London School of Economics and Political Science

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Moving home: the everyday making of the Chilean middle class

UMI Number: U615959

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies how middle-class cultures are assembled in contemporary Chile, by looking at a group of lower-middle-class families who move to new houses in the suburbs, focusing in particular on the role of home and home possessions, place of residence and housing markets in the production of people's social and spatial positions. Class is broadly understood here as a process that happens within people's experience. It is understood, thus, more as an outcome of actors' production than as a pre-existing category. By taking this standpoint, this thesis draws on a rather heterogeneous set of theoretical frameworks for exploring the different set of mediations —places, discourses and materialities— that assemble the ordinary experience of class.

The thesis is based on seven months of fieldwork (2005-2006) in Los Pinos, a new real estate development in Santiago, Chile. The fieldwork is a case study and does not claim any generalisation; notwithstanding, the field site was chosen as embodying —in terms of both the place and its inhabitants— what has been recently described as the "emergent" contemporary middle classes, which have emerged with the neoliberal reforms of the last 30 years. Specifically, the research aimed to grasp families' experiences of buying, moving into and settling into their new house. Against this backdrop, the thesis focused on three interrelated stages: first, the design, production and purchase of houses; second, the material culture of the new home; and third, neighbouring practices and the production of Los Pinos as a middle-class residential area. Analysing this process of social and spatial mobility, it empirically traces how actors live and perform class and how, in doing so, they produce particular cultures of inequality.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I arrived in Chile to undertake the fieldwork for this thesis, I meant to study social change and consumption in Chile by focusing on the material culture of a group of suburbanites that had recently bought their new house. During the research process, however, my questions shifted to the more specific theme of how class and social mobility are experienced and produced in contemporary Chile. Class, thus, is not the point of departure but the point of arrival in this research: indeed, I came to realise that my research was not exclusively on the material culture and/or everyday life in the newly built suburbs but, more specifically, on how Chilean middle-class cultures were being produced in everyday life. Given that this thesis was based on Chile, such an arrival point was not strange: Chile remains one of the most unequal countries in the world. What is more, few would dispute the statement that class and class inequality pervade many aspects of ordinary life in Chile. In many ways, class is being made in how we live our ordinary life, in our working and leisure time, in how we make sense of our personal trajectories and how we talk and relate to others, the way we judge, value and categorise other people and how we think about ourselves. Subtlely and slowly, but constantly and securely, our experience of class and inequality are being assembled during different ordinary moments of our everyday life.

At this point, I might warn that this work does not describe the most visible spaces in which inequality is produced in Chile —something that research on poverty or elites could do much better— nor does it analyse or measure class impact. Instead, it is an attempt to map, from the bottom up, how middle-class cultures are assembled and experienced in contemporary Chile. In doing so, it moves away from traditional stratification analysis, which is focused on occupational categories, to explore class and social mobility in the more elusive spaces of the home and the home-moving process. Of course, this is not the first work to have approached class by looking at these areas. Indeed, as will be discussed later, it is deeply indebted to a long and recently renewed tradition of class cultures research. It draws, too, upon other theoretical frameworks which, though not so closely associated with class analysis, enriched the view of the process by incorporating other perspectives. I feel that I also have connections with a new generation of fellow Chilean sociologists who have increasingly endeavoured to study people's ordinary experience of class and inequality in contemporary Chile, and I am indebted to them as well.

To my parents

If we stop history at a given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences. But if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition.

(Thompson 1969:11)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: class cultures and social change in Chile

Over the past 30 years, Chile has undergone substantial social and economic transformations. Broadly speaking, the process may be defined as the propagation of a market-led modernisation with the market acting as a central social principle (Tironi, 2003). This derives from the explicit promotion and application of neo-liberal policies during the military regime in the 1980s and relatively continuously under democratic governments during last 18 years. Scholars have defined this process in terms of the emergence of a "neoliberal" pattern of development whose core components are private capital, open markets and the emergence of new forms of competition and vulnerability (Wormald, Cereceda et al. 2002; Worlmald, Sabatini et al. 2003).

The consequences of these changes have been manifold. Between 1987 and 2003, GDP per capita rose by more than 100%, transforming Chile from a lower-income to a middle-income country. Moreover, domestic consumption surged, as witnessed not only in the rise of the consumer credit industry, but also in the growth of advertising and marketing industries, the democratisation of commodities and the general rise in social indicators (Tironi 2003; Castells 2005). Market-led reforms, however, also involved other, more controversial, consequences, such as the flexibilisation of the labour market, the privatisation of social welfare (health, pensions and education), the spread of a new dynamics of vulnerability and the maintenance of high rates of inequality. Indeed, after 25 years of relatively stable economic growth, Chile still figures as the world's twelfth most unequal country (Torche 2006).

At a general level, scholars have focused on exploring the relationships between this "market-led modernisation" and cultural change. For example, reports by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describe a profound cultural change in Chileans' ordinary life, as links between "structure" —economic and social transformations— and "people's experiences", they argued, became increasingly tensioned (PNUD 1998; PNUD 2002). Traditional ways of life have thus been affected by the emergence of an incipient consumer culture and systematic changes in the meaning of work. Furthermore, market-led modernisation has fuelled a process of individualisation and cultural segmentation, making the sense of national belonging increasingly remote. These hypotheses have been further explored in several fields. For example, some scholars have studied the emergence of new fragmented and privatised identities in the city (Marquez 2003; Marquez and Perez 2008), while others have examined how this "compulsive" modernisation has shattered traditional

identities, producing a new cultural gap (Bengoa 1999), or analysed how the cultural repertoire of modernity has spread (Brunner 1998; Tironi 2003).

A key area of analysis concerns the increasingly complex relations between socio-economic changes and class cultures, particularly the emergence of new middle-class sectors in the context of pervasive social inequality. Although the topic of structured inequality has been broadly addressed in Chile (Martínez and León 2001; Torche and Worlmald 2004; Espinoza 2006), relatively little research has been conducted on how changes in class formation and class inequality have been produced and experienced by ordinary people. Indeed, as Mendez argues, most of the existing research on stratification has been framed without a "culturally sensitive" approach (Mendez, 2008:23). Within this context, some authors claim that scholarly attention has broadly neglected the ways in which people have produced and performed cultural change in contemporary Chile. As Francisca Marquez said:

The question that follows in the discussion is whether, given this depth and speed of social transformation of our societies and economies, we should open our eyes and our analysis to how social and structural change functions at the level of the lives and culture of the actors and their families. (Marquez 2002: 2)

That class and class inequality are central elements in people's experience is commonly agreed in Chile. Indeed, recent studies show that 76% of Chileans perceive Chile to be a highly unequal society (UDP Survey, 2007). In this line, historians have recently described Chilean society as the most concerned with class and class distinctions in Latin America.[1] Moreover, what little research exists has showed that class is a central (albeit increasingly complex) category in people's identities and ordinary lives (Van Bavel and Sell-Trujillo 2003; Stillerman 2004; Mendez 2008). Thus, to paraphrase Marquez, the question of: "how class cultures are produced and installed at the level of the lives and culture of actors and their families" appears as a central, but still unanswered, question. Against this backdrop, this thesis attempts to approach the issue of how class is experienced in contemporary Chile. It does so by focusing on a group of lower-middle class families who move to new houses in the suburbs. It takes a cultural, bottom-up approach to class and inequality, on the basis that this starting point may offer critical insights into how class inequalities are produced in Chileans' everyday lives. Indeed, by researching how people produce class in their ordinary life, the aim is to enrich public and academic debate on Chilean class inequalities by

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[1] Alfredo Yocelyn-Holt, *Las Ultimas Noticias*, 28 September 2008.

offering a more complex picture of the relationships between class, social change and people's ordinary lives.

Class is broadly defined here as a process that happens within people's experience (Thompson 1968). It is understood, thus, more as an outcome of actors' production than as a pre-existing category. By taking this standpoint, this thesis draws on a rather heterogeneous set of theoretical tools for exploring the different set of mediations — places, discourses and materialities— that assemble the ordinary experience of class. In this context, the term "class culture" relies on a broad anthropological definition of culture as people's way of life (Jenks 2005), including all practices, narratives and materialities that frame meaningful patterning of social life (Slater 2002b).

The thesis is based on seven months of fieldwork (2005-2006) in Los Pinos, a new real estate development in Santiago, Chile. The fieldwork is a case study and does not claim any generalisation; notwithstanding, the field site was chosen as embodying —in terms of both the place and its inhabitants— what has been recently described as the "emergent" contemporary middle classes (please see next sections). Specifically, the research aimed to grasp families' experiences of buying, moving into and settling into their new house. Analysing this process of social and spatial mobility, it focuses on tracing empirically how actors live and perform class. Home and place of residence were chosen, therefore, not only because they are key places in the production of cultural meanings (Miller 2001), but also because they constitute a central element in the production of class (Hammett 1995; Bourdieu 2001; Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005).

This chapter is the introduction to the thesis. The first section gives a general overview of the Chilean middle classes. It begins by describing the traditional middle classes, then goes on to give a brief account of recent changes in class structure, before discussing the decline of the traditional middle class and the rise of a new type of "emergent" middle classes linked to the process of market-led modernisation. Lastly, this section reviews existing descriptions of "emergent middle class" culture. The second section situates the research questions by connecting them with the mounting body of literature on class culture analysis and, finally, the third section presents the structure of the thesis and reviews the different arguments presented in it.

1. Social change and the Chilean middle classes

This section provides a brief genealogy of the middle classes in Chile, presenting key elements of their recent history. The plural "middle classes" is used to underline the fact that this label has been used to identify more than one group in Chilean history. The section is divided into three parts. The first provides a genealogy of the traditional middle classes, focusing on their association with the formation of the State and their key political agency during much of the twentieth century. The second part explores the shifts in stratification and opportunities that, it has been argued, led to the decline of the traditional middle classes and the emergence of what may be broadly defined as the "emergent" middle classes. From here, the third part goes on to explore different ways in which Chilean scholars, politicians and media have described contemporary middle-class as the main actors of market-led modernisation. It is argued here the prevalent tone of these descriptions is consistent with top-down models of analysis in which class cultures are understood roughly as outcomes of structural transformations. The term "emergent middle class" is used to reflect the connections between these sectors and market-led modernisation. Following Latour and Bourdieu (1986), it is argued that such discourses should be treated as a central enquiry of an empirical analysis of how the middle classes are produced.

The traditional middle class: a brief account

In Chile, the middle classes were a product of neither social mobility nor increasing economic patrimony but a direct consequence the workings of the State as the main source of identity and privilege (Lomnitz and Melnick 1991; Cerda 1998; Bazoret 2006). Bazoret traces (traditional) middle-class origins to the end of the nineteenth century, when resources from the Saltpeter War[2] encouraged enlargement of the State through the creation of public salaried positions (Bazoret 2006). The State, thus, drove the consolidation of a new group of urban bureaucracies that joined the existing small groups of middle class employed in services and commerce of the nineteenth century. This connection was also evident in other countries in Latin America, where the middle classes have historically been linked with the development of the State. As Sembler argues:

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[2] The Saltpeter War or War of the Pacific was fought between Chile and the joint forces of Bolivia and Peru, from 1879 to 1883. Chile gained substantial mineral-rich territory in the conflict, annexing the Peruvian provinces of Tarapacá and Arica and the Bolivian province of Litoral and leaving Bolivia landlocked.

The reference to middle classes —though often related more with socio-political analysis than with stratification studies— was usually a key instance for analysis of the tensions and dynamics of Latin American State development strategies (developmentism). (2006: 8)

This link between the middle classes and the State remained intact for most of the twentieth century (Lomnitz and Melnick 1991; Bazoret 2006). Indeed, since the 1920s, middle-class service employees —with civil servants as their core group— became increasingly central political actors mediating the relations between oligarchies, the working classes and State bureaucracies (Lommitz and Melnick, 1991: 27) while also achieving several demands in terms of their quality of life. The State also had a hand in further elements underlying the constitution of this group: first, the central value of public education, which was and remains a main source of status, not only as source of social mobility but also as a core element of its symbolic identification as a group (Bazoret, 2006:76; Tironi, 1985; Lommitz and Melnick, 1991:17); second, the establishment of networks of reciprocity and exchange of favours, which were central to the constitution of class privileges (Bazoret, 2006; Lommitz and Melnick, 1991). Indeed, as Bazoret notes, these networks of reciprocity explain why the middle classes were the major beneficiaries of welfare policies during the first two thirds of the twentieth century. Class privileges explain why the middle classes were able to differentiate themselves from the working class without possessing a large economic patrimony (Ibid, 2006; Lommitz and Melnik, 1991).

Understandably, most accounts of traditional middle-class identity have focused on connections with the political sphere, thereby relying on a structure-consciousness-action perspective to explain the connection between common objective situations, shared consciousness and political awareness (Devine, Savage et al. 2005). Political identification has thus been one of the main factors framing the traditional middle class as a grouping with a common position in the political class struggle (Angelcos, Perez et al. 2006:162). In this vein, Tironi used the concept of "symbolic identification" for describing how the different occupational categories constituting this class (professionals, civil servants and traders) were connected only by a symbolism of the State, public education and republican values and common political interest. Symbolic unification was thus based on shared politics and a common opposition to other classes (the oligarchy and working class). As Lommitz and Melnick explain, in agreement with Tironi:

The middle class in Chile would thus be the product of an effort to symbolically unify social aggregates that are materially dissimilar, for the purposes of political mobilisation". (Lommitz and Melnik, Ibid: 16)

Elements such as civil service employment, public education or networks of reciprocity and political participation emerge from here as central dimensions of traditional middle-class identity. Hence, it is understandable that the middle class has often been associated with Chileans' republican and political history. Indeed, this notion of the traditional middle class as active political actors associated with public administration is still present in some analysis of contemporary middle class, defining what some authors have called a "nostalgic" relation with the traditional middle classes[3].

The emergent middle class

There is a consensus that the military coup of 1973 and the advent of an authoritarian government (1973-1989), with its agenda of neoliberal reforms, marked a turning point in the evolution of the Chilean middle class (Lomnitz and Melnick 1991; Martínez and León 2001; Torche and Worlmald 2004; Angelcos, Perez et al. 2006; Atria 2006; Bazoret 2006). Indeed, policies such as mainstreaming of the State apparatus, promotion of a free-market economy or suppression of political and civic rights, among other elements, underpinned a major change in the Chilean class structure in general, and the middle classes in particular (Martinez and Leon, 2001). In terms of traditional middle classes, State downsizing reduced public employment, with civil service functions being absorbed by independent and private service sectors. Furthermore, political and economic transformations brought about a decline in their traditional sources of social mobility and privileges and, therefore, a dilution of their class awareness (Martínez and León 2001; Angelcos, Perez et al. 2006; Bazoret 2006; MANZANO 2006). Indeed, on this basis, Bazoret argued that these transformations translated into the disappearance of the middle class as such and its substitution by a group of heterogeneous "middle sectors".

> "The strong diversification of the middle sectors during the 1980s, in combination with a deep rupture in their identity, symbols and resources, leads us to consider the possibility that this group has in fact disappeared, having either been subsumed into popular sectors through impoverishment or scaled towards the well-off classes that benefited from restructuring during the dictatorship years. This is why we talk of a single "middle class" until the 1960s and then switch to the plural thereafter, to reflect increasing heterogeneity and, above all, diversification of identities during recent decades" (Ibid: 86).

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[3] This term was used by Maria Luisa Mendez in a workshop on Middle class and Culture in Chile. Universidad Diego Portales, January 2009.

In a similar vein, but taking a more ethnographic approach, Lomnitz and Melnik (1991), described in the early 1990s how the changes in the political and economic system eroded "traditional" middle class identities. Their work focused on the experience of a group of teachers, analysing how the changes stemming from neoliberal policies affected their working conditions, social resources (social capital) and symbolic representation.

Stratification and opportunities

While the traditional middle class employment structure and source of identity declined, those changes brought a parallel increase in private-sector services positions governed by a more flexible system of employment based on individual incentives (Martínez and León 2001). It is possible to talk, therefore, of the emergence of a new "type" of middle class sectors during the 1980s. Three elements may be considered central here. The first relates to changes in stratification patterns, particularly the substantial increase in the volume of workers defined as private-sector employees and semi-independent workers (Ibid2001). Although some of these jobs were linked to the decrease in public employment, most of the increase reflected a natural increase in private-sector services employment. As measured by the magnitude of new private-sector employment, as a whole, since the late 1980s the middle classes have increased systematically. Indeed, between 1977 and 2001, this group increased by more than 100 percent in absolute terms. As Martínez and León said: *"In 25 years the number of positions with mid-level salaries increased from 550,000 to 1,400,000"* (2001:16). Those changes also reflected the consolidation of a salaried employment structure characterised by an increase in salaried work in the private sector.

Shifts in stratification patterns were also connected with changes in social mobility and educational opportunities (Torche 2003; Torche and Worlmald 2004; Torche 2005). First, in terms of the middle classes, Torche et al show a systematic increase in private-sector service employees, who, as a group, also show a substantial increase in technical and tertiary education (Ibid: 18). The number of positions in services employment (professional and technical sectors) has thus increased systematically during last 20 years, as has the petit bourgeoisie. Second, in terms of social mobility, the authors found a growing social fluidity, mainly among the middle sectors (lower service positions and petit bourgeoisie).

Figure 1. Social stratification by social-occupational categories, 1971-2000*(Percentages)*
Source: (Torche and Worlmald 2004)

Social categories	1971	1980	1990	1995	2000	Percentage variation 1971-2000
I. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	18.3	14.4	18.8	15	13.9	+4.4
II. Outside agriculture	81.7	85.6	80.3	84.4	84.7	***
1. Business owners	1.3	1.4	3	2.7	2.4	+1.1
2. Middle sectors	**26.2**	**33.5**	**31.3**	**36.2**	**37.2**	**+11**
a. Public wage earners	*18.4*	*9*	*6.9*	*6.8*	*7.4*	*-1.6*
b. Private wage earners	**	*15*	*18.2*	*21.3*	*21.6*	*+ 6.3*
c. Independent workers	*7.8*	*9*	*6.3*	*8.1*	*8.2*	*+0.4*
3. Traditional crafts workers	6.2	5.2	5.2	5.4	5.5	-0.7
4. Working class	34.5	20.3	28	28.9	28.8	+5.9
5. "Marginal" group	9.6	10.4	12.5	11.2	11	+1.4
III. Others	25.8	14.7	1	0.6	1.4	***
IV. Total	100	100	100	100	100	

What is especially relevant here is the considerable fluidity between lower and upper service sectors. This rate of social mobility contrasts, however, with the pervasive social inequalities expressed in the relative closure of the elite. Hence, upward social mobility works principally within middle- and lower-class sectors. As Torche said:

> *"The pattern of mobility closely follows the type of inequality that characterizes Chile. High hierarchical barriers to mobility, especially between the top stratum and the rest of the class structure, are combined with weak horizontal barriers between classes that are close in terms of SES (Socio Economic Status)".* *(Torche 2005: 444)*

Third, shifts in social mobility and employment went hand-in-hand with changes in material well-being and social opportunities. On the one hand, middle-class income and material well-being rose systematically (Tironi 1999; Larrañaga 2003; Tironi 2003); through access to new services and goods such as clothes, furniture or private housing. It is important to remark, however, that the economic distance between these sectors and the upper classes was maintained. This process has been strongly linked to the expansion of retail industries, particularly broader availability of consumer credit and the emergence of new retail centres, almost all of which, as Coloma (2002) points out, targeted the middle class. On the other hand, new forms of social vulnerability emerged mainly as a result of changes in the labour market and social services (Wormald, 2003 and 2002; UNDP 1998). Furthermore, the labour market became more flexible and fragmented, mainly because of both neo-liberal policies and the diffusion of

post-Fordist logics (Tokman 1998). Within this context, the middle class saw their access to public social services shrink, as a consequence of new highly focalised social policies (which were reoriented towards the poorest sectors of the population) and the privatisation of basic services such as health, education and social insurance (Wormald and Ruiz Tagle 1999); see also Tokman, 1999, Wormald, 2002, Martínez and León, 2000).

The icons of the market society

In recent years, and partly as a result of these transformations, the "emergent middle classes" have also become a recurrent theme in public and political discourses, widely labelled as icons of the contemporary Chilean market society. The middle class has been central to public and political interpretations of contemporary Chile, appearing as a symbol of the "new market society", embodying both the best and the worst of the Chilean model. According to some authors, including Tomas Moulian (1997), the emergent middle classes —which he refers to as the "credit card citizens"— embody the worst aspects of marketisation because they are individualistic, consumerist and socially ambitious. Associated with this, there is an increasing sense of vulnerability in which consumption has substituted traditional political compromise for the primacy of individualised social experiences (Moulian 1997; Angelcos, Perez et al. 2006; MANZANO 2006). Based on this analysis, it has been argued that these conditions also imply a weakness of "class consciousness" and possibilities of social action (Martínez and León 2001; Torche and Worlmald 2004; Angelcos, Perez et al. 2006; MANZANO 2006). Other authors have interpreted these transformations more positively, describing the changes in the middle class as a sign of modernisation and an extension of elite lifestyles (Tironi 1999; 2003).

The contemporary middle class has been also part of political discourses. Indeed, understanding and decoding the preferences of this "new" group has become a central political task (Landarreche 2002). The middle class thus figures as a reference group that may include a large swathe of the population. Because of this, political discourses aimed at attracting this sector reinforce their common understanding of themselves as a socially ambitious but vulnerable group. For example, in the 2004 presidential campaign, the right-wing candidate, Joaquin Lavin, defined his campaign as focused on the middle class:

> "I think that it is very important that we have a clear discourse about the middle class. I feel that today in Chile the middle class has many troubles, it has aspirations but many problems". (Lavin El Mercurio, 2004)

The emergent middle classes have also been a common reference in the mass media and advertising. The middle-class's label of "aspirational" (socially ambitious) and its relation with consumption have been analysed at length in magazines, newspapers and books that seek to typify this group in connection with Chile's recent transformations.[4] Advertising is another arena for descriptions of the middle class. A famous character of late 1990s advertising, Johnny Faundez, was created by an agency to spread the use of mobile phones in the middle class. Faundez was comically portrayed as a feisty and upwardly mobile manual worker conducting his business with a mobile phone at a time when its use was associated with better-off sectors. As the journalist explained:

> "In many ways Faundez represents the best of today's average Chilean: ambitious, emergent, an entrepreneur, unafraid of consumption, and smart". (Que Pasa magazine, 2004)

During those years, Faundez become a widespread icon of this emergent middle class's lifestyle; symbolising people who have successfully navigated the rules of the new market society.

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A genealogy of Chile's contemporary middle class may thus be traced along two separate paths. On the one hand, much research has focused on stratification patterns, processes of social mobility and the distribution of opportunities and social resources. Most of these analyses focus on occupational positions as a proxy for class structures and opportunities. It is therefore unsurprising that culture is approached predominantly as a derivative of structural changes, mainly in employment. On the other hand, the emergent middle classes have been extensively described by public scholars, in politics and in the mass media. Most of these descriptions refer to this group as one of the major icons of Chilean neoliberal modernisation and they tend to focus on connections between socio-political change and the middle classes identities, rather than on how people experience class and social change.

These two traditional approaches to middle class in Chile are seriously flawed, however, in terms of explaining the role of culture in contemporary Chilean middle-class formation. This is because they tend to rely on a dualist approach to class

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[4] See for example: Tironi, E. (1999). La irrupción de las masas y el malestar de las elites. Santiago, Grijalbo, Halpern, P. (2002). Los Nuevos Chilenos y La Batalla Por Sus Preferencias. Santiago, Planeta.

analysis, in which culture is conceived mainly as the consequence of structural transformation and not as a central dimension of class in its own right (Devine and Savage 2005). In other words, they understand culture mainly as the "consequence" of structural change —not as a key aspect of class— and hence treat cultural change mostly as a dependent variable explained by external factors.

The centrality of the "dependent variable" approach to culture may be related to the systematic neglect of cultural aspects of consumption in analyses of contemporary Chilean class. In fact, the downplay of consumption can be found in most of the work on middle class discussed earlier (see previous sections in this chapter). In terms of stratification analysis, former research has focused almost exclusively on (mainly quantitative) analyses of occupations and of educational as well as economic assets without considering consumption as a relevant element of analysis (See for example, Torche and Wormald 2004, Martinez 2001). Similarly, public accounts of contemporary middle classes have also treated consumption only as a sign of structural changes and not as a space of cultural production on its own. This view can be found, for instance, in Tironi's and Moulian's accounts in which consumption is portrayed either as an indicator of modernization and wealth (Tironi 1999) or as a space of "alienation" that have replaced the political commitment of the middle class (Moulian 1997). Finally, a similar point can be argued in terms of the absence of empirical research about the meanings of home and home ownership. Indeed, existent works have only focused on home ownership as indicators of economic development (Tironi 2002) without exploring its connection with the production of class cultures.

As the next chapter will discuss, this thesis argues for a different theoretical approach to class culture research. It argues for an effort to transcend dualism by taking a bottom-up approach to class analysis. In doing so, it attempts to overcome some of the theoretical limitations of current descriptions of class identities in contemporary Chile by broadening the focus to include research into everyday life. To this end, it draws upon more contemporary approaches to class cultures (related to the work of Bourdieu) and introduces some other theoretical backgrounds that have traditionally taken a more "actor-based" approach to cultural creation.

By moving in this direction, this thesis construes the interpretations of class and social change mentioned earlier as another empirical dimension through which class is performed in contemporary Chile, rather than as theoretical frameworks in themselves. In other words, following Bourdieu's argument on the power of class analysis in creating class (Bourdieu 1986), the performative power of class labels and discourse descriptions will be discussed as a further area in which class is produced in contemporary Chile.

2. Researching class cultures in Chile

This thesis attempts to situate the foregoing discussion of middle-class culture and social change in terms of people's ordinary experiences. It is proposed as an empirical research on how middle-class cultures are produced in everyday life. It is thus aligned with a new generation of Chilean sociologists who have used qualitative and ethnographic methods to focus on experiences of social change in contemporary Chile (Ureta 2006; Mendez 2008; Palacios 2008). In terms of middle-class research, it also connects with a recent international renewal in class culture analysis[5] (Devine and Savage 2005), associated with a small, but increasing, group of Chilean scholars, who have approached class from a more cultural standpoint (Lommitz and Melnik, Mendez, 2008, Bazoret 2006).[6] Central to this is the work of Mendez on middle-class identities (2008), which draws on recent literature on class cultures to explore relations between class boundaries, horizontal differentiation, individualisation and different types of authenticity in the Chilean middle class. The picture that emerges from her work portrays relations between class and culture as far more complex than scholars and the mass media often present them. Research of this type has moved some authors to posit that a cultural approach to class may become a central tool for explaining the new and rather complex ways in which class and inequality are being produced in Chile and Latin America (Sémbler 2006).

Like Mendez's work, this thesis examines the production of the middle classes in Chile. However, it does not focus on discursive identities, but on the nexuses of practices, narratives and materialities that shape people's experience of class and social mobility. By taking an ethnographic approach, the focus is, thus, not only on how middle-class Chilean families make sense of their new social position, but on how this position is performed as an assemblage of places, objects, practices and narratives. Indeed, even though most of the discussion here revolves around families' practices and narratives, the empirical analysis also extends beyond houses and neighbourhoods by exploring the production and marketing of houses as central elements in the production of class.

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[5] Particularly the tradition of British sociology and the cultural shift in class analysis. Devine, F., M. Savage, et al., Eds. (2005). Rethinking Class, Identities, Cultures and Lifestyles. London, Palgrave.
[6] Evidence of this renewed enthusiasm is a research grant in Chile recently awarded to broaden different analytical approaches to understanding the middle class and social change. Qué significa hoy ser de clase media? Estructuras, identidades y representación en la estratificación social chilena. PROYECTO FONDECYT 1060225

This thesis argues for a sociology constructed from "below"; i.e., a bottom-up approach that looks at social life (and social collectives) as the outcome of actors' practices and understandings. As the next chapter will discuss in greater detail, class is approached not as an outcome of job positions but as an output of people's experiences (Thompson 1968). Through the process of moving house, the research explores the active role played by several types of human and non-human agencies (housing markets, houses, furniture, neighbourhoods or class discourses) in the production of class. Within this context, market-led transformations are treated not as causes of class transformations but as empirical dimensions through which class is assembled. Here, figures such as the "market" appear only as part of the ordinary experience of moving house, that is, in the form of housing markets, real-estate companies or shopping practices.

3. Thesis structure

The following chapter discusses the main theoretical standpoints of this thesis. The theoretical discussion represents an attempt to make sense of the fieldwork experience, in which moving home appeared to be an experience assembled through a large variety of practices, narratives and materialities. These findings led us to define a theoretical starting point that construes social categories and processes more as an outcome of ordinary practices than as pre-existent categories that "cause" ordinary experience.

Chapter 2 is divided into three sections. After introducing what is known as the cultural turn in class cultures research (Devine and Savage 2005), the first section discusses the work of Bourdieu, a background shared by most contemporary approaches to class cultures. It then explores some key elements in contemporary class cultures research that have a bearing on this research, particularly the links between class and individualisation, place and consumption, which are presented here as key aspects of the making of middle-class culture. The section finishes with a discussion of some of the limitations of Bourdieu's frameworks in a bottom-up approach to class, focusing on the role of agency and on extending some of his postulates in terms of a relational analysis of class.

In this vein, the second section of chapter 2 proposes three further theoretical bodies that may be useful in conducting bottom-up research on class cultures. It first examines some contemporary developments in social practices theory, which define practices as an array of interconnected doings, discourses mediated by materialities (Warde 2004; 2004). The second strand of literature refers to material culture and consumption, proposed here as key elements in the analysis of the middle classes. Within this strand are De Certeau's theories of everyday life and consumption, which he describes as meaningful practices based on resistance and creativity, and Material Culture Studies, particularly the emphasis on objects and consumption as meaningful cultural spaces that appear as central in the production of cultural meanings. The third body of literature examined is Actor Network Theory (ANT), on the basis that ANT may help to understand social collectives, such as class, as the outcome of human and non-human associations.

Based on this discussion, the third section of chapter 2 delineates the main theoretical standpoints of the thesis. The first of these has to do with the notion of relations, which are proposed as a central pillar of analysis. The second concerns the main mediatons —objects, places and discourses— in the production of class cultures. It is argued that mediations not only "represent" social categories; they are themselves

at the heart of the creation of social collectivities such as class. Based on these elements, the chapter concludes by discussing a working definition of class cultures as performed through practices, spaces, materialities and discourses. This performative standpoint, it is argued, makes the examination of class cultures an empirical question regarding the different aspects and relations that produce the experience of class and social mobility in contemporary Chile.

The third chapter deals with the research methodology. I first discuss the relevance of researching class cultures by looking at the home and home possessions. I then propose ethnography as a central approach for researching the everyday practices of buying and dwelling in a new house, arguing that this discipline has been widely used in other contexts for researching home cultures (Miller 2001).

The choice of ethnography is closely related to the thesis' theoretical standpoints about understanding the everyday life of the middle class and culture rooted within the home as a set of relational, local and materially mediated cultural practices. Given that ethnographic field methods are bound to study social life as a set of contextual and mediated meaningful practices, this choice of methodology functions as an empirical extension of the theoretical assumptions. The second part of the chapter focuses on the fieldwork highlights. It first describes Los Pinos, a real estate scheme, and the families who participated in the fieldwork. It then moves on to discuss some of the main methodological issues in the fieldwork, describing the research strategy used for the three interrelated areas that structured the fieldsite: indoors with the families, the neighbourhood community and the real estate company.

Based on these theoretical and methodological considerations, the following chapters of the thesis explore different aspects of the home-moving process. Each of these chapters looks more explicitly at a particular type of mediation found to be significant in the connections between moving home and the production of class cultures.

Chapter 4 explores the house production and purchase, focusing on the real estate company and the purchase practice. It delves into house design and production to explore the role of housing markets in the performing of particular types of middle-class categories and narratives. By taking a cultural economy approach, it explores two specific stages of production. First, house design and house qualification, which rely on an intensive deployment of cultural knowledge on class, areas of the city and people's social trajectories. Indeed, it is argued that agents and executives work as "sociologists at large" in designing real estate projects, since they deploy and perform narratives and meanings of class and social mobility. Second is the process of symbolic labour

associated with the house purchase. Here potential buyers "enter the market" with a complex interconnection of individual narratives, social aspirations and devices of arrangement and practices of budgeting and disentangling (Cochoy, 2007). Within this context, finding the "dream home" is a milestone in the making of individual narratives of social mobility.

The chapter concludes by describing the purchase as further stage at which economic and cultural calculations converge in the production of class, exploring buyers' negotiations and their use of an intensive set of economic and cultural calculations Slater 2002). The material setting of the showhouses is also examined as something that facilitates both cultural and economic calculations relative to family trajectories and social positions. Against this backdrop, this chapter argues that housing markets work as a space in which social positions —and particularly their trajectories— are negotiated and produced.

Chapter 5 examines the material culture of moving home: how new residents make sense of and appropriate their new houses. It is argued that home-making practices are a key dimension in which newcomers make sense of their social trajectories and perform class. Taking a material culture approach, it explores how the new home and home possessions play a central role in the production of new social positions. In order to do so, it analyses two complementary home-making practices: home improvements and decorating the new house. Improvements are understood to be all the changes that families make to the new house. Home decoration is construed as the way families arrange their possessions within the domestic space. It is argued that improvement and decoration are cultural practices that involve not only the creation of the "home" as a meaningful space (Miller, 2001), but also the articulation of social trajectories in terms of individual trajectories of social mobility and the emergence of a shared sense of "us" among new neighbours. Both elements are connected to a sense of achievement and upward mobility.

Chapter 5 is divided into four sections. The first briefly discusses some of the theoretical themes that will be described later in the chapter. The second describes how families go about home improvements, looking at different stages such as the planning, funding and construction of improvements. It then moves on to discuss whether the practice of home improvement relates to the making of class cultures, describing a central tension present in this practice: its dual nature as a collective and individual task. This tension is at the core of the trajectories and practices shared among residents. The third section explores decoration, first discussing how families approach their projects, using resources such as magazines and formal discourses on

taste and decoration. It also analyses the strategies deployed for decorating and whether decoration may be regarded as a gendered practice inserted into housekeeping routines. Next, the practice of decoration is examined in relation to the assembling of class. Two elements are explored here: first, the links between decoration, taste and authenticity, and the way furniture helps to articulate tensions between personal trajectories and more external, class-related taste references And, second, the role of old possessions in the new house, particularly the way decoration is used to perform families' trajectories of social mobility. The chapter finishes by discussing whether home improvement and decoration can be understood as key resources not only in the creation of home but in the shaping of social boundaries and trajectories of social mobility.

Chapter 6, the final empirical chapter, deals with the production of Los Pinos neighbourhood. In keeping with the overall approach of the thesis, residential neighbourhood is understood as the outcome of a rich cultural production involving a set of interconnected practices, narratives and materialities. Against this backdrop, chapter 6 analyses the connections between the production of the neighbourhood and the assembling of class positions. The first part discusses the relevant literature on neighbouring and middle classes. Neighbourhoods are understood not as given spatial or social settings but as cultural and social achievements that depend on a rich assemblage of practices, spaces, objects and narratives. Following the work of Savage, Bagnall et al (2005), (2005) and Doreen Massey (1995), I explore how the production of place —neighbourhood and neighbouring practices— emerges as a pillar of the production of middle-class social positions.

The second, third and fourth sections of the chapter examine different "neighbouring practices" in connection with the production of a sense of place and the shaping of a sense of "us and them" (Southerton 2002). The second section looks at street life, particularly the public use of squares and the street and the normative frameworks that regulate them. It also explores how public space use relates to residents' expectations of their new their life in the suburbs and their previous trajectories. The third section explores shopping life in Los Pinos, particularly local commerce, malls and supermarket purchases. In line with the previous part, it explores shopping as a key practice in assembling local place in relation to class positions. It looks specifically at two key aspects: local shopping and normative efforts to regulate Los Pinos as a middle-class residential area; and residents' involvement in a network of middle-class places around Santiago. Finally, the fourth section analyses associative practices in Los Pinos, focusing on Los Pinos homeowners' association (HA). It explores the different efforts through which the HA attempts to frame and improve the status of Los

Pinos, examining links between HA practices and regulations, informal social life and the production of class-related divisions between "us and them".

Chapter 6 concludes by exploring the relationship between neighbouring practices and the production of people's social and spatial position. It is argued that through neighbouring practices, newcomers produce an emergent sense of "us" and make sense of their new social and spatial position. In this line, I argue that the neighbourhood's production is a highly unstable everyday life achievement that involves a balance between shared everyday neighbouring practices and shared narratives and expectations of the new area.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion to the thesis. The first section reviews its main empirical themes by examining how practices relate to the assembling of class and social trajectories. The second section discusses central aspects of the house-moving process and its relation with class, starting by describing how people talk about class. This ties in with existing research on middle-class ambiguity and claims of ordinariness (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001; Mendez 2008). Within this context, in Los Pinos class labels are found to relate to a rather external, objective process of labelling which often stands in opposition to the rich array of everyday life practices through which actors produce and understand their social positions. In the light of this, some of the main elements presented in the empirical chapters are reviewed. It is argued that when moving home class cultures are assembled in at least two connected ways. On the one hand, there is a temporal production of social positions: class is articulated in terms of individual trajectories of social mobility; on the other hand, there is a more spatial aspect that relates to a collective sense of "us" and "them" that emerges from shared practices and common normative expectations. In this, elements such as place, external narratives and materialities mediate the production of class and the way in which inequality is produced and maintained in everyday life.

CHAPTER 2
Researching class cultures: a "bottom-up" approach

Chapter 1 discussed Chilean socioeconomic transformations and their relation with the middle classes. A "bottom-up" approach to middle-class cultures was then proposed as a way to enrich current descriptions of the middle classes and class inequality in contemporary Chile. This chapter moves on to discuss the main theoretical standpoints of this thesis by engaging with the broad theoretical discussion of the connections between class, culture and agency. Specifically, I propose a framework that takes actors' ordinary practices and understandings as the main concern of analysis. This chapter is, thus, a reflection on the possibilities of an actor-centred, "bottom-up" sociology in the analysis of class formation. The discussion presented here arises from the fieldwork experience, insofar as it is an attempt to deal with conceptual and methodological challenges that arose during the fieldwork.

This chapter has three sections. The first reviews the theoretical discussion on class cultures, describing what has been labelled as the "cultural turn" in class analysis (Devine and Savage 2005). It first focuses on Bourdieu's work; a cornerstone in contemporary class culture research. It then explores a number of particular topics regarding the formation of class cultures, namely: the individual experience of class and the centrality of place and consumption as key dimensions of class cultures analysis. After engaging with general literature, the section goes on to discuss some of the potential flaws in Bourdieu's approach in terms of conducting a work of ethnographic research on class. The second section examines three further strands of literature in order to enrich a bottom-up analysis of class. It first discusses social practice theories and their definition of social practices as an array of interconnected doings and sayings. Second, it describes the role of objects and consumptions as spaces of cultural creation, specifically, De Certeau's (1984) theory of consumption based on resistance and creativity; and Material Culture Theory and its emphasis on the material world as a central dimension in the production of cultural categories. The section concludes with a discussion of Actor Network Theory (ANT), which is proposed as a useful "method" for tracing how actors produce social categories, particularly through its understanding of the social as a set of unstable associations that involve multiple and heterogeneous elements (Law and Hassard 1999 ; Latour 2005). Categories such as class and social mobility are defined from here as effects of the association of human and non-human agencies.

Based on the previous discussion, the third section delineates the theoretical standpoints of the thesis. The first standpoint relates to the notion of relations, which are proposed as a key element in the study of class culture production. The second standpoint concerns the centrality of objects and mediations. It argues that objects, places and discourses not only "represent" social categories, such as class, but also function as a central component in the creation of class and class inequalities. The chapter ends by proposing an empirical approach to class based on tracing its performative and mediated production.

