

Santiago and the Dictator

How Augusto Pinochet's 17-year Reign shifted the Development of Santiago de Chile

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Introduction

Just how much can political extremism affect the development of a city? There is no better place to study this than in Santiago de Chile. This city, Chile's Capital, has been central to some of Latin America's most interesting political history of the 20th century. It was the epicentre of a vicious 1973 Coup D'état which overthrew the world's first democratically elected Marxist. This coup led to a startling 17-year national dictatorship that has forever changed the country and, just as remarkably, Santiago as a city. The dictator Augusto Pinochet had a conservative agenda in lieu of the ongoing Chilean Cold War. He oversaw the enactment of various neo-liberal economic policies encouraging foreign trade, privatization, urban cleanliness, and other policies that would typically please the Chilean political right. Pinochet's actions have been heavily criticized by many western countries, including the UK and Spain, who together had him arrested in May 2000 for human rights violations that took place during his regime. On the contrary, Pinochet's actions have been praised by Chile's conservative population, as well as by notable economist Milton Friedman, who credited Pinochet for Chile's rich economy today. This radical polarization, one can imagine, has been ongoing in the streets of Santiago from Pinochet's first moments in power. With ongoing competing views on whether Pinochet was good for Chile as a whole, the footprint of his Regime on Santiago as a city has yet to be critically analyzed. My research on his regime extrapolates Pinochet's urban influence from various academic studies that cover his decisions, policies, notable events, and personal life. What I discovered was that Pinochet's decision-making led three major facets of Santiago's development: a) Santiago's housing geography is economically uneven, b) Santiago's urban space reflects neoliberalism and modernity, and c) Santiago's people are socially divided. His power in essence remains

present in the city as a vivid memory. Santiago de Chile's timeline from 1973 until 1989 was one of powerful stories, immense emotion, and rapid change. This paper will start by outlining the historical events just before Pinochet's regime, to explain the political tensions of Chile at the time. The relationship between Pinochet's governance and the city of Santiago from 1973 to 1990 will then be chronologically analyzed and discussed. Neo-liberalism as an influencer of urban development will be discussed, with Santiago and Pinochet as the case study- reflecting on modernity, uneven development, and social inequality.

1970-1973: Allende Regime, Political Tensions

This section will provide background knowledge of Santiago's urban issues before 1973, as they related to national politics.

Annexed by the hostilities of the ongoing international Cold War, Chile and subsequently Santiago, saw decades of unrest in the mid to late 20th century. This unrest, fueled by polar politics, would not seemingly be enough to disrupt Chile's pristinely kept robust democracy – yet *somehow* it did. The political issues that mattered most during these years, many of them urban issues in the capital, pressed for a 1970 election that famously marked the beginning of an unforgettable era in Chilean politics. An analysis of 1970-1973, which were the three years before dictator Augusto Pinochet came to power, is vitally important for us to understand why the Pinochet regime lasted 17 long years, and how influential his reign was over Santiago de Chile.

1970, tensions arose throughout the streets of Santiago de Chile. Fear of the visionary Marxist candidate Salvador Allende coming to power echoed in conversations across dinner tables. Rumours that he was an acquaintance of and ideologically similar to Fidel

Castro brought frantic worry due to Cuba's unsuccessful story. Allende however, a visionary driven by the pursuit of ubiquitous social equality throughout his beloved country, painted a vision for the nation. One where the ongoing problems of foreign ownership, colonial disfavoured staple trade, and economic failures happening across Latin America, would be solved in Chile with socialism.

Urban issues were at the forefront of this election; this city was and remains today as the most politically influenced Chilean Region. The previous president Edmund Frei was struggling with housing, transportation and urban sprawl. Allende being a likely stopping force to Frei's 8-year reign, naturally appealed to working class urban voters across Santiago. Allende provided an answer to the lackluster urban policies that were not in favour of the working and lower classes¹. The Allende campaign's rising popularity during the first half of 1970 caught US President Richard Nixon's attention. In lieu of Cold War efforts made internationally by the United States, Nixon and the CIA privately worked on an \$8 million+ USD project to ensure socialism was kept out of Chile. Political scientist Jaechun Kim calls it a *Covert War*; it was meant to protect US elitist national interests². Yet, even with the USA as an opposing force to Allende pulled through and won the 1970 election³.

