NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE ARRIVAL OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN TWO AREAS OF CONCEPCIÓN–CHILE

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CAMBIOS BARRIALES COMO CONSECUENCIA DE LA LLEGADA DE ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS EN DOS SECTORES DE CONCEPCIÓN–CHILE

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Abstract

This article analyzes and interprets the changes produced in the neighborhoods of Agüita de la Perdiz and Las Tres Pascualas (Concepción – Chile) as a consequence of the arrival of university students. While international studies have recently mentioned the importance of studentification as trigger of physical, social, economic and cultural effects in traditional residential neighborhoods, Latin-American contributions on this topic are still few. From these premises, this paper aims to analyze the phenomenon of studentification

Resumen

Este artículo analiza e interpreta los cambios producidos en los barrios de Agüita de la Perdiz y Las Pascualas (Concepción) como consecuencia de la llegada de estudiantes universitarios. Pese a que estudios internacionales recientemente han manifestado la importancia de los llamados procesos de studentification *como detonantes de efectos físicos, sociales, económicos y culturales en barrios residenciales tradicionales, apenas existen aportes a este tema desde América Latina. A partir de estas premisas, el presente trabajo tiene como objetivo analizar este fenómeno con una perspectiva*

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by emphasizing the dissolution of community links, the economic heterogeneization of the neighborhood and the creation of a specific real estate market for the student sector as the main dynamics produced by their arrival and as facts that could be connected to economic policies of housing. In order to do so, the article employs a methodology based on combined quantitative and qualitative data from a fieldwork-based survey. Outcomes confirm the existence of common elements with other study cases, that, together with other specific ones, are explainable by the origins of both neighborhoods..

KEYWORDS: STUDENTS; NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGES; STUDENTIFICATION; GENTRIFICATION; CONCEPCIÓN.

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que pone su énfasis en la disolución de los vínculos comunitarios, la heterogeneización económica del barrio y la creación de un mercado inmobiliario específico para el sector estudiantil como principales dinámicas producidas por la llegada de estudiantes, vinculable con la economía política de la vivienda. Para ello, se recurre a una metodología que utiliza principalmente datos cuantitativos, combinándolos puntualmente con otros cualitativos, lo que da lugar a unos resultados que ratifican la existencia de algunos elementos comunes con otros casos de estudio, junto con otros particulares, explicables por el propio origen de ambos barrios.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ESTUDIANTES; CAMBIOS BARRIALES; ESTUDIANTIZACIÓN; GENTRIFICACIÓN; CONCEPCIÓN.

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Introduction

Higher education has not only a social, cultural or economic weight in certain cities, usually called "university cities", but also a strong spatial implication. Issues such as the location of university campuses (Chatterton, 2010), students leases (Hubbard, 2009), or leisure services for students have undoubted impacts on the dynamics of the cities. These dynamics have usually been raised in the Anglo–Saxon field from perspectives connected to the global forms of gentrification (Nakazawa, 2017; Smith & Holt, 2007). In this way, the action or inaction of the public sector implies different scenarios about supply and demand of leases to students, resolved in each space by the existence of public residences (Sage, Smith, & Hubbard, 2013), of a legislation more or less regulatory, or the proliferation of private initiatives (Garmendia, Coronado, & Ureña, 2012), all of them contributing to give specific form to the new neighborhood dynamics.

In this context, the present research aims to analyze how the absence of control and an offer from the educational institutions themselves have led to a strong growth in students lease from the private sector in the city of Concepción, Chile. At present, these are one of the main drivers of the real estate growth of the city center and of the changes in some of its neighborhoods. As a consequence, traditional spaces are experiencing a process of *studentification,* causing a strong spatial heterogenization and an accelerated turnover of the traditional neighbors of the sector, today replaced by students. To this, a revaluation of the housing price is added, which privileges new uses through its transformation into rental sites or in services for students (restaurants, stores, pubs, etc.).