1. Class cultures

Even though culture has been a central part of traditional class analysis, theoretical and empirical connections between class and culture have always been a matter of academic debate. In their introduction to Rethinking Class, Culture, Identity and Lifestyles, Devine and Savage (2005) organise this debate on class culture research into three main epochs. The first concerns the attempt to describe the formation of class consciousness (mainly in the working classes). During the "golden years" of stratification analysis, culture —understood as class consciousness— was considered central to class analysis (Lockwood, 1959; Goldthtorpe et al, 1968). The common belief was that a shared position in the social structure underlay the emergence of common consciousness and, potentially, collective action. As discussed in the previous chapter, this standpoint is still a recurrent element in Chilean and Latin American class analysis; where class culture has been understood mainly in terms of a model of class consciousness and political mobilisation (Angelcos, Perez et al. 2006; MANZANO 2006). For Savage and Devine, the end of this first era in class culture analysis was marked by the appearance of several empirical studies that showed the connection between class position and culture to be unclear. As the authors said, from then on, "the prevailing view was that there was no tidy relationship between class structure and position and cultural belief and practices" (Devine, Savage et al. 2005:7). The open incongruence between class positions (defined as job positions) and the sphere of social values and practices determined what several authors define as a major "impasse in class analysis" (Crompton 1993; Devine and Savage 2005). Here, given the lack of theoretical and empirical tools for explaining the relation between class and culture, "culture" was increasingly excluded from the agenda of class analysis. Savage and Devine argue that traditional analysis of class and class consciousness was substituted, thus, by a focus on class structures as "employment aggregates". This branch of stratification studies was mainly concerned with an approach to class based

on quantitative variables, in which class was understood in terms of employment relations and analysed through multivariate analysis (Crompton and Scott 2005) As Crompton says:

> "In this approach to class analysis, class was assumed to be the independent variable, with only multivariable analysis having the ability to establish the relative significance of class and a range of other variables related to status, consumption, ethnicity, sex etc." (Crompton, 2005: 188)

In their account, Devine and Savage argue that the causes of this impasse in class culture analysis relate to theoretical limitations of the traditional stratification approach (Devine, Savage et al. 2005). Indeed, conventional class analysis relies on traditional dualism, which tends to define cultures exclusively as a "reflection" of structures involving a reductionist and "instrumental" view of culture (Ibid, 2005: 11). In a similar vein, other authors have argued that these limitations in culture analysis were amplified by the mainly "variable-oriented" employment aggregate approach that replaced it, in which culture still appears as a residual category (Crompton and Scott 2005).

In spite of this impasse, the last decade has seen a renaissance in class culture research (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001; Sayer 2002; Crompton and Scott 2005; Devine and Savage 2005; Lawler 2005; Lawler 2005; Reay 2005; Skeggs 2005; Allen, Powell et al. 2007). This new trend in class analysis has been connected with a "cultural turn" in sociological analysis and the vindication of culture and everyday life practices as key dimensions of class analysis (Bottero 2004; Devine and Savage 2005; Lawler 2005). As a result, class analysis has incorporated a wide range ordinary practices and understandings which have been approached not as a reflection of (employment) structures but as constitutive elements through which class positions are produced (Crompton 1993; Bottero 2004; Devine and Savage 2005). From this viewpoint, class formation occurs in a vast range of aspects related to people's ordinary experiences, such as consumption and taste, place, housing or individual trajectories, emotions and moralities. This revaluation of practices and culture as key elements of class formation is inspired by the pioneering work of EP Thompson and his definition of class as the outcome of shared experiences (1968). From this mostly phenomenological standpoint, class cultures appear as a dynamic production embodied in "real people" and "real contexts". Class, it has been argued, is framed in real experiences which, in turn, produce shared values, traditions, ideas or institutions (1968).

1.1 Bourdieu

Perhaps the single most important reference of the "cultural turn" in class research is the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Indeed, vestiges of his approach to class are present in most of the contemporary research on the formation of class cultures (For example: Skeggs 1997; Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001; Butler and Robson 2003; Lawler 2005; Lawler 2005; Skeggs 2005). Furthermore, his conceptual framework is still being discussed and developed by several authors (For example: Calhoun 1993 ; Warde 2004; Savage, Warde et al. 2005). Four key concepts define the central lines of Bourdieu's approach to class: capitals, habitus, field and practices. Bourdieu understands social space as the overlapping of several fields. Fields appear to individuals as a set of structured objective (capitals) power relations in which properties are relational (Bourdieu 1986). People enter fields by deploying their capitals or resources (economic, cultural, social and symbolic), which allows them to enhance their relative position in the field. Here, people's deployment of their capital explains their social position and chances of improving it in a given field (1986). The position in each field is, thus, defined on the basis of the volume, composition, and evolution over time of their different capitals and the relational structure of the field. In some of his work (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1986), Bourdieu mentions the existence of a general field of power or social space constituted by the aggregation of all the fields existing in a given society. This theoretical space consisting of the sum and structure of all capitals could be defined as the social space or the space of the social classes. Notwithstanding, other authors have interpreted Bourdieu's work by arguing that, although different fields may be homologous, they are relatively independent from each other and present different properties and power distributions (Savage, Warde et al. 2005).

For Bourdieu, fields and capital are not pre-existent categories but the outcome of people's social practices (Bourdieu 1990:53). Bourdieu thus defines the space of everyday life as the centre of the production of the social. Practices are understood mainly as bodily performances that are not based on rational or theoretical calculation but on a practical and embodied rationality (Ibid, 1990). He connects practices with capital and fields by introducing the concept of habitus. The habitus is a generative principle, a system of durable dispositions that generates and classifies practices. Habitus does constrain practices by defining the horizons of plausibility of people's practices.

"[...] being the product of a particular class of objective regularities, the habitus tends to generate all the "reasonable", "common sense" behaviors (and only these) which are possible within the limits of these regularities, which are likely to be positively sanctioned because they are objectively adjusted to the logic characteristics of a particular field". (1990:56)

Because it relates to actors' existing and previous resources (capitals), habitus works by connecting social structure and everyday life. In other words, the habitus mediates between structure and agency: it is the consequence of objective conditions but at the same time is experienced and produced through people's embodied practices. It emerges, thus, as practical and embodied knowledge, a common sense that shapes practices and representations (1990:53).

Bourdieu's understanding of class arises from the interplay between habitus, practices, field and capitals. Class relates to the existence of shared habitus which, in turns, relates to homologous positions in social space. Class is, thus, not experienced as a given category, but actively reproduced by people's involvement in different fields and their relational properties. Hence, class is not given but depends on how the habitus is deployed in different systems of relations.

"The position of a given agent within the social space can thus be defined by the positions he occupies in the different fields, that is, in the distribution of the powers that are active within each of them". (1986:724)

It has been argued that by defining those social positions through people's involvement in fields, Bourdieu's theory goes beyond a reductive view of class cultures as outcomes people's positions in objective structures. Culture emerges as a central space in its own right. Indeed, as Savage et al said:

"There is no primary generative mechanism behind class (as there is, for instance, in the employment aggregate tradition). The emergent effect, class division, arises for Bourdieu across many relatively autonomous fields". (Savage, Warde et al. 2005: 42)

Social space and classes appear here as multidimensional, with lifestyle and consumption key dimensions in the production of social positions. In his seminal book on French taste and lifestyle (1984), Bourdieu explores how different habitus and social positions (explained mainly by the amount and structure of economic and cultural capital) relate to different constructions of taste, lifestyle and patterns of consumption. Here, the principle of taste (related to the habitus) works as a key mechanism and central dimension of the production of class.

In Bourdieu's account, class emerges not as an explicit intention to label but as "mastery" of a given position, which relates to the practical deployment of the habitus. Class culture is thus "taken for granted" and works as a sense of having "one place", reproducing limits and distances from other positions. This implies the production of what is "for us" and what is "not for us" (1986:728). By taking this direction, Bourdieu's work distinguishes between class as a "shared position" and class as a "common political project". He further argues that there is not always a clear connection between these two aspects (1986).

It is worth noting that several elements of Bourdieu's theoretical framework have been used in Latin America. In most cases, however, the analysis tends to prefer Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus to the less "structural" concepts of field and practices. Tironi's description of traditional middle-class identities, for example, relies on different distributions of cultural and social capital as sources of traditional Chilean middle-class identity (quoted by Lomnitz and Melnick 1991).

1.2 Culture and the middle classes

Bourdieu's framework operates as a powerful toolkit that allows us to "override" a reductive occupational approach by installing a multidimensional analysis of class (Butler and Robson 2003: 35) Moreover, it makes practices and culture central dimensions for class analysis by treating them as active dimensions of class formation and not only as "labels" of structural positions (Savage and Devine, 2005). Because of these strengths, Bourdieu's theoretical toolkit has become a common departure point for much of the contemporary research on middle-class cultures. In the following sections, this approach will be further explored by focusing on three critical areas of analysis in middle-class culture: the emergence of an individualised and ambivalent sense of class, the central role of consumption and the centrality of place as a space of class production. These areas were chosen because they appear as key elements for this thesis.

Individual narratives and ordinariness

The cultural turn in class analysis involved a shift from the analysis of class as collective identities to the "individual experience of class" (Byrne 2005). Here, class cultures are not understood as opposed to individualisation, but as a salient element in the articulation of individual identities (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001; Lawler 2005; Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2005; Allen, Powell et al. 2007). Some authors have explored how

individual reflexive trajectories involve the deployment of particular types of class-related capitals. For example, parenting policies and practices tend to favour particular types of individualised, middle-class-oriented types of behaviour and promote certain class-based best practices or standards of parenting and development (Gillies 2005). Other authors have explored how class boundaries are reproduced through a rather complex process of moral distinction and claims for recognition related to the production and valuing of subjectivities (Skeggs 1997; Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2005; Allen, Powell et al. 2007). For example, Skegg's research has focused on how moral value and cultural entitlement works as a key aspect of class. Here, the entitlement to describe and appropriate other people's cultures is a central dimension in the reproduction of class inequalities. Skeggs explores how the association of moral value with specific social groups —with the concomitant projection of negative value onto others— produces contemporary class identities. These elements are illustrated with the struggles between middle-class images of moral worth and the demoralisation of working-class women's lifestyles (Ibid, 2005) and in the media's representation of the working-class lifestyle as "non-modern". Skeggs' analysis shows that the class struggle has shifted from the "entitlement to the labour of others" to the "entitlement to their culture, feelings, affections and dispositions" (Skeggs 2005: 63). In a similar vein, some authors have explored how the experience of class involves not only different regimes of moral worth or subjectivities, but also the mobilisation of emotions or "emotional capital" (Sayer 2005). Within this context, the way people value themselves and others works as a central dimension of how people experience class boundaries. As noted in the previous chapter, some of these elements have recently been applied in Chile by Mendez in her research into middle-class identities. In her study on the relationships between the middle classes and individual authenticity, Mendez (2008) showed a variety of mechanisms of horizontal differentiation among these sectors.

Furthermore, class identities do not always emerge as self-evident or collective processes of recognition; rather, they may relate to feelings of ambivalence, defensiveness (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001) or dis-identification (Skegg, 1997). Middle-class cultures may be founded here on a rather disperse set of individualised and subtle practices and narratives. As Savage said:

> We can no longer rely on the class paradigm of Marx and Weber, characterized by a class formation paradigm that explores how people become class conscious. People do not have the kind of collective class awareness that might allow one to talk of classes as these kinds of social actors. It is now necessary to invoke a much more subtle kind of class analysis, a kind of forensic, detective work, which involves tracing the print of class in areas where it is faintly written.

Above all, the innocence, the kind of unacknowledged normality of the middle class needs to be carefully unpicked and exposed. (Savage 2003: 536-537)

Class is linked more to a form of "individualised awareness" deployed in the construction of individual trajectories than to a collective label (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001). In their research on class identities in northern England, Savage, Bagnall et al (Ibid, 2001) explored the ambivalence of people's attitude to class. Even though people did not want to place themselves in class categories, they still used class as a central category to describe society and their distance from others. The authors argued that people's response to class labelling depends on how much cultural capital they have, since larger amounts of cultural capital were associated with more reflexive accounts of class identification. Ambivalence towards class categorisations signals, therefore, not the end of class but another way in which class distinctions are produced. In this line, claims of ordinariness and normality also emerge as an important resource in people's self-categorisation as a way to avoid being "boxed". This sense of ordinariness is also structured in class terms as it involves making relational judgments about other people and social categories (Ibid, 2001).

Place

Place has been regarded as additional key element in the production of middle-class cultures. Some authors have explored how the production of place-based lifestyles and shared dispositions does involve the production of class boundaries (Butler and Robson 2003; Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005; Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005). Based on Bourdieu, they propose that a key element of class formation is the embodied property of the habitus. Class is related here to a sense of comfort and "being in place" (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005: 8). The existence of fields also relates to the production of different spaces. A good example of this approach is the research conducted by Savage et al on Manchester (Ibid, 2005). The authors explored the relations between field and space by looking at how different fields relate to residential locations. They argued that people move to places in which they feel a greater coherence between their habitus and the different fields in which they are engaged.

This movement is ruled, thus, by a reflexive awareness through which people make sense of their stakes in fields such as education, work or culture; locating them by establishing relations with several other places. Residential location thus emerges as a central anchor in the way people make sense of and reproduce their social position by enhancing their capitals and seeking to feel "in place" (Ibid, 2005). Within this context, the authors introduce the concept of belonging to account for the feeling of comfort

provided by residential locations that people feel are appropriate in relation to their position in the social space (defined by other fields). In a similar vein, other authors have also explored the relations between habitus and place. Butler et al (Butler and Robson 2003) explored how middle classes in London attempt to enhance their capitals by to moving to certain areas of the city. Middle-class urban neighbourhoods and their process of creation are thus central elements of people's strategic engagement in different key fields. Place emerges from this account as a central element in the strategies adopted by middle-class households to position themselves in fields such as housing, education, consumption or occupations.

Relationships between place and the middle classes have also been explored by urban researchers in Chile and Latin America. In these accounts, however, place is understood more as a dimension in which structural elements are reproduced than as a dynamic of class production. The main argument here is that land liberalisation and real-estate market development, both spatial features of market-led modernisation, have created new patterns of urban segregation and spreading of new clusters of middle-class residences in traditionally poor and peripheral areas of Santiago (Worlmald, Sabatini et al. 2003; Hidalgo 2004). Within this context, some researchers have explored middle-class gated communities as constitutive elements of the emergent middle classes' increasingly "privatised" lifestyles. The figure of the gated community embodies a middle-class lifestyle which is based on sociability among equals and reminiscences of rural communities which, in turn, are a response to the spatial segregation of the city (Marquez and Perez 2008: 1472). In a similar vein, Swampa's book on Argentinean upper-middle-class everyday life (2001) explores how everyday life reproduces a social fracture that has emerged in Argentina as a consequence of neoliberal politics and the restructuring of labour relationships. She argues that, as a consequence of market transformation, two middle-class factions — the "winners" and the "losers"— have emerged. Her account focuses on how middle-class families —part of the winning faction— have moved into gated communities, developing a way of life that is based on a private model of sociability that excludes contact with any other social group. In this account, the upper-middle class have interiorised in their ordinary life the social distance that is emerging because of the economic model. As these analysis suggest, place is regarded more as a passive "intermediary" of structural transformations than as a dynamic aspect of class culture formation. This view differs from the work of Savage, Bagnall et al (2005) and Butler and Robson (2002) discussed earlier, as these two works engage with place in a more "active" way. This approach to place as a rather active space of class creation will be further discussed in this chapter in connection with the work of Doreen Massey (1995).

Consumption

Consumption appears as another key dimension of middle-class culture formation. Bourdieu's works on taste and consumption are, again, a central precedent in the associations between the spaces of lifestyle, consumption and class (1984). Inspired by him, authors such as Featherstone and Savage have explored in more detail the relations between middle class and consumption. Featherstone studied the links between cultural practices and consumption by looking at how new middle classes reproduce their capitals (Featherstone 1992). Here, new intermediaries of middle-class culture construct their identity by deploying their cultural capital through consumption and lifestyle. The reproduction of cultural capital explains people's use of consumption as a way of producing social distinctions. Featherstone's argument has parallels with Savage's research into British middle classes (1992). Indeed, following Bourdieu's work, Savage argues that the middle classes are produced through the deployment of different types of capitals or assets. Savage adds to economic property and cultural assets the figure of organisational assets. Based on these elements, he identifies a middle-class typology of three groups on the basis of their structure of assets and habitus: a liberal and professional ascetic fraction, a corporate-indistinctive fraction and third fraction with a postmodern orientation (Ibid, 1992:36). These different fractions differ in their position in fields such as consumption, occupation and housing. Within this context, the author explores how different groups present different lifestyles related to different types of consumption. The relevance of these research works is that they emphasise that consumption may work as a key aspect of middle-class formation.

Various authors have discussed the role of home and furniture in the production of class. Bourdieu, for example, defines home as an object that materialises its owner's habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 2000). Ownership has been also examined as a central element in the production of middle-class identity. Peter Saunders, for example, (Saunders 1990) posited that home ownership may have more impact than occupation on class, as it constitutes a key source of economic patrimony. Other authors, such as Hammet, have also argued that home works as "a central cultural basis for class formation" as it constitutes the main space for domestic life (Hammett 1995: 272). Similarly, several empirical —mostly ethnographic— works have focused on examining the relations between home possessions and the production of class differences (O' Dougherty, 2002; Bourdieu, 2000; Halle, 1993). For example, in his study of Australian middle-class homes, Woodward (2003) shows how decoration, style and furniture consumption is at the centre of middle-class narrative identities. Anthropologists have also studied how middle-class identities are produced within an intricate world of competing narratives and cultural practices that relate to consumption (Lietchy,(2003)

O'Dougherty, (2002). O'Dougherty's work is particularly relevant here as it based on Latin America. The author focuses on everyday practices and discourses of São Paulo's middle class in times of economic crisis. She argues that consumption has become a privileged part of the Brazilian middle-class identity, substituting traditional identities based on work position. Within this context, her book explores how the Brazilian middle class uses transnational consumption, such as imported goods and international tourism, as a form of class distinction. O'Dougherty's work focuses on the process of cultural and social reproduction and the way in which consumption is used for maintaining class boundaries.

Although there is no research specifically on consumption and class in Chile, some of the existing research has discussed this connection. Stillerman (2004) studied working-class consumption practices and family dynamics, finding that those practices are mainly shaped by intra-family negotiation and class position (2004:53). Similarly, Van Bavel and Sell Trujillo (2003) studied and compared discourses concerning consumerism in upper-middle- and lower-class groups. They found the use of consumerist discourses to be a central criterion in maintaining social differences in contemporary Chile.

Most previous descriptions of the connections between consumption and class have taken an "occupationally driven" approach, from which consumption emerges mainly as a class "marker" or the consequence of a given class position. In line with the main standpoints of Material Culture Studies (Miller 1987), this view has been criticised by some scholars (Longhurst and Savage 1996), who claim that consumption and class not only marks a distinction between "employment categories" but also has a central role in the production of new social and cultural categories. Consumption is thus a key category in the analysis of the everyday production of the middle class. It also offers interesting possibilities for developing a more actor-based approach to class. Indeed, as Crompton argues, this connection between consumption, culture and class has traditionally been associated with a more process-focused understanding of class from a more dynamic perspective (Crompton, 1993:148). A bottom-up approach to class needs, therefore, to move further in this direction by assuming that the material world has an active agency in performing class cultures. As will be discussed later, approaches to consumption, such as that provided by Material Culture Studies, may offer key insights for research focusing on middle-class families' experiences of moving house.

1.3 Extending Bourdieu—outside Bourdieu

Bourdieu's theoretical framework offers key insights for this thesis. Two elements of his approach are central here. First, Bourdieu goes beyond an "occupational" approach to class by giving culture and everyday life practices a central role in the production of class. They are conceived not only as reflection of previously determined employment positions but as key dimension of this production. As Savage et al said:

> *What this does is to recognize the integral role of culture (of practices and taste) in the structuring of class. Culture was not integral to any of the Anglo-American accounts at this time, and it should be noted that this gave recognition to the relative autonomy of cultural behavior and its constitutive role in the formation of social classes. (Savage, Warde et al. 2005: 40)*

As has been discussed, this awareness of the role of culture and everyday practices in class formation processes underlies much of the contemporary research on class cultures described earlier. The emphasis on culture also explains the expansion of class analysis frontiers into the analysis of individual narratives and everyday life or the role place and consumption in the production of class. A second strength of Bourdieu's approach concerns his relational foundation. By defining social positions as relational, it overcomes the limitations of subject-structure approaches in explaining the role of culture and practices in the production of structured social inequalities (Devine and Savage, 2005). Class formation appears here as a dynamic process; a system of inequality that is continually remade in everyday life (Lawler, 2005). From this perspective, the middle classes can be seen as a cultural project involving the production and articulation of cultural identities.

Despite these strengths, Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus has some limitations for pursuing "bottom-up" research into class cultures. This relates mainly to the limited role of agency in Bourdieu's explanation of class and society. In other words, as several authors have noted, this approach tends to support a more static view of social positions, understating the importance of change and agency (Calhoun 1993 ; Jenkins 2004).

In term of this thesis, this flaw connects with three particular limitations. First, Bourdieu's framework tends to reduce agency and social change to a strategic principle of capital maximisation. In other words, there is an over-emphasis on competition and strategy as components of social practices, as they relate to improving people's position in the field. Some authors have noted that this is consistent with his understanding of fields mainly as social games in which people try to enhance or maintain their positions (Warde 2004). Indeed, for Bourdieu, when actors perform

practices (and deploy their habitus) in specific fields, they are reproducing and maximising their game moves. This rationale leaves out several types of social practices that may not relate to people's attempts to reproduce or improve their position (Ibid: 16)[7]. Second, when habitus is defined as a more or less stable system of dispositions related to a structure of capitals (1990), the possibilities of agency are also limited to people's structure of capitals. In other words, because of the stability of the habitus, it is very easy to overemphasise the role of capital in the production of social practices and meaning by diminishing the role of creativity in the production of identities. As Southerton said, this interpretation may "deny individuals the scope to change their consumption orientations and social group identifications beyond significant shifts in their volumes of his three resources" (Southerton 2002: 172). In this light, Bourdieu's theoretical framework appears suited to explaining how social positions are maintained and reproduced more than how new social categories and class cultures are produced. This may limit the options for research orientated specifically towards new process of spatial and social mobility. A third, unnoticed, restriction of Bourdieu's theoretical framework is the marginal role attributed to the agency of objects in the production of the social. When it comes to class, they mostly work as signs that either "represent" social positions and their connection with the habitus or are deployed as mediums in the struggle to generate social distinctions. In most of these cases materiality is, thus, reduced to a signifier of social distinctions or structures (Rocamora 2002). These deficiencies in the account of the material world are also evident in some of research on class and consumption reviewed earlier, in which consumption is regarded mainly as a status marker of existing class positions.

Some authors have attempted to tackle these deficiencies in the role of agency by affording more room to agency and creativity in their interpretation of Bourdieu. For example, in their research on middle classes in London, Butler et al attempt to avoid Bourdieu's shortfalls in explaining the role of agency in the production of class cultures (Butler and Robson 2003). Similarly, the work of Mike Savage offers a "less structural" use of Bourdieu's theories by focusing on the multiplicity of fields as a source of relative flexibility in his account of the social. This flexibility is accentuated by the fact that people produce their position by actively engaging in "playing the game" in each of these different fields (Devine and Savage 2005). In this account, reflexivity emerges as a central element as people become aware of their position by playing the game (Ibid,

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[7] In this line, Warde argues that we can relate these limitations to an under-theorised explanation of the relations between field and social practices. Warde, A. (2004). Practice and Field: revisiting Bourdiean concepts. CRIC discussion paper. N 65.

2005: 15). Additionally, greater emphasis has been placed on the embodied and practical sense of the habitus; this means that instead of deploying instrumental rationalities in the fields, people seek only a sense of coherence between their dispositions and world around them. Here, the notion of interest is substituted by that of feeling "in place" and the sense of bodily comfort as central mechanisms linking habitus and field (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005: 9)

Notwithstanding the merits of this more flexible use of Bourdieu's framework, this thesis will take a rather different theoretical direction: instead of interpreting Bourdieu's categories more loosely, it will attempt to bring into the analysis other theories and approaches that have explicitly taken a more agent-based approach to culture. Even though most of these have not been directly connected with class analysis, they are expected to help to enrich some of literature discussed previously. This endeavour should be understood, therefore, as an attempt to "test" some bodies of theory in relation to class culture analysis by extending some of Bourdieu's standpoints. In other words, the introduction of other theoretical frameworks may be seen as an attempt to "customise" existing literature for analysing class cultures and social change through people's experiences of moving house.

2. Grasping everyday life: actors, practices and relations

The real life of society, provided by experience, could certainly not be constructed from those large, objetivized structures that constitute traditional objects of social science. (Simmel 1997, 110)

Based on previous discussion, this section examines three theoretical bodies that may help to enrich previously presented literature on class cultures. The authors discussed in this section share an attempt to move away from theoretical dichotomies in the analysis of how social and cultural categories are produced, by focusing on the central agency of "actors". The section starts by discussing some elements of theories on social practices; a body of knowledge that conceptualises the social as a set of relational, interconnected and materially situated ways of doing and saying. Next, it goes on to discuss the role of objects and material culture. Two elements are discussed here. First, De Certeau's (1984) approach to social practice, everyday life and consumption; particularly his call for a sociology based on actors' relations and subversions. Second, Material Culture Studies and their emphasis on consumption and material world as spaces of cultural creation and appropriation. The section concludes by reviewing some elements of Actor Network Theory, perhaps one of the most radical efforts in contemporary theory to construct a sociology based on actors and relations.

2.1 Practice theories revisited

The concept of social practice is not exclusive to Bourdieu's analysis; it is central in the work of many other contemporary theorists. Indeed, the concept of practice appears also in the work of Giddens, Foucault, Garfinkel and Judith Butler, among others classical authors (Reckwitz, 2001). Given the extensive use of this concept, some authors have claimed a "practice turn" in social theory (2001). This turn to practice is related to several factors, such as an interest in bypassing the traditional division between agency and structure; a renewed interest in everyday life; and the increasing attention afforded to the symbolic structures that constitute the social experience, among other elements (Reckwitz 2001).

Grounding their work on Bourdieu, De Certeau and Wittgenstein, among others, a group of contemporary sociologists and philosophers have recently attempted to systematise this renewed interest in practices (see, for example: Reckwitz 2001; Schatzki 2001; Swidler 2001; Warde 2005). Social practices are defined as embodied,

materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared understandings (Schatzki 2001). Three principles are central in this definition: (a) social practice rests on a universe of shared meaning and understanding; (b) bodies' performances are a central part of practice; and (c) the material world plays an active role in the construction of the social; materialities mediate practices. Although this definition is strongly connected with Bourdieu's conceptualisation of practices (Bourdieu 1990) it also offers several important modifications in terms of its approach to the social. Indeed, it proposes that the social world is better understood as a huge array of interrelated practices than as a dichotomy between actors and structures. Here, social practices are neither created by individuals nor imposed upon them; rather, both agent and structure are embedded in practices. As Reckwitz points out:

> *Agents, so to speak, consist in the performance of practice. As a carrier of practice, they are neither autonomous nor judgmental dopes who conforms the norms: they understand the world and themselves, and use know-how and motivational knowledge accord to the particular practice. (Reckwitz, 2001: 256)*

This analysis moves beyond the concept of habitus as the articulator of the relationship between practice and structures. Instead, here, practice carries its own reproduction, as it is constructed by a set of interrelated shared meanings. This means that all social factors, even the so-called structures themselves, can be understood as a set of ways of doing and saying. In other words, practices are not another scale of the social, but themselves perform different scales. Here, social change does not happen at the level of structural properties but at the level of micro-changes connected with different set of practices and the way they connect to each other.

A further key element of this contemporary theory of practices, also connected with Bourdieu, is the centrality of performance: practices only exist as long as they are performed. Agents in different situations always carry out practices; materialising these sets of nexuses in different times and spaces. Social practices appear, thus, as embodied; they are not just an instrument of meaning but a constitutive part of the social world. Bodies' activities are related to mind activities, but they are not a reflection of the actor's ideas or choices. This approach, therefore frames practices in terms of a practical rationality that lies not in mental process but in an embodied rationality that connects to the practice itself. In a similar vein, a third key element is the centrality of the material world. Objects constitute practices, in whose performance they are embedded. As Reckwitz says, "practices are generally materially mediated nexuses of activity. Most practices relate to the uses of things in a particular way and are embedded in material contexts" (2001:253). To some degree, almost every practice implies some kind of consumption; object use is central to the reproduction of

practices. For Warde, for example, consumption and material culture are not practices but moments within almost all practices (2005: 137). Here, practices such as dining, cleaning the house, arranging things, decorating or improving entail different moments of consumption.

In terms of this thesis, the utility of this approach to practice lies in the fact that it offers a clear way of grasping processes such as moving home by linking bodies, materialities, meanings and places in terms of nexuses of everyday life practices. Here, elements such as purchasing and moving home or neighbourhood appear, thus, as a set of interconnected practices that involve the production and reproduction, of social and cultural categories. Furthermore, practice theory offers a non-reductionist approach by defining social experience as a set of interrelated practices that are not driven exclusively by rational calculation or structural reproduction but by the rules of the practices themselves. In terms of this thesis, the concept of "social practices" may offer, thus, key insights in the exploration how class cultures are assembled through shared and materially mediated practices.

2.2 Bringing objects back

The first section of this chapter discussed the existing connections between consumption and theories about the middle classes. It was argued that a bottom-up approach to class culture necessarily requires us to regard consumption and material culture not only as markers of social positions but as spaces of active production. This section will discuss some theoretical bodies that have explicitly explored the active role of actors and materialities in the production of class cultures. De Certeau's work is very useful in this, as it deals with the interrelations between people's everyday practices and the world of consumption practices (1984). De Certeau's main purpose is to study the system of operative combinations that actors deploy in their everyday practices. He argues that it is at this level that cultural meaning and social experience is constructed. The author places actors, everyday life and consumption at the centre of his analyses. He criticises social theories that assume that structural determinations steer actors' movements. Conversely, he proposes that actors create meaning by appropriating social space and institutions with subtle tactics of consumption. Consumption emerges, therefore, as a key dimension of social life. As a way of using and appropriating things, for De Certeau consumption is a creative and subtle process that is at the core of everyday practices, working as an actor's way of production. As De Certeau said: "to a rationalist and at the same time centralized, clamorous and spectacular production corresponds another production called consumption" (1984: XII).

For De Certeau, the meaning of everyday practices and consumption are framed not only in terms of individual actions but as the consequence of a network of objects, places and relations. Like the theory of practice discussed earlier, he argues that experience of everyday life is therefore relational. This is because the way in which people make sense of the social "establishes a present relative to a time and place; and it posits a contract with the other (the interlocutor) in a network of places and relations (De Certeau, 1984: XIII). De Certeau takes language as a model to explain this relationship. Studying everyday practices is like moving from studying the system of language (a theoretical abstraction) to studying the way in which people actually speak (the concrete use of everyday language). This approach is similar to Bourdieu's critique of theoretical reason (Bourdieu, 1990). Both authors coincide that in order to examine the practices of everyday life we must describe the social world as actors make it.

De Certeau argues that the enormous amount of subtle and creative appropriations explain why everyday life has remained outside scientific discourse. The reason is that there is a tension in the methods between the generalisation of scientific descriptions and the way in which actors move in everyday life. For De Certeau, ordinary practices and local experience oppose and subvert social structures by introducing indeterminacy. What actors do in their everyday life is to move across structures and institutions (such as the market(s) or the State), subverting the ways in which such spaces are framed and making them part of their own meaningful world. This emphasis on creativity is one of the strengths of De Certeau's argument. By examining actors' ability to create the social on their own, his analysis of everyday life and consumption takes culture as an outcome of a process of production. His argument moves the research toward the more inductive question of how actors make their way through different social spaces.

De Certeau makes a good point when he places agency and relations at the centre of everyday life and culture. But this same emphasis is what makes some of his postulates relatively problematic. Two observations are warranted here. First, by defending the subversive nature of everyday life, De Certeau ultimately overstates the importance of structures, as the space where actors' movements are opposed. Here, everyday practices and creative consumption attain their importance only insofar as they defy and subvert the logic of the structures, the rational capitalist production. Moreover, overemphasis of the idea of resistance excludes from the analysis a vast set of possible connections; for example, the way in which actors use many institutional and technical devices (e.g., the financial markets, real estate market or police services) in their ordinary practices without subverting their own logic. Additionally, as most of

the analysis focuses on the practices of everyday life, it is not clear how the non-everyday areas of society —the "productive apparatus"— are constructed. In his account, elements such as markets, bureaucracy, local politics or mass media are regarded only as a background to everyday life. These limitations are particularly visible when the focus is class cultures analysis. Some elements of De Certeau's model obscure the agency of external elements in the production of class, such as external discourses, places or materialities.

Material culture and consumption

Material Culture Studies, particularly Daniel Miller's work, is a further strand of literature that may help to enrich and deepen a bottom-up analysis of class culture. Like De Certeau, he places the material world at the centre of the production of cultural categories. Unlike that author, however, he attributes an important role to the material world, which is considered a central aspect of the production of social and cultural categories. Miller's starting point is that both objects and subject are the outcomes of a process of objectification. Material culture is the outcome of actors' externalization but at the same time defines people's own social experience. Miller follows Hegel's dialectic of objectification, proposing a model in which objects and subjects appear in terms of a mutually constitutive process of cultural production:

> *the term objectification will be used to describe a dual process by means of which a subject externalizes itself in a creative act of differentiation, and in turn reapproapriates this externalization through an act which Hegel terms sublation. This act eliminates the separation of the subject from its creation but does not eliminate this creation itself; instead, the creation is used to enrich and develop the subject, which transcends its earlier state (1987:28)*

The material world is defined, thus, not as a context or representation of social relationships but as a central component in the creation the social. This approach is partly related to Bourdieu's theories of social practices and material world as elements that embody social structures (Miller 2005; Miller 2005). However, Miller takes this standpoint one step further by arguing that people actively make their social world through the medium of things; in fact, society can be understood as "a cultural project in which we came to be ourselves in our humanity through the medium of things" (Miller 1998: 169) Consumption appear, thus, as a dialectic process of cultural production in which objects shape people's experience and people, in turn, produce and appropriate the material world (1987). This dynamic approach to consumption confers an understanding of culture by bypassing dichotomies between agency and structure, or

objectivism and subjectivism, thus avoiding determinism. Here, consumption involves the appropriation of the material world, transcending the alienation that arises from living in material world that is not made by us (1997:26). The process of appropriation means that, when they consume, people do not deal passively with the material world but actively make it part of their own experience. Indeed, by consuming, people re-contextualise alien objects, making them part of their own specificity. Nevertheless, the material world has also an active agency in shaping people's experience. For example, objects may become central elements in setting the scene and defining normative expectations, Miller calls this principle the "humility of things" (2005:5): although objects may be subtle, they are central in shaping people's normative frames and expectations. Here, subjects and objects emerge both as consequence of the same process of objectification.

Miller uses the concept of "a posteriori diversity" (1998:3) to account for how people appropriate general processes in terms of their own cultural categories. This is not necessarily related to pre-existent cultural differences; instead, diversity emerges when people consume and appropriate general goods, structures and processes; diversity is, thus consequence of "the differential consumption of what had once been thought to be global and homogenizing institutions" (Miller 1998:4). These ideas are illustrated in Miller's books Modernity: an ethnographic approach (1994). Here, he studies how people localise and appropriate general principles of the modern experience. Miller's analysis of modernity is very useful for understanding how people appropriate general processes and categories in their everyday life. He suggests that modernity is related to an initial condition of radical self-consciousness and temporalisation, but it may lead to many different outputs. Within this context, a key social dimension in which the modern condition is experienced is the space of material culture and mass consumption. Miller illustrates that consumption specifies the rather abstract concept of modernity in terms of people's everyday life, thus producing particular cultural categories; here: "what an ethnography of modernity demonstrate, however, is that the same imported good commodity forms may, as acts of consumption, become the very instruments by which culture defines itself as specific" (1994:313). In terms of this thesis, this idea that consumption plays an active role in specifying general processes and categories, may be useful to analyse how other process, such as class formation and social mobility, are shaped through people's relation to their material world.

In the book Home possessions edited by Miller (2001), he explores some of these ideas by focusing on the house and household possessions. He examines not only the agency of people over their material world —the process of symbolic labour through which people appropriate the material world— but also the capacity of objects to have

some degree of agency in shaping people's experience. The book explores the complex moments through which people produce home even as it helps to shape their experience, becoming a "source and the setting of mobility and change" (Miller 2001: 4). In this vein, Clare (2001) analysed how furniture and home decoration help to perform social aspirations and construct an ideal "social self". Concretely, she explores how home possessions may express the tensions between owners' self-identity and social aspirations.

Material Culture emerge in Miller's work as an dialectic production that involve subjects and objects; that is, they are the outcome of a process of appropriation through which people transform and is transformed by their material world. The way in which these different elements connect with each other may lead to several different cultural "outputs", even in the case of similar starting points. These standpoints open key possibilities for understanding the processes through which people come to terms with their new social and spatial position, as the agency of people and objects is thus a key aspect in the everyday production of class. As will be explored further in this thesis, things such as houses or home possessions emerge, indeed, as central elements in the experience of upward mobility and class.

2.3 Radicalising relationality

The bodies of theory discussed may help enrich a view of middle-class cultures by focusing on actors' own production. In this vein, the third strand of literature discussed here is Actor Network Theory (ANT). ANT proposes a radical return to actors as it defines its main task as following their associations. Showing some parallels with Material Culture Studies, ANT theorists focus not only on human agency but also on other types of non-human agency (Latour 2005).

Latour (2005) posits that traditional sociology has "misunderstood" the original sense of the term "social" by using previous category definitions to frame agents. He argues that, instead of defining the social as a property, a cause or a factor that explains actors' movements, the starting point of ANT is to define the social as a movement, a process of association that involves several heterogeneous elements. Like Bourdieu, ANT emphasises the relational nature of the production of the social. In the case of ANT, however, every entity is the consequence of its connections. ANT extends and radicalises the concept of relations present in Bourdieu's theories. Indeed, for ANT, entities result from the assemblage of multiple relations between heterogeneous elements. Every entity (including class) is conceived as the relational effects of the association of several types of elements. Some authors has defined this

approach as a "semiotic of materiality" as "it takes the semiotic insight, that of relationality of entities, the notion that they are produced in relations, and applies this ruthlessly to all materials, not simply to those that are linguistic" (Law, 2001:05). Relations are, thus, the generative principle of the social world. From here, associations are described in terms not only of human activities, but also the agency of other non-human agents in producing social categories such as class.

From this standpoint, Latour proposes that instead of fitting actors into pre-existing categories such as class, family or neighbourhood, sociologists should try to look at how those categories are empirically created and performed. Elements such as class therefore emerge as empirical assemblages (of practices, agents, discourses, processes and things) that exist as long as they are performed. Latour argues for the use of performative definitions of the social instead of what he calls ostensive definitions created from external categories. The use of performative definitions helps to focus on the instability and heterogeneity of the social world. As Latour said: "the rule is performance and what has to be explained, the troubling exceptions, are any type of stability over long term and on a larger scale" (2005:35). The centrality of the performative condition of social collectives makes the issue of labelling a key political task, as different descriptions may help to perform different versions of those entities (Mol 1999 : 83). This line of argument bears a resemblance to some analyses of the performative dimension of class labels, such as that proposed by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1986).

ANT proposes the task of tracing actors' connections as the main goal of sociological enquiry. The starting point is that every element of an assemblage is not a passive intermediary but an active agent that helps to explain the final output of social categories. Latour introduces the difference between mediators and intermediaries so as to make sense of this process. On the one hand, intermediaries transport meaning without changing it; on the other hand, mediators transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning of the elements they carry. He argues, then, that collectives are mostly composed of mediations, not intermediations. Focusing on mediators, the emphasis is on tracing the vast amounts of elements that shape associations.

