, San Bernardo, and Puente Alto, the latter two receiving 53% of the dispossessed dwellers. The scarce public services in these areas became oversaturated, aggravating urban poverty and quality of life for all in the periphery (Morales & Rojas, 1986).

The administrative reform mentioned above integrated the Santiago population in a vertical and authoritarian relationship, where urban issues were segmented (Rodríguez, 1983). Poorer communes were now expected, yet unable, to independently fund the development programs that could lift them from poverty. Conversely, the three wealthiest communes (central Santiago, Providencia, and Las Condes) absorbed a disproportionate amount of municipal funds, comprising 42.4% of municipal spending in Gran Santiago during 1986 (Hardy, 2009). The displacement of *campamentos* goes in tandem with these reforms, whose effects become recursive. Richer communes use their vast resources to erase *campamentos*, and put these lands to more rentable uses. While poverty concentrates in the periphery, resources concentrate in the center, which uses them to repeat the process. This process built a differentiated and polarized Santiago (Morales & Rojas, 1986), and its effects are still relevant today.

The military government's reform of this urban space was also strongly influenced by central Santiago's early political role as a place for sectors to manifest and protest governments. The Santiago of the past was rhetorically portrayed as "chaos", in opposition to a new representation of order which did not include a role for popular sectors. In the quest to structure this "city of discipline", Pinochet changed the model of social and political relations by disarticulating organizations, purging them of political elements, and erasing the names of previous conquests of the "urban working class" from streets, squares, and *campamentos*, using indiscriminate punishment as message, prevention, or penance. Santiago had witnessed the effective cancellation of political

space, conscience, and identity. Pinochet's Santiago was a space of social subordination, expanded through free markets, where social life was construed in cost-benefit terms. The city was segmented by wealth into sectors that did not mix, without public spaces that could mediate them, along a center of order and investment, and a periphery for those who could not afford it (Rodríguez, 1983).

These structural changes should not be dismissed for having occurred back then, as their path conditions urban space under the neoliberal democratic governments that followed. Santiago remains a heavily segregated and polarized city between low and high incomes. In the center-east, as of 2013, 63% of inhabitants are in the top wealth quintile, compared to 23 in the overall city. It concentrates high and low-level services, higher education graduates, and the highest Gini coefficient within city regions (0.53) (CASEN, 2013). From the 1990s, increasing globalization tendencies would create new dynamics over metropolitan expansion, social organization, and physical structures (de Mattos, 1999) which I review in turn.

Under democracy, the amplification (explosion) of Santiago's urban form has remained a constant. While the 1994 Santiago Metropolitan Regulatory Act (PRMS) conditioned municipalities to limit urban sprawl, the three subsequent PRMSs (in 1997, 2003, and 2006) have continuously amplified Santiago's administrative territory and expanded its periphery. The 1997 and 2003 PRMSs provide local authorities with the power to discretionally project satellite cities with private developers, in conditioned development zones (ZODUCs), as long as they include public housing. The latter provision shifted ZODUCs (and, by consequence, public housing provision) further into the periphery, into lands cheap enough to be profitable (Trivelli, 2009). Low-density suburbanization is also accentuated, expanding along the highways as axes (de Mattos, 1999).

Central Santiago has undergone a burgeoning vertical expansion (implosion), fueled by subsidized demand systems (Subsidio de Renovación Urbana). Home ownership is replaced with small, rented units, catering to smaller household of professionals and students (Casgrain & Janoschka, 2013). The built environment reflects this commodification, with shopping malls, business centers, conference centers, and megaprojects across its across its landscape (de Mattos, 1999). A particular real estate boom was evident close to the center, in Santiago Poniente, which is now dominated by middle and high-educated residents of higher incomes and purchasing power (Paulsen, 2014). The characteristics that articulate Santiago in a global network of cities

simultaneously intensify its centralizing power, given the powerful actors present and the potential in infrastructure, production, specialized services, and interactions (de Mattos, 1999).

These characteristics allow for a reasonable image of how Santiago urban space is structured today. The central Santiago commune acts as a civic district, packed with investments in restoration, tourism, commerce, and business. The notion of “central” Santiago implicitly includes the Providencia and Las Condes communes to the northeast, which have historically been, and continue to be, the core of wealth in the city (Casgrain & Janoschka, 2013). A well-educated middle class now densely packs the communes closest to this core, such as Ñuñoa, La Reina, La Florida, and Maipú. The “urban working class” is primarily relegated to affordable or public housing in the periphery (Hardy, 2009).

The periphery remains particularly detached from the center; to live there is not as simple as to commute daily. Physical access to the city’s opportunities is itself constrained by neoliberal-infused reforms of public transportation. Its initial privatization, where separate operators set tariffs independently, resulted in a costlier and inefficient system. Tariffs rose by 147% over the privatization process, nearly three times faster than inflation in the same period (Figueroa, 2010). When public transportation was eventually consolidated into the Transantiago network in February 2007, with public concessions across brand new routes (Muñoz & Gschwender, 2008), an insufficient number of buses and the lack of information created a political crisis and an all-around policy failure (Olavarría-Gambi, 2020).

The right of the city becomes indissociable from neoliberal reform of Santiago. For the urban working class, the only options of living in the center are old, often dilapidated housing, or smaller units at extortionate prices. Their choice is between living in precarious or inadequate housing in the center, or being relegated to the periphery (Casgrain & Janoschka, 2013). By housing poorer classes in the periphery, public housing inadvertently removes their right to appropriate the urban life and living standards of the center (Hidalgo, Rivas & Link, 2019); it solves a quantitative housing deficit by creating a qualitative housing deficit (Rodríguez & Sugranyes, 2004).

As mentioned above, the neoliberal turn has likewise changed the models of social relations in Santiago. While one of the safest cities in Latin America, the perception of

insecurity in Santiago widely outranks actual direct and direct victimizations. The uncertainty over the new relations between individual state, the reduced chances of interaction between social classes, the uprooting of settlements and the general withdrawal of the welfare state have created a sense of loss over the physical, social, and public spaces of before (Oviedo, 2009).

The break between Santiago citizens and the communities they belonged to before withdraws them from a full social life in the city (Morales & Rojas, 1986). Fear of others and of socioeconomic exclusion becomes endemic; people organize around their families, households, and “tribes”, the “microsocial”, to reflect the loss of collective identities, traditions, and landscapes. Relations become anonymous and transitory, guided by market logic, and creating an overall weakness in envisioning a better future (Lechner, 2009).

The Pinochet-era cancellation of political space in Santiago, and the containment of politics to a neoliberal binary, makes contestation through social movements difficult, especially given how decades of political repression, and the virtual absence of class politics in Chile, constrain class consciousness (Pérez-Ahumada, 2014). The traditional, industrialized working class itself is significantly weakened in an open economy, with a severe power imbalance between capital and labor, and the absence of a strong, class-based actor (Espinoza et al., 2006; Drake, 2003). Despite these constraints, significant urban-based protests have worked towards reimagining political space, of which I review some examples.

A good example of how urban issues have been addressed in Santiago is in the Yungay neighborhood, whose patrimonial value was threatened by big real estate projects in 2005. Along with reorganization of municipal waste collection in the same time period, with sanitary consequences, this made the neighborhood organize under the Agrupación de Vecinos por la Defensa del Barrio Yungay (“Group of neighbors for the defense of Yungay neighborhood”). Both these issues were successfully fought against as this community drew from its collective history, heritage, and its own right to the city (Paulsen, 2014).

A large-scale occupation of public space happened in the early 1980s, as the “Jornadas de Protesta Nacional” (particularly in 1983) set out against the military government. Participants were largely precarious workers, students, and the unemployed, strategically

employing marches, occupation of public facilities, and widespread absenteeism from work and education. The military government responded with rubber bullets, tear gas, and other war weapons, leaving at least 156 wounded and 75 fatal victims, of which half were young people. Repression was omnipresent in the city, and particularly intense in low to mid-income neighborhoods, as well as the public ways near the popular (peripheral) settlements where most protestors came from (Hechos Urbanos, 1984).