To address this, together with contextualizing the phenomenon, the dynamics of two neighborhoods in Concepción, linked to two university campuses where this proliferation of leases to students has been observed, are analyzed and interpreted. In them, socioeconomic changes generated by the student population, as well as their consequences, are analyzed. The novelty of this work resides in the lack of studies on *studentification* in Latin America and on the ways this topic articulates dynamics linked to higher education and neighborhood changes, phenomena that have been traditionally approached from the perspective of gentrification, closely related to the promotion policies of housing. Unlike the Anglo–Saxon literature, in this case there are not different stages in the process of *studentification*, neither a gradual emergence of large companies dedicated to the rental business. Rather, this would be mainly a private initiative that arises from the neighborhoods or that seeks a small–scale investment in promotions of apartments that are aimed at creating spaces for students. This circumstance may be due

to the relatively low amount paid for student leases in Concepción, and because the income generated by them is not received the entire year, due to the vacation periods. The rental has fixed maintenance costs, and, therefore, it is more profitable to build and sell apartments to individuals, who in turn lease them to students, than to directly rent apartments to students. The outstanding increase in real estate values in Concepción seems to confirm this idea (Prada-Trigo, Aravena, & Barra, in press). To approach this issue, a method that combines in–depth interviews and statistical data, through more than 350 surveys in these neighborhoods is used. Thus, in–depth interviews to more than 15 local actors who address the depth and consequences of these changes and their effects on the transformation of the neighborhoods analyzed were taken into account. Preliminary results indicate a process that, despite being valued as positive by large part of the neighbors -because of having improved its delicate economic situation- has also led to the rupture of traditional links previously existing in the neighborhoods and the accelerated turnover of them.

Literature review

The term *studentification* corresponds to a neologism referring to changes or impacts that occur in certain residential neighborhoods as a consequence of the increase and concentration of the student population in them (Prada-Trigo, 2019a). This generates changes in the structure of households and in the population and businesses of the neighborhood (Hubbard, 2008; Kinton, Smith, & Harrison, 2016; Nakazawa, 2017; Sage, Smith, & Hubbard, 2012a), as well as a series of interactions between students and their place of life, which would shape "student landscapes" (Russo & Capel, 2007). The reasons for these to be located in those neighborhoods would be varied, since they would mainly respond to political, sociocultural and economic aspects. Among the former, Smith (2009) highlights the absence of a strategic policy to address the increase of the student population. This would lead to a management of student housing dependent only on the private sector, position shared by Smith and Hubbard (2014). These authors denote the special incidence of this phenomenon in neighborhoods close to the university campuses, which would be more affected by the absence of regulation.

Among the sociocultural issues, there is a strong link with the neighborhoods where more students would reside. This would generate a sort of "cultural ghetto" (Munro & Livingston, 2011) and the maintenance of their own lifestyles (Chatterton, 2010; Munro, Turok, & Livingston, 2009), often considering themselves as a "community of their own" (Kenyon, 1997). Finally, from the economic perspective, some

authors point out the convenience of students to live in "depressed" or little value areas, due to the lower costs that these latter entail compared to other neighborhoods (Munro *et al.,* 2009). For Pickren, this phenomenon would suppose a better assessment for the arrival of students to low–income neighborhoods owing to the opportunities generated by such process, such as lease for new businesses (Pickren, 2012). For real estate investors, the possibility of buying in these neighborhoods and obtaining profits from student leasing would suppose a better opportunity than investing in higher–value neighborhoods (Sage, Smith, & Hubbard, 2012b).

Regarding this phenomenon, some cross–sectional elements, linked to the general dynamics present in most cities can be identified. These will be divided into two main aspects in this work. First, the political economy of housing appears as an interpretative framework of market relations. State and policy generate a specific institutional environment in which there are political agreements prevailing in a society (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014). This framework analyzes economy along with its political and social context, instead of an isolated entity and with its own rules, having existed a growth recognition of the centrality of housing within an economic policy in recent years (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014). In the case of the housing market, it works as an investment niche or as a capital reserve that is revalued over time, very related to political processes such as the existence of a public housing market, subsidies for the purchase or lease, or the availability of places offered by higher education institutions themselves to provide housing for the students (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014; Revington & August, 2019). Some cases, as the Chilean one, where there is no public or institutional provision of housing for students, where the market appears as highly deregulated (Valenzuela, 2016), and where the purchase or lease of a real estate is positioned as a clear option to complement some generally low pensions, are such a good example. This implies that, in cities of university tradition, the private leasing to students acts as a social reproduction mechanism, as well as an incentive to the economy itself.