Acknowledgement of the agency of the non-human in the production of cultural categories is one of the elements ANT shares with Material Culture Studies. Indeed, as Miller has argued, both theoretical bodies share a focus "on distributed agency and the way it includes artefacts as well as persons" (Miller 2005: 3). ANT, however, differs from Miller's dialectic approach in its espousal of the principle of general symmetry, which means that any element can play a central role in the assembling of entities.

Against this backdrop, one of the main properties of objects is that they help to make social assemblages durable. As Latour says: "follow the actors in their weaving through things they have added to social skills so as to render more durable the constantly shifting interactions" (2005:68). Furthermore, by defining the social as the consequence of an assemblage of different types of agencies, ANT moves away from any notion of representation. Like all other elements, objects do not represent social categories or structures "beyond" people's experience.

In the absence of explanatory concepts such as structure, the existence of social collectives such as class is understood not as a cause but as part of the equation to be explained. In ANT, thus, the tracing of actors' associations is the main source of this production. It calls for loyalty to actors' associations, avoiding the imposition of previous categories:

> *Actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it. It is us, the social scientists, who lack knowledge of what they do, and not they who are missing the explanation of why they unwittingly manipulated by forces exterior to themselves and known to the social scientists' powerful gaze and methods. (Latour in Law and Hassard 1999:19)*

Although ANT has not been traditionally used in the analysis of class; it may be very useful for researching how categories such as class are assembled. As was discussed earlier, exploring how class is assembled means not only following human agents but also tracing the role of non-humans (e.g., objects, discourses or places) in the production of class. Instead of a set of external categories that have to be applied beforehand, the sociological gaze should trace this production by virtue of its own empirical assemblage.

3. Toward a sociology of relations and material culture

The last section presented a set of theories that may be useful to grasp the space of everyday practices and culture as central elements in the assembling of class. They were introduced as a way to enrich the prior discussion on middle classes with some new perspectives on a bottom-up study of class and culture. Largely, those accounts go beyond traditional distinctions between macro/micro, global/local and structure/agency by introducing an alternative set of concepts such as practices, consumption or the extended principle of relationality of the actor networks. This section will attempt to articulate these elements in terms of research into middle-class culture in Chile. It does so by defining a set of theoretical elements as standpoints of this research. Rather than a conceptual map of class, the aim here is to offer some "epistemic pivots" that may help in the empirical analysis. Two key elements are proposed as starting points for this research. On the basis of these elements, the chapter concludes with a discussion of how these standpoints connect to an analysis of class cultures.

The first standpoint is the notion of relations and the call for a relational sociology as a comprehensive approach for dealing with the everyday production of class in all its complexity. This involves focusing on how social and cultural categories emerge as a consequence of nexuses of relations with other agencies. From here, this thesis will look at actors' production of class by emphasising the relations between the different moments and agents related to the process of moving home. During this production — to paraphrase De Certeau— it might be possible to find negotiations, trickeries, associations and ways of doing that often do not conform to pre-defined categories. This standpoint connects to Bourdieu's previously discussed relational understanding of social space (Bourdieu 1986). However, the notion of relation is used here by taking ANT's extended approach to relationality. That is, relationality is not only an attribute of fields and social space; but also defines the constitution of social collectives and categories. From here, the production of social categories such as class are understood as an outcome of a given set of empirical relations between human and non-human agents (Law and Hassard 1999 :2). Moving home appears thus as a process defined by the connections between multiple agents. This involves not only focusing on the experience as such but also considering its relations with other spaces and agencies, such as architects, real estate companies, house materiality, or families' networks. Looking at relationships thus necessarily means extending the analysis beyond the field site. This standpoint coincides with extended method ethnography and its call to "extend" the field in other directions (Burawoy 1998). In terms of class

analysis, looking at home and local neighbourhood means researching the role of other "places" too. As Latour points out:

> *In effect what has been designated by the term 'local interaction' is the assemblage of all the other local interactions distributed elsewhere in time and space which have been brought to bear on the scene through the relays of various non-human actors. (2005:194).*

Furthermore, this starting point also means considering the role of various agencies in the shaping of class: this is the second standpoint.

The second standpoint has to do with the central place of objects and mediations in the production of social and cultural categories. Objects are regarded here not as a space of representations but as constitutive elements in the creation of cultural meanings. By focusing on the active role of objects in the production of culture, this thesis engages with the much broader tradition of Material Culture Studies (Miller 1987; Miller 1994; Miller 1997; Miller 2005). The difference between intermediations and mediations introduced by Latour (2005) is central here. Objects such as the house appear not only as marking a new position but also as a space that mediates —that is, transforms and ultimately creates— people's experience of class. Objects such as house, home possessions, showhouses or neighbourhood parks are considered thus not only as signs of status or income but as central elements in the shaping of people's new position.

As discussed earlier, the role of the material world in the production of middle-class cultures is explored here mainly by studying the home and home possessions — defined as the "the single most important site for material culture studies" (Miller 2001). By tracing the connections between house design and house appropriation, this thesis looks not only at how people make sense of their new conditions through things, but also the key agency of their new material environment in producing this experience. The previously discussed concept of appropriation emerges, indeed, as a central element for studying home-moving as a process of cultural production. As Miller says: "To describe this gradual making of one's home, we can use the term "to appropriate". The term suggests that tenants have to work to achieve this goal and do not feel at home by simply living in a property" (Miller 1997: 14). Indeed, in looking at the experience of a group of families which buy and move to their new house, one of the central concerns will be to explore the varied types of "symbolic labour" that connect the appropriation of home and neighbourhood with the performing of class positions. This approach involves, thus, introducing an important source of variation and contingency in the analysis of class formation.

Besides the material world, two further mediations can be identified as central for this thesis: places and discourses. In term of place, and following the previously discussed works of Savage (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005), place is considered here not only as a container but as an active process through which people produce their social position. A key contribution in this line comes from Doreen Massey's work (1995). She argues that class and place are a dynamic and interrelated process because, when they make places, social groups create their own identity by producing cultural boundaries. Place-making practices, thus, do not necessarily reflect groups' pre-existing identities; instead, place figures as dynamic dimension in which class identities are assembled. As Massey said: "a social group does not merely make a place after its own (thus pre-given) image; rather the process of construction of the place is integral to the imagination and affirmation of the social identity itself" (1996:338). The production of place and class therefore imply each other.

A third central mediation has to do with the centrality of discourses. Like objects and place, discourses are analysed here as central components in the empirical assembling of class. In this sense, this thesis follows Bourdieu's argument regarding the power of naming in the production of class positions (1986). Here, as Miller et al argued following Bourdieu, "perhaps more than any other term in social sciences, class creates the very discourse that it purports to describe" (Miller, Jackson et al. 1998: 136). Considering class descriptions and labels central to the empirical analysis of class cultures not only involves exploring the sociological labels of class, but also, importantly, the several "sociologists at large" that contribute to shaping the social world. Indeed, in this thesis the empirical focus of analysis will be the different middle-class discourses and labels that mediate the enactment of particular versions of being middle class.

Assembling class cultures

Middle-class cultures have been approached in this chapter as the result of an active process of production. As a social category, class thus emerges more as an outcome that has to be described in its own production, than as a pre-existing category. It has been argued also that the production of class cultures involves a rich assemblage of practices, spaces, materialities and discourses. In other words, class cultures have been approached not only as the space of values and representations related to labour categories but also the whole set of practices, discourses, objects and places that constitute people's experience of their social position. This rather broad approach to class connects with most of the current stances on class cultures described earlier, and

their focus on the ordinary experience of class and class inequality (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001; Devine, Britton et al. 2003; Lawler 2005; Lawler 2005; Skeggs 2005)

In spite of these similarities, and based on the literature reviewed, two elements are considered with particular attention. First, class will be analysed as an outcome of an active production that involve a mix of practices, materialities, places and discourses. By taking this standpoint, the question of class cultures becomes empirical, as it shifts strongly towards describing the different elements and relations that produce the experience of class and social mobility in contemporary Chile. Second, this production of class is approached by focusing on the central role of mediations. Three of these are essential to this research: objects, places and discourses. As argued earlier, the material world is central because it helps to assemble definitions and relations. The material world is appropriated and deployed in certain meaningful ways, allowing people to make sense of and produce their social trajectories. Similarly, places emerge also as central figures in the production of class. Like objects, place is understood not as the container but as a key element in the production of social categories and meanings. Finally, class discourses and labelling also present an active role in shaping the experience of class. Here, the power of "official naming" is analysed as a central dimension in the shaping of actors' experience of class (Bourdieu 1986: 734).

The empirical analysis of this mediated and performed production of class cultures thus constitutes thus one of the central aims of this thesis and defines the endeavour of the "bottom-up" approach proposed here.

CHAPTER 3
Methods: moving home—an ethnographic approach

This chapter concerns the research methodology. It proposes the ethnographic approach as a prime strategy for researching middle-class cultures in Chile and discusses key aspects of the seven-month fieldwork undertaken in a housing complex built for middle-class buyers. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first section proposes the middle class as a suitable subject for ethnographic enquiry. This choice is closely related to the theoretical conception of middle-class formation as the output of materially and spatially mediated agents' associations. It is argued that an ethnographic approach may enrich this "bottom-up" manner of dealing with class cultures. The second part describes key elements of the setting and the families involved in the research. This site, Los Pinos housing estate, is contextualised as paradigmatic of the expansion of middle-class housing in Santiago and is thus described in terms of its urban and architectural morphology. There follows a broad description of the research participants, in terms of certain socio-demographic and contextual aspects. The third part discusses the main methodological aspects of the thesis, describing the access and research strategy of three interrelated areas around which the research is structured. This third section first describes the research with newcomers and the different aspects and limitations of researching in an indoor context. Second, it describes the work in Los Pinos public spaces and the research with the neighbourhood association. Third, it discusses aspects of the research concerned with the real estate company and house design.

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1. Researching middle-class and home cultures

The ethnographic approach is a comprehensive perspective that looks at social practices in their own contexts of production by involving the researcher in people's daily lives (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Burawoy 1998). Because of its flexibility and emphasis on context, the ethnographic approach can deal with multiple levels of analysis, including the material world and its relationship with social discourses and practices. Ethnography focuses on the localised and contextual nature of social meaning by attributing central importance to the relations and conditions in which social meaning is produced. Furthermore, it takes a multidimensional approach to research of social life, as it affords equal importance to the space of practices, narratives and materialities in the production of social categories. Within this context, the ethnographic approach connects with the bottom-up approach to class cultures described earlier, on the theoretical and empirical levels.

On the one hand, the ethnographic approach is intrinsically connected with the theoretical standpoints discussed in the last chapter. Given this approach's commitment to the study of social life as a set of contextual and mediated meaningful practices, this choice of methodology works as an empirical extension of the theoretical assumptions discussed in that chapter. In terms of class analysis, ethnographic and qualitative methods more generally have been used as a central tool for studying class cultures. Indeed, as Devine et al argue, this methodological starting point is connected with the cultural turn in class culture analysis (2005: 13). Furthermore, ethnography has been widely used in material culture and consumption studies (Miller 1994; Warde, Edgell et al. 1996: 308; Miller 1997; Miller, Jackson et al. 1998). Ethnography has also been drafted in to research the relational aspects of consumption and everyday life in developing societies (Miller 1994; Miller 1997; O'Dougherty 2002; Liechty 2003) and — crucially for this thesis— has emerged as a common approach for researching home cultures (Clarke 2001; Marcoux 2001; Miller 2001), as it is flexible enough to study the different cultural processes that connect the house and its inhabitants.

This approach also emerges as preferable in terms of empirical matters. The fieldwork showed the process of buying and settling into a new house as performed within a unique connection of spaces, objects, practices and narratives. Ethnography thus offered enough flexibility to trace most of these connections. Furthermore, by reinforcing the researcher's involvement in people's lives, the ethnographic approach makes it possible to move between and connect different practices and sites. Also crucial is the fact that an ethnographic approach seems to work better than other methods in terms of the contact and rapport with people's lives, particularly in the case

of everyday cultural practices. As ethnography attempts to maintain a "naturalistic" approach to social life, it does not impose pre-existing external categories, but relies on the researcher's ability to make sense of what is happening in the field. I noted that the informants felt less objectified when they realised that my work did not set out to "box" their opinions into a priori categories, but to trace, make sense of and "learn" why they do what they do. Given these considerations, the ethnographic approach offered a clear advantage for dealing with the different aspects and moments of the process of moving home. Particularly, it offered key possibilities for dealing with researching indoors, establishing trust and, therefore, gaining access to people's experience of moving home. On the basis of these elements, the outcome of this research therefore pivots on the flexibility of the method employed.

By taking an ethnographic approach, this thesis is defined as a case study directed towards analysing the empirical connections between moving home and the production of class cultures. It does not use these either to create a statistically representative picture of the Chilean middle classes or to propose any type of causalities between structural factors and class cultures. Instead, it attempts to unpack the complex set of elements that define how class and social mobility are performed through moving home. House and home cultures were chosen because they appeared as key dimensions of the production of cultural meanings, particularly class cultures. As discussed in the previous chapters, several authors regard house and residential location as central to the production of cultural categories in general (Clarke 2001; Miller 2001) and class cultures in particular (Hammett 1995; Bourdieu 2001; Clarke 2001). Furthermore, in Chile, house ownership has also been regarded as a key indicator of social mobility (Mendez 2002). The empirical value of this research lies, therefore, in its possibilities of producing new and richer interpretations of how social change is produced and performed in everyday life. Empirically speaking, the general aim was to analyse the house-moving process of a group of middle-class families by focusing on the different moments and actors involved in the process. By looking at this particular process, I aimed to explore its connections with the production of middle-class cultures.

With this in mind, the research was based on seven months of fieldwork in a new real estate development in the suburbs of the city of Santiago in Chile. I spent most of this time involved, on a daily basis, in the life of twenty families who had recently moved to the area, discussing and participating in their house-moving process. I conducted more than sixty tape-recorded interviews and compiled over 200 pages of field notes, as well as an assortment of additional material such as maps, magazines

and more than 400 photographs. The next section introduces the site, Los Pinos development, as well as the families to whom I dedicate most of the fieldwork.

2. Los Pinos and its residents[8]

Los Pinos is a real estate complex oriented towards the lower-middle income segment, located on the northwest side of Santiago. Quilicura, the district where Los Pinos is sited, was traditionally an area of social housing schemes. However, since the late 1990s, it has become a common location for middle-class real estate projects. Like other peripheral districts of Santiago, such as Puente Alto or Maipu, Quilicura has become one of the focal points of an expanding geography of middle-class housing projects. In general terms, this type of large-scale project has been highly successful in providing private housing at relatively low prices, extending the supply of private housing to lower-middle-income families. Indeed, such projects are partly responsible for the significant increase in home ownership during the last decade in Chile, where 72.6% of families now live in their own home (Larrañaga 2003). In recent years, Quilicura has become a main location for middle-class housing. The district is now the third fastest-growing in terms of real estate targeting the lower-middle class,[9] receiving a large portion of all projects aimed at the middle class. In the course of the fieldwork, over twenty such projects started up in the district and several others were already under construction. This hive of construction activity has led some developers to refer to Quilicura as the new "La Florida", an area of Santiago that has traditionally been associated with the emergent middle classes and epitomised urban development in the 1990s. The scale and intensity of this process has helped to change Quilicura by introducing a more suburban, middle-class lifestyle; transforming an area traditionally defined in terms of social housing, industrial parks and rural farms into a central milieu for families seeking a house in the suburbs.

At seven years old, Los Pinos is one of the oldest lower-middle-class real estate schemes in Quilicura. Los Pinos appealed to me for several reasons. In terms of access, I received an unexpected welcome, not only from residents but also from the real estate company and the homeowners association. This ensured rapid establishment of a minimum level of trust needed to start the research. Apart from these practical requirements, Los Pinos was a paradigmatic lower-middle-class scheme. Furthermore, as one of its stages was to be delivered during the months of fieldwork, it offered an unusual opportunity to contact new buyers. In other words, it was still in a process of consolidation, with most of its resident families in the midst of a crucial process of social and spatial mobility.

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[8] The scheme and the house will be described in detail in chapters 5 and 6.
[9] Source: Observatorio Habitacional Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

Figure 2. Los Pinos geographical location: 1. Location of Los Pinos in Santiago. 2. Location of Los Pinos in Quilicura. 3. Los Pinos local area and real estate design. 4. Los Pinos and distribution of real estate projects in Santiago (the colour red denotes large concentrations of middle-class schemes). **Source: Maps 1, 2 and 3 prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material and Google Earth Maps; Map 4, Catalina Pacheco on the basis of Observatorio de Ciudades, PUC.**

1. Los Pinos in Santiago
2. Los Pinos in Quilicura
3. Los Pinos local area
4. Los Pinos in Santiago's middleclass real estate geography
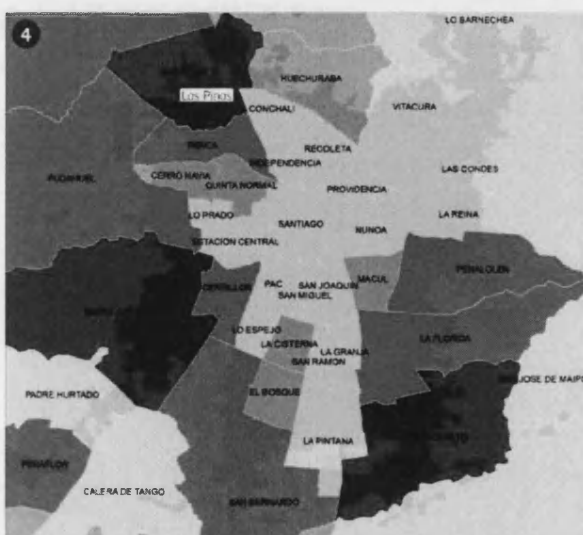
Boroughs
Supply of real projects by square metres in Santiago 2002-2007. (Houses of 71 to 100 SQ Metres).

3-50
51-500
501-3000
3001-9597

Los Pinos lies on the city limits, surrounded by social housing and market farms, giving the sensation of being on the physical borders of the city (please see figure 2). In terms of dimensions, the development has 600 inhabited semi-detached houses of between 60 m2 and 120 m2 in plots of approximately 160 m2. The company is considering building more housing on a piece of farmland owned by a business partner. When building work is completed in a few years' time, Los Pinos will have more than 1,000 houses. As Stockings argues, these dimensions are typical of this type of project, which relies on densification and extensive building to secure revenue. Indeed: "the small size of the plots and the use of two-level semi-detached construction allows the companies to reach high levels of density, maximising the use of the land" (2004:92).

At the time of the fieldwork, the housing scheme had two entrances, though more were being considered. The main entrance has a big sign promoting the scheme, which the company deployed for marketing purposes. This entrance connects with the broad main axis of the scheme. This is, in fact, the road on which the homeowners' association is located and where more people may be seen on the streets. The main avenue joins with a second wide street, which ends in a second entrance. These two streets form a route often used by non-residents to cross Los Pinos, on foot or by car, towards other areas of Quilicura. Besides these two main streets, the rest of the scheme consists of several inner, smaller streets, where the bulk of the houses are built.

In terms of spatial morphology, Los Pinos follows most of the patterns of emergent middle-class urbanisation as described by Stockings (2004). Its spatial structure is defined by several cul-de-sacs that facilitate the grouping of many houses. As she noted, this type of "close design" with small streets is aimed at faciliting the construction of further stages. In Los Pinos, most inner streets are cul-de-sacs, a design that gives the sensation of being inside a labyrinth. It also reinforces the sensation of homogeneity and lack of physical orientation (Ibid: 2004:106). This shape helps to mark out clear units within the scheme. The estate has several small squares with playgrounds and seats. Most of the streets have grass borders and trees. These spaces represent a significant difference from the surrounding neighbourhoods, which are mostly social housing schemes that lack such facilities. Even though the housing project is located on the physical borders of the city, it is well connected by motorways and public transport to Santiago centre, which can be reached in under 30 minutes. There is no formal commerce but, as it will be discussed in detail in chapter 6, there are some local grocery stores; a type of informal commerce used by residents to buy daily necessities.

Figure 3 Distribution of Los Pinos real estate: detailed map of scheme. The red squares show the main squares in the estate. Red circles represent guard posts. Lines show main streets. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material and Google Earth Maps.**
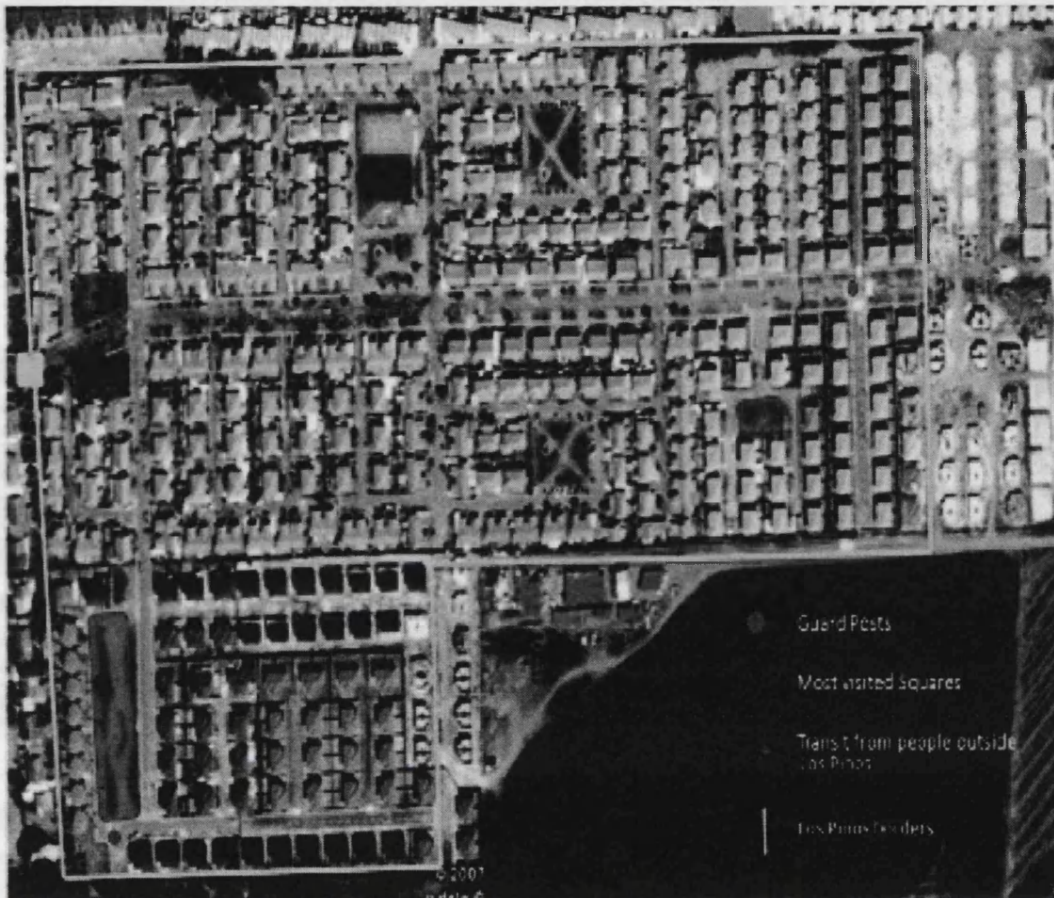
One of the distinguishing features of Los Pinos is its access. As an open neighbourhood, Los Pinos is legally defined as a *villa* (pronounced *vee-ya*): a relatively homogenous residential area with open access points. This differentiates the estate from the gated communities, another urban feature that has spread during recent years in Santiago. Whereas gated communities jointly own the communal space and control the access of non-residents, the community in Los Pinos does not have the option of privatising its streets and squares. It will be discussed later how this element was a key driver of the creation of the homeowners' association. In spite of its open access, street signs and guard posts form a clear, yet porous, frontier between Los Pinos and surrounding social housing *villas* (picture 1).

The houses that make up the estate are semi-detached units measuring between 66 m^2 and 120 m^2. They are set in plots of between 120 m^2 and 160 $m^{2\cdot}$, which some Chilean scholars have typified as the dimensions of lower–middle-class house design (Ducci 2002:13). The project has different types of houses that vary in price, number of rooms and square metres. Nevertheless, the external design and house features are

relatively homologous to an external observer. They have similar colours (pastels), garden size, walls, roofs and windows. Furthermore, typically of big real estate projects, all the houses have an identical construction style and materials. In terms of interior design, houses have two or three floors depending on the price. They have a living room, dining room and kitchen on the ground floor with the bedrooms on the first floor. Bigger houses have a third level with two extra rooms. All houses have a small back garden and a front garden with an unroofed parking space.

Figure 4. Plot and pictures of Los Pinos houses. Central plot: distribution of Los Pinos houses. The plot shows furnished rooms. Pictures on the right and left show Los Pinos houses as furnished by residents. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material. Plot: Golden Houses Real Estate Leaflet.**
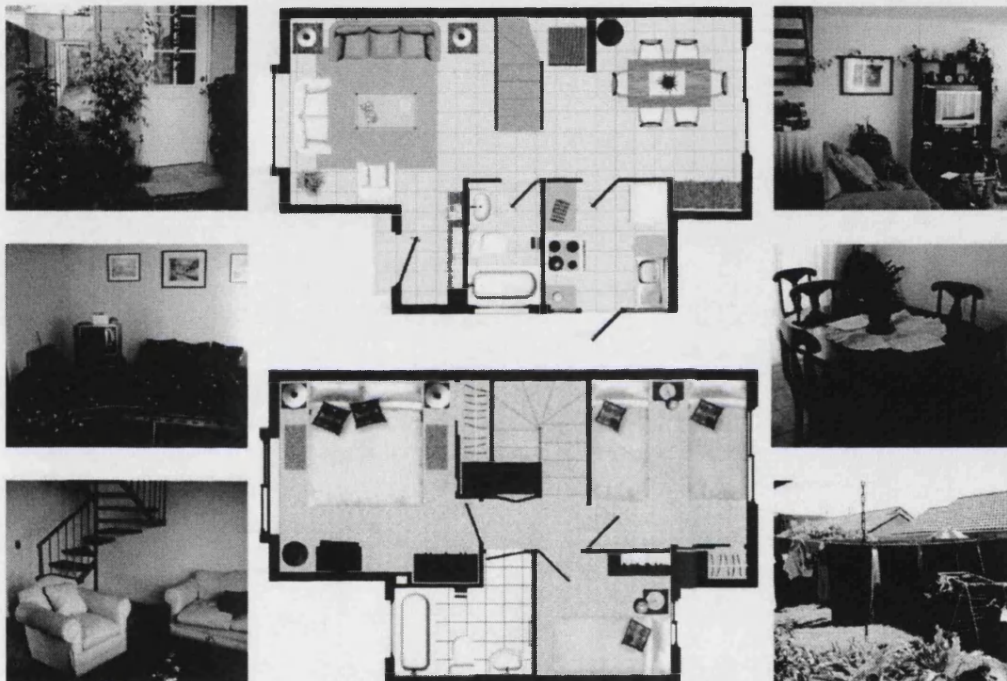
2.1 The families

The research focused on families who had arrived in Los Pinos in the seven months prior to the start of the fieldwork. Most of the work concerned twenty families of new owners, though I also interviewed three other families and had contact with several other people living or working in the area. Most participants were young couples who had just bought their first house. Most were in their mid-thirties with young children, although three of them were slightly older (early forties). The fact that all the informants were couples has to do with the setting. Indeed, as in many cities, it was relatively difficult to find single people living in this type of suburban residential area, as they prefer to live in the city centre or in apartments.

In terms of their stocks of cultural capital, almost all the research participants had some kind of higher technical qualification or at least complete secondary schooling. Typical qualifications were in accountancy, technical engineering and business administration. In Chile, it takes one to three years to obtain a technical degree in a tertiary technical institution, as opposed to a —generally longer— professional degree. For our purposes, this means that the cultural capital of Los Pinos inhabitants was clearly differentiable from groups of university-qualified professionals such as lawyers, engineers or doctors, who lived in other areas of Santiago. Nevertheless, the average level of educational attainment of Los Pinos inhabitants places them above the average for the Chilean population and in line with the educational level of their age cohort and with classifications of socio-economic group (see discussion below). Figure 5 shows the research participants' educational attainment in comparison with that of the 30-45-year cohort in the broader Chilean adult population and their socio-economic group.[10]

Figure 5. Educational attainment of research participants and the broader Chilean population. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material and UDP Poll (2008)**

	Research Participants	Socio-Economic Level C3 Age Cohort 30-45	Chilean population Age Cohort 30-45
Complete secondary schooling	25%	53%	66
Tertiary Education	75%	47%	34

In terms of household economics, I tried to pick couples with a variety of employment conditions. Indeed, in ten of the families I worked with, the women were in full-time employment, and in the other ten they were not.

Figure 6. (Graphs) Above: household structure of research participants (N=20 families). Below: Educational attainment of fieldwork participants (N=39 participants). **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

Married without children
Married with one children
Married with three children
Married with two children
Married without children
Living together without children
Living together with one children
Living together with two children
Living together with three children

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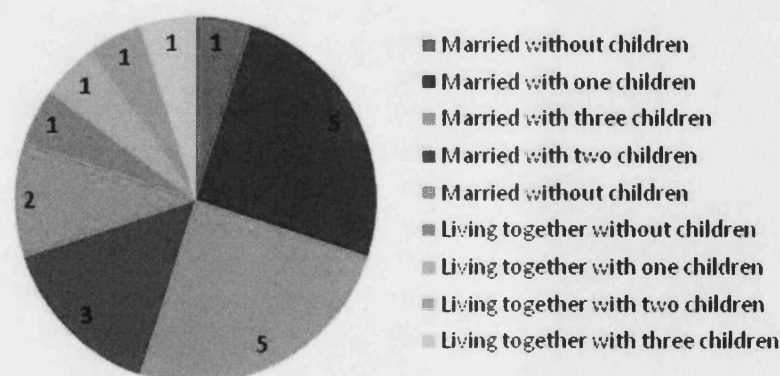
[10] For more details please see Appendix 1

- High school
- Technical degree
- University degree
- Postgraduate
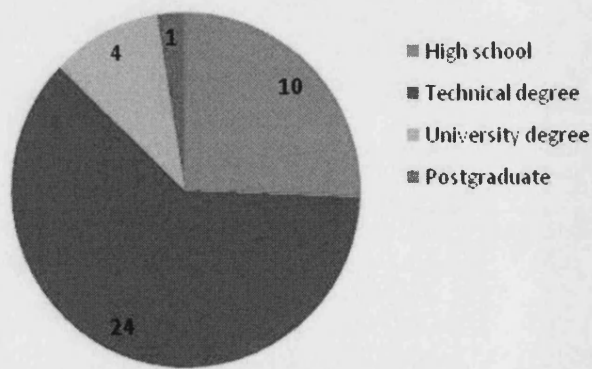
In terms of economic capital, as shown in the charts containing family data, incomes were distributed in average income deciles 6, 7 and 8, showing a distribution similar to that described by Martinez et al as a feature of private sector middle classes in Chile (Ibid, 2001: 20). This means that the research participants' family income situates them above the average household income level and within the wealthiest 40% of the Chilean population. Nevertheless, those incomes are still far below those of more professional families. A further element in their economic capital is the fact that all the research participants had recently become homeowners. The price of their house, an average of 1400 UF (GBP 28,000), places them at the relatively low end of the private housing market and differentiates their assets from other, wealthier, middle-class sectors, the prices of whose homes start at 4000 UF (GDP 120,000).[11]

Based on these considerations, then, the participating families would fit the label of lower-middle class. Indeed, they could be categorised as private middle class (Martínez and León 2001), as lower service sector (Torche and Worlmald 2004) or in the socio-economic marketing category of C3 (Corpa 2007). These families' financial position should not be equated, however, either with more wealthy fractions of the Chilean middle classes or with the middle classes in countries such as the UK, because they differ systematically in their stock of economic and cultural capital. In particular, families in Los Pinos differ from other, wealthier sectors of the Chilean middle class, specifically higher-income professional groups who do not live in the area. As will be discussed later, these differences were regarded as important during the home-moving experience (see chapter 4). Indeed, if any comparison can be made in terms of income and material conditions, their position may be analogous to that of the UK working classes. Indeed, as discussed in the first chapter, a key feature of these sectors is that they combine growing access to consumption and private housing with high levels of economic vulnerability.

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[11] Please see the following chapter for more detailed specifications on the housing market.

Figure 7. (Graphs) On the top: research participants' occupations (N= 28. Includes employed wage-earners, the other 11 participants were housewives). Below: household income of research participants (N=20 families). **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

- Administrative
- Middle Manager
- Owner of an small company
- Professional
- Secretary
- Senior Sales Executive
- Middle professional or Technician
- Middle Professions and Technisian

- 400 and 600 thousand pesos (400-600 GBP)
- 600 and 800 thousand pesos (600-800 GBP)
- 800 and 900 thousand pesos (800-900 GBP)
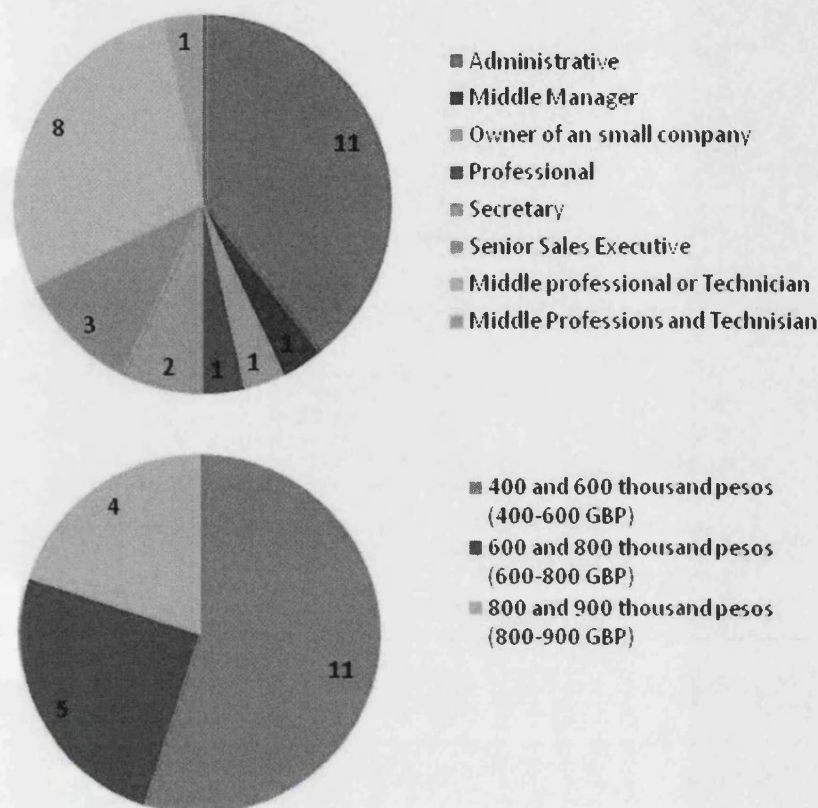
Considering their age, income and work situation, all the research participants would easily come under the previously discussed label of "emergent middle classes". Furthermore, as will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, the new house represented a milestone of social and spatial mobility, in relation to both their parents' situation and their own living conditions hitherto or not long before. Purchasing and moving to a new house was regarded as an important turning point in their families' histories and in terms of their accumulation of economic capital. The new home meant a change not only in material conditions but in their whole lifestyle. Thus, for most of them, moving home not only embodied a personal process of upward mobility but also epitomised the fulfilment of *el sueño de la casa propia* (the dream of owning one's own house); a Chilean set phrase that emphasises the centrality of home ownership. At will be further explored, the new house was one of the family's largest investments ever and was associated with enormous amounts of personal investment, not only in monetary terms but also in terms of time, emotion and even manual work.

3. Moving to Santiago's suburbs

Homes and families were regarded as the main object of the fieldwork. This did not mean limiting the research to the space of the home and family, however. In fact, as discussed earlier, the home-moving process was examined by considering other spaces. Indeed, the fieldwork encompassed work in three interrelated spaces. The first was the houses and the families. It involved researching "indoors" the different connections between the new house and its residents. A second space was the neighbourhood, particularly the public areas (streets and squares) and the activities of the homeowners' association. As detailed in chapter 6, the neighbourhood appeared as a key element in the production of both individual trajectories of upward mobility and the more collective emergence of a shared sense of "us" (and "them"). Finally, a third space concerned the design and marketing of the real estate project. In empirical terms, this involved researching in the Real Estate Company and sales office. Even though these three instances may be separated for analytical purposes, empirically they formed a single process. From the point of view of the families, the experience of moving home was part of one biographical moment while, analytically speaking, the three spaces were interrelated in the performing of class cultures. Indeed, even though the original intent was to focus exclusively on the new home, during the fieldwork I found that the process of buying and dwelling in a new house was deeply related with both the neighbourhood and the real estate company. For example, during my interviews, it was very difficult to establish sharp frontiers between families, houses, housing market, company and the neighbourhood as they were interrelated in my informants' experience and narratives. At the same time, things that happened in one area were crucial for making sense of what was happening in others. Because of these connections —as often happens in ethnographic research— my original research focus exclusively on homes and families evolved to include the space of the company and neighbourhood.

3.1 Approaching the site

I approached Los Pinos by three main, interconnected, routes. I started my fieldwork by contacting people from the real estate company. My original contact was my uncle who worked at the head office and introduced me to some of the salespeople working in Los Pinos. They were representatives working in the *villa*, selling homes and dealing directly with clients. Some of them maintained a fluid relationship with new residents as the house-buying process often took a long time. One salesperson introduced me to

the administrator of the Los Pinos neighbourhood association: a middle-aged, married man called Oscar[12] who had lived in Los Pinos for five years. From the beginning, I introduced myself as a sociologist studying "the home ownership dream". I also told them that I was attempting to understand "what the new house meant for the families". Fortunately, Oscar identified with my project as he felt it tied in with a positive topic, and he offered to put me in touch with families, showing me the "way of life of Los Pinos people". A key advantage was that my research originally tackled a process that was understood and experienced as an achievement rather than a problem. At the same time, my informants could relate to my interests. Indeed, during my fieldwork I realised that they regarded social research as focusing solely on social problems or politics, not on ordinary life. When I started talking about my issues, people were interested in my aims and the themes I wanted to address. This helped me to consolidate my access, as people were eager to talk about issues they viewed as part of a normal conversation; they regarded such things as a central part of their everyday conversations and experiences.

After these first contacts, I started to visit Los Pinos on a regular basis and help Oscar in ordinary administrative tasks, such as the upkeep of communal spaces, collection of security fees and the organisation of community events. These gave me the opportunity to spend time in the area, talk with Oscar and, most importantly, meet the new residents. Oscar became, thus, the main gatekeeper of this research. An accountant in his early forties, he was currently unemployed and working part-time for the homeowners' association. He was proud of being one of the "founders" of the area. Although I never interviewed him formally, I spent many hours at his home chatting about the *villa* and discussing ordinary issues such as payments, security or the organisation of community activities. He also helped me in daily issues, inviting me to lunch or allowing me to use the toilet when I was researching in public spaces. He helped me to meet people and gave me advice in terms of access. Initially he introduced me to ten families who had moved to Los Pinos in the previous seven months. Because of my association with Oscar, most of the families were eager to meet me. During the second month of visiting Los Pinos, I started to help Oscar to prepare for the reception of new families arriving that December. This task gave me the chance to meet another group of ten families who were just arriving. The original ten families plus the new families that I met during the reception in December formed a

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[12] Names of research participants, locations and institutions have been replaced by fictional names.

corpus of twenty new resident households that I continued to visit and interview until my fieldwork ended in April 2006. Those twenty families were the basis of my fieldwork.