Two major student movements in Chile are worthy of notice. The so-called 2006 “Penguin Revolution” is important as it opened a political role for students as contesters in democracy, and reinforced the need for media coverage in this and further protests. It was organized by secondary students around repealing the Pinochet-era foundations of the education system. Attendance of street protests rose to 10,000 within three days. However, the reform ushered in did little to change the fundamental tenets of Chilean education, and was widely perceived as a defeat (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008). In 2011, this dissatisfaction would again spark 36 marches across Santiago, spanning 120,000 students over 7 months. Majorly led by university students, these protested the high cost of higher education in Chile, presenting an early challenge to President Piñera’s first mandate (Cabalin, 2012).

5. Results and discussion

5.1. The role of mobility as a catalyst

The E.S. begins brewing in October 4, 2019, with the announcement of a new tariff structure for public transportation in Metropolitan Santiago. With exemptions for students and seniors, subway and train fares are set to increase 30 Chilean pesos (0.03 EUR) in peak and off-peak hours, while bus fares increase 10 pesos (0.01 EUR) (Chechilnitzky, 2019). The authorities turn to greater input prices, operational costs, and currency depreciation as justifications (Larrondo, 2019). This marks the 22nd fare hike in Santiago since 2007, where fares grew slow but steady, and at least 65% faster than real wages between 2010 and 2018 (Salinas, 2019). Fueling already visible discontent, Minister of Economy Andrés Fontaine celebrated the new fare structure, pointing out that it also reduces fares for those who choose to wake up earlier (Martens, 2019).

In response, students from the Instituto Nacional (a prestigious school in central Santiago) start a week-long campaign of fare evasion, incited and publicized through an Instagram “meme” page. At first, they organize in packs and target the closest subway stations: first Universidad de Chile, then Santa Lucía and Bellas Artes a few days later, requiring preventive measures from the Carabineros militarized police, stationed at nearby Baquedano station (Díaz, 2019; Garcés, 2019). This online publicization would snowball into larger evasion campaigns, disorder, and destruction. As a result, as many as nineteen stations were closed by October 16, disrupting travel in all lines in both center and periphery (Osses, 2019; Bravo, 2019; Guerra, 2019; Guerra, 2019a).

These fare evasions are important to consider, I argue, since they define the right to the city as the implicit language of the protests. The grievance of these protestors is not so much the small fare hike (of which students are exempt), as it is a system that has commodified, and profits from, what may be their only feasible way of physically accessing the opportunities and benefits of the city. Thus, the process of creating a social resource is itself appropriated – urban space is used against the urban working class. The official rhetoric also reaffirms neoliberal social relations, by putting the responsibility on them to simply “wake up earlier”. This provides a starting point that protestors eventually link to a wider sphere of abuses by the neoliberal system.

This smaller-scale, horizontal contention serves as a prelude for spatial strategies used later in the E.S., fitting in Santiago's tradition of using urban space as a tool of protest covered above. By blocking subway mobility in Santiago, it disrupts the production of the social resource. As previously noted, Santiago's urban space particularly gathers its opportunities in its center. Thus, when central stations were first overtaken, everyone who had to go through them in order to "live in the city" was simultaneously affected, and shared the same deprivation from urban life, the same cry. It was an unignorable sign some sort of political space beyond the system had opened.

5.2. Understanding the "Zona Cero"

October 18, 2019 marks the "day zero" of the E.S., where this social turmoil finally burst across Santiago. Claiming not to have security conditions to operate, the Santiago subway ceases service from 7:20PM through the weekend (Metro de Santiago, 2019; Metro de Santiago, 2019a), overcrowding overground transportation and forcing many to walk home (Villaroel, 2019). This fuels protests and incidents throughout Santiago; protestors assemble *cacerolazos* (mass protests through noise, by hitting kitchen pans) and tear down police barricades, mostly along the Alameda axis. Overnight, the situation devolves to a wave of lootings and intentional fires. At least 10 buses, 19 metro stations, and several institutional buildings were destroyed (Riveros, 2019; Flores, 2019; 24horas, 2019), damaging 41 subway stations and wounding 156 policemen (Parra, 2019). Tensions escalate over the following seven days. A weekend-long night curfew and an indefinite state of emergency are declared (Flores, 2019; Ferrer, 2019). President Piñera retaliates with hostility, declaring Chile to be "at war with a powerful enemy, willing to use limitless violence" (Andrews, 2019), deploying army tanks, and firing anti-disturbance projectiles (ADNRadio, 2019; El Desconcierto, 2019).

While people start gathering in the thousands in the pericentral Plaza Nuñoa and Irrazaval Avenue (Meganoticias, 2019), it is Plaza Italia, or Plaza Baquedano, which gradually becomes the focal point of the protests, especially after well publicized moments such as an impromptu rendition, by protestors and musicians, of Victor Jara's songs "El derecho de vivir en paz" ("The right to live in peace") (Daza, 2019). The square would later be known by protestors as Plaza Dignidad, a name change I examine in section 5.5.3., and use throughout. Plaza Dignidad's status as the focal point of protest is cemented following a general strike on October 25, called by a wide array of sectorial

labor unions (the Mesa de Unidad Social), in demanding the “unfair and abusive neoliberal model” comes to an end and a new constitution is drafted (El Mostrador, 2019). In what was called “Chile’s largest march”, an estimated 1.2 million people gathered in Plaza Dignidad and surroundings. Without routines, leaders, or political capitalization, its message is the plural and transversal co-presence in space of demanding citizens (El Mostrador, 2019a).

The urban space of the E.S. is characterized from this point by the conflict between a top-down order, defended by the Carabineros police, and a bottom-up order, represented by protestors. This conflict mostly concentrates in the so-called “Zona Cero” (roughly “Ground Zero”). Usage of this term can be fluid, but I interpret it as comprising Plaza Dignidad, and any surrounding blocks that could be considered affected, altered, or disrupted within the Estallido. Jurisdiction over this Zona Cero falls between the central Santiago and Providencia communes. While it is a “central” location in Santiago in this sense, it does not represent the historical center of Santiago or its seat of power (La Moneda palace), both within 2km to the east. The authorities estimate most of the E.S.’ protests to have taken place in Zona Cero, along with Plaza Maipú and Plaza de Puente Alto (Delgado, 2020a).

The urban space of the Zona Cero is clearly distinctive and comprises my main area of analysis, where the production and reproduction of urban space through conflict is most obvious. I also analyze this in contrast with the peripheral areas where this production differs radically. Within the Zona Cero, I emphasize Plaza Dignidad as the epicenter, and the key location where the E.S. creates “place”. For practicality, I mainly refer to the corresponding communes throughout: those where the Zona Cero falls (Santiago and Providencia), the wealthier northeast communes (Las Condes, Lo Barnechea, Vitacura), and some of the most affected peripheral communes to the west and south (Pudahuel, Puente Alto, San Bernardo, Peñalolén, La Granja, La Cisterna). Rather than pinpointing specific locations, my idea is to emphasize the corresponding power relations between these different communities.

5.3. Weaponizing the urban

5.3.1. The dynamics of marches in the Northeast

As expected, a large role is played in the E.S. by marching through urban space. Surprisingly, however, it is not its most significant spatial feature. In Santiago, protestors mainly moved towards Plaza Dignidad, with the intent of gathering there, or moved up and down the Alameda in tandem with police repression. Even the so-called “Chile’s largest march” was in practice a large-scale occupation of Plaza Dignidad and surrounding Zona Cero. Nevertheless, transient occupation of space becomes important in two key examples, especially when occurring in the wealthier northeast communes.