Secondly, some authors propose to interpret the *studentification* phenomenon from the perspective of the dis–emergence student "culture" or "lifestyle", that as in other gentrification processes would lead students to live in spaces where there would be more residents "like them" (Sage *et al*., 2012a). Here they can develop their own way of life, being the student neighborhoods a sort of "cultural ghettos", similar to the gentrified neighborhoods (He, 2014; Smith & Holt, 2007). Despite this, there are also important contrasts between gentrifiers and students, since the last, as abovementioned, have no influence on a "social escalation" and their

social capital is more limited (Smith, 2004). Nevertheless, some studies consider them as "potential gentrifiers" (Smith & Holt, 2007). Similar works emphasize a perspective closer to the spatial restructuring. According to them, the *studentification* process would entail the rise of *rent gaps* as a consequence of the arrival of students to the neighborhood and the housing devaluation. This would allow a higher gain in the future by existing the possibility of making a modest investment in order to favor the arrival of a new wave in the neighborhood, connecting studentification and gentrification processes (Smith, 2004). These would have more economic and social resources than students and would arrive attracted by the bohemian environment and the cultural lifestyle created previously by the students in the neighborhood, starting the rise in the price of housing (Hubbard, 2008). This perspective connects students with the first wave of gentrifiers, and because their capital would be scarce, they would be pushed by the logic of the market towards peripheral places and, in the mid–term, they would be facilitating the arrival of a new wave of young professionals with greater capital (Hubbard, 2009; Smith & Holt, 2007).

In this way, many scholars find that *studentification* has had a very intense and concentrated development in Anglo-Saxon countries, where it has been analyzed more deeply. However, the only works carried out in the case of Latin America correspond to this same research (Prada-Trigo, 2019a, 2019b). In general, studies on *studentification* are coincident with the fact that this phenomenon has greater impact on medium–sized cities that have university weight (Holton & Riley, 2013; Hubbard, 2008; Munro *et al.*, 2009) compared to the relative sprawl of the students occurring in bigger metropolitan areas (Malet, 2018).

Concepción: University capital of central–southern Chile

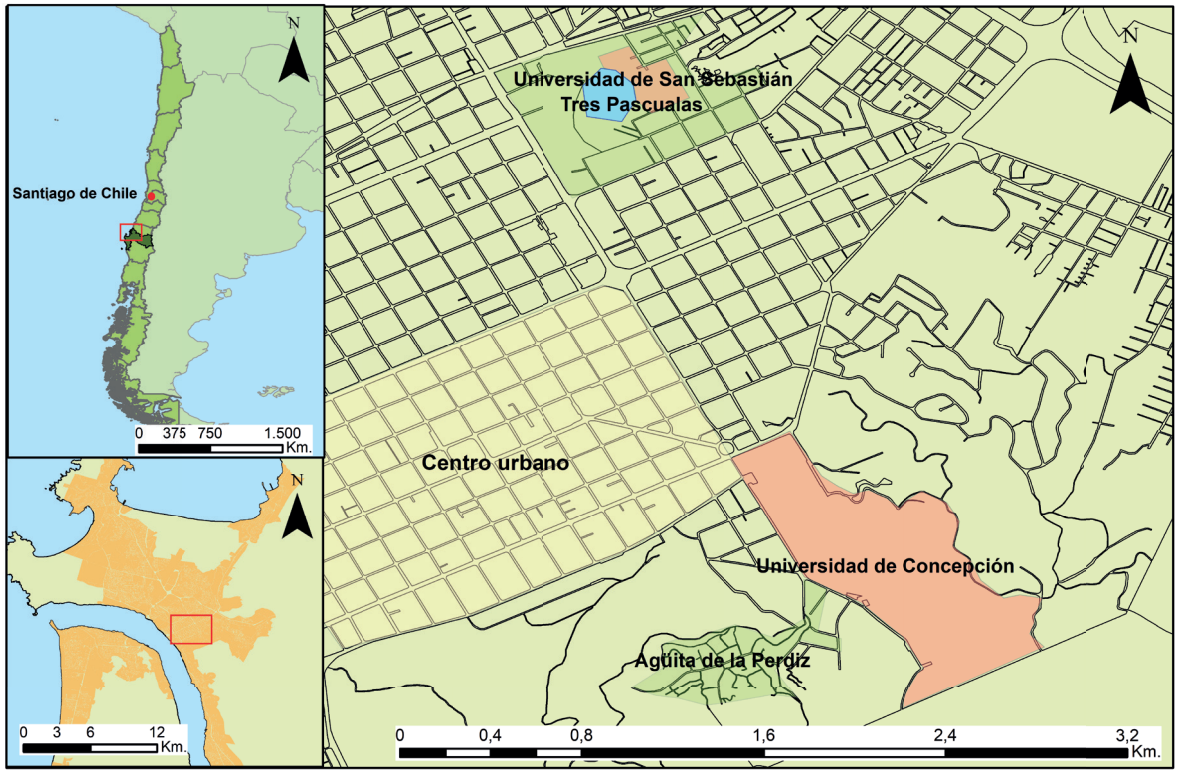
The commune of Concepción is the main city in the larger metropolitan area of central-southern Chile (Figure 1). While the municipality of Concepción had a population of almost 224,000 inhabitants in 2017, the entire metropolitan area, made up of 10 communes, was close to one million inhabitants (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2017). The Concepción Metropolitan Area has a series of local elements that make it an advantageous space for *studentification* dynamics. Firstly, it is the seat of several universities, as the *Universidad de Concepción* (the third one in Chile's university ranking), the *Universidad del Biobío* (one of the largest regional public universities), and several private universities with their own campus in the city, such as the *Universidad de San Sebastian* and the *Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción*. Within the