My time in Los Pinos was spent seeking interviews, chatting with people and helping Oscar in his regular visits to the residents. At the beginning of my research, most of my visits took place in the afternoon —between 4 and 7 p.m.— but at some point I started to spend more time there late in the evening, in the morning and at weekends in order to interview people who were not there during weekdays. I visited Los Pinos regularly four days per week until the end of my fieldwork. During these visits, I compiled approximately sixty recorded interviews and took part in many informal meetings and chats. Scheduling interviews proved to be the only way to rationalise entry to a family's home, so I often tried to formalise my encounters even though I was not seeking a formal interview; I will explore this point in greater depth later. After visiting families regularly, I was able to articulate an informal relationship through sporadic encounters in the playgrounds, front gardens and streets. Most informants regarded me as a PhD student keen to learn about their new house experience. I also became involved in helping some families to do home improvements and with domestic tasks such as setting out and re-arranging furniture. My involvement in such activities proved helpful in building trust and moving beyond the frontiers of formal interviewing and the more stereotypical first conversations.

Additionally, I spend time in the sales office of the real estate company, which is located next to Los Pinos' houses. Here I observed selling strategies, negotiations between sellers and clients, and the ways clients construed their purchase. This last point was a useful input for my work with residents. After two months of these visits, most of the salespeople knew me and we started talking about informal aspects of the company as well as the business and the new neighbours. (For example, we criticised the owner and the company directors or discussed client stereotypes.) Encouraged by these encounters and with the help of my contacts in the company, I visited the estate development company's main offices and conducted seven interviews with executives and people related to the Los Pinos enterprise, such as decorators, executives, architects and the owner of the company.

These three activities —dealing with new families, participating in community life and conducting research in the real estate company— were the three main interconnected dimensions that constituted the bulk of the research. Even though in empirical terms these three dimensions are highly connected, for clarity's sake I will separate them in the discussion of the issues and tensions of my fieldwork.

3.2 Researching indoors

As discussed, the fieldwork revolved around twenty families who moved to Los Pinos during my fieldwork or had done so during the preceding months. Most of the data gathered on the families' everyday life is based on interviews undertaken as a pretext to establish a long-term relationship. In terms of access, the first interviews and contacts were arranged with the help of Oscar. As a gatekeeper, Oscar was a central figure in the task of building a relationship with the families of Los Pinos; without him it would have taken me much longer to build trust with my informants and it would have been almost impossible to be invited into their homes. Indeed one of the biggest challenges of this research concerned the difficulties of conducting ethnography indoors. In order to meet new residents, I would walk with Oscar around the neighbourhood looking for available families. At the beginning, I was worried that Oscar could introduce a bias into my selection, but later I realised that he was working on the basis of the homeowners' association register, which covers more than 85% of residents. I did also manage to meet a family that was not a member of the association, for the purposes of comparison; I found no substantial differences, however. Then we would go to the selected family's house and knock on the door. Oscar would usually introduce me as a sociologist who was doing a thesis in London and explain my project as having a focus on *"the family, the home and things related to this..."* His description was clearly ambiguous, partly because he did not attribute enough importance to my interest in material culture and the home as such, and partly because he understood my core interest as the fulfilment of "the dream of owning one's own house", as the research was focused on a positive situation (after all, most of the people I met were relatively new residents). After these first visits, I managed to work out a schedule of visits with the families who agreed to participate in my research. I used this schedule and these formal interviews as the starting point of my relationship with the families. One of my main difficulties was how to obtain access to the houses of new residents. Conducting ethnography indoors is regarded as a very difficult task, because notions of privacy and intimacy often preclude entering the home. As I expected, I had to work hard to overcome this initial resistance and secure more confidence. My greatest difficulty lay in creating links that would extend beyond the more formal instance of the interviews. In order to solve this problem, I tried to make visits on an informal basis, but it was extremely uncomfortable for both the homeowners and me. I also tried simply asking for the opportunity to spend time with them informally in the home, but obtained only arrangements for more formal interviews in response. The problem of researching indoors was also present in the extreme formality of the interviews. In fact, my visits inside the home were often framed as particularly formal instances; the owners would offer me a juice or something to drink and we would sit in the living or dining room, and

they would ask about the subject or the reasons for the visit. Fortunately, time and familiarity by themselves dealt with this resistance. I also made my academic purposes very clear and my willingness to learn about family histories and practices rather than making any sort of judgment about their lifestyle. After a few visits, most informants started to treat me more informally as I moved to a position of "learner". The informants seemed to enjoy the time we spent talking about their life and their projects and worries about the process of moving into a new house and establishing a new life. Offering to help in the garden and with home improvements was also a good way of moving beyond the initial distance and suspicion. I helped directly or indirectly in many different home improvement and decoration projects.

Another major issue was related to the gender dynamic. Indeed, my position as a man

Figure 8. Location of informants' houses within Los Pinos. Pictures on the left show Los Pinos houses. The map on the right shows the two main fieldwork areas in Los Pinos: the recently opened Barrio Norte and Barrio Oriente. Red points mark the location of the fieldwork participants' houses. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**
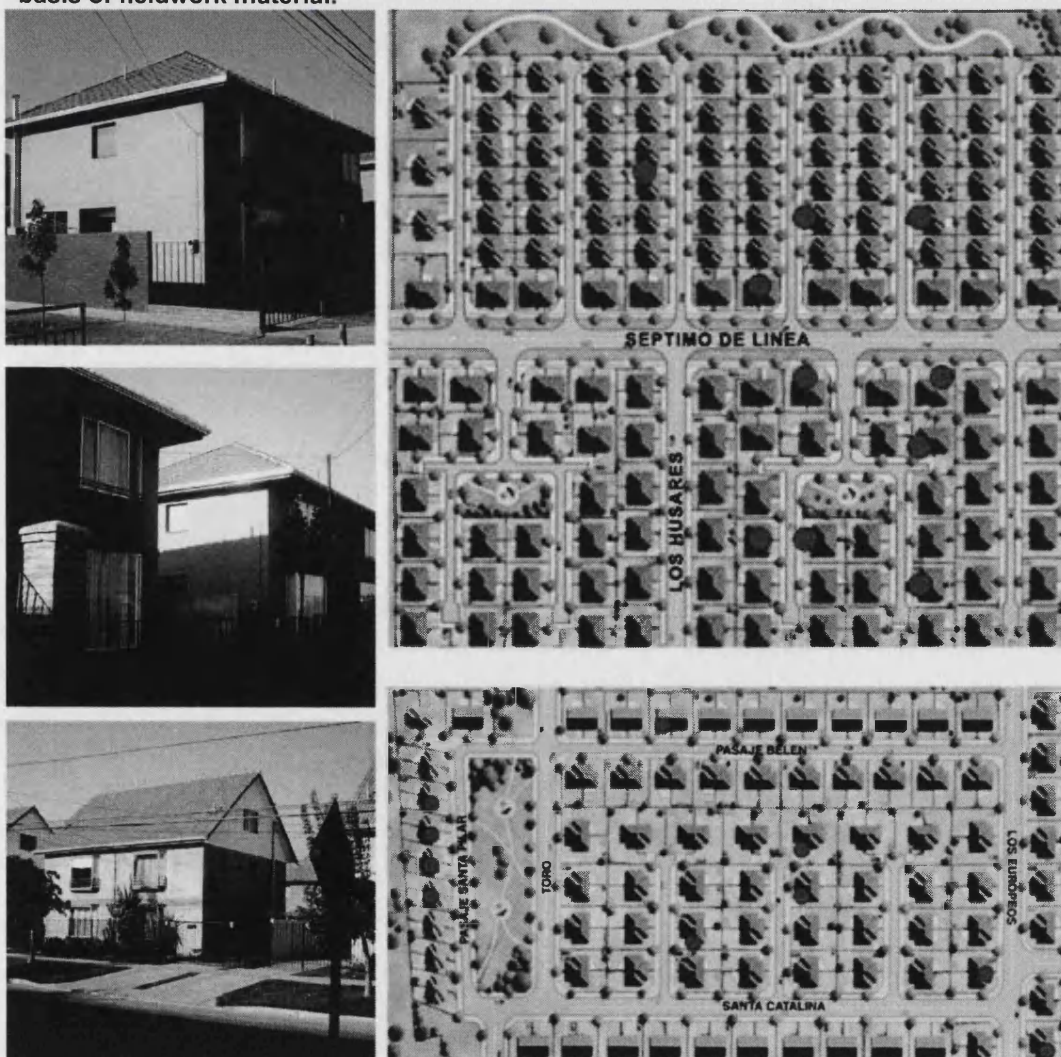
hanging out during working hours was not regarded as normal by the residents of Los Pinos. In fact, in the case of most traditional couples, the women refused the interviews with the excuse that they needed their husband's approval. I dealt with this resistance by trying to meet the husband and be completely clear about my position as a young PhD researcher. In most cases, the wives discussed my project with their husbands before deciding to participate.

With regard to the interview contents, I tried to be as flexible and open as I could, eagerly keeping track of the conversations that came up during my meetings. Nevertheless, I kept a list of themes that I used when the conversation became stilted or for introducing a new topic into the conversation. I also tried to personalise the outlines of the interviews in terms of the particularities and history of each of my informants. I did an average of three recorded formal interviews per family plus several unrecorded chats and meetings. I did not use quotas in terms of gender but I did try to secure the testimony of both members of each couple. In the first formal interview, I explored the issues of house purchase, residential history and the moving process; we also talked about general aspects of the family and their life history. These subjects moved the discussion to domestic issues and household economics so I finally incorporated this topic as a part of the routine. The first formal interview was also crucial for creating an initial rapport and explaining the nature of my project.

The second formal interview focused more on the issues of material culture and consumption. We talked about decoration, taste and their plans for the house. In this second formal interview I also used a digital camera and asked my interviewees to show me the different rooms and explain matters of decoration and the history of their things. In this interview I also explored the household's everyday practices, the uses of space and some topics on shopping, Christmas and household economics. The use of the camera and the tour of the house helped to enter topics of family history, history of things and practices inside the house. While the first two interviews dealt with issues of everyday life without discussing explicitly topics that might be class-related, the third interview took a more reflexive standpoint and focused on evaluating the whole process. Specifically, we talked about their experience of change, in both spatial and social terms, making comparisons with their old circumstances and their parents' life. I also asked my informants about the neighbourhood, confronting my fieldwork experience with their experience and evaluation as new owners. The last recorded interview brought in some of the topics that had been raised during the previous interviews; I tried to be more straightforward in terms of my appreciations and evaluation of my previous encounters.

3.3 Researching outdoors: public space and the neighbourhood association

Even though my involvement in the community and the neighbourhood association was originally intended only as a strategy to access new resident families, the neighbourhood soon became a field site in itself. In terms of my participant observation at the street level, I spent several hours walking or talking with people who I encountered regularly in the streets of Los Pinos.

Figure 9. Los Pinos: A general view of Los Pinos public spaces: Picture 1. HA community centre. Picture 2. Local shop set up in a house's front doorway. Picture 3. Tennis court in HA facilities. Picture 4. Tennis court, a view from the entrance. Picture 5. Square with playground. Picture 6. Main Square. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**
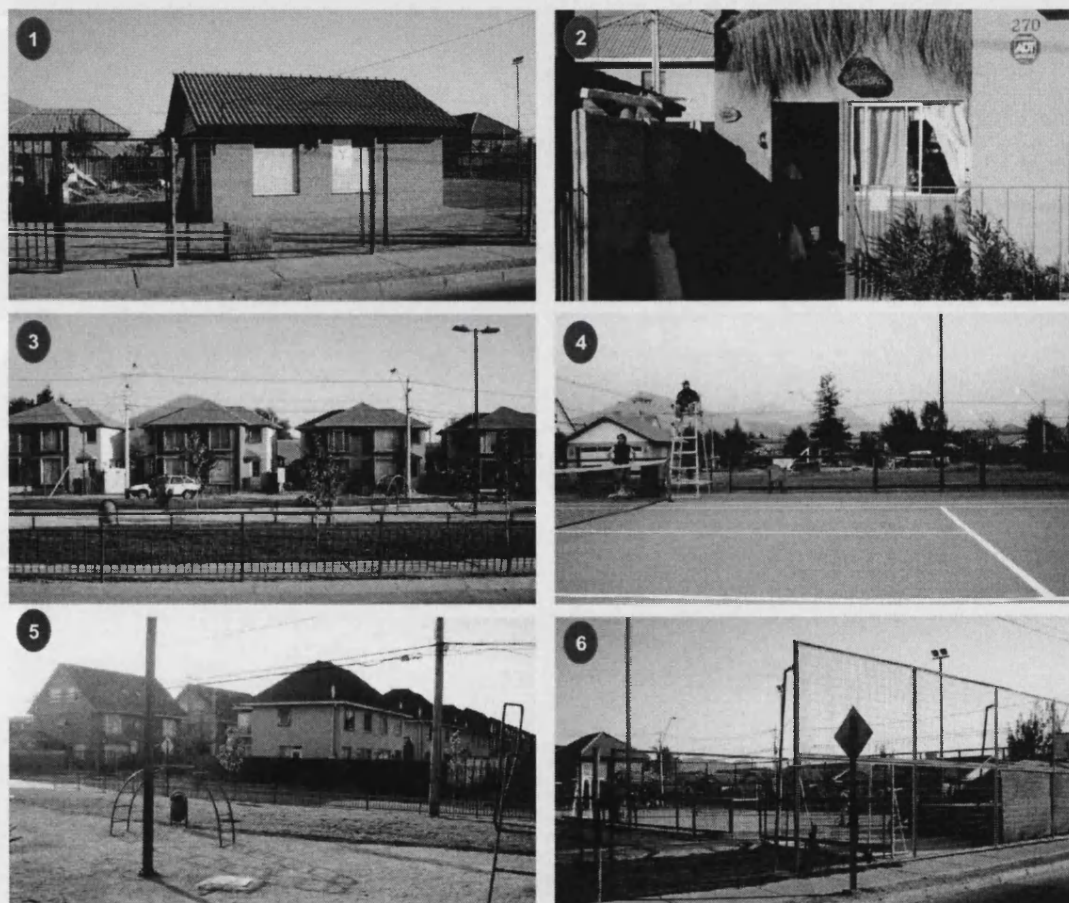
One of my most common tasks was to meet Oscar —who spent much of the day trotting the streets— and walking with him around the area, often talking about neighbourhood issues and meeting other neighbours. The rhythm of the streets was often very quiet and slow with just a few people around; most of them were residents going shopping, gardeners and people who worked in the new stages of the projects. Although it was quite monotonous, my time in the streets proved helpful to understand

and contextualise the everyday life of a family in Los Pinos. In fact, after two months of frequenting the community I started to gain important insights into everyday life in the streets. These insights had two sources: my own observation and my involvement in the activities of the neighbourhood association. On the one hand, people I met in the street helped me to understand neighbourhood life. I had long talks with workers (mostly people working on the new houses before the owners moved in, who explained the structure and rationale of house improvements), security guards (who talked mostly about security issues) and the owner of a small store, one of the few in Los Pinos. On the other hand, I also got involved in several community activities and administrative issues. I participated in four social events: the Halloween party, a Bingo fundraiser for Los Pinos Club House and the Los Pinos Christmas party. I also participated in administrative and informal conversations as well as everyday tasks such as collecting monthly payments or dealing with security issues.

Among these activities, clearly the most important for my research was the reception given to the new families taking up residence in the stage delivered in December. This process has several stages. First, the real estate company cleaned the houses and opened the streets, a process that started two weeks before the families began moving in. The second stage was the entry of the property in the district register and the arrangement of a meeting with the owner to formalise the process. During the last stage, the moving-in process, the homeowners' association visited all the newcomers to welcome them to the area. Oscar was in charge of this procedure and I helped him to introduce the newcomers to the community and the homeowners' association. As noted earlier, this process was very helpful, not only because it provided insights into some of the most important aspects of moving into a new home, but also because it greatly facilitated access to new families.

3.4 Researching housing markets

The third area and theme of my fieldwork concerned the real estate company, Golden Houses (GH) and the housing market. Golden Houses, which runs Los Pinos, is one of the oldest and biggest in the middle-class-oriented real estate industry. It has several projects around Santiago, mostly focused on the same population segment (a detailed description will be provided in the next chapter). My original intention in approaching the company was simply to gain access to new Los Pinos residents. However, since my research was given such a warm reception —due to the fact that my uncle was one of the company's longest-standing employees— and the company's centrality in the

whole house-moving process, I decided to conduct some interviews with executives and other project-related professionals.

Those interviews were articulated in three levels. First, I interviewed people at the firm's main quarters. My main contact —my uncle— had worked there for 20 years. He introduced me to some of the executives and explained the nature of the business. From this entry point, I interviewed several company executives, starting with the owner and director. I conducted the interview in his office. We talked for more than two hours about different aspects of the housing business. He explained the history of the company, which he described as the oldest in the middle-class housing market. We also discussed his impressions of Los Pinos residents. After this interview, I had three more with different people who were related to the company in different ways, including the executive who certifies and manages the purchases and another who was involved in project design.

Second, I also engaged with the work of the salespersons. I spent plenty of time in the sales office from the beginning of my fieldwork, talking with the sales reps and looking at the ways in which they dealt with and understood potential buyers. After some six visits they started to feel more comfortable with my presence and showed me some of the techniques they used to attract clients and discussed their intuitions about potential buyers. I conducted two recorded interviews with them.

Finally, besides the work within the real estate company, I also interviewed other people who were directly or indirectly involved with the project. I contacted the owner of one of the main advertising companies in the real estate business, "El pabellon de la construccion" ("the building pavilion") which provided economical television advertisements aimed at promoting urban schemes such as Los Pinos. I also interviewed the chief architect of Los Pinos, who works in a company that is allied with GH. He showed me maps of the project and we discussed the different house distributions, uses of spaces and his intuitions about middle-class preferences in decoration. My third and last interview was with a designer who specialised in furnishing show rooms for projects like Los Pinos. She gave me major insights into how companies "construct" an image of their clients, even though she was not related to the project.

My involvement at the company level opened windows onto other aspects of the way families engage with the housing market. Moreover, it gave me very useful clues about how those companies make definitions, construct and operate, keeping their target "new middle-class" families permanently in mind.

CHAPTER 4

Housing markets performing class

This chapter examines the design, sale and purchase of real estate in Los Pinos. Chronologically, this is the first step in "moving home" and a key moment in the assemblage of middle-class cultures. This chapter thus considers culture —particularly cultural calculations— as a key aspect of economic production (Slater 2002a; 2002bb) and market exchange (Miller 2002; Slater 2002a; Slater 2002b; Miller 2005). Specifically, the design and purchase of real estate are understood as neither economic nor cultural practices alone, but as the outcome of the interrelation of cultural and economic calculations (Slater, 2002). Within this context, it is argued that the production and consumption of real estate function as interrelated instances in which a broad array of class meanings are deployed.

A number of scholars have explored the connections between the housing market and class. In his research on the production and consumption of French real estate, Bourdieu argues that real estate markets are intrinsically connected with the reproduction of social positions (Bourdieu 2001). The author uses the concepts of field and habitus to examine how the housing market is constituted as a space in which housing field and buyers' habitus are interconnected. In terms of real estate production, Bourdieu argues that the design and promotion of real estate projects involve a company in active efforts to capture new owners, which they do by seducing buyers with advertising connected with their habitus. In this way, real estate markets help to shape demand and reproduce the space of social positions. In terms of the buyers, Bourdieu understood the home as a key object of social distinction that allows people to situate themselves and be situated on the social map. This is because the house forms a major part of people's objectives in terms of economic, social and biological reproduction (Bourdieu, (2001: 37). Because of that, the purchase is a critical moment for families. By interrelating these instances of production and consumption, Bourdieu argues that house-buying should not be viewed as a purely economic event, but as the outcome of interconnections between the properties of the field of housing markets and those of the habitus of the "demand". Within this context, housing markets are, therefore, spaces par excellence for the reproduction of class positions (Ibid, 2001:211). As discussed in the theoretical chapters, Bourdieu's conceptual framework has been a cornerstone of contemporary research on class identities and residential choice (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005). Nevertheless, this analysis has tended to focus on the consumption side, that is, the connections between families' residential choice

and their social position, rather than on the links between real estate production and class.

Other authors have focused on the "supply side", however, particularly the connections between class and housing market agents (Bridge 2001; Burrows and Gane 2006). Housing market intermediaries play a crucial role in the reproduction of social positions. For example, drawing on Bourdieu's theory of field and habitus (see theoretical chapter), Bridge analyses the way in which estate agents in Sydney intermediate the relationship between house price and taste by drawing on different types of cultural capitals. He explores how "the agent must negotiate the boundaries of class demarcation and distinction" (Bridge, 2001:89). Bridge shows that, in order to sell houses, intermediaries must understand and "manage" sellers' and buyers' cultural and economic capital, particularly as regards new middle-class buyers' aesthetic gentrification. Factors relating to sellers' and buyers' habitus thus play a crucial role in enacting the real estate market. Indeed, "contrast in the class-based judgment of taste must be negotiated by agents when moving between working class vendors and middle-class purchasers" (Ibid, 2001:91). In a similar vein —though less connected with Bourdieu— Burrows' and Gane's (2006) analysis of class, housing markets and geo-demographic software has explored the role of non-human intermediaries, particularly new technologies, in the reproduction of a class-based organisation of housing markets. They show how geo-demographic software turns class labels into an increasingly spatialised and quantifiable category that has become a key feature of the housing market. Thus software and housing markets influence the way class culture and identity are placed and acted out in urban space.

This chapter follows these attempts to study connections between housing markets and the formation of class cultures. Nevertheless, instead of tracing the connections between existent social positions and housing market intermediaries, it looks at how different meanings of class are actively deployed and negotiated during the design, marketing and purchase of real estate that targets the middle class in Chile. In other words, instances such as the design, promotion or purchase of houses are not explored as "embedded" in class categories but as points at which these categories are actually negotiated and performed. Not only buyers, but also producers, are actively involved in this work of assembling class.

Real estate production and consumption may be defined as successive steps of qualification of goods, in a process that engages both producers and consumers (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002) and the deployment of cultural and economic calculations (Slater 2002a). This approach has several analytical implications. First, the housing

market —and economic life more generally— emerges as a highly dynamic and heterogeneous process of goods qualification. This means that the qualities of economic goods such as houses and real estate schemes are not given, but are the outcome of an active production that involves several different agents: "*different networks co-ordinating the actors involved in its design, production, distribution and consumption*" (Ibid: 2002:198). After this process of singularisation, real estate projects are situated in a relational space of properties with a unique combination of characteristics that define their individuality in the housing market. Those properties may change at different points of qualification, however. In other words, the qualities of an economic good are not given but rely on an active process of negotiation. The use of cultural meanings is an important part of this, particularly the deployment of cultural calculations aimed at defining the good in terms of its potential buyers (Slater 2002a, 2002b). In this context, cultural calculation refers to the instrumental use of cultural knowledge in production for markets, thus "the very notion of market requires qualitative understandings of the place and meaning of objects/commodities in ways of life" (Ibid, 2002b:61). In the qualification process, production and consumption both rely on situating real estate in terms of its "use value": cultural meanings that situate the product in terms of wider cultural and social categories that define the good in terms of its "*real social context*" (Ibid, 2002b:73).

In terms of production, an extensive array of cultural knowledge is deployed for defining a house and "attaching" it to potential buyers. This type of cultural knowledge is instrumentally deployed to re-define and destabilise goods and markets (Slater, 2002). "External" meanings relating to buyers' lifestyles, values and trajectories have a strong bearing on the production of calculable relations and the stabilisation of the attributes of market goods (Slater 2002a; Slater 2002b). This cultural calculation not only enriches the houses in advertising, but is deployed as a key element during different stages of house design and production. Producing and selling houses involve, thus, understanding their use value in terms of the buyer's life world. Of course, it must not be forgotten that these cultural calculations are instrumentally oriented (Slater 2002a) to increase companies' sales by tightening the match between their products and what they define as their final consumers. From the consumption side, the experience in the housing market also involves a major process of qualification. The entire purchase process from start to finish involves the deployment of cultural calculations. Furthermore, insofar as it represents the first encounter between the house and its owners, it marks the beginning of the process of appropriation and the beginning of the house's influence *over its residents* (Miller 2001: 10). Like many other types of consumption, purchasing a house is an active process of cultural creation in

which goods are situated in people's lives. In the process, houses are re-qualified in terms of people's experience. This process of production relies not only on their efforts but on several non-human elements that help them to "imagine" the connections between the new house and their future life. This is also a process of qualification by which buyers "become attached" to houses through socio-technical devices that help them to situate houses in terms of other possibilities and their own experience and expectations (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002: 203).

In this broad cultural economy approach, the real estate market appears as a dynamic process of qualification (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002); both the production and purchase of real estate projects are defined by a rich production of cultural and economic calculations. This chapter will explore the connections between this process of qualification and the production of one type of such cultural calculations: those relating to class and social mobility. It will do so by describing the different times at which class meaning is deployed by both producers and consumers of real estate. From this standpoint, the connections between class cultures and housing markets are explored across the traditional dichotomies of demand/supply and culture/economy.

...

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part explores the production and design of real estate projects by looking at the discourses, objects and practices deployed for qualifying Los Pinos as an economic good (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002; Callon and Muniesa 2005). It takes a cultural economy approach for analysing housing markets as spaces in which class cultures are negotiated and deployed. The analysis is based on interviews with architects, designers, executives and sellers of the Golden Houses Company, as well as my own observations in the company's headquarters and sales office. It is argued that housing markets and house production involve the interrelation of several cultural calculations on class and social mobility. In other words, meanings of class and social mobility are instrumentally deployed in the design, production and marketing of real estate. Indeed, by designing "real estate" projects, agents and executives work as "sociologists at large": they deploy and perform new meanings of class and social mobility.

The second part discusses the house purchase, looking at buyers' experiences and the purchase stage. Like the first part, it discuss how families "enter the market" by deploying an interconnected array of economic and cultural knowledge. This second part describes three specific stages: the decision to buy a house, the search and the final purchase. It is argued that these different stages operate as key spaces in which families articulate the house with their own trajectories and expectations. Nevertheless,

this section also describes how buyers use an intensive set of economic strategies and trickeries when entering the market. Because of that, it is difficult to separate the economic disentanglement (Callon 1998) from the extensive process of cultural entanglement (Miller 2002; Callon 2005) related to people's aspirations and trajectories. In the duality between making a good purchase and finding their "home", people come to make sense of their new spatial and social positions.

The chapter ends with a conclusion. After reviewing the main empirical findings discussed here, it finishes by proposing that housing markets should be seen as cultural spaces that, by performing several meanings of class, become the first empirical instance in the assembling of middle-class cultures.

1. Designing and selling houses by performing class

In this section, I describe how Los Pinos real estate projects are qualified. The design and marketing of real estate projects are understood as the outcome of the interplay of different narratives, practices and materials involving cultural and economic calculations. I look at one particular type of cultural knowledge deployed during the production phase: the meanings of class and social mobility. I discuss how, when producing houses, designers and executives actually work as "sociologists at large", by deploying and negotiating several types of understanding of class and social mobility. I will explore three instances of real estate production: 1) the choosing of the urban location; 2) the design and profiling of houses; and 3) advertising strategies.

Golden Houses (GH) has been selling houses to middle-class families for over twenty years. Originally, the firm managed people's savings in order to finance real estate projects. After the financial crisis of 1982, however, it moved into the construction and promotion of real estate projects. Since then, GH's main activity has been to manage and promote the different parts of this business. They have specialised in finding partners (land owners, building companies and clients), who help promote and sell the product. Despite their current significance, two decades ago these types of projects were not considered by other companies, as the GH CEO explained to me. The general view in the industry was that there were neither consumers nor a mortgage market for real estate projects for the lower middle class. The expansion of the business over the years, however, suggests that GH placed its stakes well. Since its beginnings, the company has sold over 50,000 residences, all of them targeting middle- and lower-middle-class families. In many ways, GH embodies what Stockins defines as the "real estate industry", specialised in the serial production of homes on relatively large tracts of land to ensure economies of scale (2004: 91).

GH is currently engaged in the development and promotion of ten projects on the outskirts of Santiago. Los Pinos is one of their star ventures. More than 30 employees work under contract for GH, but its projects commonly involve a much higher number of people (such as architects and builders).

Company executives construe Golden Houses' story as a chronicle of increasing complexity and sophistication. Mortgage accessibility has drastically changed the way in which the business is conducted. As the company's CEO said:

> CEO: In 15 years the mortgage market has changed. Today you can get a loan of 100%. People do not have to make the efforts that they made before. It is not heroic anymore.

There are now (at least before the global crisis) mortgages to finance the entire cost of a house of this type. Additionally, the competition has increased, owing to the shortage of land and the development of new managerial and building methods. Indeed, as the CEO explained:

> CEO: The sophistication [of the business] is related with the land and the increasing difficulty of finding good land for building; land has got incredibly expensive and there is almost nowhere left to build.

In recent decades, companies have piloted new and cheaper building and management methods, which have lowered costs and increased competition. For example, the cost of materials must now be reviewed every week to keep the providers' cost as low as possible.

Within this context, perhaps the most important change lies in what real estate executives understand as their "clients". Indeed, members of the company mentioned the emergence of a "new type of consumer" as a landmark in their business's evolution. Agents see this "consumer" as more informed, more "rational" and belonging to a new "class" born of Chile's successful economic performance. One of the executives explained this in stark terms:

> Executive: The Chilean people have increased their purchasing power in recent years. People who 10 years ago would have bought a 800UF (16000 GBP) house, today can afford houses at up to 50% more. The interest rate has gone down so Chileans have gone two or three steps up.

GH's business is thus inseparable from the major socio-economic shift that occured in Chile in these decades, particularly the transformation of the middle class's lifestyle and material conditions. What they understood as a generalised process of upward mobility —the "two or three steps up"— is a major driver of their success. The skills for understanding this "new consumer" and his process of change are, thus, at the centre of Golden Houses' business. Indeed, this knowledge is deployed during all the stages of the business: planning, execution and sale. During all of these different stages, agents rely on several forms of knowledge of class lifestyle and social mobility to produce the final version of the projects, choose the location and design the houses. As they explained, the source of this knowledge is mostly personal, as they seldom use market research. Executives attribute it to their "nose" and professional expertise. The architect, for example, regards his knowledge of clients as the basis of his professional formation. It is an intuition of who buyers are, which is born of their experience. In most cases, this "intuition" is translated into particular projects or strategies aimed at making the whole business more competitive.

Along with keeping costs down, understanding clients is, thus, not just another commercial strategy, but a key part of the process through which the whole housing market and, particularly, real estate projects and houses are defined.

1.1 Locating class

Location is the starting point and centre of the real estate business. Indeed, when I asked Golden Houses' CEO about the cornerstones of his business, his response was a stock phrase: "land, land and land". Indeed, securing land is the first step in the whole business: only by having a piece of land —preferably a large piece on the city outskirts— is it possible to start thinking about the main steps of the project. The purchase of extensive tracts of land in peripheral areas of Santiago is common to these new real estate companies which rely on scale to lower their production costs (Stockins 2004).

The choice of land is also the first step in an extensive process of cultural calculation of anticipating how different locations would fit with potential clients. It appears, thus, as the first stage in the qualification of the house as an economic good (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002); a process that involves an active understanding of the links between different class cultures and urban location. Choosing the right piece of land is no easy matter. In the first instance, there is the matter of availability and price. I was told that finding land is becoming increasingly difficult in Santiago. Once an available piece of land is found, the next task is to match the location with potential buyers. This is not based on land prices but on a vast array of knowledge of the social and spatial segregation of Santiago which, like many other Latin American cities, is highly spatially segregated (Caceres and Sabatini 2004; Sabatini and Caceres 2004) (see Figure 9). Detailed knowledge and understanding of class distribution is thus central to the business. As a GH executive explained:

> Executive 1: I am not from Santiago but for people here the area of the city in which you live is very important: Vitacura or Maipu, people are treated very differently in their business according to where they come from. The difference is noticeable in some details. For example, when I ask people where they come from, some of them say they are from Independencia, later I realise that they are from Conchali (a poorer area).

These connections between class and urban location were not only regarded as part of the business, but also appeared as part of self-positioning in the social and spatial map. Indeed, during the interviews, executives located themselves in Santiago's geography of class. For example, most of my interviewees in the company clearly

pointed out the difference between the chosen project location and their own residential choices. Project areas were different from the executives' own residential choice, which tended towards the city's upper-middle-class areas. Indeed, agents were eager to explain that they lived in "other areas of Santiago". In one of the interviews in which we were talking about the location of Los Pinos, an executive attempted to set himself apart from Los Pinos by stating that he lived in the "Barrio Alto" and that his children attended a private school, whereas the projects were located in areas associated with other types of schooling facilities and connections. On another occasion, I had a conversation with a salesman who made it very clear that he preferred to live in a traditional area of Santiago (referring to Providencia, one of the high-income areas of the city) than to have a nicer house in a scheme such as Los Pinos. In those accounts, the links between urban location and status not only defined the houses but also framed their own social position.

Within this context, it is essential for GH executives to match available residential location with different "types" of clients and houses. The ability to connect buyers' status, projects and urban locations is thus an extremely important skill in project design. Executives use this knowledge to decide where to invest and which type of project to design. The city appears here as a collection of places in which urban location, house prices and social classes overlap. As one agent explained:

> Executive 2: The most expensive houses are found in La Dehesa, Huechuraba, some areas of Las Condes, Vitacura and la Reina. Then, houses between 700 and 3000 UF are in Santiago Centre, the most popular area. From this point down comes the middle class, a very "marketero"[13] term, as they put it.

In some cases, this knowledge appears to be a rather objective, external "market" rule which determines which type of projects should be constructed and where. For example, the architect explained that every type of real estate project has to be placed in the right area; that is, in the urban area in which its potential buyers would look for houses. As the architect told me:

> Architect: Well, if you go to Chicureo (a upper middle class residential zone), nobody comes [we were talking about Los Pinos clients]. This is about something called real estate clusters, you always have to be inside the zone (you are targeting), we once went right outside the zone and no clients materialised.

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[13] Meaning something that lends itself to marketing.

Figure 10. Maps 1 and 2: Current supply of real estate projects by price in North Santiago. Map 3: Spatial distribution of socioeconomic groups in North Santiago. Source. prepared by the author using supply of real estate projects in Pabellon de la construccion. Map taken from Santiago Urbano. Green et al. 2008.
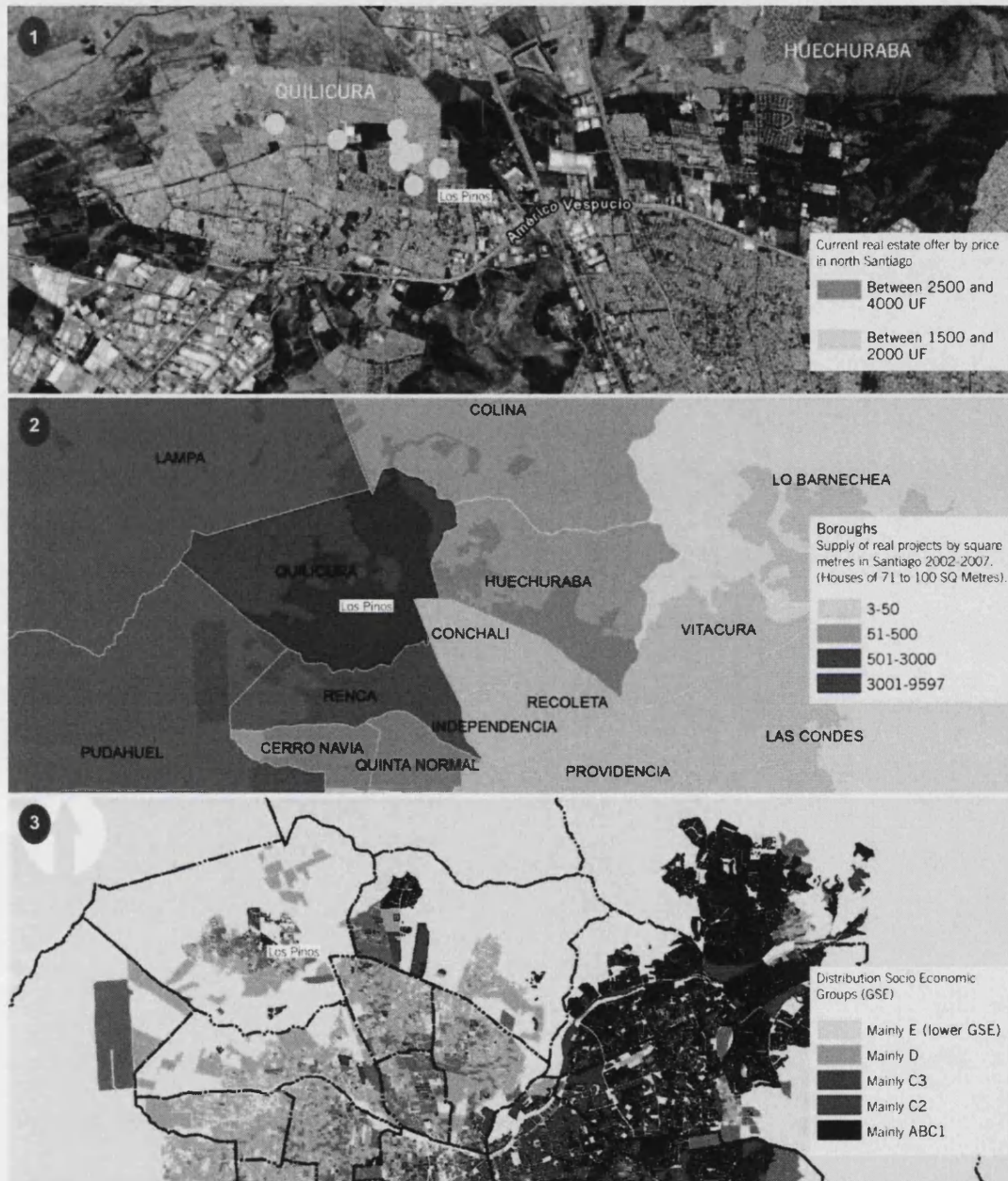
For the architect, being "inside" a zone means making the right connections between buyers and urban location; being outside the zone means that projects are ill-placed (in the wrong zone for a given type of client) and may therefore fail.

Since this type of analysis is so crucial, executives become very careful observers and users of the connections between class and urban location. This awareness

involves not only finding the right "target" for a given piece of land, but also linking the location with a richer, detailed analysis of buyers' lifestyles. Indeed, as I noted in my interviews, a central part of the business is to recognise and define what type house and consumer is suited to a certain piece of land. Agents use categories such as "middle class" or marketing scales such as ABC1 or C2 for this analysis. The following conversation with one of the executives on consumer stratification clearly illustrates this point. This description was given when I asked who Los Pinos' main target was.

> *Executive 1: There is a broad middle class here, with four or five different subtypes. A guy who earns 800.000 (GBP 800) is considered middle class; so you have A, B, C1; there are four categories.*

> *TA: so these people [Los Pinos´ buyers] are C3? (This is a Chilean marketing category)*

> *Executive 1: I would say they are C3.*

> *TA: C2 are more expensive houses?*

> *Executive 1: It's not only about price but also the location: you use these categories to assign a set of differences in terms of education, incomes and location. For example, if you live in Quilicura, you would never be in group "A" [A is the top group in the socio-economic classification], even if you have a $500 million (GBP 500,000) house and earn $5 million (GBP 5000) a month.*

Executives thus match urban location with potential buyers and project design in terms of spatial distribution of class in Santiago. Their knowledge of the city and its class links are instrumentally deployed for defining the right type of project for the right "niche". Working as "sociologists at large", they treat location and class as inseparable categories. In their account, for example, someone from upper middle classes would never buy in projects located in Quilicura or similar areas.

But real estate companies such as GH are not only passive users of these typologies. Given the shortage of land for this type of project, companies are sometimes forced to invest in locations which are not yet linked with a given type of project and buyer. This often happens when they buy pieces of land in areas that have not been used for real estate investment before. Such investments, along with the increasing difficulties of finding the "right" piece of land for developing a project, emerged as a central theme in my conversation with GH's CEO. He told me that the key to success in this type of situation is the executives' ability to understand where the "city is going" and know whether people will move to new urban areas and where. Based on this knowledge, companies assume some risk by investing in land that falls

within their forecast of urban expansion, particularly their expectations in terms of the type of people who will move to the area. By doing so, they also negotiate new types of associations between class and urban location. Los Pinos is a case in point. Although north-east Quilicura is now an important location for lower-middle-class real estate,[14] when Golden Houses started to invest there, middle-class buyers had yet to show any interest in the area. As an agent explained:

> Agent: It was the area that received all Santiago's overspill 20 years ago; the tomas (squatters), the shanty towns; it was a garbage site, but at the same time the access and logical development of the city were heading in this direction.