Marching dynamics were key in a series of cyclist protests (*ciclazos*), the first one being held December 1st, 2019. As this date marked the birthday of President Piñera, participants (allegedly thousands) cycled from Plaza Dignidad towards his residency in northeastern Las Condes, capturing the entire route as they went by. From there, cyclists proceeded towards the Portal La Dehesa mall, further north in Lo Barnechea, through a section of the Costanera Norte, a privatized expressway and the main artery connecting Central Santiago to the wealthy northern suburbs (La Izquierda Diario, 2019). To divide the attention and resources of Carabineros, a subsection of the cyclists took an alternate route, towards the Costanera Center and back to Plaza Dignidad (The Clinic, 2019). Within the period analyzed, cyclists marched every following Sunday since, always under the same concept and equivalent route: from Plaza Dignidad, through the key arteries of Northeastern Santiago (Cooperativa.cl, 2020c; SonarFM, 2020).

This form of protest is only possible through the coordinated movement of cyclists as a highly mobile swarm. By choosing to cycle through communes with large endogenous resources and police presence, cyclists are implicitly aware that any lengthier occupation of the Northeast would be met with stern repression. The Northeast is not where the urban resource is produced, but where it is appropriated; it does not belong to, or include, the urban working class. Thus, this recapture cannot be understood without considering the “cry and desire” for the possibilities of the city. It temporarily takes away key routes from those that control their mobility, even de-commodifying Costanera Norte by disregarding tolls. Much like the initial subway protests, it temporarily disables the capture of the social resource, this time in a way that the top-down order cannot ignore.

Another interesting dynamic developed in the Northeast, as Chile approached an initial date for the constitutional plebiscite. While E.S. protestors began campaigning to approve it, a strain of reactionary marches develops, defending its rejection. An initial significant march for the “no” vote was held February 8th, replicated every following Saturday within my analysis’ timeframe. The trajectories of “no” vote marches were strictly contained to the Northeast. The Military School in Las Condes would often serve as a meeting point, and these protestors would march along the Apoquindo Avenue, stopping just short of Plaza Dignidad. Even as these marches grew into the thousands, there was a clear environment of familiarity with authorities. Legal permits were granted and special force repression was absent, even with the publicized attendance of right-wing extremists. The Carabineros that were present mostly served as a police escort, despite multiple reports of aggressions and death threats, towards opponents and journalists, under their watch (El Dinamo, 2020; Bustos, 2020; T13, 2020a; Ramírez, 2020; Jimenez, 2020; Minay, Catena and Fava, 2020).

It is interesting to consider these protests, as they only make sense through the E.S.’s original politicization of urban space. They parody and transfigure their rituals and routines in an equally transgressive form, while being in a sense “top-down” marches. They only march in streets they already have the right to, with legal support and little opposition, able to discharge violence against whoever opposes them. While not intentionally, they reflect that there is some urban space in Santiago where not everyone has an equal right to voice and participation, and thus reflect the validity of the cry and demand for the city, as a driving force behind protests and an unignorable consequence of the neoliberal system they defend.

5.3.2. Exploiting the periphery

The spatial dynamics this analysis highlights mostly consider the center of Santiago. However, an analysis of the urban space in Lefebvre’s terms requires explicitly acknowledging the difference in resources and access between center and periphery of Santiago, and how this comes to be weaponized against the latter. Here, I narrow down on how the urban space shifts as “object and stake” in the peripheral communes, mainly focusing on Pudahuel and Puente Alto as key examples.

While violence and rioting were felt across all of Santiago, the Pudahuel commune was the stage to some of its most violent conflicts, especially in its southern part. This location

was particularly enflamed when a police car ran over a student, during a largely peaceful protest on January 7th, 2020 (El Desconcierto, 2020a). The violent confrontations that followed incited a stern, week-long wave of repression by authorities (El Desconcierto, 2020b). Here, it is evident how Carabineros weaponize this disconnection from the opportunities, resources, and watching eyes of Central Santiago, to exert a disproportional amount of police violence. Frequent reports show Carabineros using armored vehicles to fire tear gas indiscriminately, allegedly hitting civilian houses overnight and victimizing, among others, children and pregnant women (El Desconcierto, 2020b; Hertz, 2020; Martínez, 2020). Most of this conflict was centered around the 55th Commissary police station in Pudahuel Sur, which would be barricaded and attacked by masked individuals, sparking fears that it could be later stationed elsewhere (Cooperativa.cl, 2020a; Cooperativa.cl, 2020g).

The historically peripheralized Puente Alto neighborhood was also the battleground for some of the worst cases of looting and pillaging within the protests. While the Plaza de Puente Alto was a hotspot for protests, the hundreds of protestors present are highly disproportional to the level of police brutality employed. Starting from late January, widespread reports arise of Carabineros assaulting protestors unprovoked, often alone and outnumbered, and leaving them with severe, visible injuries (Espinoza, 2020; Villaroel, 2020; Delgado, 2020). Carabineros went as far as breaking once into a health clinic to conduct arrests, including at least one minor (Cooperativa.cl, 2020d).

Other peripheral communes likewise struggled with disproportionate violence, given their small visibility as stages for protest. The “null presence of Carabineros” was noted in peripheral La Granja, while supermarkets were frequently looted, and even a news team assaulted (Cooperativa.cl, 2020f). In San Bernardo, a 23-year-old was reportedly tortured in a police squad (Cooperativa.cl, 2020e); a 36-year-old woman, going to work alone in the evening, was blinded in one eye by a tear gas bomb (Delgado, 2019c). 200 wounded were reported in Peñalolén in two days as a result of a police incursion (Cooperativa.cl, 2019a).

This disproportionate violence has been systematized before, but largely escapes analysis in tandem with urban space. When mapping police brutality in Santiago between 17 October 2019 and 31 January 2020, the INDH (Chile’s National Institute for Human Rights) found 139 cases of police aggression cases to be concentrated in Puente Alto (28 cases) and Central Santiago (40 cases), the epicenter of protests. Little to no aggressions

are reported in places other than the center and the extreme peripheries; 88.5% of these aggressions are at the hands of Carabineros (INDH Chile, 2020).

The authorities use the periphery against itself in multiple ways. They first exploit its weak social structures, its disconnection from the city, and the systematic defunding of its local governments. It is an imposition of the top-down “order” through violence, by a social group virtually unrepresented in the periphery, towards a largely disenfranchised class. The power relation between the wealthy center and the marginalized periphery is also exploited. The risk of removing the police station in a neighborhood vulnerable to crime, including looting, becomes the risk of further removing access to the potential and opportunities of the city, and reinforcing the distrust, insecurity, and fear that characterizes neoliberal social relations in Santiago. Pudahuel alcalde Johnny Carrasco warns that dismantling security resources, and shifting policing towards repression, increases Pudahuel’s susceptibility to drug trade-related violence (24horas, 2020b). Organized crime in the area can actively capitalize on this turmoil by lending resources to violent protests, which shifts police resources away from their operations, and weaving new and improved networks, an issue that Puente Alto alcalde Germán Codina raises (T13, 2020). In La Cisterna, alcalde Santiago Rebolledo formally accused the state of not ensuring local safety, leaving the commune vulnerable to a wave of shop lootings in November and December (Villaroel, 2019a).

The periphery is also left vulnerable against any shocks that take place in the center of the city, pushing these neighborhoods further into the periphery. A relevant example is the suspension of thirteen bus routes on March 11 due to safety concerns, all of which with terminal stops in Puente Alto and neighboring San Bernardo. This directly hinders mobility for those who may have no resources to physically access the city otherwise (24horas, 2020c). This heavily contrasts with the greater resources of central communes, which were at times used lavishly – take the example of Evelyn Quezada, a Providencia municipal worker who, under threat of being fired, was assigned to infiltrate the frontline of protestors, and to eavesdrop on plans (El Desconcierto, 2020d).