context of Chilean universities, the campus of the University of Concepción, with 48 hectares, is significantly outstanding as it is the largest open campus in the country. This campus, designed at the beginning of the 20th century, constitutes a symbol of the city and has come to be a model for other university projects in Chile. In addition, in the center of Concepción, the campus of the San Sebastian University (Figure 1) is also present. It was built on the side of Las Tres Pascualas Lagoon, on a site of about 7 hectares on horseback between the 20th and 21st centuries. It involved a real estate and landscape renewal on the part of a wider sector, characterized by physical and social deterioration and still in the process of transformation (Cartes, 2014). Since the late 1990s, several illegal settlements on the shore of the lagoon were eradicated, along with the creation of an urban park. This urban reorganization attracted the interest of private actors (schools, the University of San Sebastián, real estate companies and supermarkets), causing deep changes in this sector (Araya, 2000). In this logic of urban renewal, the neighborhoods near the University of San Sebastián (for instance, the Barrio Condell) have been subjected to a process of "recycling". Thus, verticalization and densification processes have been carried out by replacing existing low-rise houses and promoting the property merger to build departments (Pérez Bustamante, González Bello, Villouta Gutiérrez, Pagola Contreras, & Ávila Zañartu, 2019). The cases of the University of Concepción and the University of San Sebastián are interesting because both are located in the center of the city but, however, differ in their unequal size and history. While the University of Concepción responds to the archetype of a large university with a public vocation, the University of San Sebastián, despite having its own campus, constitutes a smaller private university.

Secondly, Concepción functions as a university center for south-central Chile. The city receives many students from all over the country (in total, in 2017 the commune had 90,652 students and the metropolitan area, more than 105,000 students). For this reason, its regional context contributes to reinforce the image of Concepción as a university center. Finally, only the University of Concepcion has about 400 places to accommodate students arriving from other cities, which is clearly insufficient. Therefore, almost all students must require private leases to solve their need for accommodation. In this way, in Concepción, both internal processes (city of university tradition and with a limited offer of student accommodation) with other generals to the country (increase in the number of university students) are reflected, which makes its case study interesting.

The Agüita de la Perdiz neighborhood is a central space, close to the main campus of the

FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF THE STUDY CASES.



Source: Own elaboration.

city. Originally, it is very homogeneous in social terms, coming from an illegal land occupation. In recent years, after the regularization and improvement of the services, the neighborhood has produced a strong change in it as a result of the proliferation of leases to students. This fact, along with the "physical" modification of the space, has triggered a social and economic change due to the improvement of some families' incomes and to the exit of traditional neighbors because of the increase in student leases. In the second case, Las Tres Pascualas neighborhood, this corresponds to a space subject to an intense change as a result of the building of a private university campus a few years ago, which generated a strong adaptation of the surroundings and the proliferation of apartment buildings, used for leases to students. As a consequence, traditional neighbors have to live with new edifications, with a strong presence of students and the onset of new services linked to student leisure. This situation coexists with a reality dominated by self–construction housing, many of it also reused as student leases.