Within this context, GH was one of the first companies to start using this district as a location for real estate targeting the middle class.

> CEO: Some people with long-term vision bought big pieces of land. As Quilicura provided cheap land, they initially built cheap houses, but one day Manquehue (a building company) set up Lo Campino (a real estate project). Today Lo Campino is in competition with Huechuraba. It started selling houses at UF1200 (GBP 30000) and now they are worth UF3000 (GBP 63000).

The fact that Quilicura was adjacent to other consolidated areas of real estate development helped to increase real estate companies' interest in investing in the area and Quilicura soon became a prime location for lower-middle-class real developments. These companies thus "made" Quilicura into a middle-class-oriented area. In this new set of conditions, company executives consider their investment a success. Central to their evaluation of Quilicura's transformation is their interpretation of buyer perceptions. Indeed, thanks to the increase in real estate investment, they think new buyers now see the area as having a higher social status than before. Interestingly, the executives attribute their own analysis of the location's status to the new residents. The following quotation shows how the architect construes the buyer's evaluation:

> Architect: "They feel like they are in the Barrio Alto (higher income neighbourhoods of Santiago). With the name Altos ("Heights", this word form par of its real name), they feel like they are of a higher social status. They know Lo Campino real estate is in the other side of Vespucio Avenue but within the neighbourhood they feel like the "Dehesa" of Quilicura (La Dehesa is a very upmarket Santiago district).

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[14] Today the area contains more than 10 projects which revolve around the same price.

The choice of location and the definition of project characteristics can be defined, therefore, as the first stage in the process of qualifying the good; that is the process through which the firm attempts to singularise the houses by creating attachments between them and the future demand (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002: 205). In this process of choosing land, cultural knowledge —particularly the knowledge of the links between urban location and class— is instrumentally deployed. In defining project location, executives thus link location to their own understanding of buyers' lifestyles and trajectories and perform the links between different residential locations and class categories.

1.2 Designing houses

A second landmark in the process of house qualification is the design and profiling of projects. Like location, project design relies on intensive deployment of meanings of class and upward social mobility. In the case of GH, this involves having to think about and define the type of client that would live in the new house, evaluating all the "social" implications of a given project's features and considering how buyers may connect with different prices and designs. Executives rely on their own perception of clients' cultures and trajectories to foresee how buyers will evaluate and engage with the different house qualities. The final design, thus, scripts several of these cultural calculations.

For GH executives, there is an obvious connection between house design, pricing and this "segment" of buyers' tight budgets and tendency towards thrift. Knowing that buyers of these new houses enter the venture on an extremely tight budget, the architect opted for a low-cost design by focusing on the basics, minimising details that might increase the final price. One way of materialising these understandings is by marking a difference between what they call "programme" and "design". Programme is defined as the scheme of the house: the number of rooms and house type (detached or semidetached). A house's programme thus delineates its essential features, those which commonly define it as a particular type of house. For example a three-bedroom house with a separate dining room corresponds to a different programme from a two-bedroom house with combined living-dining room. Design, meanwhile, is defined mainly in terms of finishings and the quality of the materials. A single programme may include different types of design that use different qualities of material and decoration features. The architect explained that Los Pinos' buyers tended to focus more on "programme" than on "design". Hence, in his work, he prioritised the programme (i.e., the number of rooms and general distribution) over design (style), which meant

sacrificing design features in order keep the house price accessible. In other words, his aim is to maximise the programme for a given price.

> *Architect: This is a very similar product. Sometimes the quality or space varies, but the price is central. People who buy in this range of $1400 afford it with some difficulty (on a tight budget). For example, we took the shelves out [of the house design] in order to help people to reach the price of the house. If you fit shelves people can't afford the house, they are left short of money (in this case) and they prefer to go to the DIY store.*

The architect sees the relationship between price and a house design that maximises the programme for a given price as crucial for this type of buyer. This relates not so much to buyers' budget constraints as to their social position more generally. These differences were understood as a consequence of the relatively new and "emergent" purchasing power of lower-middle-class buyers. Indeed, executives explained that demands are completely different in other segments, such as the upper-middle class, where design and finishings strongly influence purchase decisions.

Executives also deploy their own "sociological analysis" of buyers to define the distribution of houses within real estate schemes. For executives and architects, people want to live in areas of houses of a similar value, surrounded by the "same" type of people. For executives, this was crucial in regard to house prices. By creating fairly homogenous areas, the architects help to perform a sense of homogenous upward mobility. One architect explained:

> *Architect: There is something curious about this segment, I think that they are...the word is not arribista [socially ambitious: literally, someone who seeks to go "up], but they really worry about their neighbours. When we sold cheaper houses within the scheme it turned out to be a problem, because people felt that they had bought in a posh area. They complained because one of the houses was cheaper.*

As this quote shows, for executives, price is a matter not only of different types of houses, but of a complete set of different connotations and expectations regarding lifestyle, values and culture. For example, if the architect places a cheaper house in a scheme, it may disrupt new buyers' sense of achievement by forcing them to share their space with lower-status residents. This type of analysis is an architectural application of the "keeping up with Joneses" principle. In this case, house distribution, price and design, therefore, correspond to the executives' expectations of their "clients" as "socially ambitious" people.

A third key area in which such calculations are deployed is the connection between what executives define as "social origin" and the final design of the houses. Executives see buyers as living a process of social change in which the house is crucial. Houses should thus be designed to help buyers to live this process of social mobility to the full. This is what they explicitly term the "aspirational effect". Indeed, for GH executives, the design has to "perform" the process of social mobility. As the architect told me:

> Architect: We try to create the "aspirational" effect. They have to see the house and feel that it is good. It is great for us if they feel that they are taking a step up when they buy it.

In this account, taking a "step up" is a part of the buyers' process of upward social mobility, materialised in the new house. Executives assume that the new house will be at the heart of the production of the buyer's new life. The step up must be performed through different material and design decisions that help new owners to feel that their new house represents a quality-of-life gain. As will be discussed later, this effect is achieved not only through architectural design but also by using several advertising tools that portray the new houses as bound up with quality-of-life improvements.

The house design also included certain restrictions on potential use by residents. When describing their design, the architects explained that one main aim was to help new owners to learn how to live in their new house. For Los Pinos, they had produced a pamphlet explaining how to use the house properly.

Figure 11. "How to live": Leaflet for new inhabitants designed by the Chamber of Construction and the Real Estate Company. **Source: Real Estate Company.**

When asked to elaborate on this document, the architect said people did not know how to live in these types of houses, mainly because of their social background. The executives construe the whole design not only as an economic practice but also as a process of "culturalisation" of the new buyers. Given this background, they also expected their clients to borrow their ideas in terms of decoration. For example, the architect clearly explained that, given buyers' characteristics and the fact that they are experiencing a definitive process of change in their living conditions and tastes, the showhouse was likely to become a main point of reference.

> *Architect: People decorate very similarly to the showhouse, they place the armchair in the same position (...) when people see these houses they see a beautiful house, much more beautiful than their old house, so logically they copy it and borrow ideas; in 90% of cases...*

The preceding paragraphs have examined different stages in the design of real projects and houses, showing how house design involves an instrumental deployment of meanings of class and social mobility. These cultural calculations not only form the background for real estate production but determine the final design of the projects. By designing the house, housing market professionals are, thus, performing a wide set of meanings related to how new buyers are living —or should live, in some cases— their process of social and spatial mobility.

1.3 Advertising houses: classifying the dream home

Advertising and marketing strategies are the third aspect of the real estate business explored here. Several scholars have noted the connections between advertising and the production of cultural meanings (Nixon 1997; Slater 2002b)) or, more specifically, the way house advertising relies on the deployment of cultural meanings that attempt to connect houses with buyers' experiences and habitus (Bourdieu, 2001). In keeping with this chapter's general line of argument, advertising practices are understood as a further step in the qualification process; a instance in which market agents aim to "attach" goods to consumers (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002). Nevertheless, in comparison with location choice and house design, advertising is perhaps the most visible cultural instance of real estate production. Indeed, its purpose is to connect product qualities *"with particular categories of people in the context of particular relations of consumption"* (Slater 2002b: 73). Agents, thus, work as sociologists at large: they attempt to match houses and buyers by enhancing the use value of the houses in terms of the buyers' life-world (Ibid, 2002b: 75).

Advertising was essential to Golden Houses' business. Executives explained that project sales are heavily influenced by investment in advertising. Projects such as Los Pinos are promoted through three main channels: weekend magazines, television programmes and showrooms at shopping centres. Most magazine advertising is placed in housing and decoration magazines that come with the weekend newspapers. These magazines usually have a special section for real estate offers. Television advertising takes the form of specific programmes aimed at house buyers, which are broadcast at off-peak times and consist of lengthy reviews of real estate schemes including descriptions of their price, features and location.

Figure 12. Pamphlets for schemes in Quilicura. **Source: Revista Casa & Decoracion**.

In terms of content, one main aim of advertising is to highlight the links between the real estate scheme, price and quality. Visually speaking, imagery of nuclear families with children and green spaces is very common, but most of the content is devoted to promoting the price and the technical specifications of the houses, including a detailed description of square meterage, number of rooms and payment options. This focus on budget and price is not exclusive to GH, but a standard practice in real estate advertising in Chile. Research conducted recently on housing market advertising found

that price and quality are the most common elements in real estate promotion in Santiago (Salcedo and Torres 2004). Consistently with advertising for Los Pinos, the research authors also found that associations between quality, natural environment and price were recurrent themes (Ibid, 2004:124). In terms of this thesis, interestingly enough, project status and distinction were often dismissed as sales arguments. Yet, though not a visible marketing category, class distinctions are still pivotal in the production of marketing strategies. Knowledge of class and lifestyle are used not only to "frame" advertising strategies but also to position the project within the existing market supply. In this context, the following paragraphs will explore two marketing devices which markedly display different meanings of class and social mobility.

Besides investment in advertising, another main marketing strategy relates to the showhouses attached to the sales office. These showhouses are intended to "capture" the expectations of potential buyers by providing them an image of their future life. As will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, this marketing device is not only essential to promote the house, but is also a key part of families' purchase experience. Showhouses are designed and decorated to generate an attachment with potential buyers. They achieve this by representing buyers' experiences and helping to perform their process of social mobility. During the fieldwork, I interviewed a showhouse's interior designer, who specialised in choosing furniture for this purpose. She explained that one of the secrets of her work was how to use "different hierarchies of taste". Her works is to decorate the showhouses to represent what a given market segment wants, or make them aim just little bit higher. The decoration is engineered to portray a picture in which the new life is attainable, without showing objects or styles that may belong to other market segments. The trick is to produce an image that reflects people's aspirations without straying into the "unattainable". The notion of "social aspiration" is central here; as a showhouse designer explained to me:

> Designer. It works on the basis of what people aspire to buy. This is probably not what people buy or have, but I have to think about their aspirations. In practice, that means that if, for example, you are asked to work in a $1500 showhouse (GDP 1,5) you decorate it for $2000 (GDP 2). (...) Always a little bit further without being extremist, because then people would feel that it is unattainable.

Decorators and architects rely on their own "taste" for furnishing showhouses. But they do not decide in terms of what they like, but instead rely on an extended understanding of taste hierarchies. This means that decorators would not necessarily use pieces of furniture they like in any of the projects. The secret is thus to be able to interpret

buyers' taste. The architect, for example, explained this by making a comparison between the buyer's and his own personal taste:

> Architect: "We can't put a 22-inch screen television [in the showhouse] because that doesn't reflect people's reality at this house price. Perhaps some of the buyers could buy a TV like this but it's not what is expected. These are not people that appreciate this sort of thing. They don't buy decoration magazines; they don't take inspiration from contemporary Italian design. So if I use a vanguard design style like stone, glass or steel they would find it cold".

The showhouse is, therefore, produced on the basis of extensive relational knowledge of taste and class that represents both producers and buyers. The decorator uses different styles and objects to make potential buyers identify with the house, particularly to make them perceive the new house as an improvement in the family's quality of life and as a personal achievement. The final part of this chapter will return to the showhouse, exploring how families engage with it as a critical part of their purchase experience.

Figure 13. Real Estate Showroom located near Quilicura. Estate projects with homologous price and location are clustered on blue panels such as that shown in the picture. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

Knowledge of class is also deployed in the way real estate projects are clustered and promoted in terms of different project typologies. Following Cochoy (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002), these typologies may be described as socio-cognitive arrangements that situate real estate projects "in relation to one another". Indeed, with these devices: "Consumers are not alone, facing a product, left to determine its qualities. They are guided, assisted by material devices which act as points of reference, supports, affordances in which information is distributed" (Ibid, 2002: 203).

The supply of real estate is clustered in magazines, television slots and web pages, but it has a particularly significant presence in real estate showrooms located in shopping centres. These showrooms are owned by real estate advertising companies and their purpose is to bring together the entire supply of real estate in a single space. In general terms, they are meant to facilitate house-hunting by assembling "clusters" of real estate projects that connect with the profiles of different buyers. They display different clusters on different panels, so buyers can easily pick out projects that are of a similar nature. Picture 7 shows the showroom of a real estate project located in a shopping centre near the field site.

Because these clusters conflate urban location, consumers' values and aspirations, house design and price, they perform a hierarchy in which different lifestyles and buyer types are sharply distinguished. Hence, these socio-cognitive arrangements not only differentiate product materialities, but also perform a hierarchy not necessarily connected to price but mainly to urban location. For example, during a fieldwork visit to one of these showrooms, I enquired about a Quilicura project and the salesman showed me an exhibition panel entitled "Quilicura", which assembled several projects with similar houses, prices and qualities. They also gave me a folder with all the projects of this cluster, which they defined by enquiring about my budget. Within this classification, all the Quilicura projects with equivalent price and qualities were labelled "Quilicura" and presented to me along with similar projects in other areas. Although there was an abundant supply of projects within this typology, it excluded any other possibility as the projects were selected and ordered beforehand, according to my profile.

Advertising thus enacts particular forms of classification involving not only house prices but also a hierarchy of client lifestyles and, particularly, urban location. In so doing, these mechanisms not only "equip consumer cognition" (Cochoy 2007: 109), but also perform a particular type of connection between housing projects, urban location and class. Indeed, as will be explored in the following part, these arrangements represent key ways in which families locate their own house-hunting process within an extended map of class positions.

...

The first part of this chapter has explored how agents designing and promoting real estate rely on cultural calculations on class and social mobility. These are not secondary features of project design but crucial to the different instances of qualification explored here: location, house design and advertising. In all these instances, narratives of class and social mobility play a key role in qualifying houses. Real estate agents, thus, operate as applied class analysts. The descriptions they use when designing projects are performative in nature as they are materialized in house design, project location or advertising strategies and typologies. In other words, the meaning of class deployed when producing houses not only provides a general context but is also scripted in several types of materialities and devices. Elements such as house design, project location, advertising typologies or showrooms are active in defining real estate projects and in performing and maintaining certain understandings of class and social mobility. In terms of Los Pinos, for example, the project design connected a general awareness of class inequality and spatial segregation with more specific orientations in terms of what social mobility and middle class means for potential buyers there.

2. Buying a house

The first part of this chapter described how production and marketing of real estate projects relate to the deployment of cultural calculations on class position and social mobility. It analysed how different instances such as location, design or advertising work as stages in a process of qualification that employs meanings of class. This second part looks at how buyers engage with real estate offers, moving on to exploring the actual purchase. While, in many ways this can be understood as the other side of the production process, the purchase and the way families engage in the housing market also involve a rich deployment of cultural and economic calculations. In line with the previous discussion, it is argued that consumers engage in housing markets as active agents, contributing to the final process of qualification of houses (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002). The purchase emerges as a stage at which cultural meanings intertwine with strategic orientations: on the one hand, by buying a house, buyers engage in an intensive process of "symbolic labour", which links the new house with their own trajectories. On the other hand, buying a house involves the display of economic calculations and budgeting strategies used by families to ensure the best possible deal. These two interconnected aspects of the purchase will be analysed in terms of one particular issue: the production and use of different meanings of class. It is argued that the purchase is a landmark in the articulation of families' trajectories of social mobility, because it represents the starting point in the appropriation of the new house (Miller 1997) , through which families perform their new position.

Empirically speaking, this second part will examine two key stages of house-buying. First, it will analyse families' arrival stories (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005), 2005); particularly how the decision to buy a house is connected to a moment of radical family change (Metcalfe, 2006) which articulates a mixture of personal narratives and economic practices. Second, it will describe the purchase and the encounters between sellers and buyers and the different materialities that help to frame the purchase. These elements, it is argued, form a dialectic process of economic disentanglement and cultural entanglement (Slater 2002a; Callon 2005); cultural and economic calculations are intertwined in the production of people's experience of social and spatial mobility.

2.1 Looking for a house

Maria and Pedro moved to Los Pinos a few months before I started my fieldwork, after living for over eleven years with Pedro's parents. For the first nine years, their life with

Jorge's parents was not bad; they had a small, independent house in the garden. Maria told me that they worked hard to improve the house in those eleven years.

> M: We repaired it, we painted it, in fact, we had the option of building some new rooms but I said no.

The relationship with Pedro's parents was by no means bad, but Maria had concerns over the lack of space and intimacy. This situation came to a head with the birth of their last child two years ago and Maria tired of the situation:

> M: I didn't want to clean the house, we had a wooden floor and it was too much work; too much - I felt bad, even depressed. [TA: Why? Because of the house?] The baby didn't have enough space, you walked and you tripped over toys, it was chaos. Here it doesn't matter but there, as the space was smaller, my children couldn't study and Jorge couldn't sleep (...) I didn't have a big closet. There was nowhere to put the furniture.

They even had intimacy problems because the children had to go through their room to get to the bathroom. In December 2004, Maria asked Pedro for a new house. She wanted to have her own house and "my own square metre". In January 2005 they began house-hunting.

For Maria and Pedro, as for most of the families I met during fieldwork, the decision to buy a house originated in a specific constellation of urgencies that forced them to move. Indeed, more than half of my informants had lived with their parents before buying their house. Several other families decided to move because they realised they were expecting a baby. In these arrival stories the decision to buy a house had nothing to do with financial investment or social status ambitions, but with key issues of family trajectories. Susana's and Juan's arrival history is also very illustrative of the connections between house-buying and critical changes in family trajectories. Susana and Juan are in their mid-thirties and have two children. They moved to Los Pinos a few weeks after my fieldwork started. Before this they lived in a flat near Quilicura. For Susana, the decision was bound up with several circumstances that "pushed" them to buy a new house. First of all, they began to have problems with their neighbours:

> S: I had problems with a neighbour, because I defended a dog, he kicked me so I sued him. But you don't get anywhere with these cases, nobody helps you, nobody says this is wrong. So we ended up living a daily conflict because my husband wanted to kill this guy.

Furthermore, the house purchase was related to an attempt to change their family dynamics. The new house represented a turning point in their marriage:

S: We needed to get out of there and make a change. Because marriage, you know, every marriage is difficult so we think that if we change in order to move here... my husband promised to make some changes, spend more time with the children.

Finally, as Susana's parents lived next door, moving to a new house had to do with them too:

S: I like to be independent and they got too close to me. So at the end it was like...and I wanted to sever the links a little bit. I have a brother out of town, he only makes some telephone calls but I had to deal with the problems and we were coming to the end of the road. So it had to do with all these things.

Susana's construct of her arrival history connects the decision with several compelling family reasons. The decision addressed all of these and performed a radical change in their way of life, one that not only improved their economic situation and well-being but produced a completely new way of life. In her account, the decision to start house-hunting was inevitable.

Figure 14. Previous residential area of fieldwork participants. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of interview data.**
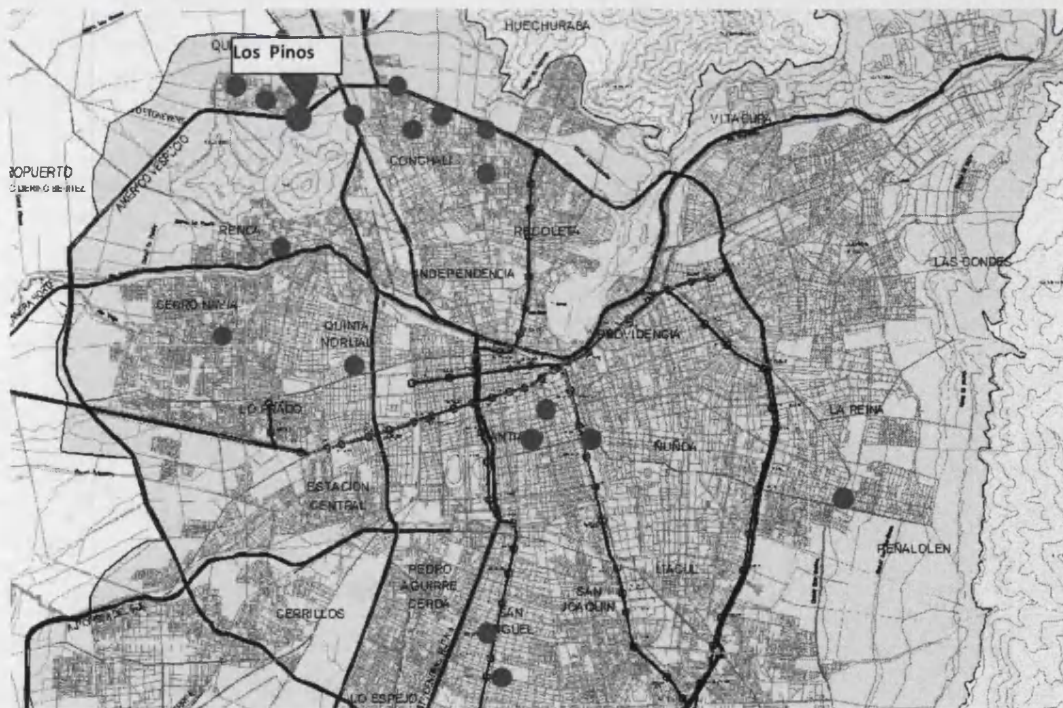
Arrival stories such as those of Pedro and Maria or Susana and Juan were common in Los Pinos. Indeed, the decision to buy a house was rarely a matter of financial investment; instead, it was most often related to stories of necessity and family change. Indeed, while none of my informants mentioned the house purchase as an investment

for the future, most of them linked the decision with such matters as their marriage, the birth of new child, the need for independence from relatives or problems with their previous neighbourhood. Deciding to buy a house is, thus, an unavoidable necessity connected to families' reproduction; a step in their trajectory that involves moving forward and overcoming the limitations encountered in their previous lifestyles. This recalls Metcalfe's description of residential mobility as related to the concept of *kairos*: As he puts it: "Deciding to move is rarely a rational decision. Stories are told of fate, fortune, of moments of realization, of opportunities arising that had to be grasped with both hands. Time, therefore, is not just clock time, the time of passing moments, empty waiting to be filled, it is also the time to act, a time of judgment, skill and recognition, it is the right time" (METCALFE 2006: 247). In the case of Los Pinos families, however, more than histories of fortune, the "time to act" refers to the need to change previous living conditions. Following Miller, it may be said that deciding to buy a house is a moment of cultural entanglement not only connected with changes in family relationships but also signifying a wide repertoire of cultural values and expectations (Miller 2002).

Finding the right house

While arrival stories often frame the decision to buy a house in terms of family relationships and aspirations, the process of searching and finding the house is described in terms of strategies of budgeting and financial leverage. In other words, house-hunting involved the deployment of a strategic awareness oriented to finding the "perfect deal". As well as being part of a process of family change, then, finding the "right" house involves engaging with the housing market by deploying instrumental calculations. The example of Maria and Pedro illustrates this combination of personal drivers and strategic approach to the housing market. Once they had decided to move, their first option was to try to move into a small house they had bought a few years earlier with Pedro's redundancy pay. They had not been able to do so before because they did not have enough money to both pay Pedro's university fees and dispense with the rent. When they decided to move out of Pedro's parents' house, first they tried to find a way to use this property but it had become too small for a family of five. They spent a month looking for a way to extend it. Maria told me that they made several drafts and visited similar houses to get ideas. After a month they decided to start looking at new houses and rent the other one out. They learned about Los Pinos through a television advisement, visited it and liked the house very much:

> M: This house was exactly for what we were looking for: bedrooms on the second floor, back garden, front garden and bathroom.

Pedro took a painstaking approach to house-hunting. They were both very meticulous about choosing a house inside the scheme and when they opted for Los Pinos, they used a tape measure to find the house with the biggest garden. They also asked some neighbours about the house. Before they moved in they took many friends and relatives to see the showhouse.

This careful house-hunting process was a common practice among the families I met. It often involved searching through a wider range of "potentially interesting" projects in the city and a large amounts of advertising. Indeed, in several cases, the process lasted for years. Perhaps because of the length of the process and the dedication involved, house-hunting trips are about more than the immediate purchase: they work as key times through which couples imagine their new lives. The arrival story of Alberto and Lucia is a typical case. Alberto and Lucia are in their mid-thirties and have a small son, Benjamin. When they realised they were expecting, they decided to start searching for a new house because the flat they rented downtown was too small. Lucia wanted to live in a flat in the centre but Alberto wanted a house with a garden. For Alberto this had to do with his own upbringing: "I am from the south, I'm used to open spaces so when we married and moved into the flat I felt desperate". Despite Alberto's priorities, they searched for flats in the town centre first. Alberto told me that this was his strategy to convince Lucia:

> L: She realised that the spaces in the flat were small and that our new son would need space to play, she realised that what we needed was a house, so we started looking for houses in different places.

When they decided on a house, they started looking in almost all the middle-income-housing areas of Santiago. So they decided to buy a car. Alberto told me, "It was a hard task; long and exhausting, at that time the car became crucial". After finding their house they embarked upon the difficult process of finding a mortgage.

Although advertising does not play an important role in the decision to move, it becomes central once house-hunting begins. In most cases, advertising mediates the first contact between the families and Los Pinos. It is thus a "market device" that helps families to classify and compare existing offers (Callon and Muniesa 2005), a mechanism that helps them to sort real projects by their different attributes (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002). This is because advertising provides a very useful source for comparing projects' qualities. Indeed, as illustrated in the case of Pedro and Maria, showrooms and television programmes are at the core of the process of comparisons and house-visiting, as prospective buyers seek to maximise the possibilities within a specific real estate cluster. By looking at clusters, families simplify the search process

by reducing the choices to one or two clusters and areas; and they rely on different types of advertising to do this. Advertising therefore works as a device that sorts the market supply and situates buyers in terms of their possibilities. As Macarena explained me:

TA.How did you come to this place?

M We would typically watch the TV programme that shows showhouses, looking at the newspapers and advertisements, that's how we started.

TA. And did you go to see the showhouses at the weekends?

M: Every so often we would yes, but some weekends we had to give Sebastian (their son) to my mum because he doesn't have the patience, so it was a slow process

TA. Did you gather project leaflets?

M: No, but we would get the typical newspaper magazines, for example La Tercera or El Mercurio, those magazines are full of advertisements. And that's how we started searching, looking to see which projects we could afford and visiting them.

Advertising, class and location

As well as helping families to find the "best deal" and sort the supply of real estate on offer, advertising helps to give families a visible picture of the connections between residential choice and social position. When people look at the real estate options on offer, the typologies that associate type and price of houses with residential location and social status situates what was originally conceived as a personal project within a broader social context. This is aptly illustrated by the case of Diego and Ana. Once they decided to buy a house, they began looking in different locations near their flat. Even before they began, they knew that a painstaking process lay ahead to find a house. As Diego explained:

D: Getting here was difficult; it [buying a house] is not like buying a pair of shoes [that you know]. In a couple of months they will be done and you can get a new pair. We had to look for a house that met all our expectations.

However, in the process they realised that a main issue consisted of the connections between location and "environment"; by looking for a house they also had to choose

between the different statuses of the areas. In their case, the choice was between Los Pinos and other areas that had better surroundings but higher prices.

> D: In my case this had to do with my wife's expectations, because she visited some houses like this one but bigger, in Huechuraba.

After visiting a number of projects they decided to move to Huechuraba, a higher-income area very close to Quilicura. The main reason was that Huechuraba had a better "environment" and Diego's wife preferred it. As they looked, they had to start making evaluations and judging the status of the different areas in which they were looking.

> D: My wife looked at Huechuraba because she liked the houses and the environment, [but] it was exclusively about environment. She doesn't like it so much here, mainly [because] she was thinking about the old town of Quilicura, and, in fact, the old town...is like.... If you come to this area up St. John's Street the first impression is that it is not safe enough, but that's only the first impression.

However, despite their doubts, they finally decided to buy in Quilicura. Diego explained that this decision was because Quilicura was cheaper and they also realised they could have a more comfortable life there. With this decision, they were trying to balance what they needed with what they could afford and "traded off" the status of the area in the process. By looking for new houses through different real estate clusters, buyers not only define what they want, they also become aware of the different links between house purchase and social hierarchies.

As Diego did, other families became aware of housing projects' "status" when they started searching in different areas. For example, when Oscar and Julia started looking, they visited almost all the projects in Quilicura and Huechuraba and ended up buying a house in Los Pinos, partly because the "lifestyle status" in Huechuraba was too high:

> O: It was in August 2005 that we took the decision. We had already decided and then we said let's go and look at houses, we went to Santa Luisa, Parque Central, Casa Mayor, and all of the projects in Quilicura".

> TA: and Huechuraba?

> J: "Even though the [social] environment is very good there the problem is that the lifestyle status is, socially speaking, too high.

Oscar told me that the contrast between Quilicura and Huechuraba (the nearest cluster) was defined mainly in terms of lifestyle and status. Like Diego, he realised and processed the connection between location and social status. Within this context, other locations helped to frame their decision as focused more on budget than appearance.

The experiences of Oscar, Julia and Diego and Ana show that, as families engage with real estate markets and advertising, they are confronted with a broader type of classification related to the social status of residential locations. As noted earlier, this partly relates to the way advertising presents and sorts different projects in terms of their connection with urban location and social status. When they began house-hunting, couples thus became aware of the connections between their personal house choices and a more extended geography of class. In other words, when they enter the housing market they start to think about the connections between residential location and their own social trajectories (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005). In many ways, this connects to the "symbolic power" (Bourdieu 1986) of real estate classification and the way it helps to conflate spatial and social distinctions. As Burrows et al. show in their analysis of the role played by geo-demographic software, the act of house-hunting within the real estate market makes class inseparable from its relation with particular places (2006: 808). As these authors also argue in line with Savage, Bagnall et al, (2005), the choice of residential location is relational as it involves judging the value of different locations (Burrows et al, 2006:29). In this case, most of the comparisons were with a nearby residential location —Huechuraba— whose status and prices were both higher.

Although buyers see the different locations on offer in the housing market as associated with different social statuses, the desire for distinction plays only a secondary role in their final decision. Although they were aware of the "social value" of different areas, most buyers ultimately chose the location with what they regarded as a lower status. When it came to the final selection, families were not concerned with finding a "site of distinction" (Allen, Powell et al. 2007: 244), but with securing the best deal they could. In most cases, the final decision was based on "value for money". For example, Alberto's and Diego's families decided to move to Quilicura, even though they liked other areas, because it offered a great price/quality ratio. So, while the search involves some reflexivity and awareness of the connections between location and social status, the final outcome dismisses these elements in favour of an "indistinctive" choice. This "indistinctive" choice —underpinned by budgeting and pragmatic rationales— has been associated with the inconspicuous lower middle-class choice of suburbia (Allan, Crow et al. 2002). In this case, Quilicura and Los Pinos were understood not as source of status but as the most sensible and practical choice.

Indeed, in most cases, the location was either not irrelevant or relevant only insofar as it was connected with a good deal. As Alberto, one recently arrived house-owner told me:

> *A: I didn't know Quilicura. Indeed, I still don't know it well. I only know Lider [supermarket] and a little further where the market is. We chose this location because of the money. We had the money for this type of house.*

Families do not treat class and status as central considerations in choosing a house. In fact, most of them opted for Los Pinos for practical and financial reasons. Their choices, thus, reflect the findings of Allen et al. (2007) on lower-middle-class home-owners, in that their primary motivation for "buying into the neighbourhood was to engage in the inconspicuous consumption of semi- or link-detached houses with gardens that were surrounded by green space, rather than to achieve distinction" (Ibid 2002: 241). Similarly, in Los Pinos, the decision was a matter of affordability, not aspiration to social distinction. Nevertheless, families searching for a house and engaging in the housing market do reflect on the connections between their personal house-buying decisions, residential location and the extended geography of class. Through its link with residential location, class emerges as an awareness, an "external reference point" (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001: 882), from which the final pragmatic decision is undertaken.

2.2 The house purchase: financial calculations and cultural expectations.

The first encounter between the real estate project and its potential consumers often takes the form of weekend visits to Los Pinos sales office in Quilicura. Families often take daytrips to look at all the offers available in a given real estate circuit. Besides being the final step in the house production process from the company's perspective, this stage inaugurates a second and richer process of cultural production in terms of the families: the succession of practices through which the purchased house will be transformed into a "home". As will be discussed in the next chapter, this process of house *appropriation* (Miller 1997) is at the heart of the production of families' social and spatial coordinates. This *appropriation* begins during the first encounters between sellers and buyers and continues during the transaction, as buyers form attachments with their new house. The limits between the transaction and the production of the home and the family are thus blurred.

The sales office is adjacent to Los Pinos neighbourhood on a piece of land that is earmarked for future stages of the project. A gate connects the offices to the inhabited neighbourhood. The premises consist basically of a large, lightly-built and sparsely decorated warehouse. There is space for several desks, but there are only two, and the sales office is often manned by a single salesperson. The desks have little adornment: a phone, a set of pamphlets about the project and another set from banks and financial institutions. The walls have maps of projects and posters with prices and advertisements of the different stages. There is also a map in the middle of the room showing the houses available. Next to the sales office are the showhouses. As will be discussed later, these are a crucial part of the purchase as they give buyers the chance to "imagine" their future life in the house. I visited this sales office several times during my fieldwork. The busiest times for family visits were at weekends, when the salespeople were often glued to their desks, answering potential customers' questions. This helps to explain the salesroom's design, with a circuit that brings visitors directly to the salespeople. The only way families can visit the showhouses is to go past the sales desks.

Like the long process of house-hunting described in the previous section, the purchase is a stage at which both economic and cultural calculations are deployed. It may thus be defined as a practice that involves both economic and cultural entanglement. These calculations are mediated by the agency of several spaces and objects that frame the transaction in economic terms but also help families to imagine their new life in the suburbs. The following paragraphs will discuss two stages of the purchase that are connected with two different settings: a) the sales office and the negotiations with the sales manager; and b) the showhouses, particularly the way buyers rely on this device to envisage their house as both an economic product and their future home.

The salesroom and the negotiation

Most buyers visiting the salesroom and holding discussions with sales managers are focused exclusively on the financial aspects of the purchase. Their main objective is to obtain the best possible deal. As discussed earlier, this is consistent with their highly strategic approach to the housing market in general. Within this context, financial technicalities are central to family purchase strategies and often take the preceding process of house selection for granted. In most cases, the process takes several meetings and involves consultations with several institutions. Indeed, most of my family interviewees went to much trouble to deploy strategies to leverage their relationship

with banks and mortgage-lenders. For most of them, these practices relate to "tactical knowledge". For example, Pedro and Maria secured a good deal by forcing three financial institutions to compete. As Maria explained:

> M: They work with three banks and they approved the loan with all three. So Pedro negotiated with the three banks and got them to lower their rate. He spent almost a week negotiating until he got the best rate he could.

Families try to maximise their options by comparing the prices and offers of different real estate projects. Mortgage issues move to centre stage at the time of the final purchase. Marcos and Pepa, for example, made up their mind by comparing the financial schemes offered by companies in several different real estate clusters. She told me:

> P: We went to other areas (within Quilicura), we liked the others [houses] too. We went here and there, but there they asked for a 20% downpayment; the houses were OK but they wanted 20% and we didn't have that money. Here they asked for 10%.

SELLING A HOUSE

During my visits I participated in several of these dialogues, which often started after potential buyers visited the showhouses. They involved detailed discussions of buyers' incomes, payments and final price. The sellers' main objective is not to convince potential buyers of the houses' virtues, but to verify their financial possibilities. They want to determine whether a potential buyer fits their target group and is financially sustainable. During this operation, the buyer's attachment to and interest in the house is often taken for granted. Several devices help to "frame" the transaction (Callon, 1998). The most important of these is a financial formula that measures and determines the financial possibilities of potential customers. The formula factors in such aspects as payment capacity, current liabilities and income, in order to generate a list of potential clients. The sellers also have a bank list and spreadsheets and forms they use to calculate an interested buyer's possibilities. These elements are useful to quantify the financial risk, purchase capacity and financial status of potential buyers. They also use a table with the different houses built in the scheme and their prices in order to specify price and options. Most of these elements are deployed during the transaction and help to structure the conversations.

After clients pay the reservation fee, they have a second interview in GH headquarters with other executives. The purpose of this interview is to "ensure" that potential customers are financially viable. This process of financial "orientation" continues throughout the purchase process until the final contract is signed. I had the opportunity to interview the executive responsible for the final stages of the purchase. He explained his work as a process of "filtering" and classifying consumers:

"I receive all the possible buyers and I filter them a little bit. I make appointments and I look at their profile in term of income, for classifying them. Some people present that information themselves, but most of them don't know how to do it so I guide them.
TA: Why?
You have to orient them, some people have incomes that mean that they will have to choose other houses or price ranges, we have to tell them the bands. There are some parameters in term of income, financial liabilities, if they have other debts and if their financial liabilities is over 50% it is very difficult. Then I say to them that they have to reduce their debts and some of them do so".

By the time new families come to the sales office, the new houses are already woven into their trajectories and relationships. Most buyers have already learnt the language and characteristics of the different projects on offer. In fact, the negotiation with the salespeople in the showroom is the final step in a long search in which families have assimilated the different possibilities and imagined their new home. Furthermore, before discussing the purchase with the executives, most families have already visited the showhouses; this is essential to the creation of shared knowledge of the house and project qualities between sellers and buyers. This shared knowledge works as a common background that allows sales executives and buyers to converse exclusively at the level of payment details and price negotiation.

Against this backdrop, the first encounter between sellers and buyers would hardly fit into a logic enchantment like that described in Korczynski's analysis of sales offices (2005). On the contrary, here buyers and sellers focus almost uniquely on clarifying the limits and qualities of products and the liabilities of the transaction, with most conversations and practices related to specifying technicalities of the house and financial payments. In the first instance, the aim of sellers and buyers alike is to delineate the limits and responsibilities of the transaction and frame the house price in order to produce the transaction (please see the box adobe). During this conversation, the house is disentangled from other elements, some of which emerge as calculable entities (Callon 1998). In other words, a clear boundary is drawn between elements that will be taken into account and will serve in calculations and those that will be excluded (Ibid, 1998:16).

In many ways, this stage is analogous to Bourdieu's descriptions of French real estate as a practice in which sellers focus mainly on moving clients from their aspirations to their "real" possibilities. As he said about the sale: "it is rapidly transformed —under the effects of the technical and financial coactions— into an inquiry into the buyer's guaranties." (Bourdieu 2001:171). In this particular case, however, this process of "framing" is not only the sellers' work, but is actively shared and produced by the buyers. The framing and qualification of houses is not the work of the seller alone, but implies the active commitment of the buyers. Indeed, during my observations at the sales office, I noted that most buyers knew exactly how to proceed and what to ask. Furthermore, they did not expect the sales manager to enter into the biographical value or personal connotations of the new house. The discussion was reduced to budgeting and payment. Indeed, the financial details of the purchase were the main theme of conversation. In most cases, the interaction and conversation began and ended with the topic of payments and financial possibilities. These financial discussions often account for much of the salespeople's work, as they have to explain

and "orientate" their potential buyers as to the real dimension of the purchase. As one agent explained:

> A: Many people are OK because they complement their income, others have one million [pesos monthly income] (GBP 1000) and others have no chance, so we have to explain to them that their income doesn't give them any chance. (...) There are some people who don't know about the process. They think that they know everything, because they know other people's stories, but it is very variable. There are some people who know, others start by looking for the loan; others come without credit and don't know how to go about it, so then we do it for them.