While this analysis concerns Santiago urban space, the issue of those beyond the periphery should not go unnoticed – that is, those in vulnerable rural settings, outside of the large urban areas of the Estallido. Sociologist Andrea Santelices (2020) warns of consequences, such as the rise of fear and distrust, that spread to these areas well before the right to the city’s opportunities can be considered. This becomes important when

considering urban space from Lefebvre's perspective. If the urban phenomenon tends towards planetary urbanization, but is not yet there, the demands and agendas of the E.S., infused by the right to the city, inevitably do not include those outside of the urban. Urban protest as a tool of demand should not evade critical analysis, as it aims to decide for all of Chile, but does not include all of it.

5.4. Weaponizing place

5.4.1. Places as targets

While the E.S. creates “place” through conflict, it also the preexisting meaningfulness of locations to its own benefit. I provide two examples, reflecting both peaceful and violent usages of “place” as a target of contention. First, shopping malls were frequently chosen as sites of protest. While many were besieged by lootings and fires (Meganoticias, 2019), malls become a stage for mostly peaceful contestation starting from November 2019, becoming at times the only fixed occupation of space in the wealthier Northeast. Providencia's large Mall Costanera Center was forced to close temporarily due to protests (Martínez, 2019); other severely disrupted malls include Mall La Dehesa in Lo Barnechea, Parque Arauco in Las Condes, and Eurocentro in Santiago proper (Delgado, 2019b; Fernández & Vedoya, 2019; El Desconcierto, 2020e).

Malls symbolize more than the “global order” for Chile. With the withdrawal of the state from public life, these became icons for the new model of social relations, centered around consumption. They are commodified public spaces where transgression can effectively confront the commodification of public space, while simultaneously ensuring safety and an audience (Ferrer, 2019a; Cáceres, 2019). They hold symbolism as “centers” of wealth, in a city conceived around wealth and consumption; their occupation represents the quest to retake this center. Malls differ in form and purpose between center and periphery, and reflect their dynamics: the dozens of Carabineros deployed in Providencia malls contrast vividly with the Arauco mall in Quilicura, looted and burnt down when the authorities withdrew from it (Ferrer, 2019a), after allegedly using it to interrogate and torture detainees (Delgado, 2019a).

Deliberate fires, as tool of protest, also incorporated the idea of “place”, and symbolic value. Particular attention is given to the fires set in Zona Cero, most of which by protestors. Churches were a significant target, including the Veracruz church in Lastarria (Meganoticias, 2019) and the San Francisco de Borja church, owned by Carabineros as a

site to honor their martyrs (Carabineros de Chile, 2020). Fires were also noted in buildings from the ministries of Housing and of National Heritage, the Civil Registry of Providencia, as well as the Pedro de Valdivia and Diego Portales private universities (González & Villaroel, 2019; González, V., 2019; Barros, 2020). These reflect a rejection of the building blocks of the ruling elite, one that is fundamentally homogenous, wealthy, and exploitative. This is not to say all fires target the established institutions; fires in cultural institutions include the Café Literario in Providencia, the Violeta Parra Museum, and the Alameda Arts Center (El Desconcierto, 2019b; 24horas, 2020; Meganoticias, 2020).

5.4.2. Cabildos: (re)politicizing the city

A central aspect of recreating urban space during the E.S. was the reopening of previously cancelled political and democratic space. In late October, as constitutional change becomes part of the debate, the Mesa de Unidad Social begins organizing “cabildos”: informal democratic congresses, assembled informally in any public space, and open for all citizens to come together and “collectively reflect on the current state of Chile”. Their standard operating procedure is as follows: citizens are divided into small groups, where they discuss a few standardized questions on origins and opportunities of the current political crisis. A moderator controls time and ensures equal participation within groups; the final results are later aggregated, much like survey data (Molina, 2019).

Cabildos start taking place around October 26. Over the following two weeks, up to 15,000 people across the country would participate (Fuentes, 2019), spanning 300 cabildos in 73 communes (Cooperativa.cl, 2019). The MUS provides guidelines and logistical support for *cabildos*, but officially commits itself to maintaining their transversal, independent, and non-institutionalized character, and to work towards rewriting a constitution, from political social discourse beyond party lines (Claro, 2019).

Cabildos act as an explicit re-politicization of urban space. As discussed before, the ruling Chilean elite largely disarmed popular organizations and political agents outside its parties. The space for political debate and decision is contained within La Moneda and the ministries. The cabildo directly defies this conception. It pops up according to local demand in having a political say: guidelines suggest it can be held in “offices, schools, universities, cultural centers, neighborhood juntas, workplaces, and “any possible location” (Claro, 2019). This works in tandem with urban space, as any public location

can organize around a *cabildo* as center. The *cabildo* becomes a political place that is consistently produced and reproduced by the urban resource (in the multiplicity of outcomes from spontaneous meetings), adding to urban space a continuous political dimension.

This does not mean that *cabildos* should be analyzed uncritically. While non-commodified and unrestricted, they still follow a given structure. This reflects the priorities and agenda of its organizers (the MUS), and replicates its collection of diffuse and conflictive worldviews. This power of replicating an agenda is evident in the Chilean government's subsequent rush to introduce its own institutionalized *cabildos*. While under the guise of including rural, vulnerable, and excluded sectors that could not otherwise assemble, this was widely perceived as putting a "straightjacket" on an otherwise unrestricted and inclusive political space (Herranz, 2019).

5.4.3. Campamentos: (re)taking the city

As I detail in section 4.2., the *campamento* has a direct influence on modern-day Santiago, given its historical use as political tool and the spatial legacy of its removal. Even if briefly, this weapon of protest would return on December 10th, 2019, in the so-called *Campamento de la Dignidad* ("Dignity Camp"). This was organized and installed by the MUS in the Plaza Montt-Varas. This location is worth noting, as it is well outside the Zona Cero or the affected peripheries, and is instead in the historical center of Santiago. Plaza Montt-Varas is just south of the Chilean Congress building, and just north of the Palace of Justice, respectively the homes for legislative and judicial power in the country. The location is characterized by the tension, as key organizer Mario Aguilar puts it, between the *Campamento*, "illegal yet legitimate and democratic", and the halls of power that surround it, "legal yet illegitimate and anti-democratic" (González, T., 2019).

The several distinct visual elements in this place further highlight the contrast with the "order" of the elite. The *Campamento* stands as a chaotic cluster of tents, chairs, tables, and parasols bound together. Diverse and colorful signs, flags, tarps, and kerchiefs are spread throughout, held together by impromptu fixes and spontaneous help from outsiders, such as trash collectors. It is structured around a small central open-air "venue" with its own programming, welcoming outsider engagement through debates with invited specialists, occasional music and poetry performances, and open-mic nights. The community is constantly involved; sourcing and sharing food donations, taking

surveillance shifts at night, and even playing football matches in the open plaza area. The only laws imposed are no alcohol nor drugs, and responsibility over individual waste (El Desconcierto, 2019a; Castro, 2019; Castro Guerra, 2019).

The Campamento de la Dignidad would involve over 39 sleepers and last for twelve days before disbanding (Castro, 2019; González; 2019). I argue its sense of place is a good representation of Harvey's ideal of "commons". It is held together not through profit, or top-down power, but rather by the solidarity and shared beliefs of protestors. It deliberately captures the centrality of the formal institutions to establish a visibly alternative way of living the city, just a few meters away. The Campamento can be thought of a fixed *cabildo*, which does not reproduce itself across the urban but rather captures it through its centrality. Thus, it produces a new meeting point, where everyone excluded from formal political processes may come together and conceive a new urban space, and ultimately a new country. Its precariousness and rough outside are both symbols of how the Santiago people have been deprived of the right to the city and their desire to reassert it.

