**Yvonne J Rydin**

00:21 Hello, my name is Yvonne Ryden and I'm a Professor in The Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. Welcome to the BSP podcast in which we profile the research that is taking place within the school. This autumn, we are showcasing the work of our vibrant research student community and today I'm talking with Cristobal Diaz Martinez, who has just started his second year of doctoral studies. Welcome Cristobal.

**Cristobal**

00:42 I'm pleased to be part of this BSP podcast series so thanks for having me.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

00:47 Glad to have you talking to us. Your research is about housing in Chile and in particular about the impact of a housing voucher scheme in two cities in Chile, can you start by describing the housing situation in Chile for us?

**CristobaL**

01:02 Of course. Well, long story short, since the last financial crisis that began in 2008 there has been an increasing number of families resorting to informal housing strategies as they cannot access the formal market.

01:17 On the one hand, self-build settlements, known as campamentos have appeared in the outskirts but also very central areas of our cities. On the other hand, co-residence practices, formerly known as allegamiento or overcrowding have presence in very central but also peripheral districts.

01:37 Campamentos and Co-residence are the two main informal housing strategies that have skyrocketed in the last 10 years, both in Valparaiso and Santiago, the two main metropolitan areas of the country and also border regions in central Chile. This short story leads me to the analysis of recent housing policies: rental subsidies and ownership subsidies based on relocation and social integration residential projects.

01:56 The effectiveness of these two voucher-type subsidies materialised in accessing housing and location is one of the goals of my research.But the long story I'm interested in is linked to processes of segregation encouraged by the state as a historical feature of the urban development in Chile.

02:16 Marginalisation in our cities has intensified due to the increasing amount of families outside the formal job market, due to land-market speculation and institutional effects of the State on the territory (including here, among others, the effectiveness of policies such as housing subsidies). Due to land market speculation and institutional effects of the state on the territory, including here, among others, the effectiveness of policies such as housing subsidies.

02:45 My study aims to compare segregation, informality and the implementation of housing policies in the two aforementioned cities. Factors such as political history, social inequality, the development of informal economies and even topography, are necessary to understand how Santiago and Valparaiso express similarities but also relevant differences in their segregation patterns.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

03:11That's very clear. And it'd be interesting to know how this relates to the very specific political context in Chile.

**Cristobal**

03:22 Well, Chile, as the cradle of the neoliberal stage of capitalism, experiences a liberalization of rural and urban land and a substantial reduction of the public production of housing, in favor of private initiatives (aka public-private associations).

03:39 This scheme developed in the 1980s, under the dictatorship, was maintained and reinforced by the democratic governments since 1990, and the resulting location and quality of social housing, even though being successful in covering the housing unit’s shortage, intensified spatial inequalities among social classes.

03:47 Santiago and Valparaiso have broadened their urban limits through a diversity of residential projects: gated-communities and suburban country houses for middle- and high-income families.

04:02 On the other hand, social housing is produced on peripheral urban or straight on rural land, with scarce services and connectivity. Campamentos and other informal occupation appear in the outskirts and recently in the pericentre. Co-residence is seen in pericentral areas as location is one of the assets to pursue, being both carried out by low-income families. Nevertheless, and according to recent reports of Chilean NGOs working on housing, there are now more low-middle class families resorting to informal housing strategies, for the first time in the residential trajectory of their lives.

04:45 The Ministry of Housing started changing the focus of their policies, among other factors, because of the recommendations of the OECD after the inclusion of Chile in the organization in 2010. The new housing subsidies (rental and ownership) were developed in order to address the housing shortage, relocate families from deteriorated social housing units, and diminish the growing number of informal housing strategies.

05:12 One of my goals is to unveil the extent to which these *voucher* subsidies promote residential mobility and desegregation, as it has been assumed by public and private actors that housing informality and segregation are relevant problems to tackle.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

05:29 Several times you've mentioned the word segregation or desegregation. Obviously it has a general meaning, but I think it also has a more specific meaning within your research. Can you just explain how you understand the term segregation?

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**CristobaL**

05:44 Yes, sure. Well, segregation is understood not only as the spatial but also the social distance between human groups. The previous means the lack of interaction among social groups that come from different sources. First, class stratification, which origins socioeconomic segregation. Second, spatial location that produces residential segregation and third, race or ethnicity that produces ethno-racial segregation.