That purchase conversations are framed in strictly economic terms does not preclude a rich cultural production at the time of the purchase. Indeed, as the next section will discuss, when buying the house families swing between strategic economic calculation and entanglement of the house with their family trajectory and aspirations. Most of this production happens when families visit the showhouses.

Measuring and imagining the new life

Showhouse visits constitute a second crucial stage in the purchase. The area in which they are located has a well-kept green with a children's playground and stone pathways. This setting contrasts sharply with the company's main offices, which lack decoration or aesthetic intention. The company set up two different showhouses: one furnished and the other unfurnished. The idea, the executives explained, was to help families to make sense of the "two stages" of their purchase: the house as it is delivered and the house at it would look when transformed into a "home". Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the furnished home is a central device in the company's advertising strategy and aims both to connect the house with the buyer's lifestyle and to perform an idea of achievement. Picture 4 shows the interior of the showhouse and its garden. The second house was included with the aim of facilitating potential buyers' final decision. The two showhouses embody the duality with which families enter the housing market: with a mixture of cultural and economic calculations.

Whereas the salesroom visit entails a financial discussion related to "framing" the purchase, the visits to the showhouses are bound up with a rich process of cultural production in which families "entangle" the house in their trajectories. Visits to showhouses thus involve the performing of both "exchange" and "use" of the new house's cultural value. Specifically, the showhouses articulate an instance of

measurement and evaluation with one in which families imagine their life in the new house.

In their visits to the showhouses, families articulate these two stages of cultural entanglement and economic disentanglement. On the one hand, they focus on and measure exactly what is going to be bought. This process of evaluation follows the logic described by Callon, Meadel et al. (Ibid, 2002), whereby consumers play a central role in the production of "attachments" by judging, evaluating and classifying. During my visits to the sales office, I met families who used rulers, digital cameras or sketches to help them envisage the proportions more precisely and to make sense of how their things would "fit" into the new space. These practices also represent the beginning of house improvements (a practice I will explore in the next chapter). Maria and Pedro, for example, measured their entire house just to be sure that the dimensions of the land were exact. They also asked the neighbours to help gain an idea of how the house would look when finished.

> *M: We came with a measuring tape to find which house has more garden. (...)*
> *there were many of them, in fact at the end there is a couple that were the only*
> *people living here. They were working in their garden and we asked them about*
> *the house. We also asked if we could take a look inside the house, and they*
> *said yes.*

Families also enlist the help of relatives and friends. They often invite parents, uncles and aunts or friends to give a second opinion. Matias and Rosa, for example, visited their house many times before they moved. As Rosa told me:

> *R: We came every week with my mum, my dad and my brothers. We all came*
> *to take measurements, to get a feel for the house; I don't know, to practice. We*
> *wanted to come as soon as possible.*

The salespeople's work also relates to this process of qualification. They explained to me that this is a natural procedure, given the magnitude of the investment. They also attribute great importance to clarity about the house specifications.

> *Salesmen: People come with measuring tapes and they measure the spaces.*
> *People who have already bought come to see if what they bought is real, the*
> *same with the plots. Luckily, I am really careful about this sort of thing. If it said*
> *5 metres I said 5 metres, other people [sellers] round off numbers. So they trust*
> *me more, because I am meticulous.*

On the other hand, showhouse visits are also a cornerstone of cultural production in terms of how families make sense and imagine their new life in the suburbs. During my

visits to the showroom, I realised that most families managed to combine the measurement activities with an open discussion and evaluation of the perspectives of their new life in the house. Indeed, while walking through the house they were allocating the rooms and deciding how to fit their possessions into the different spaces. By looking at the different areas of the house, visitors also engage in discussions of the lifestyle of all the family members and the potential everyday uses of the different areas, such as the place for having breakfast or watching television. Many would also discuss the showhouse's advantages and disadvantages in relation to their current house. By comparing the showhouse with their own living experience, families not only evaluated the pros and cons of living in this new house, but also imagined the contours of their new life. Decoration also came into this conversation. Indeed, for most of my informants, the showhouse decoration was used as a source of ideas for their own personal decoration (this point will be further explored in chapter 5).

By helping families to imagine their new life, the showhouse thus inaugurates the process of appropriation. Buyers move between the rationale of measurement to one of "dreaming" and imaging. Indeed, in keeping with the company's aim to connect the house with buyer's uses, tastes and lifestyles, potential buyers use the furnished house as an "entanglement device" that allows them to make sense of their new social and spatial coordinates. By qualifying houses in terms of their own expectations, families thus define and frame their process of change.

There is, however, an open duality between the logic of calculation and framing related to the purchase and the more cultural entanglement that occurs when families judge the showhouse in terms of their own trajectories, projects and expectations. This duality is, somehow, embodied in the two different showhouses displayed in the area. While the furnished showhouse connects with the "use value" by tying the object in with families' trajectories, expectations and values, the empty showhouse is part of the definition of purchase boundaries and the disentangling that structures the purchase process. Buyers' skills for dealing with these two levels are very important here. Most people engage in this process by being highly reflexive and managing the duality between the house they will buy and the home they "imagine". Some of them move between one aspect and the other of the purchase, or between the empty and the furnished showhouses. The following dialogue with Carmela illustrates this:

> TA. Did you like the showhouse?

> C. I loved it. It is because the showhouse is decorated to make you love it. The good thing is they did another house to show it as they deliver it. [When you look at this other house] you touch the ground. The decorated showhouse is

spectacular and you don't have that kind of furniture and even if you had it you wouldn't have the same style. They do it because they want you to say, " Wow". So then I went to the empty showhouse and I said to myself, "This is the house; this is what costs $ 20 million [GBP 20000].

Other couples, such as Oscar and Julia, deal with this duality through a "de facto" division of labour: one family member focuses on the "real house" (the disentangled good) and the other on the decorated house (its future as their home).

O: "My wife went to the furnished showhouse and I went to the other, the house as they deliver it. For me this was what counted, the other [decorated] one is what you can do [in the future]. Perhaps it is like someone's dream to have a furnished house with the exact things, like the showroom".

Figure 15. Showhouses. Pictures show a panoramic view of decorated showhouses in Los Pinos. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

Elements such as the conversations between buyers and sellers and the empty showhouse work as the disentangled aspect of the purchase; both are orientated

towards forming a sharp definition of "what will be purchased". The complementary, furnished showhouse and the practice of house-hunting involve cultural calculations in which sellers and families rely on the house's use value to make sense of the purchase. The showhouse thus works as a space of "entanglement" (Callon 2005) that helps consumers to construe the house as part of their future life.

•••

For families, the process of moving to the suburbs involves the deployment of a mixture of cultural and financial calculations. In terms of arrival histories, the decision to buy a house is connected with major changes in their lives. It is not a financial investment but a "totalised moment" that redefines their trajectories. It resembles, thus, Miller's description of the purchase as a moment

> "in which everything —from past suffering to possible future pleasure, from all her social relationships to all the other economic possibilities that are contingent upon this particularly large purchase— comes together in this choice of a particular style and the weighing up of a constellation of values (Miller 2002: 226).

At the same time, however, the practice of house-hunting is approached as a highly strategic practice in which different options are confronted in terms of economic maximisation and budgeting. Furthermore, families engaging in the housing market help to make visible the connections between residential choice, social status and their own biographies. A pervading geography of class based on sites of "distinction" appear, thus, as a general backdrop for decisions. Nevertheless, in the case of Los Pinos, an indistinctive and pragmatic decision seems to prevail over, but not eliminate, traces of class. The purchase, particularly the visits to the salesroom and showhouses, work on a similar logic. Indeed, although families deploy strictly financial calculations to approach the purchase, it also involves a key moment of cultural production in which they make sense of their new biographical moves. Finally, families are not alone in this production, as it is assisted by several materialities and market devices (Callon, Muniesa et al. 2007a) that help them to define what the new house means in terms of the purchase and their own trajectories. Marketing devices such as advertising and showhouses plays a key part in this.

These two apparently opposing instances of cultural entanglement and economic disentanglement contribute to define the house purchase as a process in which families start to perform their process of social mobility.

3. Concluding remarks: housing markets performing class

This chapter has examined the design, marketing and purchase of real estate projects aimed at Santiago's middle class. It has examined production —the work of agents directed at selling houses— and consumption —the way families engage in the housing market— as parts of a continuous process of qualification (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002). This process has been used as a basis to explore how housing markets function as vehicles for the assemblage of Chilean middle-class cultures. This argument looked at two consecutive stages. First, it described how real estate executives draw on varied meanings of class and social mobility to qualify real estate projects. Second, in terms of the house purchase, it examined how buyers engage in the housing market and perform different practices related to the house-buying process. It was argued that house-buying involves an intensive deployment of cultural and economic calculations, leading not only to the final financial transaction but also to the performance of families' trajectories of social mobility.

The analysis has been underpinned by the idea that economic life (i.e., production, exchange and consumption) is a key vehicle for cultural production. Here, cultural meanings are regarded not only as the "context" in which economic practices are embedded, but as elements that constitute goods and markets as such. Indeed, as was explored here, actors rely on cultural calculations to define economic goods. At the same time, however, this cultural knowledge is subject to a particular instrumental economic framing (Slater, 2002). This is how, as economic goods, real estate projects can be produced, sold and purchased through a sequence of (cultural) entanglement and (economic) disentanglement (Callon 2005). This process involves not only human agents but also several types of objects and market devices (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002) that play an active role in performing these economic and cultural calculations.

Through this cultural economy approach, the chapter analysed one particular type of cultural production: that related to the meanings of class and social mobility. Within this context, the first part of the chapter explored how the production of real estate involves the deployment of several narratives and understandings of middle-class lifestyle, values and social trajectories. When choosing the location or designing or promoting their projects, producers rely on these understandings to attach projects to final consumers. House design draws on understandings such as location, status, families' narratives of "social aspirations" and class-related buyers' preferences (which are defined on tight budgets but with social aspirations) and, more broadly, it places potential buyers inside a broader imaginary of hierarchical tastes, lifestyles and values. By deploying these cultural calculations and practising pragmatic "theories" of class

and social mobility, real estate agents work as "sociologists at large". In other words, the outcomes of real estate production are not only real estate projects but also narratives of middle-class and social mobility that are performed and scripted in house design. Perhaps one of the most striking dimensions of this performing of class consists of the connections between real estate production and the instrumental use of an extensive knowledge of the city's class-based spatial segregation. By choosing project types in terms of these different geographies of class, real estate executives actively perform the links between residential location and class.

Families also experience the whole house-buying process as a combination of cultural and economic calculations. The arrival stories showed that deciding to buy a house was the outcome of a highly personal decision, a "totalised" moment in which not only are families' relationships negotiated but their values and trajectories are determined. The decision to buy a house thus appears as a landmark that is entangled with families' biographies. At the same time, however, the practice of house-hunting takes an instrumental view of the housing market to deploy "budgeting" strategies aimed at securing the best possible deal. In other words, while deciding to move can be read as a highly cultural moment, the search process is constructed around the deployment of instrumental practices aimed at securing the best possible deal. For families entering the housing market, this involves not only imagining their new life and performing their trajectory but also connecting these personal changes with an extended geography of real estate projects that conflate location with class. In other words, families immersed in the housing market and in advertising and real estate offers are not only looking at and comparing houses, but, in doing so, they are also confronting their own trajectories with an extended map of social and spatial locations. While an "indistinctive choice" was their usual final decision, the whole practice involves, nevertheless, an increased reflexivity about the links between residential choice and social position and trajectory. In this vein, the final part of the chapter described buyers' visits to the sales office and the purchase encounter. This moment was described as the very first in a process of appropriation (Miller, 1997), through which families make sense not only of their new house but also of their own trajectories and expectations. Nevertheless, like the practice of searching, the purchase stage is not purely cultural in nature but is a mixture of cultural and economic calculations 2 (Slater 2002a). Indeed, the purchase swings between moments in which the house is evaluated as a central part of families' lives and others in which it is framed strictly in terms of economic considerations. The showhouses work here as central objects through which families can not only "measure and evaluate" the house but also make sense of and perform their own social and spatial trajectories.

...

This chapter has attempted to describe how calculations of class, social status or social mobility work as central components of design, location and marketing of real estate projects. Within this context, the chapter title, "Housing markets performing class", is intended to reflect how housing markets inherently help to perform particular *versions* of middle-class culture and social mobility (Mol 1999). In other words, the different cultural calculations that structure the production and purchase of real estate help to enact a *particular historically, culturally and materially located* version of class (Ibid, 1999: 75). This production is connected not only to the instrumental deployment of class narratives but also to a rich set of materialities in which these understandings are scripted.

The design and sale of real estate does not necessarily reproduce or "intermediate" existing class categories, but performs particular versions of those class categories. Paraphrasing Callon, it may be said that markets perform class insofar as the cultural calculation that defines real estate production "contributes to construct the reality that they take as their starting point" (Callon 2006: 7), rather than merely reflecting an objective space of class positions. Within this context, for example, executives apply their own understandings of middle-class lifestyle, residential choice and social trajectories. This standpoint differs from other analyses of housing markets that attribute them with a logic of social reproduction in which real estate agents "interpret" and use different social positions and capital structures in their sales strategy (Bridge 2001). Here, instead of focusing on a process of reproduction, the affirmation that housing markets perform class stresses the active contribution of market agents and objects in shaping particular versions of class-related values and hierarchies.

By enacting particular versions of class (Mol 1999), housing markets act as vehicles in the assembling of class positions. They do so by performing particular understandings of social hierarchies and trajectories when locating, designing and selling houses. Although executives claim that their project design refers to an "external" and relatively obvious system of class positions and lifestyles, by deploying these categories they actively engage in enacting particular versions of class and social mobility. In other words, their practices suggest "a reality that is done and enacted rather than observed" (Ibid, 1999:77). In fact, in qualifying real estate projects, some associations between class and housing are confirmed while others are ruled out. The first part of this chapter explored some of the class categories that appeared as central in real estate design. The links between house design and narratives of socio-economic achievement, the value of "thrift and aspiration" and connections

between real estate design, lower-middle classes and particular urban location emerged as crucial in the enactment of a particular version of class and social mobility. This production process not only relates to discourses but is also connected with the production of several materialities. Indeed, as final outputs of the qualification process, houses script several of the class meanings deployed during the process of qualification. Similarly, showhouses, decoration and sales office advertising are conceived on the basis of executives' understandings of middle–class lifestyle and trajectories. It may be said, thus, that these elements play an essential role in enacting particular versions of class and social mobility. They become "a practical attempt to create a material world in accordance with these ideals" (Miller 2005: 5).

A homologous argument applies to the families: for them, too, the housing market works as a space in which social positions —and particularly their trajectories— are negotiated and produced. Indeed, the house-buying process involves performing new connections and associations between families' trajectories and a general geography of class. Furthermore, through objects and spaces such as showrooms, decorative objects and showhouses, people begin to make sense of their spatial and social trajectories. These elements thus represent the starting point for the appropriation of the new house and residential location. As was described, this production is, however, not clear-cut or purely cultural. Indeed, the house-buying process is revealed as a mixture of cultural and economic calculations, closely linking the new house and family trajectories with more instrumental issues such as finding the "best deal". When buying a house, families thus navigate an open duality between meaningful and instrumental considerations. These two aspects are largely inseparable, as both define the home-moving experience.

A critical issue in this context is that of the connections between families and their newly purchased houses —the most visible component of the house-moving experience. The way new owners appropriate their houses is the subject of the next chapter, which examines the material culture of social and spatial mobility.

CHAPTER 5
Moving home: the material culture of social mobility

This chapter examines how recently arrived families make sense of their new house in the suburbs. It does this by analysing two complementary practices: home improvements and decoration of the new house. Home improvements are understood to refer to all the changes that families make to the new house. Decoration is understood as the way in which families arrange their possessions within the domestic space. I argue that improvement and decoration work are cultural practices that not only create the "home" as a meaningful space and shape families' trajectories, but also help to produce people's social and spatial coordinates. In other words, by improving and decorating, families make sense of social trajectories and perform their new position. This chapter, therefore, is not only about how home and family are (re)created through the material culture of the new house, but also about how the everyday practice of moving home operates as a key vehicle for the production of new social positions. This chapter is about the material culture of social mobility.

1. Improving and decorating as home-making practices

Although the two concepts are normally conflated into one, a house does not necessarily imply the existence of a home (Blunt and Dowling 2006). In fact, making a home often involves large amounts of "symbolic labour" expended on the house over a lengthy period of time. Home is therefore not just an idea or a space but an active cultural process (Miller 2001). Home-making practices, then, are all those by means of which dwellers ground personal and social meanings in the new residence, thus making a house into their home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). When making a home, families appropriate the new residence and make it part of their life (Miller 1997). My fieldwork found that this idea of home-making as a dynamic process was pivotal. Indeed, in Los Pinos, moving to a new house was not a passive transition but an animated and dynamic process that reshaped notions of family as a result of living in a new home. Many aspects of family life, such as family history, framing, projects and everyday life practices were reshaped in such a way that boundaries between family and house were often blurred. Home-making practices may, therefore, be seen as being at the core of the cultural repertoire that Los Pinos families deploy to make themselves feel in "place", to construct their new social and spatial position. Home-making practices *are*, so to speak, the material culture of social mobility.

When improving and decorating, Los Pinos neighbours engage in common projects, practices and experiences that shape an emergent sense of "us" which develops through a collection of shared practices and understandings among neighbours (Southerton 2002). They are not alone in the project of making a home, improving their family's comfort and working towards an anticipated higher quality of life. They also share a whole conception of social mobility. This relates to a shared sense of achievement and autonomy (Kaika 2004), as well as ownership and economic accumulation (Bourdieu 2001). What emerges is a sense of attachment —of "fitting in"— through which families merge their trajectory with their current situation. The creation of home and this sense of attachment do not relate to a preexistent set of class values or positions, but are instead a consequence of an active production involving everyday practices, places and objects. This production is executed by way of negotiation, connections and creativity. Improving and decorating are therefore complex and dynamic processes that often involve the articulation of delicate equilibriums between house and material possessions, family expectations and budget limitations. I draw here on De Certeau's (1984) concept of tactics, which emphasises the creative and subtle ways in which people make sense of and appropriate their material and social situation. Improving and decorating, therefore, diverge from passive dwelling in a mass-designed house to enact a cultural process of appropriation (Miller, 1997)

Home and Family in Latin America

Several works have explored the links between house, family and cultural change in Latin America. They have unanimously concluded that the *casa* (house) has a central role in the articulation of Latin American families, both in terms of their process of domestic reproduction and in defining their identities (Da Matta 1987; Gudeman and Rivera 1990; Holston 1991; COLLOREDO-MANSFELD 1994; Ureta 2007). The literature on house and family in Latin America can be divided in two strands. The first body of literature has explored the key role of the house for the peasantry and rural Latin American communities (Gudeman and Rivera 1990; COLLOREDO-MANSFELD 1994). In their research in Colombia, Gudeman and Rivera (1990) showed that the rural *casa* is a key aspect of family economic reproduction as it defines the whole economic sphere. The authors explored how in these rural communities the *casa* constitutes a metaphor through which peasants' domestic economy and family identity is articulated. In a similar vein, but based on rural communities in Ecuador, Colloredo-Mansfield explored the important role of houses and house improvement in shaping the complex relations between family identities and the wider local community. This happens because the house and home improvements are at the heart of the production

and circulation of social status. As they argued, by improving their *casa*, rural families "transform new forms of wealth into locally structured relations of power and identity" (COLLOREDO-MANSFELD 1994: 862). In line with more general literature on home culture, the work of Gudeman and Rivera and Colloredo-Mansfeld thus shows that Latin American rural houses play a highly significant role in shaping family values and cultures. They function not only as a living environment but also as key cultural categories through which family is produced. Against this backdrop, authors such as De Matta (1987) have remarked how the realm of the house has historically embodied values like honour and safety. Within this context, the house, as a realm, is opposed to the realm of the street; a space associated with danger and disgrace.

A second strand of literature on house and family in Latin America has focused on the connections between house and urban marginality. Central here is the idea of the house as a process and a practice that are actively deployed by families. Specifically, the process of home construction and improvement has been explored as a constitutive element of the creation of home and family. These relationships may be traced to the origins of Latin American cities and the spread of slum housing in marginal sectors. For example, in his review of the history of social housing in Santiago, Chile (2002), Hidalgo argues that "ranchos" and "conventillos" —slum housing— constitute the main type of urban housing in Latin American cities. Both types of houses were characterised by instability and informality in their construction and boundaries.

Within this context, some authors have researched how practices of house auto construction appear central element in the shaping of families. Here, the house is construed as part of the family *proyecto* rather than a particular space or materiality. For instance, in her research on Mexico City, (Ortega-Alcázar 2007) argues that house self-construction is inseparable from the assembling of the family. In a similar vein, Ureta explored how working-class social housing in Santiago is domesticated through practices of decoration and minor improvements (Ureta 2007). He argued that these practices are essential to newcomers' social identity and integration. Similarly, Holston's work on self-construction in Brazilian working-class families explores how the articulation of family identities revolves around the house process. Referring to Brazilian working class families, he said that "(...) auto construction engages them in the modern knowledge-world through an essentially new sense of agency, both political and personal. In doing so, they auto construct self images of competence and knowledge (...)" (Holston 1991: 448)

The bulk of the research on links between house and family in Latin America has focused on urban and rural lower classes; it is difficult to find much reference to the middle classes in this field. One of the few pieces of research that have explored these links in the Latin American middle class is the work of O'Dougherty (2002), as mentioned earlier. In her research, she shows how domestic space is crucial not only in framing the family but, more centrally, in reproducing differences between the working and middle classes. In her research, she shows that the use of domestic space (and domestic service) constitutes an important strategy for maintaining cultural differences.

Improvements and Decoration

As home-creating practices, decoration and improvements are substantially different in terms of context and connections. The sense of public/private is one main difference. Whereas home improvements are embedded in the scope of relationships created amongst neighbours, decoration pertains to the more private sphere of family narratives. In other words, while improvements reinforce a more visible and spatial account of a family's social position and trajectory, decoration articulates those same elements by tensioning its history and temporality. This difference was often quite evident, as illustrated by my experience with one couple, Alberto and Lucia. They are both in their mid-thirties and met at university, where they read mathematics. I met Alberto in late December through Oscar and, after the first interview, I started to visit him regularly on January afternoons. I always found him tending to the garden, where he grows many of the family's vegetables, which helps to save money that is then spent on the garden and other external improvements. We started talking about vegetables almost weekly. We also often talked about home improvements and his future projects for the house; he explained in detail his plans to build a hard standing for the car and a new fence. However, when we started to talk about decoration and, particularly, when I asked if I could come into the house, they were quite hesitant. At one point, Alberto told me that Lucia was uncomfortable with the idea of me recording and photographing the living room, because she thought that decoration was a more intimate topic. We agreed not to take pictures of the living room. She justified her decision by appealing to the importance of privacy.

Given this difference, decoration and improvement practices will be addressed separately. I want to underline, however, the idea that the two are related in the production of a sense of home, constituting a further stage in the assembling of social and spatial trajectories. The chapter is divided into three parts. Following this introduction, the second part describes how families approach the different stages of

the practice of home improvement, such as planning, funding and construction. It then discusses whether improvement practices relate to the enactment of individual upward social mobility and the emergence of a sense of shared social positions. It examines a fundamental tension that lies within the practice of improvement —its dual nature as both a collective and an individual task— and how this tension articulates a sense of shared social trajectories and experiences among residents. The third part explores how Los Pinos families engage in decorating their new house. It starts by describing the practice of decorating, looking at how families talk about their projects and use resources such as magazines and formal discourses on taste and decoration. I also discuss the stratagems deployed for decorating and whether decoration may be regarded as a gendered practice that is inserted into housekeeping routines. Also in this section, I discuss the practice of decoration in relation to the assemblage of social position and trajectories. Two elements are explored here. First, the relations between decoration, taste and authenticity, and how decoration involves making sense of and dealing with a tension between personal trajectories and external class-related references. Second, how people deal with old possessions in the new house and how decoration emerges as a way of performing their trajectories of social mobility. The last part of the chapter offers a final reflexion on the practices discussed here, exploring whether improvement and decoration may be construed as key resources not only in the creation of home and family, but also in the assemblage of families' new social and spatial position.

2. Making the house suit

By mid-December, improvement works were under way all over Los Pinos. The scale of these works was apparent in many ways. Sand, cement and construction supplies were all around, altering the shape of the landscape and hindering the passage of vehicles in the streets. Furthermore, the improvements generated a continuous movement of people and materials that made the new areas of Los Pinos appear much busier than the rest of the scheme. The improvements also formed a central topic of neighbourhood conversations. Before I met the new owners, Oscar —my main informant and the manager of Los Pinos homeowners' association— told me all newcomers typically undertook improvements. Real estate company employees also remarked upon the magnitude of these ventures which they considered excessive given the large (and "unnecessary") amounts of money and effort often expended. Within a month of moving, all my informants were improving their houses. As I talked to them, I realised that the task of suiting the new house to the family's necessities was a priority. Oscar and Julia, for example, told me that they could not wait to start planning all the changes and improvements they wanted to make. For them, the new house was like a blank canvas waiting for the family's colour:

> *J: We looked at the plan [and said] look, here, we'll do this and that. The back garden has got so much space so if we do this, so much would be left for grass. We toyed with everything.*

Home improvements are a big business, requiring families to mobilise many assets. When planning, funding or building their improvements, they have to be able to complete their projects without sacrificing autonomy or going bankrupt. In most cases, families work on the improvements themselves, without using building companies or architects. They deploy subtle adaptations, manoeuvres and stratagems that they learn from other families or create by themselves. Improving the house therefore has a tactical aspect (De Certeau, 1984). It involves making the house into their own home and, somehow, brings closure to the purchase process. Since the house's original design offers limited possibilities of change (Mallet 2004: 68), improvements are a way of adapting it to their expectations and lifestyle. In other words, what they choose as their house will not become their home until they work on making it "fit" into their plans. Improvements are thus a key vehicle for the appropriation of the house. This work is not simply a matter of comfort or aesthetics; it is a key means of achieving convergence between families' new lives in the suburbs and their own trajectories and aspirations. It is a practice through which they make themselves feel in place. Furthermore, improving the house involves a process of cultural production in which

new residents not only appropriate the house in terms of their own trajectories but also "come to see their life as formed through the influence of the home itself" (Miller 2001:10). Thus are their new social and spatial coordinates produced. In line with previously discussed literature, it can thus be argued that improvements help families to shape their identity (Colloredo Mansfeld 1994, Ortega Alcazar 2007).

2.1 The practice of improving the house

The improvements families make usually conform to a set of standard changes that can be seen frequently around the villa. Four improvements are common in Los Pinos houses. The first and most frequent is a hard floor at the entrance and around the edge of the house. Most of the owners choose to lay tiles, although some opt for the cheaper option of cement blocks. The second is a fence around the front garden. The houses do come with a fence, but owners often find it too flimsy and prefer to put up a new one. A third common improvement is a roofed entrance for the kitchen. In some cases this roof is made into a whole room. This roof/room is used to dry clothes and keep domestic appliances, such as the washing machine, under cover. The fourth

improvement is a porch —a big roof over the house's main entrance. Some families connect this porch with the kitchen extension, creating a continuous roof almost over the entire facade of the house. The porch is one of the most expensive and valued extensions. Many families make other small changes in addition to these four main ones. In the case of my informants, most had made or planned to make these four standard improvements, but some were also thinking about other small projects such as a barbecue area or a garden fountain.

Improvements became the first priority of most of my informants after they had moved. As argued before, improvements mediate the original house with the "ideal home" that new owners expect. The state in which the company delivers the houses contributes to a sense of unfinished work. Instead of a lawn or garden, the new houses have bare earth, which makes them look very different to the presentation in advertisements and showrooms. The house finishings are far less terminated than the image offered by the company in the showroom. Indeed the differences between the two —the house at the time of the purchase and as it is delivered— are marked. Unlike the showhouses with their garden and ready-to-live-in look, the houses received by new owners are empty, relatively dirty, with no garden and a flimsy fence. The fact that the company, GH, delivers the houses in this condition has to do with the effort to minimise features (and therefore price), as buyers are understood to be able to afford the purchase price at a stretch. In this way, the designers somehow push families to start appropriating their own house with even more urgency. An unintended consequence of the company's design is that it forces new residents to actively work on improving their house and, thus, make it into their own home. GH's characterisation of buyers as people with small budgets but great aspirations, offers families the opportunity to appropriate their houses in terms of their own trajectories and values.

Furthermore, as new residents, most of my informants saw the unfinished air of their houses as a sign of scarcity and disorder. The importance of improvements relates too, to a sense of collective propriety among neighbours. Making improvements shows care and commitment to the new house and the new area in general. Improvements generate an important difference among houses: those that lack them are often regarded as less attractive or poorly kept. This was an important issue for most of my informants: they felt that they could not take proper care of their house without improving it.

Figure 16. Photos comparing improved houses with houses as delivered. Pictures marked A show houses after improvements. Pictures marked B show houses as delivered. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

Families try to reconcile their impatience to start improvements with their budget constraints. There is always a way to start changing the house. In fact, even though some of them lacked the resources for definitive improvements, all my informants found a way to change their house when they arrived. The importance of changing the house's appearance is that it makes it feel more like one's own, even if the changes are not definitive. Through appropriation, the purchased house is thus transformed into a home (Miller 1997); a space in which people defines the contours of their new life in the suburban semi-detached house. The experience of Trinidad and Javier illustrates this point. When they moved to Los Pinos, they did not have the money for improvements, so they decided to wait. The first time I met them, Javier told me that, given his budget, improving the house would have to be a two-year project. However,

regardless of the limitations, they found a way of building some provisional improvements. A couple of weeks after the first interview they had started creating a garden and had put up a temporary cement roof over the entrance. During our second interview, Javier asked me for help and we laid the blocks together. While we were working, he told me that a friend had taught him how to do it and that this installation might only last a year until he got the funds to build a proper roof. Although he knew it was temporary, it was worthwhile because the house looked better and was more comfortable. For Trinidad, it was important because it was difficult to keep the house clean and tidy without it. These changes were regarded as the starting point of their work on the house; they looked forward to making more improvements:

> T: "the next step is the cement blocks, the grass and then the closet, that is in the middle of the year, when money'll be easier, because our pockets are almost empty".

Improving is not an easy or a straightforward task. It requires the articulation of many different elements with high levels of "street savy". At every step, decisions have to be made about the family's and the house's future, creating and exploring new relationships and learning how to function under great financial uncertainty. Moreover, improvement activities engage the family in a new architecture of social relationships and circumstances that shape how they frame their situation. The following paragraphs will describe how families improve their house tactically. For the purposes of clarity, this practice will be examined in three key stages: planning, financing and construction.

Projecting and planning

The definition and planning of the improvement usually involves long-term negotiations. Large quantities of time and energy are spent. Changes involve reshaping not only the house but also family projects and schedules. Families often start planning and projecting long before moving to Los Pinos. Most regard the process as something very personal, as it involves making decisions about the family's and the house's future. Most of my informants also found the whole process of planning highly enjoyable. In fact, I spent several hours of my fieldwork talking informally with owners about improvement projects. Often when I met them in the street or in their front garden, they would automatically start talking about their improvements and projects. Even when the feasibility of improvements was uncertain, plans were sketched out and discussed at length. Although external help and resources were always considered, I met no family that relied on external help to design or plan their improvements. Planning was always regarded as a private practice as it involved deciding the shape of the definitive home

and family. Indeed it may be said that planning constitutes a first space for couples to practise their new condition as homeowners.

Figure 17. Improvement sketches drawn by a fieldwork participant. These were used for planning the different uses of the house. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**
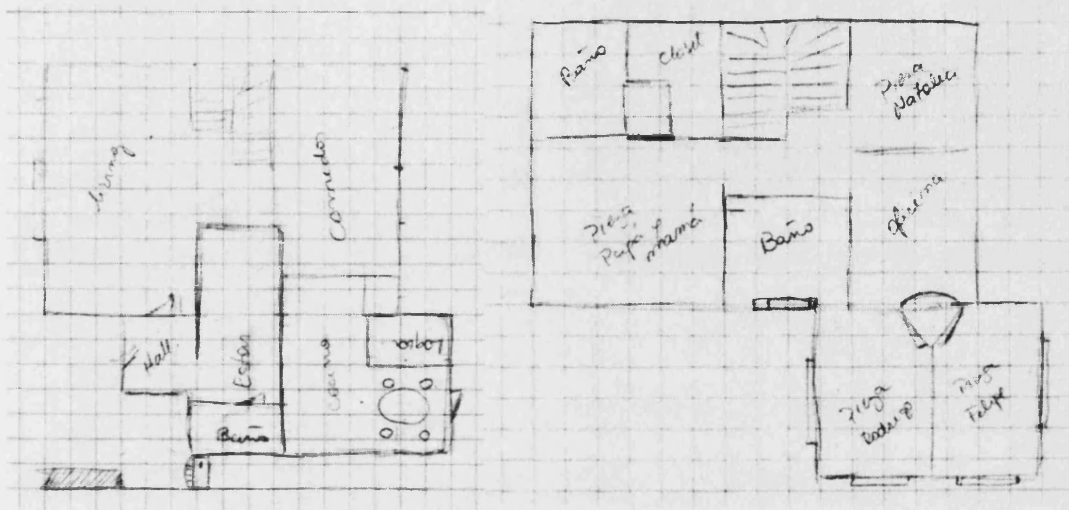
As a practice, planning is treated carefully and involves considered judgments. Defining how, what, and when to improve is therefore seen as a very important and time-consuming process. Jorge's and Mariana's planning process illustrates the great sophistication involved in this task. Jorge and Mariana moved to Los Pinos in December and I met them just two weeks later. Their improvements were carefully planned and discussed. Jorge told me that he and Mariana had carefully studied such aspects as the order of the changes, procedures and how to finance every change that they planned. Jorge likes to talk about "projects" and emphasises that "everything was planned in stages". He also told me that they drew all their projects and mailed them to each other for discussion. The discussion and the record were essential to the planning process. The following dialogue is very illustrative:

> M: "I am planning a lemon tree, we will plant it there, a fountain, we sketch all our plans
> TA: How do you draft it? In Excel?
> P: Yes, Jorge mails it to me; based on what we have discussed, he sends me three or four different designs; I see which I like best...
> TA: Do you keep a record?
> M: Yes, I keep a record of everything, what we've spent".

Raising the money: bonuses, banks and parents

By far the biggest challenge in making improvements is the financial aspect. Improvements usually involve a large amount of money. However, most families have no possibility of raising further loans on top of their mortgage. Thus, they have to find the money outside the financial system to improve the house.

In some ways, finance and planning cannot be separated. Many families design and discuss all their improvements incorporating and discussing the backing. For some of my informants, financial requirements were the most scrutinised part of the project and required the deployment of long-term strategies. In many cases, improvements and house-planning bound family life-plans or *proyects* and the house together inseparably. In planning and funding their house improvements, members articulate the family's present, past and future. Nevertheless, most families do not question the option of making improvements, as these are seen as a crucial step in making their new house habitable and fulfilling their expectations of it. Because of this, it can be said that improvements are not necessarily determined by economic or budgetary calculations but in terms of general considerations of families' expectations regarding their recent achievement and autonomy.

The most highly regarded strategy for financing house improvements is saving. In some cases, savings and scrupulous planning may finance an entire house project. Josefa and Andres, for example, decided to start saving for improvements as soon as they started saving to buy the house. They put money in different accounts; one was for the house and the other for improving and decorating. They did this because they knew that they had no other financial option. When we talked about this, Josefa told me that what they agreed was first to save money and then to decide what to do with it. After a month living in Los Pinos, they decided to spend their savings on a roof.

> A: In the end, I said that if we're going to build a porch, we have to do it now, because, in the end, it'll soon be next year and I'll spend all of the money, just like that, then I won't be able to save to do the porch so quickly, you know what I mean, we won't be able to pay for it in cash.

For Andres and Josefa, planning and funding improvements are almost inseparable from their history as a couple. The day they got engaged they decided to start saving to get married and buy (and furnish) a house. When I asked Andres why he was so thrifty, he told me that for him the most important thing was to have their own home without the interference of third parties and that, without a new house, they would never have got married. For them, family and house were outcomes of the same process, both the consequence of a common objective of personal achievement. Indeed, for Andres,

becoming the owner of a house and achieving a related level of well-being was an essential step on the way to his family *proyects*. The house and its improvements actually frame personal trajectories as a process of advancement towards financial and personal autonomy.

Most of the families lack the savings to pay for the whole improvement project at once. In this case many other stratagems are deployed. One option is to fit improvement expenses into the mortgage. A grace period before the first mortgage payment releases resources to fund improvements. Bonuses and extra money from work are also used. The advantage of using bonus money is that it does not affect the monthly budget or generate more debt, functioning as an involuntary saving. Some families structure all of their improvements around this money, timing all their construction work for when they know they will receive a bonus. Diego's and Ana's improvements are illustrative of this method. Although they really wanted to improve, they did not want to get deeper into debt and compromise the family's stability. They scheduled all their improvements around the time of Ana's bonus and added some extra money by taking a grace period before the first mortgage payment.

> A: *"As we weren't paying the mortgage, we planned to use this money on the things we needed, for example, the fence, the garden and the cement floor".*

After the bonus arrived they started on the garden and the porch and installed a fountain in the garden. For Diego and Ana, financing their improvements affected not only the house but also their family *proyects*. In a way, the whole notion of expanding the family has been mediated by their financial schedule as it shapes their dreams of creating a home designed for the "enjoyment" of their children. They could not make any changes to the house or buy furniture until they received the bonus money.

Relatives and contacts are another good source of funding. In some cases, like that of Pamela and Joaquin, parents helped with money directly. They told me:

> P: *"Well, our parents gave us the tiles. Joaquin: We just paid for the cement, and then my father-in-law started with the tiles. It does not mean that I did not have the money, it was just that I was going to get the money later and I did not want to get stressed out with more expenses. (...) And he said, OK, I'll buy you the tiles. He asked my parents and in the end the four of them bought us the tiles".*

Contacts and friends are also sources of financial assistance. For example, Juan and Susana could not have made improvements without the help of Juan's loyal clients.

They helped them with materials for building the driveway, the painting and the garden. Juan also used some of his bonus money to cover the difference:

> *J: (...) with all the improvements and so on, I've not gotten into debt, what with the Christmas bonus. Plus, I've done well...I've been given the tiles and I have a friend who works in construction and he gave me the cement and sand for free. The person who is doing the job for me is also one of my clients, who works on the side; he came to see me and we made a deal. He charged me 100 "lucas" (GBP 100) even though it's worth 300, but I'm going to give him a bit more.*

Resort to financial institutions is rather problematic. Most of my informants qualified for a consumer loan from banks and other financial institutions; just as in the UK, consumer loans are promoted in Chile as an easy way of financing home improvements. However, my informants often regarded these loans as expensive and risky, mainly because they could overload an already strained budget. Families also evaluate the risks of using friends and relatives as sources of finance; the main tension here was whether it was possible to accept other people's financial help without losing autonomy in the design and creation of the house project. This was particularly relevant when owners were a newly-formed couple who had just moved out of their parents' houses. In this case, the house and home-creating practices were considered the most important aspect of their autonomy; the creation and preservation of their independence was at the heart of the new house's improvements and their new biographical condition. Andres, for example, explained that he did not want to ask their relatives for anything, to avoid interference.