5.5. Plaza Dignidad: the key point

The social production and reproduction of space in the E.S. is best considered at its epicenter, the Plaza Dignidad. The presence of protestors in this square was constant, fluctuating between a smaller-scale daily occupation and a larger-scale series of weekly protests. The latter would invariably happen every Friday, along with other specific, meaningful dates. These included the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and New Year's Eve, as well as other dates contextualized by the E.S. (its first month, fifty days, third months, and hundred days). An implicit spatial routine is generally replicated throughout the analysis. The first protestors would arrive at 16:00, immediately surrounding the Baquedano statue, while also scattering throughout the roundabout and nearby intersections, forcing traffic to be rerouted. Attendance numbers would exponentially increase (and peak) within the following two hours, protestors would pour into the Zona Cero around it and incite initial waves of repression. Conflict would heat up starting nightfall, resulting in the forceful removal of protestors as early as 20:00. This is verifiable in an extensive number of news reports, as well as Galleria Cima's livestreams of the Plaza from atop a nearby building (Galleria Cima, 2021; El Mostrador, 2019; Osses, 2019; González & Villaroel, 2019;

González & Sabag, 2019; González, V., 2019; González, V., 2019a; El Mostrador; 2019b; Lara, 2019; Lara, 2019a; Lepe, 2019; ADNRadio, 2020; El Dinamo, 2020a).

This subsection shows how the E.S. produced its top-down placed in urban space, reflecting how the urban working class imagines its city. To understand how Plaza Dignidad becomes “place”, I analyze in turn how location, locale, and sense of place influence, or are influenced by, this process. I draw extensively, and primarily, from the lived experience of the protestors I interviewed: Carlos, Agustín, Sofía and Alonso (representative names).

Carlos is a theater school graduate, having worked in dance and acting. He now works as specialized cultural producer and manager, as well as a professor and union member in these areas. He was first involved in the E.S. in its second night, joining his family for a *cacerolazo* at the edge of Puente Alto. “Everyone was there, kilometer after kilometer, in each corner people with bonfires, burning old mattresses and waste. And everyone was joyful (...) because there was never this massive popular escalation”. Together with his friends and trade union, he occupied Plaza Dignidad daily, up until mid-March. Agustín, student of architecture, likewise began participating through the early *cacerolazos* in and around his university department in Providencia, later occasionally migrating to the Plaza alongside friends and fellow students.

Sofía and Alonso are news reporters, each for a different large-scale news organization. While both primarily engaged with the E.S. as part of their work, Sofía recalls actively participating in the early *cacerolazos*, as well in “Chile’s largest march”. All except Agustín mention being previously involved in student protests. Carlos joined the 2006 and 2011 student movements as a student in Universidad de Chile, and Sofía mentions participating in “almost all” 2006 protests, during her time in college, which made her see such protests “as a valid form of expression”. Alonso recalls “hurling rocks at the police in 84/85” in his student times, while Agustín claims, nevertheless, that watching these protests during his life made participation in the E.S. a “fluid, almost natural act”.

5.5.1. Location: a node and a mediator

Plaza Dignidad’s role as centralizer was facilitated by its location and spatial features. It is primarily a transportation node, connecting three main arteries of the city: the Vicuña Mackenna Avenue axis, going southbound towards La Florida and Puente Alto, the Alameda axis, running eastbound through the La Moneda palace, and the Providencia

Avenue axis, westbound towards Las Condes. The Santiago subway follows this overground logic; the “Plaza Baquedano” station serves as a transfer hub between Line 1 (along the Providencia-Alameda axes) and Line 5 (along the Vicuña Mackenna axis), notably the two lines most affected by initial protests.

While it provides spacious surroundings, by intersecting the Balmaceda, Bustamante, and Forestal parks, what is called “Plaza Dignidad” is essentially a circular, central island between the Providencia and Alameda axes, along with a small, barren square to its south. All interviewees saw it as a location of little practical meaning to their lived urban experience. Agustín best describes it as an “inhospitable location, a large and disordered space with few places to be”, instead portraying it as a “location to move through”.

As mentioned before, Plaza Dignidad is not where power is concentrated. Historically, then-Plaza Italia demarcated the outer edge of the city, far from the colonial-era center of Plaza de Armas (24horas, 2015). Instead, its location matters symbolically as a frontier between the two worlds of Santiago. To the northeast (uphill towards the Andes mountains) lie the wealthier communes of Providencia and Las Condes; the further one goes downhill, the more they meet the “urban working class”. Any transit between the two goes through this chokepoint. Alonso describes it as the “poverty line”, to explain its “social and ethnographic symbolism”. For Sofía, this makes it a “symbolic center (...) where many different realities converge”. In other words, Plaza Dignidad was a pre-existing point of tension, and mediation, between the bottom-up Santiago, the urban working class, and the globalized order, literally looking top-down on the city it appropriates. It represents a center defined by the accumulation of wealth, produced through the collective memory of Santiago citizens; a place between “our” downhill and “their” uphill.

The varying names of the Plaza are equally central to its placemaking process, and the construction of this collective identity. The square had been named Plaza Italia in 1910, as the Italian community in Chile gifted the city a monument, in celebration of its first 100 years. While this became the popularly adopted name, it is officially renamed Plaza Baquedano in 1928, when a new statue was unveiled (24horas, 2015). The two toponyms create a dissonance between the collective, heterogenous meaning of Santiago citizens, and the imposed symbolism of space around an elite figure. The fact that no interviewee referred to “Plaza Baquedano” reflects how this divide lasts to this day.

A different, bottom-up change to the toponym would come through the Estallido. As “dignity” became a keyword in the protests, an informal campaign in November 11th collectively suggested “Plaza de la Dignidad” as the square’s name on Google Maps, manipulating the algorithm into interpreting it as legitimate (24horas, 2019a). To some extent, the scale of this helped legitimize Plaza Dignidad as a new name, and asserting the new symbolism of place through toponymy, reflecting the conflict for, and joy of, “dignity”.

5.5.2. Locale: built environment as battleground

The built environment of Plaza Dignidad is a decisive element that protestors include in their creation of place. This starts with the Baquedano statue, the Plaza’s central visual element. It is a large statue of Manuel Baquedano, a 19th century Chilean general, commander-in-chief, and politician. The existence of the statue is the pretext behind the plaza’s official name (Baquedano); it structures the meaning the authorities wish to convey it. Of course, the idea of a new Plaza, where meaning is built by protest and resistance, is incompatible with this old relic of authority. In this context, it represents the top-down relationship that protestors defy; thus, it must be removed, or its meaning disarmed. Over the course of the E.S., images of the protests routinely show the statue’s base with graffiti, scribbles, political slogans and demands; different paint drawings over the statue parody and deconstruct the statue as a figure of authority (Delgado, 2019).

One of the secondary statues resting at its base, representing an anonymous soldier, was broken and knocked down in the November 2 protests (T13, 2019), prompting the local government to remove both secondary statues. Three other nearby monuments were also damaged by then (Espinoza, 2019). The struggle over the statue culminates afternoon 31 December, when a group nearly succeeds in toppling the statue with ropes (Villaroel, 2019b). The authorities refused to remove it at first (Cooperativa.cl, 2020), only restoring it in March as protestor numbers decrease (Herrera, 2020).

As many monuments attacked across the country, Baquedano represents a historical figure of the Chilean elite. The symbolism of these monuments dissonates from this new eruption of Chilean culture, fundamentally heterogenous and inclusive of the mestizo and the indigenous (Urrejola, 2019). By destroying this visual memory of the place, the city imagined in the E.S. breaks free from institutions and characters of an elite power that excludes the wider urban working class.