05:52 The previous three in the mentioned order are the most relevant sources of segregation for the Chilean context. For the specific purposes of my research, I will work on residential segregation, which is understood as the uneven distribution of different social groups across residential neighborhoods of an urban region. This definition adapted from Tammaru and other authors in 2019, shares the vision about the relevance of income inequality and uneven distribution of income between people and households, as determinants of segregation between socioeconomic groups.

06:46 Here, the labour market and the housing market are the structural forces that drive inequality. However, families’ residential mobility and trajectories may be challenging these forces by their informal housing practices, so segregation is understood as a dialectic phenomenon.

07:10 It’s interesting thing to observe that there may be adaptation or resistance to a structural marginalisation. Probably as a consequence of the impossibility of using the subsidies in the formal housing market, due to lack of offer, inflation or other economic and legal barriers. Other families may refuse the subsidies or even develop auto segregation practices, in order to preserve social networks, as it is happening with migrant communities.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

07:41 Your principal supervisor is Sonia Arbaci and we had an earlier podcast in which Sonia talked about her book on Southern European housing and segregation. How does your work relate to Sonia’s?

**CristobaL**

07:57 Sonia Arbaci’s work is part of European recent scholars that addresses segregation as a multiscale phenomenon, in a complex relationship with inequality. It has been traditionally understood that segregation is the spatial expression of inequality, but as the recent debate in housing and urban studies has posed, social and spatial dimensions of segregation are not always in a direct relation.

08:22 One of the main aspects of her book, “Paradoxes of segregation”, that I’m considering for my own study, is related to the multiscale analysis of segregation, the compared perspective and the need for contextual analysis.

08:37 Sonia Arbaci argues that segregation is not produced only or exclusively by inevitable global forces, individual choices and constraints or pure market logics. Then it is in the interplay of these forces that segregation takes particular shapes and dynamics in cities or countries. Her study challenge mainstream theories from northern Europe and the United States, and my research also looks for a contextualized analysis, and hopefully, theorization. By doing so, there are chances to find divergences in Chilean cities’ segregation dynamics, but also similarities that inform us about a possible Chilean segregation model. In the future, it may be interesting to test if this model or general features of segregation are also extended to the rest of the Latin American region.

09:32 Sonia Arbaci, but also Nicola Livingstone as 2nd supervisor, have been an amazing support and guidance to keep digging in theories and methods for a comprehensive study. As the United States literature understands segregation based on race and more recently on income, and Europe show a socioeconomic and ethnic-cultural segregation, we need to decolonize segregation studies in Latin America. The previous, for our historical trajectory and type of capitalist development may help to understand the difficult implementation of recent subsidies and the growing informality.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

10:11 So let's turn to some of the the detail of these housing policies, these housing voucher schemes. How are they supposed to work?

**CristobaL**

10:20 Well, one of these recent housing subsidies is directly inspired on the voucher scheme of the Department of Housing and Urban Development of the United States. The rental subsidy of 2014 in Chile is an adaptation of the Section 8 voucher (created in 1974 in the US), and in Chile was initially known as “Chao Suegra” which literally means “goodbye-mother in law”.

10:45 The intention was to give independence to young families from a situation of co-residence in which is assumed that the domestic rules are defined by the figure of an authoritarian or “annoying” mother-in-law.

11:00 Nevertheless, recent studies have demonstrated that co-residence relationships are more complicated than that, including support and mutual aid and not only dependence on the host family. The rental subsidy also aimed to improve residential location, through the assumption that families would look for central districts to live, but as I analysed on my master thesis, the high rent prices and the need to preserve social networks produce short residential trajectories and in many cases, a use of the subsidy within the same neighborhood.

11:38 The second of these voucher schemes is the subsidy of social and territorial integration of 2016. Here, notions of de-segregation are based on the concepts of geography of opportunities, neighborhood effects and similar, relevant in the north American segregation literature

11:56 The previous means that the Chilean Ministry of Housing assumes that spatial concentration of poverty is itself a problem, that can be solved by relocating poor families in better provided areas. Taking people to opportunities and not opportunities to people is one of the main critiques to the approach of this subsidy

12:17 The implementation has been problematic because most of the residential projects mix low-middle class with a small percentage of low-income families (so there is not a diverse range of socioeconomic groups). But the worst part is that the location (at least in Santiago) is still peripheral, and the promise of territorial integration is not fulfilled.