Nevertheless, in most cases, families managed to articulate some kind of connection with those "external" sources of help. In the case of Diego and Ana, the use of "external" resources was a highly negotiated decision. Diego and Ana are in their mid-thirties and have two sons. They moved to Los Pinos almost a week before I met them. Before moving, they rented a furnished flat not far from Los Pinos. They also own another house but it was bought just for investment purposes. When Diego and Ana moved from their old flat to Los Pinos they realised that improving the house would take a big effort in terms of time and money. They had no furniture so they would have to make a big investment to buy a new sofa, dining table and chairs. Additionally, several improvements were needed to adapt the large garden to their plans. When we talked about sources of funding, it impressed me that they were not considering asking for help even though it would be relatively easy for them to do so. Instead, they chose to make all the house changes with their own money, postponing improvements until they obtained all the resources they needed. Diego and Ana give two reasons for this decision. One was that taking out a loan would risk their financial stability. As Diego

explained, improvements and debt should not be allowed to endanger other priorities such as health or food:

> *D: We have some workmates that bought everything new and now they are paying the consequences (of spending their savings). [for example] When you have children... if one falls ill it'll cost you at least 50,000 pesos [GBP 50] [in medical costs].*

Another reason was that asking the family for help could also jeopardise the fulfilment of all their plans by ceding to their relatives' ideas. Ana was particularly worried about this. She told me that, even though Diego's parents offered to help them with the construction, she preferred not to accept. She did not want to lose control and autonomy over the changes to the house.

The use of "external" financial sources discussed above appears to be a very delicate issue. What is at stake is the sense of self-achievement and family autonomy (Kaika 2004); a central aspect of how a family experiences and appropriates their house. If you lose control over the decisions involved in the improvements of a house, the whole project of family reproduction may be jeopardised. Because of this, and as a way to deal with the sometimes unavoidable use of external help, most families define an untouchable space of autonomy that should not be compromised by any source of help. This space consists of the definition of improvements, particularly the timing, the size, the structure and the aesthetics of the project, aspects that guarantee a minimal level of autonomy.

Families manage this delicate equilibrium between financial possibilities and the maintenance of family autonomy to embark upon house improvements. By taking these decisions and developing their plans, they not only alter the house but also define the contours of their new biographical and social trajectories. In fact, as will be discussed later, managing autonomy in terms of house improvements is a key step in their own perceived social advancement of ownership. Within this context, the definition and funding of improvements are inseparable from the reproduction of the family's life course and relationships, and particularly the way they perform their new social and spatial coordinates. The practice of home-improvements is thus a crucial arena in which families start performing their new position by experiencing and producing the contours of their new life in the suburbs.

Construction

The construction of home improvements is often articulated as a mix of weekend do-it-yourself work and hiring informal labourers. It can be noted that while the centrality of these improvements is similar to other Latin American home improvement practices (Ortega Alcazar 2007), they differ in the fact that these improvements do not imply construction or modification of central aspects of the house. Families usually undertake small and medium-sized tasks such as painting, gardening, or even the hard standing for a car, by themselves. However, when improvements are large or require specialised help, they often hire people from surrounding areas on an informal basis.

Figure 18. Trinidad's and Javier's car port and house entrance. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**
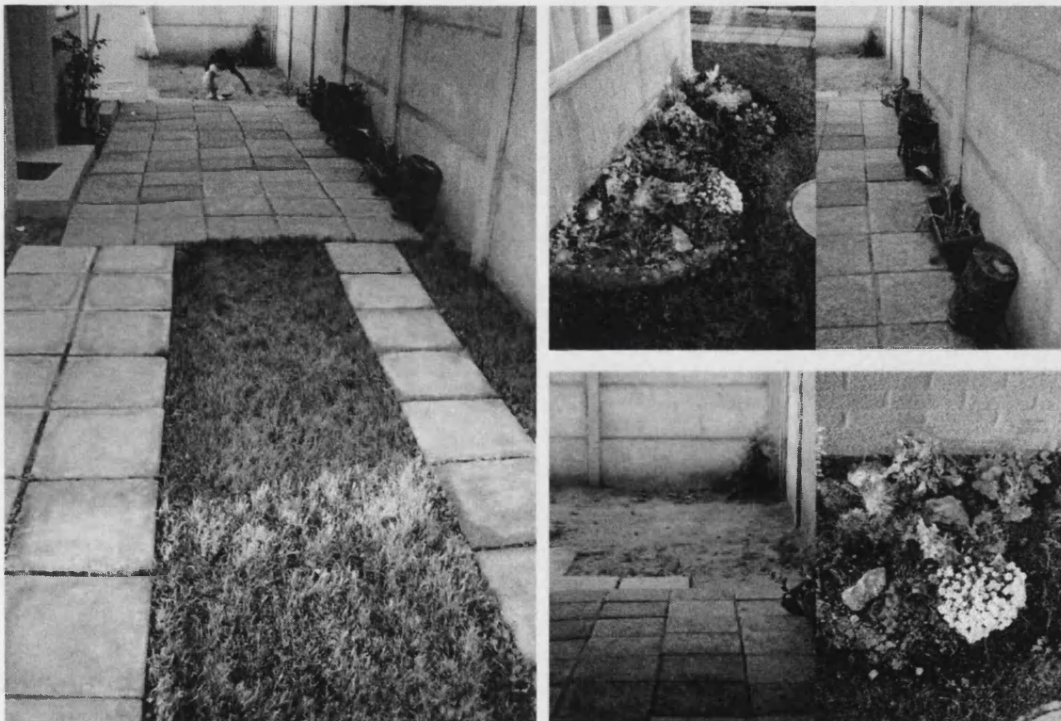
Most of the work involved in the improvements is done by the couple. This usually focuses on the garden and small tasks such as painting, improving the fences or preparing the cement roof for the entrance. Some of them also build the porch. Families see building home improvements on their own as an important experience that articulates an important part of "family time", at least in the first few months after moving. Family time and house time are often blurred. For example, families often spend their weekends and leisure time working on improvements, decoration or the garden, which were treated as leisure activities. At least two elements help to explain this. First, work on the house is used as a pretext for social or family gatherings. In many cases, work on improvements takes place after a barbecue with friends or relatives who are invited to party and help. This work is highly valued as it involves

making an enduring investment. For my informants, it was much more useful to enjoy themselves working on the house than in other "useless" ways. The recurrent point of comparison was television time. Watching television was regarded as a waste of time, while work on the house was seen as a better way of spending time with the family, as it also involved improving the house.

One fieldwork experience illustrates this process. After arriving in Los Pinos, Oscar and Julia spent many days working late into the night on their improvements. For Oscar this was unusual, as in their previous house they went to bed at ten o'clock without ever wanting to work on the house. When I asked Oscar about this he described his newfound enthusiasm for working on the house. He told me that they used to go to sleep very early but now everything had changed and they worked well into the night on improving their house. On one occasion, Oscar told me, they had turned in at 2 a.m. because they were cleaning the newly laid tiles in the front porch.

Owners often hire skilled workers for larger improvements, such as roofs, porches, or big fences. Given the high cost of professional building companies, workers are contacted and hired on an informal basis using neighbours' contacts. By far the largest source of help is the scheme's corpus of security guards and gardeners. Some of these people have been working on improvements since the scheme started. During my fieldwork visits I met one of the longest-standing construction workers in Los Pinos, Danilo, a security guard, who had been working on home improvements for seven years. I met Danilo several times in the streets during his rounds and once we talked about his work. He told me that he was the best-known building worker in the area and had done hundreds of improvements in Los Pinos (the whole estate has around 600 houses). He told me that his reputation is based on his work, his background as a guard and the power of word-of-mouth. This informal work also generates the first relations between neighbours and social housing projects in the area.

2.2 Standardisation and personalisation of the dream house

For Los Pinos families, improving the house involves handling a duality between personalisation and standardisation. Families experience improvements as the creation of a unique space that connects and articulates their history, projects and everyday life; however, when planning and working on improvements, they also engage in a new set of spatial and social relationships that connect with a set of knowledge, techniques and materialities that are shared between new neighbours. Here, home and family shape each other and also shape new shared practices and values, which emerge as families make sense of their neighbours as people who are involved in the "same" process as

they are. It is apparent that the boundaries between individualised social trajectories and the production of a more collective sense of "us" connect with the endeavour to feel in place. This process will be explored in three parts. I will first discuss how improvements relate to the construction of an idea of uniqueness and the articulation of individual and familial narratives. I will argue that improvements are central in how families articulate a narrative of upward social mobility that involves considering the improvement project as part of a unique biography. I will then go on to discuss how these apparently unique practices help to create a new set of social relationships and shared symbolic spaces among new owners. Lastly, I will discuss how both dynamics work as central components in the assemblage of families' new social and spatial coordinates.

Personalisation and the family *proyects*

As strategic pieces in the performance of a family's trajectory, improvements are regarded as a very intimate and personal practice. This revolves around three elements: the relationship between house, family history and timeline; the sense of achievement and ownership; and the way in which improvements mediate everyday routines and values.

In the first instance, like the decision to buy a house, moving and improving are experienced as constitutive parts of the family's history and timeline. As practices, they therefore help to perform family trajectories of upward social mobility. In fact, when they talked about the house and its improvements, most of my informants could not separate family and house. The house and its changes are somehow always conceived as an active part of family trajectory, particularly their future. Here, the house works as a central aspect of the family project (Ortega-Alcazar 2007). This connection is strongly related to the previous chapter's discussion on the connections between house purchase and family history. Indeed, moving home appears as constitutive and symbolic of life course transitions (METCALFE 2006).

As noted earlier, the timing of improvements and of family were often quite blurred. Furthermore, money and financial requirements also play an important part in shaping and sometimes in determining the whole family's aspirations and plans. Milestones in people's lives, such as getting married or having a child, were often related to changes in the house's improvement schedule. Furthermore, understandably, for all my informants, moving home was a landmark in their history as a couple (see chapter 4). Some couples regard the house as the starting point of their formal relationship. Other couples had previous residences, but the new house, as the house they own,

embodies a turning point in their residence history, in the family's process of accumulation; it emerges as the definitive and long-term space in which future family projects will be realised. For families, the house is the space of biological and social reproduction (Bourdieu 2001).

Secondly, the sense of self-achievement plays a central role in the way in which this history is created. The house is a (major) step in a longer list of material and personal achievements that articulates narratives of upward social mobility. This notion of self-achievement is often articulated in terms of "checking things off the list". Not only home ownership but also improvements are part of this biographical checklist. The case of Rodrigo and Raquel illustrates this point. I was introduced to Rodrigo (40) and Raquel (33) by Oscar, my doorkeeper. They had been married for three and a half years and have a six-month-old son, who was born almost on the same day that they moved to Los Pinos. Rodrigo and Raquel moved to Los Pinos because buying a house was their first big venture as a couple. For Rodrigo and Raquel you have to tick things off a "to do" list in life; as Rodrigo said:

> R: You have to tick things off as you go through life, if you don't do this; it means that you have a problem.

For Rodrigo and Raquel, to own a house is a major item in their "to do" list. This list also includes the marriage and providing a good education for their children. As the house helps to fulfil their projects it also helps to consolidate their relationship:

> R: Having a new house makes you stronger as a couple; you can see that your dreams are being realised. (...) You have your house with the people that you love, your new child. I don't know, these are stages that you go through. Tomorrow it will be my son's education, his marriage.

For Rodrigo, the plan is "getting the house done up as soon as possible." This is also part of his life project.

> R: For the next two years I will focus on the house, finish it, and then I will focus on my other priority: my child.

This sense of achievement relates to the feeling of ownership. Indeed, when talking about improvements, one of the most salient issues was the rewarding sensation of working on something that you own. Ownership articulates a close relationship between family and home, in which the house is crucial to the household. Some informants told me that, before moving, home issues meant little to them because the house where they lived was not their own, something that changed when they moved

to Los Pinos. Oscar's relation with his new house is very illustrative of this. On most of my visits to Oscar's house, I found him working on different aspects of improvements. One of his first tasks was to lay the tiles around the entrance. He did it himself, by sacrificing hours of sleep. I once asked Oscar why he was so proactive about improving the house. He explained that he had felt he had little to change in his old house so he often spent time watching television. Conversely, in his new house, he felt so committed to making it look the way he and Julia wanted that he was very happy to go to the trouble of working in the house after his job. To illustrate his feelings about the house, he told me that it was like a new child to whom you want to give the best. Within this context, the new house and the sense of home ownership do much to frame the family's trajectories. In this case, however, the notion of ownership is not related so much to a feeling of safety or ontological security (Dupuis and Thorns 1998) as to the consolidation of a trajectory of personal achievement.

Thirdly, improvements also mediate family everyday practices. Here, the production of the home involves performing understandings and aspirations regarding family routines. Indeed, when they talked about their reasons for making improvements, most of my informants also referred to different aspects and routines of family members. For most of them, improvements were important to incorporate the house definitively into the family life plan, because they would mediate future family routines. Some couples, like Diego and Ana, explicitly connect changes with their sons' everyday life. When we talked about their future plans, Diego told me that the timing and form of the alterations would be governed by his children's requirements:

> D: I imagine that in the future, we'll have a fence made for the house, some curtains (...) and it will keep changing depending on what the children want, because they are the ones you change the house for, after all.

In practical terms, the changes that he was considering differed little from those of other families; however he conceived them as a response to his children's requirements. For example, he started the improvements with a garden and a solid roof because he wanted his children to enjoy the house as soon as they moved. For him, improvements have to do with the reproduction of his family, and in this case this means that they should revolve around his children's everyday routines. In a similar vein, this sense of reproduction is applied to the making of everyday life more generally. At least during the early months, the new house becomes a central part of their routines. From here, improvements are a space of family creation, as families are involved in the construction of improvements. This is particularly relevant when families build their own house improvements; in these cases their own do-it-yourself work

reshapes the whole family's leisure time, making house improvements into key family time in which family relationships are reproduced.

The description above has attempted to show how families understand home improvements as performing a further step in their trajectories of upward social mobility. A key part of this production is the verification of a sense of home ownership, which is a major item on the list of family aspirations. Furthermore, the design and implementation of improvements relate to the reproduction of the family in this new context, particularly the building of its history in terms of the materialisation of values and aspirations and the making of everyday family life.

Home improvements as a shared practice

At the same time, improving the house is a collective process in Los Pinos; it articulates a whole set of shared meanings and practices and shapes an emergent sense of "us" among new residents. This can be understood in two related ways. First, from a material perspective, the design and shape of improvements are very standard around the scheme. Second, improvements are also linked to a set way of doing things, norms and practices shared by all the neighbours.

A visitor arriving in Los Pinos cannot avoid being struck by the highly standardised construction of house improvements. This not only in terms of the small variety of constructions, but also in the homogeneity of style and design. This standardisation reflects both the original house design and the owner's response to it.

Houses in Los Pinos have a very standard design and architecture, so the range of possible improvements is limited by their materiality. Indeed, when I interviewed the architect for Los Pinos, he told me that the houses were designed to "suggest" their own improvements. This means that the structure and rationale of improvements were, in a sense, already present in the house plans. Although these changes are not part of the material house, the houses are imagined with these extensions. As discussed in previous chapters, the design is tightly bound up with cultural calculations regarding the buyer's taste and social position. In many ways, the house scripts these changes as it "is designed to configure the user in specific and practical ways" (SHOVE, Watson et al. 2005: 4). Partly because of this house design, owners make improvements from a very standard list. Nevertheless, the suggestiveness of the original design refers to *types* of improvements, not *style*.

Figure 19. A line of house fronts in Los Pinos. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

Yet, the improvements made in Los Pinos also evidence shared styles and specifications. Indeed, during my fieldwork, I noted an increasing sameness among new owners' improvements. When I talked to them, I realised that they saw these changes —and their style— as "natural extensions of the house". The "self-evident" nature of improvements emerged forcefully in conversations about type and style. Indeed, when I first arrived it took me a couple of weeks to understand that widely used words like *cobertizo* (roofed area), *reja* (railing) and *radier* (hard standing) had a specific meaning in terms of Los Pinos houses. New owners used this very general architectural terminology in their own way. What emerges is a local "canon" of what is possible and what is not in terms of improvements, which may not always coincide with the company's original expectations. For example, one of the main transformations was the construction of a fence around the front garden. The houses are delivered with a small fence intended to maintain a consistent facade along the line of houses, but a common practice among residents was to built a new fence some two metres high. Most residents assumed this to be an almost obligatory improvement, whereas the company regarded it as a waste of money that, furthermore, distorted the original design and style of the streets. It can be noted, thus, that the standardisation of improvements among new owners does not necessarily extend from architectural

design but relies on a more general shared taste and knowledge among new owners regarding the ultimate style and sophistication of such transformations.

Improvements also related to the first steps in neighbourhood sociability. They thus formed a "common ground" for forming relationships among neighbours, playing the role that, for example, "weather talk" might play in another context. Furthermore, this set of shared tasks and practices related to a common house design involves the deployment of shared stratagems, tastes and meanings in relation to the style and design of house transformations. Improvements generate a whole set of shared ways of doing things, of norms and shortcuts, and become central in the creation of the neighbourhood as such. This does not take the form of a normative agreement, but practical accords on ways of doing and saying. Home improvements generate a space of shared practices and tastes among neighbours. In fact, many of my informants met their new neighbours by discussing different solutions and techniques for improvements. This happens because improvements are one of the few topics that newcomers have in common. Javier, one of my informants, told me that most of his conversations with his neighbours were on these topics. As he said:

> J: He asks me about the lawn, the neighbour on the other side, the one with grey hair, asks me about the plants, the other neighbour from over there, [asks me] how we did the lawn, where we got the plants from, or the other day, a neighbour told me, "your grass is beautiful, I would love to have some like that in my house.

Improvements also fuel the emergence of a sense of common "propriety" (De Certeau, Giard et al. 1998). They are considered by all neighbours as a desirable practice; furthermore, newcomers pay special attention to the improvements done by other residents when embarking on their own. Indeed, newcomers often walk around the neighbourhood observing improvements; it is a common practice. Partly as a result, when talking about making improvements, families explained not only their own projects, but also how these compared with those made by others. Indeed, most of my informants showed a vast knowledge of the different styles and devices, gained through observation of the other improvements in the area. The neighbours thus develop a normative horizon in terms of improvement styles and characteristics. The most salient evidence of this emerged in a conversation with Joaquin and Pamela, a young couple whom I met a week after they arrived in Los Pinos. Improving the house was an urgent necessity for them. As they have a dog, their main objective was to put down cement in part of the garden to avoid problems with the dirt. Nevertheless, after some thought they decided to lay tiles. During the process they also obtained funding for other changes, such as a big terrace in their back garden. When we discussed

these improvements, I noted that they also had been studying their neighbors' improvements; in doing so they were not only looking for good ideas but also judging their neighbors projects in terms of their own plans. In analysing the existing improvements, they did not separate their plans from their neighbours' design. In fact, their own improvements were defined in connexion with a set of shared technical requirements and possibilities. As Joaquin told me when he explained his project:

> J: First of all, some neighbours are more worried about putting up a fence, the people opposite; well everyone actually, wants to put down a cement floor because the house gets very dirty otherwise. We opted for tiles because cement is so ugly.

As this quotation shows, their own decisions are connected with knowledge of other neighbours' improvements. From here, the sense of propriety is understood as what is right or desirable to do in the context of existing neighbourhood improvements. Indeed, neighbours are used as points of reference for improvements. In fact, a common practice among new neighbours is to walk around the scheme and borrow ideas from the improvements their neighbours have made. Many of my informants told me that they do that. The intention is not to exactly "copy" the improvement —considered a lack of individuality— but to use it as a starting point to develop an original idea. When I talked with Javier and Trinidad about how they decided on their improvements, he told me:

> J: I have seen this fence in other houses, it has a brick base and three pillars but it is built with rough bricks rather than dressed bricks to give it a rustic feel: rough bricks with a wrought-iron fence on top.

As a shared practice, home improvements articulate an emergent sense of belonging among new owners. This is not related to interactions or networks of friendships, but to their involvement in homologous practices on equivalent houses. Whether obtaining tips or borrowing ideas, newcomers who are improving their house participate in a new set of shared practices and meanings that define an emergent community of practices. As will be discussed later, in many ways those everyday practices mediate further engagement with a more extended social map. Following Southerton, it can be said that house improvements become a key space in the production of a "community of taste and practices" that mediates *more general class-based categorisations* (Southerton 2001: 201). Furthermore, as will be discussed in chapter 6, these shared practices also become key channels of neighbourhood production.

2.4 "My house is different because it's mine": dealing with sameness

The foregoing discussion would suggest, at first glance, that Los Pinos families experience the collective and personal aspects of improvements in the form of tension. Nevertheless, in Los Pinos, the two aspects of improvements were often articulated as a coherent narrative in which one side implies the other. In other words, the collective "us" sense is not opposed but mediated by individualised trajectories of upward mobility. When I asked them about the distinctiveness of their home improvements, some of my informants told me that details like colour or shape help to individualise their house; most of them, however, give other reasons for the "uniqueness" of their home. When I asked Diego about this he illustrated this point straightforwardly:

> D: Everyone competes a bit to have, I dunno, the best grass or the best paving stones; but, in short, you can see that from a quick look around, but we're all so tight-fisted that I'll give you just one example, when you leave here just look at all the hoses in this street, mine and my neighbours' hoses, and you'll see that they are all exactly the same because all of us go to the same shop — Homecenter— and buy the same hose which is on offer, you know what I mean? So there's no difference, it's not important.

The example of Diego's hose clearly shows how newcomers come to understand their new life as an everyday project that is shared with their new neighbours. Here, the collective side of improvements coexists perfectly with their understanding of the new home as a place in which families' uniqueness is performed. In fact, for Los Pinos families, their home's uniqueness has nothing to do with establishing differences or status symbols between neighbours; what really marks this sense of "uniqueness" is not a search for distinctness, but the very strong articulation of home improvements with their own individual trajectories of social achievement. In fact, when talking about their experience, most of my informants focused more on the process —their involvement during planning, financing and construction— than on specific outputs. What made their experience of home special and unique was not the final output but the intrinsic connection between family reproduction and home-making practices. Within this context, although families' singularity is not connected to a sense of distinctness or efforts to stand out, it does involve a strong awareness of their trajectories of upward social mobility and the new home as part of this. Distinctions are established, thus, not between people and their neighbours but between people's current situation and their own previous lifestyle.

The collective dimension of improvements does not, therefore, oppose individual trajectories; instead, shared aspirations and everyday practices relate to people's

extended awareness of having homologous trajectories. Together with the circulation of ideas, tips and tastes, a shared sense of life-plan and achievement helps, thus, to reinforce a sense of shared position. This was very obvious for some of my informants. For example, in one of my conversations with Oscar about the benefits and problems of his new home and residential area, he said:

> *O: It's quiet here, which is something that gives you peace of mind. Moreover, you know that other people are in the same position of looking towards the future and not going back. People here are relatively balanced and centred.*

For Oscar, like most of my interviewees, the idea of "looking towards the future" was central. It was within this context that the label of middle class arose in relation to shared projects and aspirations. It appeared closely tied to the experiences of moving home, and the awareness that all newcomers are confronting similar possibilities and limitations.

> *O: Even though some families may have a better class or position than we have; I would say that all the people here are part of the middle class. The reason is that if they had more they would have not lived here but in a posher area; if they had less, it would have been just too difficult for them to live in a place like this; they would feel that the people here are looking down on them.*

Neighbours share not only equivalent projects and aspirations, but also homologous limitations in terms of house and family achievements. In this explanation, for example, the experience of moving home fits into a wider map of social positions, through which individual's and neighbours' trajectories are contrasted.

In the light of this, it is understandable that families care little about the originality of their improvements. Sometimes they even joke about the repetition of the same style and type of improvements around the neighbourhood. As Macarena —who had moved in with her husband a month before— said to me:

> *M: I know that this house is exactly the same as the others, for others it may be the same, but for me is my house and it's different because it's mine.*

As Macarena noted, the key issue is not the possibility of being different from their neighbours, but the fact of having their own home and their new condition as owners in terms of their own personal trajectories; this is what makes Los Pinos new residents feel that they share an equivalent trajectory.

It has been argued here that the practice of improvement involves the performing of shared but individualised trajectories of upward social mobility among Los Pinos owners. In this way, improvement practices articulate both an individual and a collective dimension of the experience of class. Home improvements help to develop an emergent sense of "us" within the common experience of moving home, particularly in relation to shared home-making practices and the sense of individual achievement. Within these practices, class categorisation appears not in terms of particular collective values or dispositions, but within the more subtle space of individual experiences of social mobility Nevertheless, as has been discussed here, these elements allow new residents to identify each other as sharing equivalent individual social and spatial trajectories.

3. Decoration

The first part of this chapter looked at how improvements transform the house into a home through a highly negotiated set of practices. These practices are tightly bound up with families' trajectories and the emergence of a set of shared understandings, ways of doing, and common aspirations among newcomers. This being so, home improvement is a major strand in the experience of social mobility. This section will move indoors, to explore the practice of decoration as a space in which social mobility and class cultures are produced. The relation between household possessions and social change has been much researched; particularly in material culture studies (Clarke 2001; Marcoux 2001; Miller 2001; Southerton 2001; Woodward 2001). This section will analyse how people deal with household possessions and decoration when they move home. The relation between possessions and the production of class identities has been explored by several authors. For instance, in his research into kitchens in the UK, Southerton shows that kitchen decoration is related to taste communities that mediate a more extended categorisation of class (Southerton 2001). In a similar vein, Woodward studied how the narratives of home decoration relate to wider moral frameworks that involve the production of middle-class identities (Woodward 2003).

The first section of this part describes how families decorate their new houses. I first describe how families plan and talk about decoration. They often employ different elements such as magazines, showhouses and "external" discourses on style. I will then explore some of the stratagems deployed by Los Pinos families to decorate with tight budget restrictions. I will discuss the subtle, gendered nature of decoration practices. The second section will analyse decoration as a space in which social trajectories and aspirations are performed, by describing two complementary aspects: first, the relations between decoration, taste and authenticity and different types of social positioning; and, second, they way families moving to Los Pinos reconcile their old possessions with their new social and spatial position.

3.1 The practice of decoration: discourses, stratagems and routines

Just like improvements, decoration is a common topic of conversation in most Los Pinos families. Decoration is regarded as a highly enjoyable activity and usually takes up a great deal of time. In fact, during my fieldwork, I spent hours talking about detailed plans for interior decoration, furniture, colours, and style. Planning usually has its own

material culture, involving maps and sketches, and an array of ideas and bargains. For example, several of my informants kept a journal of things that they liked or a wish list.

In many cases, decoration may be construed as an ongoing dialogue about style and taste within the couple. When talking about wishes and projects, couples shape what they understand and what they want to do in their house. Often, decoration is ultimately the articulation of a set of several different elements such as magazines, model homes, formal discourses about taste and decoration and the values and aspirations of family members. Unlike in the case of improvements, neighbours are not seen as a reference. Instead, decoration draws upon a more general and diffuse set of magazines, showhomes and narratives of taste and style that help to frame individual decisions.

Figure 20. A commonly used decoration magazine called Casa & Decoracion. Pictures marked A show the cover of Casa & Decoracion. Picture B shows furniture advertisement. **Source: La Tercera, prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

Couples often use decoration magazines to look for deals and get good ideas. The most used in Los Pinos is *Casa y Decoracion*; a Sunday supplement. None of the families I met mentioned buying other magazines. The back pages of *Casa y Decoracion* advertise sales and offers on furniture. These pages are usually regarded as a good place to find things at a reasonable price. Some people collected magazines to make a scrapbook of offers and ideas. Showhouses are also used as referents. When I asked Javier how they chose their furniture, he said:

> J: I think it was a combination of things. We went to the model home to see what kind of lights they had used. We also looked at magazines, Casa y Decoracion: as I subscribe to "La Tercera" (newspaper), I get it every Sunday.

Despite the importance of these references, families very rarely take literally what they find in them. Instead, magazines and model homes help create and define a more personal sense of taste and propriety that families use to mark a distance between their final decisions and the options displayed in these media. In this sense, they take an opportunistic and pragmatic approach to the use of external references such as magazines or showhouses. The idea of adapting and borrowing ideas is highly valued, as it allows families to enhance and "personalise" the original source. In fact, none of my informants had bought a piece of furniture that was promoted in magazines or displayed in the model home. When I discussed this with Josefa, she was very clear about the distance between magazine offers and her final possibilities and choices.

> J: We used to have magazines which I looked at more for the garden because I haven't got a clue about gardening. A lot of people talk to me about cutting out pictures from magazines; they look for nice things in magazines. There was a time when I did that, too, but now I haven't looked at a magazine in ages. I have a house and I want to look at what I can afford to buy.

As expected, decoration projects are placed in the context of family resources and history. People must reconcile their expectations with their resources and existing objects. As described in reference to house-buying, different decoration possibilities are mediated by budget and pragmatic considerations. In this case, not only by budget but also by existing possessions. The final choice is a plan conditioned by making the most of "what is at hand". Martin and Macarena, for example, defined themselves as committed to achieving a stylish and warm decoration. For them, one of the most important things in terms of decoration was to keep their house's "rustic" style. The importance they attribute to style relates to their profession as designers.

> M: (...) as both of us are designers and we also looked at design magazines and books.

Their house was predominantly decorated with wooden furniture and original handicrafts. In order to keep their style, they avoid receiving decorative gifts from other people, as this may soil the coherence of their decor. During one interview, however, I realised that many of their objects were not aligned with this aesthetic canon. Martin explained:

> M: I do not often accept pieces of furniture as a gift; this piece is just an exception. I needed it and my mother gave it to me.

> The one thing that is not in line is that piece of furniture there. It's my mum's, but I don't have anywhere else to keep the dishes. For that reason, we're going

to buy a new piece of furniture later that has the same rustic style that we can keep the dishes in.

Thus, predictably, even the more rigorous commitment to a particular style is mediated by practical considerations.

Getting it done: ways and means

Like house-buying and home improvements, decorating is very much a matter of budget. Decorating involves two different practices: refurbishing and purchasing. On the one hand, families often refurbish and customise their furniture, trying to make the most of old things. Pamela and Joaquin, for example, worked hard to adapt their old furniture to their new house. When we talked about furniture, they told me that some of it was hard to adapt. The bed was the most difficult. They could not find a way to get it into their room, so they had to split it into parts. Now they are just using the mattress. When I asked them about buying a new bed, they told me that now they like their bedroom's style, as it has a "new-age look".

J: In the end we dismantled the wooden frame (of the bed) and used it to build a fence for the dogs, so that they can't get outside, and we put the mattress on the floor. We even thought about buying cushions to put on the floor permanently, the bed with cushions at the sides.

Pamela and Joaquin told me that they enjoyed making those alterations. For them, working on the furniture is also an important part of creating their new home.

On the other hand, while buying new things is not uncommon, it is usually restricted by budget considerations and is considered, overall, a second choice. In the case of decorative objects and mementoes, purchases are small and relative to the occasion. They represent very personal decisions and are not connected to more general decoration decisions. Some families, such as Pamela and Joaquin, have made bargain-hunting in flea markets one of their hobbies. They get small, cheap things there. As well as a hobby, this is an important part of a couple's life. In the case of bigger pieces of furniture, purchases imply a larger investment of time and price comparisons. At this scale, decorating is almost as important as improving the house. I met two families for whom buying furniture was a big investment as they had no possessions. In both cases, the purchases were planned and calculated carefully, through lengthy negotiation. The case of Josefa and Andres illustrates this practice. The first time I met them, they had nothing in their living room. When I asked them if they had any furniture, they told me they had none, but were saving to buy everything

they needed in cash. Their first purchase was a new sofa. When they bought it, they both told me that it was a difficult decision that involved balancing the sofa's use-value with considerations of style and taste:

J: It was difficult for us to choose the armchairs.

A: it is a mixture of both of us.

J: It was a mixture. The thing is that I liked, for example, this style with wood and fabric but Andres didn't. I wanted something that you can clean easily. In the end, one day we said, "Let's go and buy the armchairs," and we said, "let's go to the furniture centre, and after that, the market.

As an everyday practice, decoration is more subtle and irregular than house improvements. The answers to my enquires about when they decorate were usually vague. It may be whenever an idea of a new arrangement comes up. But often it is part of the everyday routine of cleaning and doing domestic work; it is, therefore, less visible and much more gendered than home improvements. Ideas and plans may also change in just days or weeks. When visiting my informants, I often found all their decoration changed in just a matter of days. Pamela, for example, told me that she needs to change the arrangement of their furniture regularly.

P: I need a change every so often, because if everything is always the same, I don't like it, so moving things around every so often makes a change.

The way in which decoration is structured around the everyday routines of cleaning and looking after the house relates to its gendered nature. In Los Pinos, decorating and keeping the house "beautiful" is usually a woman's task, which is linked to her role as a home-maker. This is particularly true of women who do not go out to work and are devoted to the house full-time. For women who are home-makers, decoration is regarded as both a responsibility and a hobby. It is a hobby because, compared with other domestic tasks, it is regarded as more exciting. One fieldwork experience in Trinidad's and Javier's house illustrates this point. During a visit, I realized that the house contents had been moved around for a third time, so I asked Trinidad about it. She told me that as their child was at school, she gets bored, so she opted to change things again. Besides, the new arrangement gave the plants more light. Trinidad is usually in charge of making the changes, which she does during her cleaning routines.

Men's role in decoration is more related to matters of funding and planning. While women take care of style and coherence, men look at expenses and the budget. For example, Trinidad and Javier told me that they both maintain a discourse whereby

decoration is regarded as a woman's practice. All my male informants regarded taste and decoration practices as eminently female domains, even those whose wives had full-time jobs. The reason they gave was that women know more about taste, while men are more "practical", and can only see price and functionality. As Oscar told me:

> O: Let me see, in terms of decoration, I would say that my wife is in charge. I guess I'm not very good at those kinds of things. Women have a special touch. That is the truth of the matter, in terms of decoration, she is in charge.

3.2 Fitting things in

Like making improvements, decoration is one of the main practices through which families make sense of their new social and spatial coordinates. Like improvements, decoration helps families to "domesticate" their new homes (Ureta 2007). Indeed, for most of my informants, decoration was a central theme of the home-moving process and often the subject of much discussion. Unlike home improvement, which is more visible from the streets and more collective, as it involves the deployment of common practices among neighbours, decoration assembles family trajectories and social positions in the less visible spaces of choice and arrangement of household possessions and style decisions. Two elements will be described here: First, the relations between taste, authenticity and external referents of taste; and, second, the links between old possessions and the new house and how newcomers reconcile old possessions and trajectories with their new residences.

Confronting authenticity

Decoration plans are strongly related to couples' moral ideas about themselves. Decoration objectifies their personal values and aspirations and relates to the production of their trajectories and moral frameworks (Clarke 2001; Marcoux 2001; Woodward 2003). Decoration practices mediate how families make sense of their process of social and spatial change. As discussed earlier, links between moral ideas of authenticity and the production of Chilean middle-class cultures have been explored recently in the work of (Mendez 2008). In her work, she analysed how different notions of authenticity operate in the production of moral boundaries and horizontal frontiers in the middle classes. Following Mendez, but in terms of the decoration practices explored here, I noted that decisions are also traversed by an authenticity-related tension that relates to their social position, particularly the tension between individual taste and what newcomers regard as mainstream decorative style.

This tension is expressed in several ways. The most common is the relation between taste and decoration and the expression of individual values and trajectories. Here, décor is understood to express "authenticity" and often opposes the "expectations" of others. This quest for authenticity sometimes took precedence over the awareness of more official, "suitable" ways to decorate the house. Joaquin and Pamela, for example, told me that they preferred to base their decoration decisions on comfort and personal taste:

> P: What we dreamt about before was old furniture, but to be honest, we thought that, as we like to lie on the sofas, both of us, and then we realised that if we bought the posh sofas, they would be too hard.

For them, mainstream style is less important than their own ideas of comfort and taste. Here, their choices diverge from more appropriate, "expected" furniture, such as old sofas. Joaquin told me that he knew that wooden chairs would have been more appropriate; however, they preferred the comfort of the big sofa.

Some people used "decorative" concepts as a way to explain their own taste in opposition to other, mainstream tastes. Here, the mainstream taste appears as a synonym of snobbism. Martin and Maracarena described their own taste, based on charm and rusticity, in opposition to what they define as a mainstream, aspirational modern taste which they associate with modernism and minimalism. Their ideal decoration is based on wood and simple things, but with "good taste" (elegante) and not snobbish or cold. When I asked Martin to explain more about their taste, he compared his house with a friend's:

> TA.-Why do you like rustic style?
> M: Because the wood is warm. Without it the house looks too cold. For example, I have a friend who has a spectacular house, full design, he has metal, glass and leather; everything simple, the place is nice but it is terribly cold.
> TA: So the thing is make the house being more homey?
> M: I prefer something warmer, we really like the wood.

Their style is opposed to external references and notions of "good taste" and "suitability". In this case, the definition of their own trajectories revolves around the tension between their own decorative choices and artificiality or snobbish forms. Decoration not only relates to their choices as couple, but is also held against a background defined by a mainstream and legitimate social map of taste. Within this context, the way families deal with "authenticity" is essential to the way they perform their own process of upward mobility. Unlike Mendez's findings, in which individual

authenticity was connected to the production of horizontal identities among middle-class sectors (Ibid, 2008), here the comparison of personal decisions with more general taste schemes does not establish horizontal comparisons but relates to the production of couples' individual trajectories.

Other families, however, do not see "own style" as such a positive way of decorating. Oscar and Julia, for example, told me that they feel they lack the skills to produce a coherent and harmonious decorative scheme. They construe "good taste" as an external skill which they do not possess, as they are "unskilled" in decoration. They would prefer someone *who knows how to do it* to come in and decorate their whole house. Here, the choice of being "yourself" when decorating is understood as counter to the couple's expectations, as it may lead to a non-tasteful outcome or inability to cope with the new requirements. In the case of Oscar and Julia, decorative style —or lack of it— forms part of their expectations of confirming their new social and spatial position; hence, decoration work is a space for confirming social aspirations (Clarke 2001). Mainstream good taste is regarded not as something artificial but as a desirable point of reference in the process of social and spatial mobility.

In these examples, decoration and taste is related to the management of the couple's authenticity and originality. This involves confronting their own decorative choices with a more general sense of mainstream taste, which is understood to define what is "expected" in terms of the new house. To paraphrase Savage, Bagnall et al. (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001) in their analysis of people's relations to "class" labels in North-West England, it can be said that here the space of mainstream style decisions is not only connected with a more general view of social positions but is used "a set of external reference points through which the individual navigates" (Ibid, 2001:882). Mainstream style is not an explicit source of identification but a background against which couples contrast their own trajectories and style decisions. Nevertheless, within this context, not all couples regard "their own style" as preferable; indeed, while some families regard authenticity as a positive way of dealing with their new social spatial coordinates, other families recognise mainstream notions of taste and decoration as a norm they should follow in order to adapt to their new social and spatial position.

Making memory

Perhaps the most important objects in terms of decoration are family mementoes and pictures. Indeed, for most of my informants, possessions were at the heart of the production of family memory (Marcoux 2001: 71). Most mementoes show family members or landmarks in the family's history. Here, material culture mediates the

shaping of commemorative moments, family relations or family memories (Money 2007). In other words, they help to mark key moments in their history and to articulate a coherent narrative. These mementoes are often small, decorative items, such as pictures, ornaments or antiques that are hung or displayed around the house, often in visible places. When asked about the history of these objects, families usually told me stories about happy family moments, vacations or exciting purchases at the flea market. The case of Joaquin and Pamela illustrates this. They have been collecting items from the flea market or their travels since they met. As Joaquin told me:

> J: We have brought stuff back from every trip that we've taken, even if it's only a stone, for example, those things, we were just camping and we said, "What a beautiful stone," and we kept it.

When I first visited their house, I realised that almost all the objects on display in the living room had a history and were highly valued by both of them. When I asked them about this, they told me that the most important thing about an object was its story and its amusing nature. Most of their stories related to landmarks as a couple or as individuals. We spent a long time talking about many of them. They told me about a sword and a candle that hung in the dining room from the time when Joaquin was into dark music and a mask in the living room collected during their travels around Chile. They also showed me many other things, such as a wooden clock and a wooden ornament bought at a flea market. All these elements composed a collage that transformed their house into a sort of museum of their personal trajectories and their history as a couple.