Both neighborhoods have in common their central location and good communications. Similarly, their populations, socially homogeneous, are characterized by a popular character. In both neighborhoods there is a traditional predominance of one or two-floor houses, although in Las Tres Pascualas neighborhood new flats have recently been built, linked to student leases and some social housing departments. These similarities, along with the differences between the two aforementioned universities, justify the choice of both cases as central neighborhoods in the metropolitan area of Concepción.

Methodology and scope

The recent topic of *studentification* has received increased academic attention within the urban studies. Some authors point out the difficulty in obtaining data on student dynamics at the neighborhood and sub-neighborhood scale. This fact entails severe difficulties in undertaking a comparative or diachronic analysis, and thus results in biased approaches to this phenomenon from a quantitative perspective (Sage *et al.*, 2012a). In this regard, the need to use qualitative methods such as in–depth interview becomes evident. Owing to this reason, Kinton *et al.* (2016) pointed out that field research is really useful for the study of these processes. Accordingly, the methodology applied in this work, developed towards a quantitative work, seeks to provide new evidences in this regard through the application of structured surveys in the two neighborhoods, having obtained 357 responses. To this end, a "house by house" study has

been developed identifying four target groups: students, leasing neighbors, non–landlord neighbors and local business. A survey model was generated for each group, with cross-sectional questions, which allowed intergroup comparisons and others specific to each group. Table 1 shows the detail of the sample design for the work carried out. Once the survey was conducted, the results were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program and a comparison was performed with the main topics identified by the international references. This served to identify some critical aspects that were later developed in in-depth interviews. Such interviews were conducted to a group of relevant actors in the Agüita de la Perdiz neighborhood (Association of Neighbors, foundations, landlords, etc.), seeking to know more depth issues inferred by the review of the literature and the results of the surveys. Since interviews were not achieved in Las Tres Pascualas neighborhood, they will be used only in a timely manner in this article to avoid generating dissymmetry between the two cases. In order to promote the expression of opinions more freely, it was decided to resort to anonymity when transcribing some part of the interviews and each of the interviewees was given a code for use in this work.

Analysis and results

The arrival of students to neighborhoods near the analyzed universities has meant a process more or less close in time and valued differently by each neighbor, partly depending on the neighborhood and partly on their role in it (local shop, landlord neighbors and non–landlord neighbors). Data that can be observed in Table 2 are clear about it. First, the arrival of students to Agüita de la Perdiz would respond to a more prolonged phenomenon in time, where only 69% of the businesses and 49% of non–landlord neighbors perceive the arrival of students in the last decade. On the contrary, in Las Tres Pascualas the process is quite different (on the eaves of the recent creation of the San Sebastian University Campus), being this a phenomenon perceived in the last decade for 92% of respondents. The relative high percentage of neighbors of Agüita de la Perdiz that consider the arrival of students a recent phenomenon could be due to the increase in the number of students in recent years. This would respond to a progressive process of universalization of the Chilean higher education in all the country, with a greater number of students accessing to the university (from 660,000 students in 2005 to 1,250,000 in 2017 for all of Chile).

TABLE 1: SURVEY SAMPLE DESIGN

Descriptor	Detail
Universe	Homes of Agüita de la Perdiz and Las Tres Pascualas neighborhood
Scope	Neighborhood, Concepción, Chile
Information collection method	Personal survey with structure questionnaire
Sample unit	Resident in the home (student, neighbor or local shop)
Population size	1.894 homes
Type of sampling	Non–probabilistic convenience
Confidence level	95%
Sample error	+/– 4.67%
Number of valid surveys conducted	357

Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF ANSWERS IN QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE ARRIVAL OF STUDENTS

Question	Respondent	Neighborhood	
		Agüita	Tres Pascualas
% who noticed the arrival of students to the sector in the last 10 years	Local shop	69.2	92
	Non–landlord neighbor	49.3	91.7
% who consider the arrival of students as positive or very positive	Local shop	91.7	91.7
	Non–landlord neighbor	53.7	59.3
% who consider the image of their sector as "of students" one positive or very positive	Local shop	84.7	79.2
	Non–landlord neighbor	66.7	69.7
% who participate in the social life of the sector never or almost never.	Student	70	80.5

Source: Own elaboration.