12:42 The Ministry of Housing has applied modifications to both subsidies, by raising the amount of the vouchers, broadening the scope of potential beneficiaries (attracting middle class families) and promoting better located housing projects. It’s in the effective colocation of subsidies (use and location of families) and the consecution of the declared objectives, that the effectiveness of these vouchers will be tested. The impact on families’ residential mobility and the (re)production of informal housing strategies will be the axis of the analysis.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

13:20 You’ve given us a terrific picture of the kind of details of your research and the specific schemes and specific context. But let's pan out now, you used the term dialectic earlier and I believe your research is framed by the idea of historical materialism or political economy. Can you say a little bit more about how that works in your project?

**CristobaL**

13:45 As an epistemological perspective, it means understanding the development of the material conditions of society in a historical trajectory, and their influence in the production of space. In fact, following Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and more recently the contributions of Chilean academics such as Javier Ruiz-Tagle or Matias Garreton, there is a focus on the denominated “socio-spatial dialectic”, not only as a perspective to understand the production of urban space, but also as a method to study urban society in light of their capitalist development.

14:24 Socio-spatial dialectics implies that spatial and social structures are mutually determining factors: while space is socially constructed (by antagonic forces), this has also certain degree of influence on the social relationships that it surrounds.

14:40 In this point is where segregation can be a result of institutional-market processes and also a phenomenon that influences social dynamics in cities. In these dynamics where communities generate social networking, social capital, belonging and so on, is where the production of space becomes valuable despite its informality, acquires value and it may become the raw material for grassroots housing movements, that fight for the right to the city. Paraphrasing the old Marx: “is not about interpreting the world anymore but changing it”, most considering the multiple-crisis world we live in.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

15:21 And how does that feed through to methodology because I think one of the challenges that almost all researchers face is how to make the link between a conceptual framework such as what you've outlined there and the methodology of what they do on the ground during field work. How are you approaching that?

**Cristobal**

15:38 Well, all that I’ve said before obliges me to develop a comprehensive historical analysis of both cities, considering that Chile, as many Latin American countries experienced an incomplete or peripheral development of capitalism. The so-called Chilean bourgeoisie of the 19th century has been described by historians as rentist, with short-term ambitions and lack of a national economic project. This peripheral capitalist economy was and is still sustained by its export sector, and could not overcome the difficulties that the mature capitalism demand from the productive forces: industrial development, proletarisation, the creation of an internal market, and so on.

16:28 The economic and political class considered the national resources as their own attribute, instead of as a good of social interest and reach, and they became big landowners, miners and merchants. This sui-generis bourgeoisie did not achieve industrialization and as they were also part of the political ruling class, they did not adopted liberalism to conduct democratic-bourgeois revolutions as in Europe.

17:01 In that context, during the 20th century Chile faced an urbanization without industrialization, which resulted in informality as a key factor to solve housing needs. Even during the period of the State efforts to build a welfare state, based on an import-substitution model of industrialisation (1939-1973), the urban growth was unmanageable.

17:30 In conclusion, my research will be structured on a first part that addresses the historical development of urban occupation, segregation and recent processes that shape the urban growth of both cities. A second part will analyse the recent housing subsidies and their relationship with the increasing informal housing strategies, as one of my hypotheses is that co-residence is more relevant in Santiago, and *campamentos* are more important in Valparaiso. Thus, my research is defined as a comparative contextual divergence study, highlighting the relevance of macro-developments (Market) and institutional (State) effects on the territory.

18:14 All the previous will allow to reach my main objective: to understand the role of housing policies and the housing system in the (re)production of residential segregation in Santiago and Valparaíso.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

18:28And for that you have hopeed to do some fieldwork. I was wondering how you are going to investigate your topic on the ground, particularly in the conditions of the current pandemic. How are you approaching that?

**Cristobal**

18:42 Well, I have been lucky so far for I haven’t experienced problems since I don't have the need to go to Chile, but I am expecting to be able to travel and conduct my fieldwork by mid-2021, a moment by which I assume the pandemic should be more controlled in Chile. Discourse analysis of stakeholders and the policies promoted by state institutions are tasks that I can do online, as well as information on the application of subsidies, location and residential trajectories, which involve quantitative methods, GIS and other tools. The Chilean state and other NGOs have reliable information and it is possible accessing to it.