This entire story matters greatly to Santiago for a number of reasons, the most notable being the community organizations that arose in the lower income brackets. These ongoing tensions in Chile during 1970 constituted the types of communities that were formed in Santiago. Up to 800,000 Santiago citizens participated in community

¹ Pyle, "Chile: 1970-1973", *New Blackfriars* v. 54 no. 643 (1973), 534.

² J. Kim, "Democratic Peace and Covert War", *Journal of International and Area Studies* v. 12 (2005), 45.

³ Perez, "Becoming Political Subjects in the City's Peripheries", *UC Berkeley* (2016), 3.

organization efforts that were primarily anti Edmund Frei- consisting of young, educated, left leaning individuals, some living in *Campamentos*⁴ (squatting), that were seeking “radical change”⁵. Allende’s political promises began a movement of direct action in Santiago, known as the *movimiento de pobladores*⁶. The *pobladores* had been around since the late 1800s, but during Allende’s regime, they grew into an even more influential, politically demanding urban voice⁷. This unified a large portion of the city politically. Now with Allende in power, the poor and working class were ready. They looked forward to adequate work, housing, and social services in Santiago⁸.

1970-1973 marks the three brutal years of Salvador Allende’s reign, who failed to create social equality among the people of Chile and Santiago. Although his first moments seemed mostly positive, things began to decline⁹. The major problems that Allende faced during his presidency were not only detrimental to his political stature and promise- but to the country of Chile and her capital. These problems were:

- i) Allende’s desire in 1970-71 to nationalize the country, including the US owned copper-mines that made up 80% of Chile’s industrial sector, led to major trade disputes¹⁰ and global market pressure¹¹.

⁴ Vicente Espinoza, “Historia social de la acción colectiva urbana”, *EURE*, v. 24 no. 72 (1998), Sec I.

⁵ Ibid, Sec IV.

⁶ Perez, “Becoming Political Subjects in the City’s Peripheries”, *UC Berkeley* (2016), 25.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Pyle, “Chile: 1970-1973”, *New Blackfriars* v. 54 no. 643 (1973), 534.

⁹ Ibid 534, 537.

¹⁰ Ibid, 535-536.

¹¹ Murphy, “For a Proper Home”, (Pittsburgh University Press, 2014), 103, 105.

- ii) The CIA's overt and covert operations in Chile's different levels of government, from 1970-1973, prevented Allende from actualizing the true power of his presidency¹².
- iii) Chile was low on money during this period¹³. Expectedly, those who supported Allende were looking for immediate access to the fruits of socialism- equitable housing being at the front of their concerns. Allende's urban planners, although keen on solving the housing challenge, did not have capital to work with¹⁴.

1973 was a famous year. These three problems, had created more unrest in Santiago than in 1970. As a result of these factors and others, the people had lost trust in Allende and socialism. The conditions for a Coup D'état were met in 1973, with newly appointed military General Augusto Pinochet in the seat of command. On September 11th, 1973¹⁵, Salvador Allende took his own life just moments after the Chilean air force bombed *La Moneda* (Chile's presidential building, where Allende was). This meant the end of socialism, Allende, and democracy in Chile. General Augusto Pinochet sat in the presidential seat for the next 17 years.

1973-1990: Augusto Pinochet

With Salvador Allende gone, economic and urban changes began under Pinochet's command. The following tables show the major policies, reforms, and events during Augusto Pinochet's regime that effected Santiago de Chile both directly and indirectly. The tables are a chronological organization of content that will be the main points of

¹² K.C. Gustafson, "CIA Machinations in Chile in 1970", *CSI Publications* (2002), 11.