In the same Table 2, another interesting element can be observed. This is the perception of the students as mostly positive for both local shops that would increase their customers and non–landlord neighbors, who consider the arrival of them as positive, especially in Las Tres Pascualas district. This question can also be complemented with the perception of the neighborhood as one "of students", which would be altogether even more positive than the previous one, since more than two thirds of neighbors and circa 80% of the local shops identify a neighborhood "with students" as a neighborhood where the image is favorable. The differences between both cases may lie in the fact that a more long-term presence of students would generate a less positive image of themselves in the neighborhood. In parallel, this identification of the neighborhood as "a student" one would bring some advantages, especially in the value of homes. In this case, the differences between Agüita de la Perdiz and Las Tres Pascualas can be interpreted from this perspective.

Despite the general acceptance of students, the last row of Table 2 shows clearly that the separation between students becomes evident, since 70% and 80% of the former would never participate in the social life of the neighborhood, performing, as the literature review pointed out, a parallel socialization to that of the traditional neighbors. Thus, as respondent 1 points out: "The truth is that there is little participation in the activities programmed here [I blame it] that each one is increasingly individualistic, they are more attentive to their lives, their things".

If the arrival of students was considered in Table 2, in Table 3 the reasons for this are deepened, especially highlighting the increase in the price of housing. The same would be valued as positive or very positive by almost 70% of the respondents in total. This would bring us back to the question of the political economy of housing, understanding the leasing to students as the form of a mechanism for generating capital gains in the real estate sector. Then, it is sought a way to enhance it, both for the immediate returns (money that the rent would provide) and for the medium–term benefits (increase in the price of the property itself). As expressed by respondent 5:

> "We considered renting to students […] we took a risk, [my husband] asked for a loan and we started renting the house. […]I think [it has] been positive, because there are many people who have "grown up" thanks to the leases […] It is a great help […] I have not seen any negative consequences on it".

In this case, the differences between both neighborhoods would not be so significant, which could be due to the low value of their homes compared to other areas of Concepción.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF ANSWERS IN QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE PERCEPTION OF THE ARRIVAL OF STUDENTS

Question	Actor	Sector	
		Agüita	Las Tres Pascualas
% who consider positive or very positive the emergence of new businesses	Business	66.6	45.9
% who consider that the presence of students in the neighborhood has affected security positively or very positively	Landlord neighbor	60	69.7
% who consider the emergence of new residents in the neighborhood as positive or very positive	Business	76.9	75
	Non–landlord neighbor	58.2	52.3
% who consider the changes in the relationships of the neighborhood produced by students as positive or very positive	Non–landlord neighbor	49.3	47.7
% who consider the increase in the price of housing in their neighborhood as positive or very positive	Business	75	76
	Non–landlord neighbor	60	71.6

Source: Own elaboration.

Along with this, the emergence of new businesses, new temporary residents or the improved security would be aspects perceived as positive in the context of the students' arrival. In any case, there are differences between both districts. While Agüita's residents show a greater enthusiasm for the opening of new businesses (probably because they were very scarce in the past), Las Tres Pascualas' residents, although having run local stores prior to students' arrival, consider the new businesses as direct competitors. On the contrary, even though both neighborhoods appreciate an improvement in security, in Agüita this is possibly nuanced by the longer presence of students over time, which generates problems related to drug use or parties, in accordance with international references (Smith & Holt, 2007). The only

element that is not so clearly highlighted is referred to changes in neighborhood relations, in the sense that, students would have articulated new processes with their arrival (displacement of old neighbors, new forms of social behavior, etc.) that would not fit well with preexisting ones. In this way, parties, noises or changes in the neighborhood would be the negative side of this phenomenon, which provoke that just a half of the non-landlord neighbors consider the arrival of students and the new social relationships as positive or very positive changes in the neighborhood (Table 3). However, this same group considers the increase of student housing prices as a mostly positive thing. This optimism related to economic issues coincides with landlords' and local businesses' responses, also observable in Table 3. Thereby, a division can be noted: on one hand, between non-landlord neighbors and those who "benefit" in some way from the presence of students (landlords and local businesses), and, on the other hand, between a globally positive economic valuation and another not so optimistic assessment of changes in local social relations.