The protestors occupying the Plaza brought a series of specific visual elements with them. Sofía mentions seeing “a lot of previous preparation to attend”, including many “banners, signs, scarves, and others”. Flags were another mainstay, of which two deserve proper scrutiny. One frequently flown flag was the Wenüfoye flag, of the Mapuche indigenous group; another was the “black flag”, a Chilean flag with black background and white contours. In this context, the Mapuche flag symbolizes resistance, liberation, and the recognition that the bottom-up society is far more diverse than the top-down order would suggest (Pairican, 2019). On the other hand, the “black flag” subversively represented outrage against police repression, the “death” of the old Chile, and the democratic imagination of a new one (Benwell, Núñez & Amigo, 2021); much alike how the places of the E.S., I argue, are an experiment in imagining a different city.

Drawing was a particular weapon to convert this “sterile” location into the Plaza Dignidad “place”. Agustín explains how: “the response [of large commerce to incendiary attacks] was that many buildings in large avenues (...) covered their windows with zinc or OSB boards. These became a large canvas where slogans, scribbles, graffitis, stencils, images and posters are put up, along with all the types of plastic manifestations that formed an important part of the ES’ imagination”. He adds that these visual manifestations across the Zona Cero “(...) demonstrate this frenzy to occupy space, to make it part of the protest, to try to materialize something”.

Every element of public space was weaponized in preserving the capture of the Plaza. “The bridges over the Mapocho river held kerchiefs (...) and the largest building in the Plaza was used as a screen for light interventions” explains Agustín. He adds: “The walkway pavements were constantly torn apart (...) to be used as projectiles against the police. Street lights, railings, and any other urban infrastructure was used to block the way of police vehicles.” This inadvertently carries a form of symbolism about who this place includes: “some would say that Plaza Dignidad was a bit of periphery in the center of the city, not only because of these elements, but because it slowly lost its vegetation and became a barren lot, much like the plazas in the periphery”.

To reinforce its narrative of “order” and its restoration, the Chilean government made corresponding efforts to restore Plaza Dignidad and the Zona Cero. From February 2020, the Intendencia Municipal launches an extensive, 242 million CLP (around 265,000 EUR) program to wash away and paint over any drawings or graffiti left in public spaces over the course of central protests. This sparked immediate controversy as it erased public

art without warning or consent from buildings where it was encouraged, such as the Centro Gabriela Mistral (Higuera, 2020). Not only are the distinctive visual elements of the place erased, but this also serves as preparation to recommodify the area, and reopen it to the same investment flows of before. It is not done for the people of the E.S., for which the walls carry their messages and their identity, but rather towards the economic interests and benefits of before.

Within Plaza Dignidad, the local government of Providencia began replanting vegetation around the Baquedano statue in February (24horas, 2020a); the Carabineros station were removed from the Baquedano subway, in a redesign of this public space around safety and efficiency (Cooperativa.cl, 2020b). However, a particularly problematic intervention comes between January and March 2020, when a series of 2-meter-high “New Jersey” concrete barriers are installed in critical points and junctions around the Plaza. While effectively serving as a “trench” between Carabineros and protestors, it has the unfortunate effect of impeding direct vehicle access to the plaza. This impedes quick access from firemen and ambulances (Figuroa, 2020), something crucial given the health hazards of violent police repression. It overall reflects how the top-down order, in its quest to re-appropriate the center, destroys this meeting point and turns it into a border. The top-down view of space is once again predominant, where the city is parceled off between classes, and is used against one another in a rational, almost military logic.

5.5.3. Creating sense of place through community and inclusion

As explained above, the Plaza Italia of before was more of a node, a mediator, than a meaningful place. Nevertheless, all four interviewees recognize an occasional social function as a civic meeting place, which Alonso likens to the Plaza de Cibeles in Madrid. Sofía explains: “whenever Chile won an important [football] match, for example, hundreds of people would gather there, in a completely festive environment”. While it was often a meeting point for protests, these would instead march down the Alameda, towards the La Moneda palace. Carlos notes the March 8th, 2019 feminist rally, as the Plaza’s only previous political moment. “No one had ever given a speech, [set] a stage, never. And neither had we, as citizens, used it”. As the E.S. occupies public space, rather than marching through it, he hints at a key distinction: “And why isn’t the Estallido a march, why doesn’t it advance?”. He argues the initial feeling was to celebrate “the stop of the lethargy, the numbness in which the neoliberal system had us. One of the first

mottos shared was “Chile has awakened”; then, it was joy and carnival, nothing more than that, and because of that, it was Plaza Dignidad”.

It is important the creation of “commons” relationships through the strong bond of the heterogeneous community presence. The participants interviewed stress the diversity and heterogeneity of the crowd, enumerating young adults, NEETs, senior citizens, the indigenous, whole families and, perhaps more unexpectedly, football fans, which Sofía explains use their “flags and flares to join important causes”. They encompass a mesh of different social classes, associations, ages, genders and professions, which Agustín says is “very hard to classify or describe”. The crowd becomes a unitary entity: as Carlos reiterates, there was no political coordination, no visible face, no press conferences, and no speakers. Agustín emphasizes how important this community was, mentioning his constant dialogue with different people every time he attended. This community was also mirrored in the organization of impromptu first aid brigades, “who would rush in to help diminish the effects of tear gases, or help possible victims”.

This heterogeneity and shared solidarity should be contrasted with the usual model of social relations in the city. Free from the distrust and fear of others prevalent, protestors can fully realize their political dimensions and aspirations, assured of the common cause at hand. Alonso explains how neoliberalism fosters egoism: “they sell us a model of happiness based on purchase. I have my sneakers, but I do not care if the neighbor has them. (...) [From October] a community is created; we want a fairer society that this plastic [card] cannot satisfy”. Importantly, this community recreates social behavior beyond the Plaza: “Even purchasing models changed. I almost do not go to the supermarket anymore, because our neighborhood assembly has created a fair-trade cooperative. And this repeats itself in many neighborhoods. (...) We all prefer to buy from the girl next door, even if we pay a little bit more”.

It is this growing decommodification that best contrasts with the neoliberal Santiago center of before. Some of it comes from a simple, and perhaps undesirable consequence: as the Zona Cero shifted into constant conflict, and the risk of looting, 69% of local shops shut down, and could not reopen within the first four months of the conflict (Castillo & Rodríguez, 2020). The plaza becomes a stage for artistic and musical performances, centered around cause solidarity, rather than profit. This spirit is best evident in moments such as a “solidary dinner”, organized and cooked by attendees for frontline protestors, featuring its own lineup of music which included famous artist Ana Tijoux (El

Desconcierto, 2020). At the 100-day mark, the Plaza featured a large carnival march, engaging protestors in song and dance (El Desconcierto, 2020c).

The heterogeneity and inclusiveness of this community opened up particular space for feminist demands. A pioneer of this is collective “Las Tesis”, intervening with a famous crowd-based intervention that equated the oppression of the (patriarchal) state with rape. This would help assert the political character of the E.S. at home and abroad, and its choreography would be massively replicated throughout (BBC News Mundo, 2020). Feminist demands were also key in mobilizing protestors, particularly in the context of the 2020 8M protests, which had between 125,000 and two million in attendance (Muñoz, 2020), followed by a national woman’s strike the next day (Morales, 2020). Feminism movements also engaged with the figurative power of toponymy, by symbolically changing the names of plazas and monuments in homage to notable female Chileans the same month; as speaker Javiera Manzi defends, “putting our names in a city that does not name us, that does not recognize our place in public space” (Diario UChile, 2020).

5.5.4. Lived experience in the Plaza: “sometimes festive, sometimes confrontational”

The ambience of this place was fundamentally split between moments of festivity and of repression, reflecting the joy, rage, and hope of the protestors. Agustín puts it as a “place of catharsis”, driven by the crowd, where the ambience was “sometimes festive, sometimes confrontational”. As a “veteran” attendee of sorts, Carlos focuses on “joy” to describe this atmosphere. “Nobody thought about it (...) and suddenly we were all there, with all the joy of waking up, fighting, and wanting a better Chile.”