¹³ Murphy, "For a Proper Home", (Pittsburgh University Press, 2014), 104-106.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 105.

¹⁵ T. Harmer, "The Rules of the Game", (London School of Economics, 2008), 169.

discussion for the rest of the paper. Also, they provide an easy to read overview of Pinochet's urban related decisions for anyone interested in this particular subject.

Table 1 - Housing

1976 'Confraternidad I'	Pinochet planned to relocate 15,000 low-income residents out of the high-income sectors into the outer slums of Santiago. In 1976 he moved some of them, and later in part II he moved the remainder ¹⁶ .
1976 National Urban Development Policy (UDP)	This originally was set to restrict the urban borders to a small geographic framework. Over 11 years, Pinochet violently segregated Santiago's marginalized groups through housing relocations with this framework as the excuse. The <i>campamentos</i> and <i>pobladores</i> that I discussed earlier, were intentionally disorganized and displaced to avoid the spatial unification of collective actions ¹⁷ .
1976, 1978 'Villa San Luis'	The Pinochet Administration during these 2 years, eradicated the <i>Villa San Luis</i> social housing project that housed 1,038 working class families. The land was unlawfully taken by 'National Assets', later to be sold after Pinochet's regime by the government, to a US realtor for USD \$89 million who recently built the most expensive Chilean project to this day, on said land. ¹⁸
1979 'Erradicaciones'	A de-slumification program running until 1985, similar to <i>Confraternidad</i> , this time involving 30,000 squatters in high-value neighbourhoods ¹⁹ .
1981 'Confraternidad II'	The rest of the 15,000 were relocated.
1981 "Decentralization Law" ²⁰	Pinochet's administration created 16 new municipalities within Santiago to decentralize and reinforce class separation, while categorizing neighbourhoods into 3 levels based on socio-economic factors ²¹ .
1983 METRO	Strongly knit communities that formed during the Allende tensions rapidly grew and formed a housing federation to help protect the <i>pobladores</i> ²² .

¹⁶ Matias Garreton, "Ch 3" in *Neoliberalism and Urban Development in Latin America* (Routledge 2018), 43

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 45.

¹⁹ Miguel A. Perez, "Becoming Political Subjects in the City's Peripheries" *UC Berkeley* (2016), 35-36.

²⁰ Murphy, "For a Proper Home", (Pittsburgh University Press, 2014), 168.

²¹ Ibid, 168.

²² Miguel A. Perez, "Becoming Political Subjects in the City's Peripheries" *UC Berkeley* (2016), 37.

Table 2 - Urban Issues and Notable Events

1979 Memorandum	Pinochet sought urban renewal in the <i>Alameda</i> ²³ to clean up what he thought was unclean, low-income, misleading and overall not welcoming for visitors to the city ²⁴ .
1979 Decree No. 420	This decree ended the section of the Urban Development Policy (UDP) of 1976 that contained Santiago's urban zone. From here on, Pinochet encouraged the opposite: outwards urbanization. In this year he tripled the size of Santiago's urban land by adding 64,000 hectares of land available for urbanization ²⁵ .
1983 <i>Jornadas de Protesta Nacional</i>	A massive collective action against the Pinochet regime took place, consisting of the general public, students, <i>pobladores</i> , civil societies, human rights groups, and unions. They sought the termination of Pinochet and the reintroduction of democracy ²⁶ .

Discussion

Augusto Pinochet and his administration were relatively vicious with their housing policies when compared to other leaders in Chile. Table 1 shows the methods used by Pinochet to transform the city into his vision. One where the economic housing geographies were formed by homogenous sections. Divided and segregated based on class. Pinochet deliberately pushed the lower-income families into the outer peripheries. The National Urban Development Plan (UDP) originally sought to "maintain a strict control over urban expansion²⁷" which was their excuse to both annex and relocate poor the families. Pinochet's administration did a good job hiding the actual motives by saying it was to preserve agricultural lands²⁸. Three years later they contradicted this and opened urban expansion again. To anyone analyzing this contradiction over time, it

²³ The *Alameda* is Santiago's main Avenue that connects the airport to the city.