In relation to this, Table 4 considers about the reason of landlords to initiate their activity. Of all possible options, those with the highest percentage of positive responses were the high demand in the sector and the available space in their housing to start leases. The first makes clear allusion again to the political economy of housing, given the lack of leases from the public and institutional area. This would affect a high demand on the part of students that would be provided by the market, not being served by these other means. Thus, as in other key sectors such as education, health or pensions, the market would come to deal with a social demand such as the housing provision. The second one can be explained by the aging of part of the population in the neighborhoods, whose children would leave rooms available for leases when leaving the house. This would be important in Agüita, where, owing to its spontaneous origins, it never existed any planning; instead, some families just took some pieces of land without a setup. In Las Tres Pascualas, however, most of the houses are state "social housing", characterized by their moderate size, which complicates to have extra space aimed at renting. The third most important response, as seen in Table 4, is referred to the economic need. This is linked to the reality of some low–income neighborhoods, where social housing or self–construction abounds in good part of its population. Here, precarious conditions dominate in good part of the population, leading to find extra income through this activity. Thereby, the real estate sector would become a sort of "lifeguard" for eight out of ten respondents in Agüita de la Perdiz, and six out of ten in Las Tres Pascualas neighborhood. In relation to this, interviewee 2 pointed out:

TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE OF ANSWERS IN QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE START OF LEASES

Question	Sector	
	Agüita	Las Tres Pascualas
% who considered the available space as important or very important when starting their leasing activity	92	64.3
% who considered the existing high demand as important or very important when starting their leasing activity	87.5	85.2
% who considered the economic need they had at that time as important or very important when starting their leasing activity	79.1	60.7

Source: Own elaboration.

> "There are many people who have been left alone [...] the children have emigrated; their house is left alone and they are renting. Others see it as something that gives them economy, they can ask for a loan [...] and they know that the lease is safe money and they can pay the loan [...] Here we talk about certain family groups that have the economic power due to the lease to students".

Finally, Table 5 refers to the other side of this phenomenon: student demand. When leasing a lodging or a room, students give priority to a series of elements over others, establishing behavior patterns that affect the spatial dynamics in the medium term. Between the two groups, the price clearly stands out at the time of deciding to live in one sector or another, which again places housing as a consumer good subject to supply and demand. The rest of the elements varies between neighborhoods and no greater similarities can be established. On the one hand, in Agüita de la Perdiz, the proximity to the University and to the cultural and leisure offer of the center of Concepción- stands out together with the fact that the neighborhood already had a student environment (highlighting a long–standing phenomenon of *studentification*). On the other hand, in Las Tres Pascualas, the proximity to the city center and the existence of a proper transport system (given that this neighborhood is not as central as Agüita de la Perdiz) were prioritized. The other factors, except for the price, were placed at greater distance, referring to a process of shorter duration in time, in which cultural attractions and a student identification of the neighborhood have not emerged yet.

TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE OF ANSWERS IN QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE REASON OF STUDENTS FOR LIVING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Question	Sector	
	Agüita	Las Tres Pascualas
% who considered the proximity to their university as important or very important when living in the neighborhood	93.3	57.7
% who considered the proximity to the city center as important or very important when living in the neighborhood	53.5	75.7
% who considered transport and communications as important or very important when living in the neighborhood	30	80.8
% who considered socio–cultural attractions of the city center as important or very important when living in the neighborhood	60	48.1
% who considered the leisure offer as important or very important when living in the neighborhood	83.3	55.1
% who considered that their neighborhood was a "student neighborhood" as important or very important when living in the neighborhood	79	59.8
% who considered the housing offer as important or very important when living in the neighborhood	80	57.2
% who considered the price of their lease as important or very important when living in the neighborhood	83.3	74.1

Source: Own elaboration.