19:24 Nevertheless, for the qualitative analysis of residential mobility, trajectories and expectations of families, it is crucial to step on the territory. Identifying support networks, social capital and other types of association from the co-produced urban space, are tasks that require getting in touch with families, and representatives of grassroots organisations. Individual or group conversations, interviews or forums demand my presence, so I hope not having problems next year. In any case, as a plan B, I am learning methods and techniques to collect experiences of the urban living without too much of my intervention, which is useful to guarantee the fidelity of the information and also as a backup plan in case 2021 brings new challenges that limit our mobility.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

20:26 I don't think we can leave a discussion around Chile without thinking about the current political situation. The crisis that there's been over the last few years resolved, perhaps, for now, by the recent referendum on rewriting the constitution. I'd be interested to know your view on this, and does it impact on your research?

**CristobaL**

20:47 Well, Chile woke up, says one of the main battle cries of the social uprising that began in October 2019. The 40-year period under the dictatorial constitution of 1980 has finished and the legacy of neoliberal policies and a diminished welfare in favor of a residual state is now in question. Only the social forces now visible in the political scene will confront each other and set the basis for a new type of social pact, political system and hopefully, a welfare state that put housing and the just city as a right. It’s a process that will take until around mid-2022, when the new constitution proposal has to be voted.

21:34My point of view about this process is have a D legitimize ruling class trying its best to avoid being surpassed by social organizations in citizens.

21:45 My point of view about this process is of a delegitimized ruling class trying its best to avoid being surpassed by social organisations and citizens. The movement has posed itself from the beginning as contrary to political parties, but the latter continue to try to get involved in the drafting of the constitution. How much they can control the process is relevant, as for the case of housing policies, one of the fundamental debates will be the property and the social function of land. As the 1980 Constitution exacerbates the individual private property, the discussion of different ways to manage urban land and producing housing will be an important battlefield. Whether the right to housing and the right to the city are explicitly declared in the Constitution is not a matter of life or death, as it is more important to define the type of welfare state and the minimum political guidelines for our institutions.

22:36 After the constitutional process, it will be an issue of the general law to consider informality as one of the main constituents of urban development and housing production in Chile. The previous would allow to institutionalise the formalisation and reconversion of informal settlements instead of eradicating them. These are challenging times and many voices are fighting to be heard. It is vital to give space to excluded movements, ideas and people that do not traditionally participate of the political arena.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

23:16 Finally, can you tell us a little bit about your experience of being a research student at UCL?

**CristobaL**

23:23 It has been amazing, though I was lucky to start in 2019 so I got to know most of the professors and colleagues face to face during the first 6 months, and well, in the last 8 months everything has been online. Either way, the possibilities of interacting and exchanging with professionals of different disciplines and latitudes is always a contribution to one’s work. Being open minded and willing to incorporate new resources and ideas is a must, for there are different ways to do research and promoting the social changes we need in times of growing inequalities. The different instances of support and guidance are very helpful to find our own way as independent researchers: supervision meetings, academic writing circles, seminars, research groups, and so on. These are only some of the many options to interact and update knowledge on theories, methods and research techniques.

24:30Finally, the collaboration between peers is now based on writing retreats and virtual meetings as new formats of collaboration, and there is a sense of community that is really appreciated within the Bartlett.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

24:46 I'm glad to hear that. Do you have any advice to anyone thinking of applying to a doctoral programme?

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**CristobaL**

24:53 Yeah, and it's based on my own experience, persistence, there is no such thing as natural talents or abilities in the academic world but work and patience, persistence and consistency to get a research done. Until before the pandemic it was a time of disposable immediacy, but the course of this year and in my case, this academic experience has taught me that important work to produce results goes on a slow cooking. The most relevant thing is having at least one professor or colleague guiding you, and if your topic is relevant, it only takes time to develop the skills to make a contribution on your subject.

25:41 Here, a final comment on the importance of failure, it may be a cliché but as it has been said on the world of football: success is an exception in life. We usually develop ourselves by struggling, failing and trying again. Only after making many efforts we may succeed a few times in life, but most of the learning is on that failure, and that’s what makes us strong, resilient and allows us to make the best out of our victories. Thanks for the invitation Yvonne.

**Yvonne J Rydin**

26:20 Thank you, Cristobal.

26:31 And you can see more of the work of our research student community in our virtual BSP Expo, which is available online. This is a virtual walkthrough of the posters of UCL and then amongst the work of our undergraduate and postgraduate students, you will find a PhD wall. Click on a tile on the wall and you will find details of one of our research student projects do try it out. You can find more details on the BSP website there. You will also find past episodes of the BSP podcast or you can search for The Bartlett Planning Podcast through the usual sites and search engines.

I will be back next month, talking to another of our talented research students. Goodbye and thank you for listening.