²⁴ Murphy, "For a Proper Home", (Pittsburgh University Press, 2014), 165.

²⁵ Fernando Kusnetzoff, "Urban and Housing Policies under Chile's Military Dictatorship", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 166.

²⁶ Miguel A. Perez, "Becoming Political Subjects in the City's Peripheries" *UC Berkeley* (2016), 37.

²⁷ The Pinochet Administration. Paraphrased in Fernando Kusnetzoff, "Urban and Housing Policies under Chile's Military Dictatorship", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 166.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

seems obvious that Pinochet intended to use the UDP to re-organize the city. This in turn weakened the working and lower classes and prepared the city for later neoliberal redevelopment.

In this paragraph I will discuss why Augusto Pinochet was so determined to weaken the lower class and how he was effective in doing so. Pinochet had two goals as president: the first was to serve his people by revitalizing the Chilean economy and the second was to remain as president and eliminate socialism. Pinochet tried to revitalize the economy by allowing apprentices of Milton Friedman to enact reforms throughout Chile, and advise him economically²⁹. The apprentices are famously known as “The Chicago Boys”³⁰ and played a large role in shaping Chile’s economy. Augusto Pinochet was an expert military general - not an economist. He didn’t know how to fix the country and sought advice from the Chicago Boys, who preached neoliberal values of privatization. Along with this, another ongoing motive was happening at the time. That is, Allende’s prior regime had unified *pobladores* and the working class which was a large threat to Pinochet’s seat of power. Anything to increase privatization in the city and keep his position of power would directly serve his major presidential goals aforementioned. For these reasons, Pinochet weakened the middle class with housing relocations and the separation of lower classes much like in the Decentralization Law of 1981, where he separated people based on class, into 16 smaller municipalities. Furthermore, in 1985 Pinochet separated those 16 into smaller municipalities for a total of 34³¹. This is one example of how Pinochet geographically pulled apart communities and dispersed them

²⁹ F.V. Perucich, “Ch 2” in *Neoliberalism and Urban Development in Latin America* (Routledge 2018), 23-24

³⁰ Kusnetzoff, Fernando, “Urban and Housing Policies under Chile's Military Dictatorship: 1973-1985”, *Latin American Perspectives* v. 14 no.2, 159.

³¹ Miguel A. Perez, “Becoming Political Subjects in the City’s Peripheries” *UC Berkeley* (2016), 39.

as a means to weaken their political voice; thus strengthening his regime and weakening the left. Table 1 goes into more detail on this. Fernandez and colleagues from Arizona State University concluded in their extensive statistical geospatial analysis on modern Santiago “Breaking Resilient Patterns of Inequality in Santiago de Chile” (Fernández, Manuel-Navarrete and Torres-Salinas 2016) that the spatial segregation efforts play a role in the patterns of inequality of the city today. Pinochet changed the direction of urban growth and housing for Santiago. Murphy Edward argues in his book *For a Proper Home*³², that Pinochet’s regime was not only fundamental in helping form what Santiago is today, but also paved the way for post-Pinochet governments to make drastic changes to the city - like the *Villa San Luis* project listed in Table 1.



Edward Murphy, “For a Proper Home” (2018)

Figure 1 shows a present day photograph of an area in Santiago that was once a *campamento*, home to some of Santiago’s *pobladores* that were relocated by Pinochet.

³² Murphy, “For a Proper Home”, (Pittsburgh University Press, 2014), 219-235.