Parallel to the visual art interventions around the Plaza, musical expression played a large role. Agustín recalls frequently hearing folk and popular Chilean music, from authors such as Los Prisioneros, Violeta Parra, and Victor Jara. The latter influenced Carlos’s own choreographed intervention in Plaza Dignidad. Hearing an updated version of the “Right to live in peace” anthem, he “started organizing that all dancers [he knew] would gather and choreograph” it, later performing it in the square itself.

Carlos’s experience closely reflects how tension between festivity and confrontation defines the Plaza as place. “All this joy I tell you of is beautiful, but on the other hand (...) the repression of Carabineros has cost us lives”. He screenshares a particularly illustrative behind-the-scenes video of his intervention. “Look behind us, the [tear gas]

bombs, the smoke, the fire, and all of us dancing on... which is very hard to do, and asphyxiating. Picture how the people come together, see how full it is already, and how we keep dancing”. He explains how these two elements must necessarily coexist: “if I had the luxury to dance, it is because of the [frontline protestors], just two blocks over. Without them (...) us “average” people, in our joy and happiness, we could not have been there, as Carabineros would arrive in a second”. At the same time, the joy and arts in the Plaza’s core are what decriminalize it, and legitimize it as an alternative: “Art was my battleground. The ultra-right would paint us as a horde of delinquents, and it is not like that: we are the people of Chile”.

The constant police repression was an issue both Alonso and Sofía considered as news reporters. Mostly assigned to Zona Cero, Alonso describes it as a “constant brawl” where “everything else around it had to leave”, recalling routinely stopping his work upon police repression, and regrouping closer to La Moneda. Sofía describes how she would often have to watch from balconies and rooftops, whenever protests turned too violent. She mentions witnessing rubber bullet injuries, a Carabineros vehicle running over a protestor, and the constant clash between the frontline and the police forces. The instability would spread well outside this battlefield: “[When I reported during the evenings] I saw how many citizens would put on yellow vests and go out with bats, shovels, or any blunt weapon, to defend their properties from possible looters”. While attending, Agustín witnessed how Carabineros enclosed a group of protestors, who could only escape by diving into the Mapocho river.

The grimmer sides of placemaking through conflict should not be ignored. Once protestor numbers declined, Agustín describes how the Plaza decays into “no man’s land”: “much more people selling things, drinking alcohol, and a lot of trash. The parks around were slowly taken by the homeless, (...) charging a sort of access toll”. Sofía mentions how the insecurity of looting and vandalism from nightfall, provoked by “hooded” people, stains this protest, while adding “it is also heavy to know that the authorities do nothing about it”.

In the end, Plaza Dignidad is defined by both joy and confront, much like a singular form of the “cry and demand” over the city. It is the place for popular politics from which all of Santiago regains its political dimension. Alonso compares the lingering meaning of the Plaza to a sort of Waterloo, or Normandy. “Today, passing by [the Plaza] has a meaning for everyone who has been there – rich and poor. (...) All of us who go through there, we

have the emotional connection with the largest historical successes in the last 20 years; like the Tahrir Square in Cairo, I suppose. No one walks by without deriving some political symbolism of our country”. Agustín calls it the new “place of social revolt, the space of protest by definition”, and finishes by saying: “if Plaza Italia was the limit between the elite and the people, it is now the point where the great majority have the right to congregate, and to demand their participation in the country’s decisions”.

5.6. Stalemate: The COVID-19 pandemic

The true potential of the changes the E.S. brings is unfortunately hindered by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, starting with public health measures on March 13th. The initial limitation of public events to 500 people (El Desconcierto, 2020f) would be amended to 200 people within two days (T13, 2020c), along with initial lockdown, curfew, and entry control measures in seven communes (Lo Barnechea, Vitacura, Las Condes, Providencia, Ñuñoa, Santiago, Independencia) from 22h of Friday, March 26, at the behest of local leaders (González, 2020).

Critical attention is still necessary at this point. The E.S. had lost little of its grasp over the city by then, and the political credibility of President Piñera had taken a serious toll given the severity of repression measures. The risk that Piñera would weaponize these sanitary measures to regain control over the protests was highlighted by the opposition senator Alejandro Navarro (El Desconcierto, 2020g), something the explicitly localized lockdowns (first encompassing the Zona Cero and the Northeast) seem to confirm. It is unlikely that these neighborhoods, particularly the Oriente, were more propense to transmission than the rest of the city, especially when considering their larger resources (within the previously discussed Chilean health system, where quality access requires wealth) and lower population density. I argue the dichotomy of center and periphery is weaponized one last time – the center is captured and isolated, and the vast majority becomes physically excluded from the opportunities of the city.

7. Conclusion

In this analysis, I examined how the conflict between protestors and authorities in the Estallido Social both reshapes urban space in Santiago and is shaped by the latter's preexisting characteristics. I depart from an understanding of the "urban" as a form, characterized by centrality and mediation. I establish Santiago's urban space as a strategic element of the country's top-down neoliberal reform, while also site and object of urban social movements in Chile. From this, I analyze the spatial features and lived experiences that characterize the conflict.

The conclusions this research takes can be summarized as follows. The dynamics of occupying public space varied radically between center and periphery. The wealthier and most central communes (save for Santiago Central) mostly managed to escape conflict. Urban space was only transitorily occupied by protestors, and any demands voiced there were largely those of a select elite. In contrast, the periphery suffered disproportionately from this social turmoil. While not a major stage for demonstrations, the authorities use its peripheral statute to push it further into the periphery, through uneven measures of repression and intimidation. The right to the city is a legitimate demand throughout, as the urban working class is deprived of the city's opportunities, center or periphery alike.

Urban space was produced and reproduced through conflict in several ways. Protestors capitalized on the possibilities of the urban by creating and replicating *cabildos* in countless public spaces. The city's centrality feature was captured through a *campamento* strategy which created a distinctive political place in the center. Santiago's civic center of before morphed into the Zona Cero, where previous forms of symbolism became a target of contention. The epicenter of Santiago's urban space under turmoil became the Plaza Dignidad, drawing on its location as a node and border between classes, and extensive modifications of its built environment. Its main creation is that of a place of protest, characterized by a de-commodified community, in constant tension between the joy of regaining political space and violent conflict with authorities.

Some limitations of this analysis should be mentioned. Drawing extensively from news sources limits my information to what is written about the Estallido Social. By definition, this leaves out the countless smaller events and patterns that are not reported, and that could shed further light on my observations. Considering the extensive role of social media (particularly Twitter) in conducting the protests and reproducing meaning, the role

of online space could also be examined in detail. Further research on the social production of space through protest could work around these limitations by including fieldwork as a methodology, and through incorporating online spaces, perhaps through forms of *netnography* or aggregate data analysis.

The Estallido Social is itself limited as a case for study, as its dynamics have been stifled halfway by the offset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which even resulted in different protests around how it was managed (Montes, 2020). In a sense, the Estallido Social is still ongoing; the new constitution will only be up for votes in 2022 (Armaza, 2020). This still requires continuous attention – as Salvador Allende himself (1973) says in his last words, “sooner rather than later, the great avenues will open again, and free men will walk through them to construct a better society”.

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Appendixes

Interview guide I

Date: Friday, 8 May 2021

Time: 10:00 Chile Standard Time – 16:00 Central European Standard Time

Duration: ~40minutes

Location: Online, Zoom platform

Interviewee: Carlos (pseudonymized name)

In preparation for the interview:

- I provide a review of who I am as researcher, what my research concerns, and the purpose of this interview in relation to the above
- I revisit any privacy issues left unaddressed after initial contact, if any
- I ensure I have the interviewee's consent to record the interview

Positionality, role as part of subject:

1. How would you characterize your participation in the Estallido Social?
 - a. Would you consider yourself as witness or active participant of the protests?
 - b. If you did participate, did you do so on an individual or collective (sectorial) level?
 - c. Were you involved in occupations of public space, marches, or *cacerolazos*? If so, under which circumstances?