Conclusions

The increase of the university population in most countries has contributed to the growth of studies regarding its impacts in cities. Such studies have shown that, despite of finding ourselves before a globalized process present in most countries, local elements linked to the trajectory or identity of a particular case are maintained. Therefore, the *studentification* process becomes highly interesting for the discipline of geography. The cases of Agüita de la Perdiz and Las Tres Pascualas neighborhoods presented some of the characteristics of the international case studies: new residents, emergence of new businesses linked to students, and different social behaviors by the student population. However, other aspects exclusively related to the Chilean idiosyncrasy are also presented. Among them, the potential of students to improve the image of these two neighborhoods stands out that, due to their past, they appeared as strongly stigmatized. This fact contrasts with other study cases in the Anglo-Saxon context, in which the process is the opposite (Kenyon, 1997; Smith & Holt, 2007). Thus, despite the controversial effects over the neighborhood identity, over the community sense or over the exit of traditional population, it can be emphasized that the presence of students, in cases of social stigmatization of the neighborhood or low housing value, can trigger positive effects in certain areas. In this sense, our study would keep similarities with the work of He (2014), since *studentification* has opened up new business opportunities in these neighborhoods and provoked a certain mixture of different social groups. These aspects referring to both cases would contribute to a more positive vision of the phenomenon.

As the case studies reveal, the *studentification* phenomenon has evolved over time at different rates (more recent in the case of Las Tres Pascualas, and more prolonged in Agüita de la Perdiz). All this should be analyzed according to the changes in higher education in Chile, the emergence of private universities and the universalization of the access to higher education. As a consequence, it could be considered that the *studentification* phenomenon is more "mature" in the case of Agüita de la Perdiz, which allows us to identify some particularities, such as a consolidated student life or a vision of the increase in the price of housing. This is not so positive anymore as it has made more difficult the access to it to part of the original population. This fact has become very clear in the neighborhood, in addition to the similarity with other studies that emphasize this same weakening of the community ties (Duke–Williams, 2009; Smith & Hubbard, 2014), being a phenomenon that possibly also begins to be visualized in Las Tres Pascualas.

Despite this, it can be concluded that the perception on the arrival of students to both spaces become globally positive. Although the aforementioned weakening of community ties or the increase in antisocial behaviors such as parties and alcohol consumption have been recognized, there is a more important consideration related to the economic improvement produced. On the students side, this would be a fundamental factor since the rental price would be consolidated as the strongest incentive to live in these places. In addition, particular values such as communications or the proximity to the city center in the case of Las Tres Pascualas or the social and cultural life of the city center in Agüita de la Perdiz should also be considered. We are in a process where the defection from the State and the higher education institutions from the provision of accommodation would have triggered these phenomena, which are resolved through a regulation of the market based on the inhabitants themselves. Thus, housing is consolidated as a thriving sector in the local economy, being a contribution to vulnerable social strata when it comes to improving income, even if works at the expense of a basic right such as housing.

Thereby, one of the particularities of the case studies is that neither the State nor the universities provide housing for students, thus opening the market to private actors, who offer rooms or houses to students through credits or small investments. This means a kind of "protection" against the uncertainties of the Chilean neoliberal economic model, exemplified by low retirement pensions, very expensive education, and high cost health system. This is linked to the idea of the political economy of housing (Aalbers, 2016), because the economy, far from being an aseptic element, becomes one of the bases of the system by facilitating the owners an income improvement. The cost is an investment via mortgages and a high level of indebtedness, often used by the Pension Fund Administrators to obtain their profitability. In this way, the interweaving of student leases with the economic model is evident. This fact constitutes one of the reasons why companies specialized in the construction and management of student departments (PBSA) have not appeared in Concepción, unlike the Anglo-Saxon countries. Given the discontinuity of vacation periods and students' low purchasing power to pay a good rent, owners' benefits become meager, which makes it more beneficial to invest in the construction and sale of apartment buildings. In fact, they have recently suffered a high price increase, becoming an actual business niche for the real estate sector of Concepción (Prada-Trigo *et al.*, in press).

Regarding this, one of the particularities with respect to other case studies that analyze the revaluation or devaluation of housing -in line with the appearance of the gentrifying

phenomena- is its close relation with the "income gap". In this sense, the fact that both neighborhoods are of popular extraction would have led the students to, unlike other case studies (Kenna, 2011), not have depreciated the value of housing, but rather the opposite, differentiating the Chilean cases from other *studentified* neighborhoods analyzed by international literature (Ackerman & Visser, 2016). To conclude, because of the differences and similarities of these cases respect to the Anglo-Saxon studies -where the first studies were originated- it can be observed that the *studentification* phenomenon presents a variety of forms related to the characteristics of each place that, however, does not omit their common roots as a global phenomena, analyzable and interpretable from the geography as socio–spatial processes.

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