Modernity and Neoliberalism in Santiago

“The Landscape of Santiago shows a scenographic urban setting of neo-liberal space.” – Francisco Vergara Peruchich, 2018³³

The Chicago Boys were neoliberalists under Friedman’s influence - but how did this affect Santiago? With Pinochet being strongly influenced by Friedman’s ideology, he learned to value privatization. This led to a change in how the city managed their land use. In 1979, as noted in Table 2, he tripled the size of urban land thus unlocking more of the city to privatization. Augusto Pinochet did not build any parks, social services, plazas or public space like the presidents before and after. No. In his 17-years reign he stuck to privatizing urban land, economic reforms, cleaning up what he saw as dirty, and de-slumifying. He turned Santiago into what scholar F.V. Perucich calls “Milton Friedman’s Neoliberal Urban Utopia”³⁴. This was all in part of his desire to both modernize Santiago, and create a neoliberal space in the city. A neoliberal space would allow the functions of neoliberal economic activities. Friedman believes this should be free of government influence, hence the mass programs of land privatization that occurred.

Modernity was a keystone for Pinochet’s changes in Santiago. He tried at every moment to make the city *look* appealing and new. I myself have traveled Latin America and noticed that the city of Santiago was outstandingly clean compared to other Latin American cities. In my research I discovered that this was largely due to Pinochet’s efforts. In “Manufacturing Modernity”, the scholars from UBC argue that when in the late 1970s Pinochet revolutionized the practice of janitors and idealized the science of cleanliness in urban Chile – it propelled Santiago in a more modern and neoliberal

³³ F.V. Perucich, “Ch 2” in *Neoliberalism and Urban Development in Latin America* (Routledge 2018), 43

³⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

space³⁵. Pinochet also privatized public janitor services which was typical of him. In Table 2 is listed the clean up of *alameda*, Santiago's iconic street. This kind of activity is perfectly reflective of Pinochet's desire to recreate Santiago into a modern North American city – this notion was later to be infamously called 'Sanhattan'. Pinochet neglected the city's needs and propelled it into his modern vision. By doing so, he heightened inner-city marginalization, socially divided the people, and disrupted a natural budding of Santiago. The city became a place for Pinochet to look proudly upon, because at the front and center, everything looked orderly. Yet, in the outskirts of Santiago were the displaced *pobladores*, families living in poverty that hadn't been considered by Pinochet's administration. The 17-year dictatorship brought distrust to the groups that would never see benefit, and political coalitions began to reform. Eventually, in the year of 1990, due to pressure from the *Jornadas de Protesta Nacional* as described in Table 2, Augusto Pinochet had to call for a referendum ... he lost. He agreed to an election and a re-establishment of democracy marking the end of the Pinochet regime.

Conclusion

From the visionary Salvador Allende that never got a real chance to demonstrate his vision, to the stern Augusto Pinochet that sought to modernize Chile, Santiago was central to it all. Allende was an important regime to study due to his radical unification of people on the left and the urban poor. This time period was one that signified how greatly influential national politics had become in the capital's population geography. The Coup put Chile's politics on a global map, and attracted Milton Friedman who saw

³⁵ P. Tomic, R. Trumper, R. Dattwyler, "Manufacturing Modernity", *Antipode* v. 38, no. 3 (2006), 9.

Santiago as an opportunity for his neoliberal ideologies. Thus, with Pinochet in power, the city began to develop in neoliberal fashion. Capital and privatization were at the forefront of concerns; lower class citizens and social problems were slid under the rug. This led to Santiago becoming what people today call a 'Modern Miracle'. – Santiago being a clean, modernized city amongst a continent of dirty, developing nations. The story described in this paper looks at not just the miracle, but the turmoil of this timeline. This paper started off by discussing the tensions in Santiago that were stirring during Allende's time of power which were absolutely vital for the conditions of Pinochet. Then we looked at Pinochet and how he developed Santiago's neoliberal modernistic urbanity. This paper ties together books, journals, articles and stories to argue that Pinochet's regime in Chile from 1973 to 1990 was one that forever changed the discourse of Santiago. Where the actions of Augusto Pinochet, and the actions of his opposition, are etched into the streets of Santiago like veins – forever to be remembered. Not only by the resilient citizens of Santiago de Chile, but by the infrastructure guiding them through the urban experience.

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