Spatial choices:

2. If you did participate, which moment do you consider “key” in taking you to the streets, should there be one?
3. In which locations (or occasions) have you chosen to participate in/attend the Estallido Social?
 - a. Why have you chosen these, and not others?

Lived experience, and creation of meaning, in Plaza Dignidad:

4. On a personal level, what meanings or symbolism do you associate with the “old” Plaza Italia, prior to all the protests?
 - a. What did this Plaza mean to your lived experience in Santiago, before October 2019?
 - b. What importance or use would you attribute to it, on a daily basis?
5. Regarding your own choreographed intervention in the Plaza, how and why did you decide to intervene through choreography?
 - a. How did you coordinate this intervention, and with who?
 - b. Why did you select Plaza Dignidad as a location for this intervention, and not any other location (e.g., the La Moneda palace)?
 - c. How did the public react to, and interact with, your intervention?
 - d. How did the authorities react to, and interact with, your intervention?

6. Based on your own experience, how do you describe the people that you have encountered while occupying Plaza Dignidad, during your intervention or otherwise?
 - a. Based on your observations, what common factors do you believe held it together?
7. After all this time, what lingering meaning does Plaza Dignidad hold for you?

Interview guide II

Date: Sunday, 10 May 2021

Time: 12:00 Chilean Standard Time – 18:00 Central European Summer Time

Location: Online, Zoom platform

Duration: ~35 minutes

Interviewee: Alonso (pseudonymized name)

In preparation for the interview:

- I provide a review of who I am as researcher, what my research concerns, and the purpose of this interview in relation to the above
- I revisit any privacy issues left unaddressed after initial contact, if any
- I ensure I have the interviewee's consent to record the interview

Positionality, role as part of subject:

1. How would you characterize your role in the Estallido Social?
 - a. Were you an exclusive reporter of events?
 - b. Did you also participate in the protests (e.g., in occupations of public space, marches, *cacerolazos*)? If so, under which circumstances?

Spatial choices:

2. In which locations (or occasions) have you chosen to participate in/attend the Estallido Social?
 - a. Why have you chosen these, and not others?

Lived experience in the Estallido Social:

3. Personally, which moment do you consider “key” in taking Santiago to the streets, should there be one?
4. In which locations (i.e., communes) within Santiago have you reported the protests?
 - a. What do you consider made them important to be reported?
 - b. Based on your perception and experience, what were the key difference you found between locations, for example in terms of who the protestors were, or how police repression was conducted?
5. Which elements of the protests have you prioritized during your time as reporter?
6. Using examples, which were the most significantly positive and negative experiences that you keep from your time reporting on the Estallido Social?

Creation of meaning in Plaza Dignidad:

7. On a personal level, what meanings or symbolism do you associate with the “old” Plaza Italia, prior to all the protests?
 - a. What did this Plaza mean to your lived experience in Santiago, before October 2019?

- b.** What importance or use would you attribute to it, on a daily basis?
- 8.** What distinctive characteristics would you often find in Plaza Dignidad throughout the duration of protests?
 - a.** In comparison with the rest of the city, what made Plaza Dignidad “unique”?
- 9.** How would you describe the “community” formed by protestors in Plaza Dignidad?
 - b.** How did you experience it?
 - c.** Based on your observations, what common factors do you believe held it together?
- 10.** After all this time, what lingering meaning does Plaza Dignidad hold for you?

Interview guide III

Date questions were sent: Thursday, 13 May 2021

Date answers were received: Monday, 24 May 2021

Location: Online, e-mail

Interviewee: Agustín (pseudonymized name)

In preparation for the interview:

- I provide a review of who I am as researcher, what my research concerns, and the purpose of this interview in relation to the above
- I revisit any privacy issues left unaddressed after initial contact, if any
- I reiterate that the interview structure is not fixed, and that the interviewee can add or remove topics of conversation at their own will
- I offer the interviewee the choice to respond through text or recording, depending on their consent and convenience

Positionality, role as part of subject:

1. How would you characterize your participation in the Estallido Social?
 - a. Would you consider yourself as witness or active participant of the protests?
 - b. If you did participate, did you do so on an individual or collective (sectorial) level?
 - c. Were you involved in occupations of public space, marches, or *cacerolazos*? If so, under which circumstances?

Spatial choices:

2. If you have participated, which moment do you consider “key” in taking you to the streets, should there be one?
3. In which locations (or occasions) have you chosen to participate in/attend the Estallido Social?
 - a. Why have you chosen these, and not others?
4. Based on your perception and experience, what differentiates between the protests in the center of Santiago from those in its periphery?

Creation of meaning in Plaza Dignidad:

5. On a personal level, what meanings or symbolism do you associate with the “old” Plaza Italia, prior to all the protests?
 - a. What did this Plaza mean to your lived experience in Santiago, before October 2019?
 - b. What importance or use would you attribute to it, on a daily basis?
6. Using examples, which were the most significant experiences, both positive and negative, that you keep from your time in the Plaza?
7. How would you describe the ambience of Plaza Dignidad during the protests?
 - a. What makes the Plaza distinctive during this time?
8. How would you describe the “community” formed by protestors in Plaza Dignidad?

- a.** How did you experience it?
 - b.** Based on your observations, what common factors do you believe held it together?
 - c.** From your experience, did the protestors and authorities use and alter the built environment to their own favor? If so, how?
- 9.** After all this time, what lingering meaning does Plaza Dignidad hold for you?

Interview guide IV

Date questions were sent: Sunday, May 20 2021

Date answers were received: Wednesday, June 9 2021

Location: Online, e-mail

Interviewee: Sofía (pseudonymized name)

In preparation for the interview:

- I provide a review of who I am as researcher, what my research concerns, and the purpose of this interview in relation to the above
- I revisit any privacy issues left unaddressed after initial contact, if any
- I reiterate that the interview structure is not fixed, and that the interviewee can add or remove topics of conversation at their own will
- I offer the interviewee the choice to respond through text or recording, depending on their consent and convenience

Positionality, role as part of subject:

1. How would you characterize your role in the Estallido Social?
 - a. Were you an exclusive reporter of events?
 - b. Did you also participate in the protests (e.g., in occupations of public space, marches, *cacerolazos*)? If so, under which circumstances?

Spatial choices:

2. If you have participated, which moment do you consider “key” in taking you to the streets?
 - a. Which locations have you chosen to do so?
 - b. Why have you chosen those, and not others?
3. In which locations, and occasions, have you reported on the protests?
 - a. What do you believe has made them important to be reported?

Lived experience in the Estallido Social:

4. Have you reported events in both center and periphery of Santiago?
 - a. If so, based on your experiences, which differences, if any, would you highlight between protests in center and periphery?
5. Which elements of the protests, or narratives, have you prioritized portraying in your work?
6. Using examples, which were the most positive and negative experiences that you keep from your time reporting the Estallido Social?

Creation of meaning in Plaza Dignidad:

7. On a personal level, what meanings or symbolism do you associate with the “old” Plaza Italia, prior to all the protests?
 - a. What did this Plaza mean to your lived experience in Santiago, before October 2019?

- b.** What importance or use would you attribute to it, on a daily basis?
- 8.** What distinctive characteristics would you often find in Plaza Dignidad throughout the duration of protests?
 - b.** In comparison with the rest of the city, what made Plaza Dignidad “unique”?
- 9.** How would you describe the “community” formed by protestors in Plaza Dignidad?
 - d.** How did you experience it?
 - e.** Based on your observations, what common factors do you believe held it together?
- 10.** After all this time, what lingering meaning does Plaza Dignidad hold for you?