Of these mementoes, the most highly valued are family pictures. Family pictures are crucial because they give the house a personal touch. In fact, most of the houses I visited had family pictures displayed on the stairway, or in the living or dining room. Pictures are often regarded as one of the key symbols joining the house and its inhabitants. The most common pictures are of the couples, their wedding and their children. Photos were displayed all together, usually with the picture of the couple in the middle. In some cases, they take up a great deal of space in the living room, occupying a central role in their decorative plan. Rosa and Matias, for example, had a table with almost twenty pictures on it, which I noticed when I first visited their house. The opposite wall bore a picture in a fake western setting, with all the family dressed up as cowboys, which had been taken recently at the mall.

When pictures are not present, they often constitute an important project for the future. Usually they are waiting to be hung or displayed. Diego and Ana, for example, do not have pictures in their living room, but this is one of their most important projects. As Ana told me:

> *A: I want [the pictures] framed and neat and tidy. To be honest, I've not had the time, but I want to do it during my vacation, now, on Monday, I want to take care of the pictures. We've got them all somewhere; we haven't put any of them up yet.*

Household possessions and mementoes are a central part of the family's symbolic work of making the new house into a home. They help to integrate the new house into their own trajectories. As Marcoux (2001) points out, the family memory and life-plan is furnished by their personal possessions. Carmela, one of my informants, points this out very clearly:

C: It's the little things that make a place warmer and more welcoming, in the end, you see walls and it is, like, lifeless, cold, but when you start putting pictures and things that you remember, photos (...) It is not about buying things, it is about, I dunno, if you go on holiday, bringing back something, those sorts of things make it more like a home.

Old things, new life

For Los Pinos families, one of the most important decoration issues is where their old possessions will go in the new house. This is very understandable, considering that most couples have already bought most of their "essential" pieces of furniture before moving there. Based on my visits to Los Pinos houses, common possessions were: electrical appliances, such as a microwave oven, cooker, TV, radio, and fridge; pieces of furniture like sofas, dining room table, bed or chairs; and decorative objects, such as pictures, ornaments, antiques, metal figures or paintings that were displayed in the living room. The vast majority of these things had been acquired during the couple's history; often close to the start of cohabitation (marriage in the case of some couples or moving in together in the case of others). As a result, most families regard possessions as the cornerstone in their process of accumulation. In fact, during my conversations about possessions, the expression *"nosotros hemos juntado todas nuestras cositas"* ("We've collected all our stuff") was regularly used in a quite sentimental way. Old possessions are a central part of the family's constitution. In many cases, those objects articulate and represent key points in a couple's history.

Fitting old possessions into the new house usually raises several concerns about a family's trajectory. The place of possessions mediates the change they are living. During my fieldwork, I found at least two ways of dealing with this process. On the one hand, some families plan no change or improvement of their old possessions. Old possessions are regarded as a central asset that should not be changed just because of the new house. Possessions have to be used until the end of their useful life, and should not be changed unless they really will not fit into the house or were broken during the move. As well as the cost of buying new furniture, this loyalty has to do with the belief that things should last until they no longer work. Great value was also attributed to some objects as being associated with the start of the couples' life together. In this case, keeping old possessions and adapting them to the new house offers key continuity between family history and the new house. They help to articulate family trajectory.

When possessions are not questioned, the task of decorating has to do with making old furniture look better or shifts to details such as curtains or paint. The case of

Susana and Juan illustrates this. When I asked Susana and Juan about their furniture, they told me that they had had everything they needed for a long time. They had been together for ten years and they had accumulated their things "since the beginning". Most of their things were bought at the beginning of their relationship:

> J: "When we moved in together we bought a dining table, the fridge, which was the most essential, someone lent us a cooker, then I won a cooker too, I also won the fridge".

Susana and Juan did not buy any more furniture when they moved to Los Pinos. As their furniture was still usable, it was not a priority. Moreover, they attached no importance to it as long as it served its purpose. Utility and durability were therefore the most important attributes of furniture for them. When I asked Juan about buying new furniture, he told me that they didn't need anything else; the investment had already been made and there was no reason to make it again:

> J: "No, no, no, we bought those armchairs and, to be honest, there isn't anything that (we need), I don't know, perhaps in the future, we could replace them, I don't know, my daughter's bed."

In contrast to Juan and Susana, other families have issues with their old possessions in the new house. For them, old possessions, particularly living room furniture, related to past times and past places that had nothing to do with the new situation. In most cases, however, the possibility of changing all the furniture was very remote given the limited resources. The case of Oscar and Julia shows this logic. Oscar's and Julia's living room furniture comes from their old flat. They lived in a flat that was subsidised by their company (they both work at Santiago airport) for eight years. Although Oscar recognised that the new house had given a new air to their furniture, he felt no particular attachment to it and was planning to replace all of it. When I asked Oscar what he would buy instead, he told me that if he had enough money he would buy all new furniture.

> TA. – What is going to happen with your furniture? Are you going to throw it away?
> O: Yes, my idea was to have the new furniture immediately, but...
> TA. – Is this related to moving house or do you always do it?
> O: Having a house is like having a new baby.
> J: Like a toy.
> O: More than a toy, a new baby, you want the best for your new baby.

For Oscar, things are part of past, different times and therefore need to be changed. Here, old possessions are more of an obstacle to the family's life-plan than part of their memory. Unlike other families who define their old possessions as an element of continuity between the different points of their trajectory, in this case the process of social mobility is lived more radically as involving a change in material possessions too.

Dealing with old possessions leads families to consider and evaluate their social and residential trajectories. Possessions mediate the change of family values and aspirations vis-à-vis their new circumstances. Against this backdrop, some families, like Oscar and Julia, were more aware and willing to embrace a new situation and lived the new house as a change in their whole cultural repertoire; others, such as Susan and Juan, articulate a sense of continuity that is not disrupted by the new house. In both cases, however, there is an active awareness of the choices that have to be made in order to be consistent with their trajectories. Decorating the new house thus involves making sense of and deciding how to live in their process of social change.

4. Concluding remarks: the material culture of social mobility

This chapter has examined how improvements and decoration work as key cultural practices that allow families to make sense of and perform their new social position. During this process, not only is the home created, but the family is also reshaped. Within this context, this chapter has examined how everyday practices of improving and decorating the new house are central to the shaping of a new life in the suburbs. Specifically, it has explored how those practices are crucial channels through which families perform their experiences of social and spatial mobility.

By improving their homes, families make them part of their life. The entire planning process is so bound up with different aspects of family life and the experiences of its members that it is difficult to separate family and house trajectories. Planning and funding improvements call into question the way in which families define themselves and frame their autonomy. For some of my informants, those decisions were regarded as cornerstones of the family as such. The house is shaped by a family's values and expectations for the future, but those expectations are also deeply marked by the house itself during the practice of improvement. Indeed, people's projects, aspirations and everyday life are related to their improvement practices. In this process, the house is transformed into a home; what was originally a mass-designed, standard edification thus becomes a central component of family, an object (and a place) that mediates the (re)production of family per se. It is understandable thus, why improvements also appear to be an essential resource in the assembling of families' trajectories of upward social mobility.

Three elements have been described as central here: the relation between improvements and family timeline; the creation of a sense of ownership and self-achievement, and the link between improvements and the reproduction of family routines. These different elements contribute to configuring the new residence as a landmark in the definition of new spatial and social coordinates. Nevertheless, home improvement also relates to the production of an emergent sense of us among new neighbours. In fact, what those practices produce is a new set of shared home-making knowledge, tips and ways of doing. By articulating this emergent community of practices (Laurier, Whyte et al. 2002) and aspirations, newcomers regard themselves as sharing not only homologous everyday goals and problems but also, crucially, equivalent individual trajectories. Within this context, the common experience of moving to and improving the house does not contrast with individual trajectories of social mobility but is mediated by them. New owners see themselves as being together in their individual efforts to make a home, improve their family's living conditions and pursue their aspirations to self-achievement, comfort and autonomy. In other words, an

individualised trajectory mediates the emergence of a collective sense of us. It can be hypothesised, thus, that the practice of house-improvement is a cornerstone of the production of a shared social positions.

Similarly, decorating also helps families to make their house a home. Social and spatial mobility are also performed through decorating the new house. Elements such as magazines, model homes or formal conceptualisations about legitimate taste are incorporated into descriptions and help families to perform and deal with their new social and spatial circumstances. It has been discussed here how some of these decisions are ordered around the tension between personal choices and "mainstream taste", therefore mediating the way in which newcomers fit into their new social and spatial coordinates. In some cases, decoration choices emerge as an individualised space of moral judgment which is deployed against the background of mainstream style categories. In other cases, the whole process of moving into a new home is perceived to require a change in individual taste in accordance with the new situation.

The dynamic between old possessions and the new house is another essential element; it marks family trajectory and makes visible the change in living conditions. By deciding and negotiating how to adapt their old possessions, families make their own trajectory visible. Moreover, dealing with their own possessions makes the family's process of social mobility more reflexive. At all these stages, home possessions are an active part of their origin and history, so dealing with them is also a way of re-ordering their own narratives and projects. For example, family pictures or mementoes are particularly powerful in framing a family's narrative history. Based on these different elements, it can be argued, thus, that, like improvements, decoration work is another mediation through which newcomers attempt to negotiate and produce their new social and spatial coordinates.

Links between home-making practices and people's new social and spatial coordinates emerge, nevertheless, as a highly negotiated ensemble of practices, narratives and materialities. In other words, it may be said that neighbours are not alone in this process, as several external elements are involved in mediating their home-moving experience. Materialities play an important part in this process. Indeed, house and household possessions are active in structuring a sense of home, family and the whole experience of trajectories of social mobility. In fact, the entire practice of home improvement may be defined, in some sense, as an effort to appropriate the house's materiality (Miller, 1997), by adapting its original design in terms of families' own values and expectations. Similarly, families dealing with their old possessions in these new circumstances not only change them but also are shaped by their material

history and individual style, raising issues of how to live in their new social and spatial coordinates. Here, the new house and the household possessions help families to live particular types of experiences and relate them to certain types of decisions and practices in terms of how to live their whole home-moving process. Besides materialities, other things play a role in this process. Neighbours and the set of collective practices, style judgments and stratagems that emerge during improvements are involved in the constitution of an emergent sense of us which connects to home ownership and individual projects and aspirations. Similarly, decorating makes families deal with several external references from which newcomers make sense of their own personal trajectories. For instance, this chapter has examined how "mainstream style" and taste categorisation not only shape families' own decorative choices but also determine how newcomers make sense of their own experience of social and spatial change.

CHAPTER 6

Creating place in Los Pinos: neighbouring practices and the middle class

This final empirical chapter deals with neighbouring. Local neighbourhood is understood here as the outcome of a rich cultural production that involves a set of interconnected practices, understandings and materialities. In line with the main concerns of this thesis, the chapter specifically explores the links between neighbourhood production and the assembling of newcomers' social and spatial positions. Before going into the empirical analysis, the introduction presents a brief theoretical discussion of the connections between suburban neighbourhoods and the middle classes.

Suburbia has traditionally been stereotyped as a relatively meaningless and instrumentally chosen residential place (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005: 78). However, as Savage et al. point out, since the 1990s several scholars have refuted this view by showing that middle-class suburbs are the subject of an intensive cultural and social production (Silverstone 1997; Kearns and Parkinson 2001; Allan, Crow et al. 2002; Laurier, Whyte et al. 2002; Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005; Stokoe 2006). They draw on empirical research to demonstrate that, like any other place of residence, suburban neighbourhoods are cultural spaces with a key role in articulating individual trajectories and social identities (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005; Stokoe 2006).

Understanding suburban neighbourhood as the output of a rich cultural production involves analysing the different practices, narratives and materialities that contribute to shaping a given residential locality. Within this context, some authors have focused on how neighbourhoods can be described in terms of neighbouring practices. For instance, in their research into a French neighbourhood, De Certeau et al explored how neighbourhood attachment appeared to be a consequence of a set of subtle and sporadic encounters that helped to articulate unspoken normative rules of "propriety" (De Certeau, Giard et al. 1998). In a similar vein, other authors have explored different practices that lead to the production of the suburb through a shared sense of "ordinary and sameness" (Allen, Powell et al. 2007); moral negotiation of public rights and obligations (Laurier, Whyte et al. 2002); or negotiation between privacy and sociability (Allan, Crow et al. 2002). Here, the neighbourhood emerges not as something "given", but as the consequence of a rich cultural production. It can be argued, thus, that, as the outcome of a set of "sociomaterial" neighbouring practices in public space, the making

of the neighbourhood involves the emergence of several communities of practices (Laurier, Whyte et al. 2002: 347).

Other authors have explored how neighbourhood production relates also to individual and collective narratives and imaginaries. For example, as discussed before Savage, Bagnall et al (2005) looked at how people become attached to their neighbourhoods by articulating a relationship between residential place and their own trajectories. In these authors' work, belonging happens when people are "able to place themselves in a imaginary landscape", making the neighbourhood valuable to them (2005: 90). Suburban neighbourhoods can be also linked to a wider set of cultural imaginaries, lifestyles and ideas. In *Visions of Suburbia*, Silverstone et al. (Silverstone 1997) explore how suburban neighbourhoods relate to the production of a particular type of social imaginaries. He argues that the "suburban dream" is a central element that involves imaginaries of middle class, utopian natural landscape and the increasing commoditisation of everyday life. As he says:

> *"Suburbia is a state of mind. It is constructed in imagination and in desire, in the everyday life of those who struggle to maintain hearth and family and in the words of those who are brave (or mad) enough to define and defend the bourgeois values" (1997:13).*

As a kind of place, neighbourhood may be understood, thus, as a cultural hybrid that relates to the consolidation of an imaginary (1997: 7). Similarly, other authors have explored the centrality of physical spaces and materialities in the production of a sense of places (Miller, Jackson et al. 1998). From this perspective, spaces and materialities are not "settings" in which social practices and meanings are contained, but elements that play an active role in shaping social and cultural categories. In other words, the spatial and material aspects of residential location cannot be separated from the cultural production of places such as the neighbourhood. In fact, as this chapter will discuss, different types of objects and spaces are actively mobilised for producing the neighbourhood (for example: guard post, community centres, parks, local shops, membership stickers and malls). Within this context, objects and spaces are considered not as a background but as central to the assemblage that defines a local neighbourhood. In line with the work of Miller et al. on shopping and place, spaces and materialities are understood here as main vehicles for the production and objectification of cultural meanings (Ibid, 1998: 185). Following these authors, (Miller, Jackson et al. 1998), this chapter's starting point is that:

"the very materiality of place itself becomes a medium for the objectification of ethnic, gender and other forms of identity under certain conditions. That is to say that place is itself partly responsible for the form that they take" (1998: 185).

Within this context, neighbourhoods such as Los Pinos are understood as the outcomes of an active cultural and social production related to everyday life practices, discourses (Silverstone 1997; Southerton 2002; Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005; Allen, Powell et al. 2007) and materialities .

Neighbouring practices performing class

Several authors have explored the connections between the middle classes and suburban neighbourhood. Within this context, there is a general consensus that suburban life is a central aspect of the production of middle class cultures (see, for example, (Massey 1995; Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001). Nevertheless, as Allen, Powell et al. have discussed (Allen, Powell et al. 2007), much of the recent work on the links between middle class and suburban neighbourhoods has focused more on the neighbourhood's condition as a status symbol than as a socio-cultural production. Neighbourhood has been understood more as a "physical environment" that families choose as a site of distinction, than as the final outcome of a rich cultural production in which class positions are negotiated. From this perspective, the suburbs are "suburban landscapes of privilege" (Duncan and Duncan, quoted in Allen, Powell et al. 2007), where the middle classes relate to their neighbourhoods mainly in terms of an economic investment or status symbol (Forrest and Kearns 2001).

This approach to suburban neighbourhoods as spaces in which social differences are reproduced is a common starting point in existing Chilean research on middle-class neighbourhoods; particularly in research on gated communities, which generally treats these locations as urban forms that reproduce existent social and spatial segregation. For example, the work of Marquez and Perez analysed how middle-class gated communities express Santiago's social fractures. For these authors, upper-middle-class people choose such communities because they express a lifestyle that reproduces social differences while maintaining sociability among equals (Marquez and Perez 2008). That approach to neighbourhood and class may be powerful in terms of underscoring the links between residential place and the reproduction of social inequalities, but it tends to neglect the fluidity and vitality through which place and class are mutually produced (Massey 1995). In fact, as she argues:

What is at issue here is not the happenstance congregation of different social groups into distinct geographical locations but the active making of place.

Moreover, this making of places is part and parcel of constructing and confirming the identity of the social group (1995:338).

Within this context, looking at neighbouring practices on an everyday level may help to form a more complex picture of relations within the production of place and class. From this starting point, this chapter explores the links between class cultures and place by focusing on their production in everyday life. In this, practices of place-making are considered a constitutive element of class formation. Within this context, and following the work of Massey, the chapter supports a view in which social positions emerge as necessarily performed and defined in spatial terms (Massey, 1995). Therefore, suburban neighbourhood is considered here not only a sign of distinction, but the outcome of an active cultural production related to how new residential location is signified. This standpoint thus involves a more active connection between residential place and class cultures, treating place of residence as a central dimension of class experience (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005).

A key analytical concept in terms of class and place is the notion of relations. Following Massey, it can be argued that, as places, neighbourhoods such as Los Pinos are not defined in terms of a given boundary but in relation to an extended network of other places and social relations (Massey 1994). A place is produced in relation to other places and elements. With regard to the place-class link, this relational approach has been used in several ways. First, the connection of class cultures and place relates to the ability to situate residential choice in relation to other places. For example, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the work of Savage, Bagnall et al. explored residential place as a site in which class identities are produced (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005: 207). Central to this is how residents situate residential location in connection with other meaningful places (Ibid, 2005): the value of a place of residence has to do with how it relates to other meaningful places. By placing their residential location in a "networked geography of place" (Ibid, 2005: 208), people can make sense of their new neighbourhood and incorporate it into their own biographical narrative.

Second, links between neighbourhood and class emerge through the placement of the neighbourhood in relation to different imaginaries, narratives and expectations. To an extent, Savage et al. argue this when they use Appaduray's definition of places in terms of relations with "external images, people and technologies". Within this context, the authors use the concept of "elective belonging" to show how residential place is reflexively connected to people's biographies and trajectories (Ibid, 2005:29) and how it is situated in a imaginary landscape (Ibid, 2005:90). In line with these authors, this chapter will explore how social and spatial positions are centrally connected to people's normative expectations regarding their new social coordinates.

The third use of the place-class link has to do with the production of relational boundaries: situating "us" in relation to others. For example, in his research into class identification, Southerton (2002) explored the relations between class identification and neighbourhood by examining how existent capitals are mediated by local social context and its normative frameworks. Specifically, by exploring the process of identification in an English town, Southerton shows that residential location involves a local social world of shared routines and conventions that work to produce the distinction between "us" and "them" (2002: 191) that mediates the experience of class. This process is not given but relies on an open negotiation. As Southerton argued:

> In sum, identification is not simply a case of choosing with whom to identify but a tacit process of negotiating what defines 'Us' in relation to the defined categories occupied by 'Them' (Ibid, 2002: 175).

The author argues that shared social practices and normative orientation with respect to the everyday are central spaces for the assembling of class cultures, since they mediate more external assets such as income or professional position. Southerton's account of neighbouring practices shows how a sense of local attachment and the demarcation of "us" and them" in terms of social worlds help to produce more generic categorisations related to class (2002: 191). Crucially, Southerthon's work proposed a useful link between the production of local boundaries in terms of everyday life neighbouring practices and the performing of more generic social positions.

...

Based on these theoretical elements, this chapter will conduct an empirical examination of the neighbourhood production of Los Pinos and its connection with the assembling of people's new social and spatial position. Following Massey, the focus of analysis is not how different places reproduce social categories, but how the making of place is a key process in the very production of these categories (1995). From here, the production of the neighbourhood is explored as a highly unstable and ambiguous achievement in which both neighbourhood and social positions are produced. The second, third and fourth section of this chapter explore three different neighbouring practices by looking at their role in defining place of residence and articulating residents' new social and spatial trajectories. The first part explores the uses of street and public space, examining how these produce a sense of "us" among new residents. It describes how these everyday practices are tensioned and contrasted with residents' expectations of their new their life in the suburbs. It is argued that an imagined "normative" framework on the use of public space mediates how people make sense of their new spatial and social position. The second part explores shopping life,

particularly local commerce, malls and supermarket purchases. Following on from the first part, it describes shopping as a key practice in the assembling of both place and class position, by exploring two avenues: the tension between local shopping and normative frameworks that attempt to regulate the neighbourhood as a middle-class area; and residents' involvement in an extended network of middle-class shopping venues around the area. Lastly, the third part describes the associative practices and the work of the Los Pinos homeowners' association (HA) to frame and improve the status of Los Pinos. Within this context, links between HA practices and regulations, everyday routines and class are explored.

These three parts explore different areas in which the making of the neighbourhood and the making of class converge. Class and place are described not as being linked straightforwardly, but as the output of a negotiated production in which residential place is situated in connection to other locations and normative expectations that define an emergent sense of "us and them". The chapter concludes by exploring the relationship between neighbouring practices and the assembling of social trajectories. In line with the work of (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005) and Massey (1995), it is argued that, by producing their local residential place, new residents are also producing their new social coordinates.

1. The rhythm of the suburbs

Everyday life in Los Pinos involves different temporalities: the busy, domestic morning, usually filled with housekeeping tasks; lunchtime and the more social and masculine time of evenings and weekends. Different times articulate neighbourhood rhythms in different ways and in relation to different types of people; they involve, thus, different ways of neighbouring. For most men and women, the day starts early in Los Pinos: by 8.30 most children have left for school (most of them by school mini-van) and their parents are heading to work. For home-maker wives, mornings are reserved for housekeeping: the *aseo* (cleaning routine) and preparing lunch. At 11 a.m. the sound of vacuum cleaners reverberates around the neighbourhood. This is the sound of housework. In the morning, the neighbourhood is also populated by many "non-residents": salesmen, postmen and people working on the new stages of the estate. These movements reinforce the sense of people being busy. Indeed, mornings were a difficult time for fieldwork as most people were busy: while men and some women were at work, the women who stayed at home were busy with domestic tasks.

Figure 22. Time flows in Los Pinos. Graph shows the evolution of movements during the day in terms of different groups of residents and non-residents. Axis Y represents the different rhythms of the days. Axis X shows times of day. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material**.
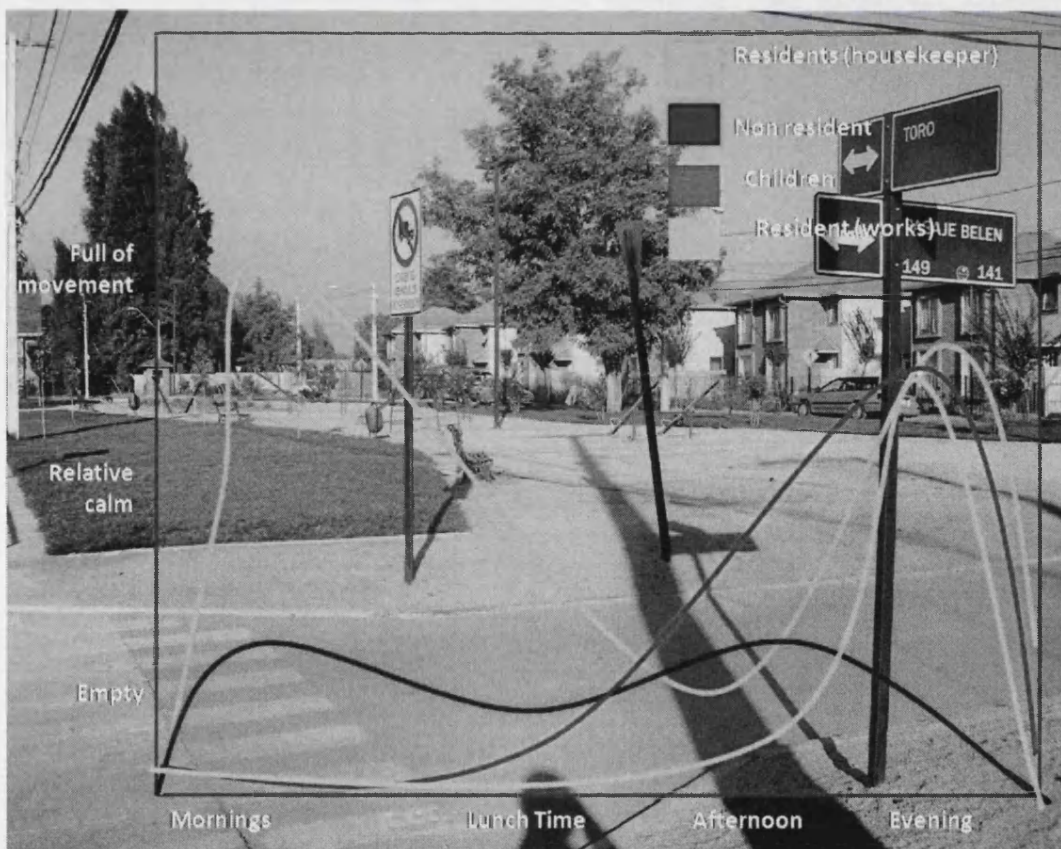
The neighbourhood rhythm slows with lunch and the start of the afternoon. At 1 p.m., young children start coming home from school or kindergarten. The morning's agitation gives way to a marked slowdown. The smell of lunch spreads around the estate. In the squares, real estate company workmen sit in the shade for lunch and a quick nap. After lunch, the neighbourhood enters a period of "lethargy". Morning noisiness is substituted by relative calm and there are very few people in the street (mainly guards). Indeed, the afternoon tended to be when I began my fieldwork visits and interviews. This was because people who stay at home (mostly women) had more time for visits, chatting or drinking coffee. This time is, however, mainly a private one. The streets are empty and people tend to stay at home. For example, the Los Pinos HA manager told me that he does not visit until after six in the evening, in order not to bother residents.

Around 6 p.m., the afternoon peace comes to an end with the frantic movement of student transport. At 5 p.m. the grocery shops open again, after closing for the lunchtime period, when there would be no customers. The end of the day marks the beginning of social life. It is time to get out of the house, tend to the garden, buy groceries, take the children to the park or simply go for a stroll. This is the time when workers start coming home from work. There are more men in the streets and a much larger flow of people crossing the neighbourhood on their way home. At this time, there is a much greater volume of traffic of non-residents, consisting mostly of people heading home after their day's work. All those activities mark a clear change in the way the neighbourhood looks and feels. There are more people in the street. As will discussed, key places in which things "happen" are the squares and front gardens, the settings in which this temporality of "social life" is produced. These settings work as meeting points for children and people in general and thus become the first space in which social boundaries are produced and negotiated.

The everyday rhythm in Los Pinos is a major element shared among residents. It embodies a shared understanding that connects families' experiences of place with those of their neighbours; defining a space of homologous routines and ordinariness. A fieldwork experience helps to illustrate this. When I first met Oscar, my main contact in Los Pinos, we talked about my expectations of meeting newcomers in the street. When he understood what I wanted, he decided that the first thing I should learn, if I wanted to meet people, were the different times of the neighbourhood. There were times of day at which people could be found and others at which it was less appropriate or more difficult to find people with time to spare in the street. He also explained that the busiest time of day was the evenings, when lots of people would be in the squares. For local people, this knowledge was part of the body of their taken-for-granted experience, but

for me it was useful, fresh information: it allowed to make sense of and fully participate in the everyday rhythm of Los Pinos.

1.1 Meeting the neighbours

Not only everyday rhythms, but also certain spaces play a role in articulating informal sociability in the area: the squares and streets. These spaces are central in at least two interrelated ways. On the one hand, they are places in which first encounters happen, where newcomers come to meet each other. On the other hand, the use of public space is related to normative expectations in terms of how a neighbourhood should be. This normative element relates to the articulation of a sense of property and the definition of the boundaries of the area.

There are several squares in Los Pinos (see illustration 2). The real estate company's design included squares for several reasons. The main one was that a "public" space is compulsory in this type of urban development. Another was connected with the company's marketing strategies and the principal lines of project design, which converged in the aim of creating a "family environment" (see chapter 4). Most of these squares remain relatively empty until 5 p.m. Indeed, it is only during the evenings that they come alive with people, mainly children. As children's playgrounds, some squares have been more successful than others. This depends not only on their position but also on the current "fashion" of a particular square as a meeting point: children have chosen some spaces as meeting points but others have remained outside their daily circuit. During the fieldwork, I spent many hours in one of the most visited squares in Los Pinos. This place was a perfect site for meeting people. Additionally, several of my informants lived opposite, which made it an ideal rendezvous location.

Children can be seen playing in the square and few green areas during the whole of the afternoon and evening. But the square starts to fill at approximately 6 p.m. Between 7 and 8 in the evening there are often several groups of children playing football, traditional street games (such as *la escondida*—hide and seek), biking (races) or chatting. Children's games were often observed by their parents, who gather around the square to keep an eye on them and occasionally chat with their new neighbours. These moments were often the only time of the day they spent out of the home. Families with small children stayed within the boundaries of the square for several hours. In summer they would go after school and stay there until nightfall. In the case of parents with older children, their visits to the square were often to call them in to dinner. In this case, parents also spent a long time in the squares waiting for their children to finish playing.

Figure 23. Most visited squares in Los Pinos. Map on the right shows the location of Los Pinos squares. Pictures show a panoramic view of these squares. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**
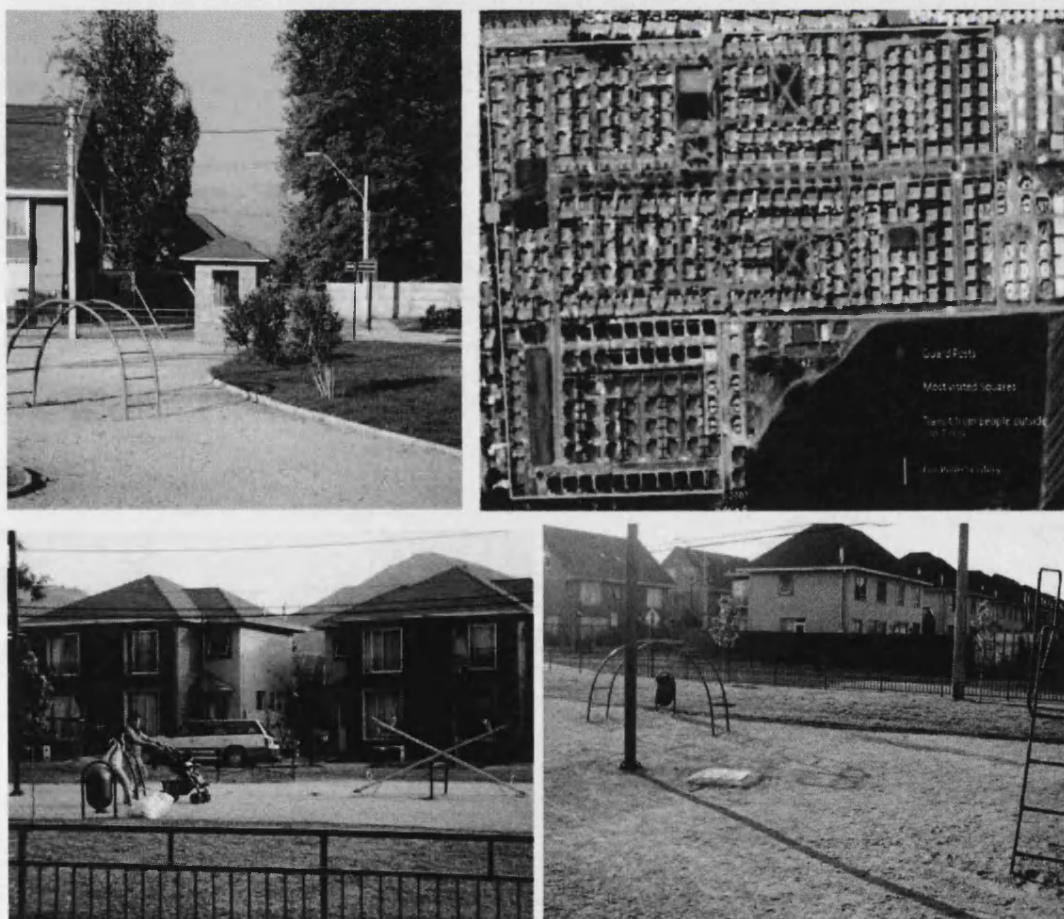
Most first encounters between new neighbours came about thanks to the children's playgrounds in these squares. The square, hence, is the first spatial and social point of reference; a place where neighbours come on a regular basis and are identified as

residents. For example, Maria, Olga and Susana —my informants who live opposite the square— met each other partly because of the square and the children. They all have houses opposite the square and take their children there as a matter of habit. As most couples in Los Pinos have young children, squares work as a common reference. When asked separately about their use of the square, they all agreed that meeting neighbours normally formed part of their visits to the square. Indeed, during my visits, I realised that they regularly clustered together when looking after their children; a practice that intensified during summer. These encounters often involved a relaxed chatting that extended throughout their waiting time. The rule of these encounters was spontaneity: everything happened as if the conversations were unintended. Although encounters can last for hours, during this time neighbours are disposed to go back home. This is related to the fact that the purpose of the visit is not the square itself, but the task of getting the children home. A fieldwork experience illustrates this point. One day I arrived in Los Pinos to find Pedro in the street playing tennis with one of his children. Previous visits had shown Pedro, Maria and their children to have become regular users of the square. As Maria had told me in one of our interviews:

> M: Pedrito goes there all time. [But] Alfonsa doesn't have friends, just people she knows: there is one who lives opposite us, he is a drum player, and they get together sometimes. Pedrito goes to the square every day.

When I met Pedro he said that he did not have time to hang around outside because it was getting dark and they wanted to go home and rest. However, after we started talking we spent more than an hour in the street moving from one issue to other. During this time, their children were playing with their neighbours and Pedro met several of their parents, when they came to collect their children or arrived home from work. Such unplanned moments of sociability were the norm and could often last until very late, even though they were framed in terms of a brief encounter.

Front gardens are also prime spaces for neighbouring. This happens when people are working on their gardens or —like the square— when they are watching out for their children. Like those in the square, these types of informal talks were always framed as casual and unintended encounters. For example, during my fieldwork I became a sporadic participant in Alberto's gardening work. He is a secondary school teacher and can usually be found in his front garden at around 6 p.m. This was also the time when he met and talked with his neighbours. I was with him during one of his first talks with a new neighbour. The topic moved from the management of street gardens and new trees to praise of Alberto's well-tended lawn. Like Alberto, many other residents met their neighbours for the first time when watering the garden at the same

time. Performing the same task creates a sense of shared responsibilities and lifestyle. As Juana, a newcomer in her mid-thirties, explained:

> J: I know almost all the neighbours, you end up meeting them all, at least you recognise them, but you talk with just a few. I often talk with Macarena (her neighbour), she's the one I talk with most, because we water the plants or look after the children together.

As can be noted, street life is a common way of meeting people. Furthermore, because those encounters were usually considered very enjoyable and desirable, they were described as the most likely way to meet neighbours. For example during my first interview with Maria, she said that was expecting to meet neighbours through her children's games in the square:

> M: I expect to meet them [the neighbours] during the summer. Perhaps then we will have some chats — now they just arrive and go straight home. I think it is going to happen because of the kids. The children are the first to get to know each other, not the adults.

The expectations of public spaces as sites of an incipient social life are generally borne out, even through the actual encounters are framed in a context of informality and coincidence. Even informants who were not regular square-goers regarded their children's playtimes as a traditional way of meeting people. For example, although Diego and Ana have yet to use the square, they too see social life with their neighbours as revolving around the square and the children.

> D: As I said, we haven't met the neighbours, but I don't see [a problem]... once we are settled the kids will make the connections. As the time goes by [it will happen] the problem is that just now everyone is working on their houses.

However, while these encounters happen on a regular basis, it is unusual for them to lead to more regular social activities such as dinners or invitations. In fact, it was relatively uncommon for neighbours to invite each other to their houses or organise more private encounters; though it was perfectly possible to find them chatting several days a week.

1.2 Normative expectations

Although squares and streets are, in fact, key sites of informal encounters and social life, these uses were the object of different types of normative evaluations. For most residents, "too much street life" was considered an undesirable practice in this new

environment: something not in keeping with the profile of their residential location. Indeed, the fact that most of the encounters were traversed by an apparent "urgency" to get home, as if people were in the street as a matter of necessity rather than choice, was partly related to these normative expectations. In fact, families' discourses often dismiss street life and speak in favour of a quiet and empty neighbourhood with little movement on the streets. Indeed, when talking about street life my informants told me that they preferred a more private, discreet lifestyle. Within this context, they openly advocated quietness and privacy and noise- and crowd-free streets as a main expectation and priority for their new area. In fact, even regulars in the square showed strong support for privacy, silence and quietness in their neighbourhood's daily life; a busier and more extensive use of the streets for social life does not fit into the new "order of things".

In many ways, this normative evaluation of street life is a key dimension through which newcomers make sense of their process of social and spatial mobility. A new normative moral framework related to privacy and quietness emerges as a new shared "orientation" that mediates their new experience of the residential place. This connection may be established in at least two concrete ways. In the first term, quietness and privacy are central points of reference in comparisons of the new life in Los Pinos with previous lifestyles and neighbourhoods. In several accounts, public life in Los Pinos was contrasted with the more chaotic experiences of people's previous neighbourhoods. In this, the home is regarded as the most desirable space to be, whereas chatting in the streets was not desirable and was associated with disorder and potential problems of coexistence cited as common in previous places of residence. Within this context, one of the main issues was "noisiness". Indeed, neighbours like the idea of having a quiet street that does not interfere with family life. Indeed, the possibility of living one's own life without disturbing other people was regarded as a principal advantage of the new neighbourhood. Trinidad, for example, told me that quiet was one of the new neighbourhood's most valuable attributes. Indeed, quiet marked a key difference between her previous residential location and Los Pinos:

> TA. – What do you think about your neighbours?
> T: They are really quiet; there are no people in the streets.
> TA. – Do you like there to be people in the streets?
> T: No, I like being quiet. There is no loud music (here)... of course some music but not like [the other place]. When you went outside your house into the street, it was really messy. My neighbour used to wash his car and splash water all over the street, the other neighbour had eight cats who would invade my house.

As may be noted in this quotation, the tension between public life and private expectations is a key dimension in which newcomers come to make sense of their social and spatial trajectories. This is homologous to the examination of decoration practices and material possessions as spaces in which "old" and "new" life confronted each other. Judgments about street life likewise helped to frame families' changed circumstances. In fact, the privacy and silence of Los Pinos were often contrasted with residents' old neighbourhoods or other surrounding (more deprived) areas, where noise and street life were regarded as common. Here, quietness is appreciated as something that "makes a difference" between the new neighbourhood and the former "less prestigious" urban developments. As a key element of residents' new position, noise and quiet define the sound-scapes of upward social mobility.

In the second term, discourses of "appropriateness" as regards the public space are another source of differentiation between Los Pinos and other lower-income urban developments in the surrounding area. This sense of what is appropriate mediates the production of "us" and "them" (Southerton, 2002). The quotation below, by one of my informants, is very illustrative of these boundaries:

> TA. – Besides money, do you see any other difference?
> J: In relation to the neighbours from over there (outside Los Pinos), I feel that when I come into Los Pinos, every day, the difference is that you find many people on the streets there, they meet and form groups, on the corners, to talk, to drink or annoy people. You can see this difference with the estate (Los Pinos), when you come in here there are some people but they are just walking, or the young people meet but in the square, a different style. You can see this.

This delicate balance between public and private life emerges as a central element in the production of neighbourhood boundaries (Allan, Crow et al. 2002). The estate's cleanliness and silence were contrasted with other, noisier areas where "popular" use was made of the streets. Here, the sense of "us" relates to the idea of a shared normative framework of what is appropriate in terms of everyday use of public space. Newcomers come to evaluate their connections with other residents in terms of a shared sense of propriety in relation to the use of public space. Pepa, for example, was very clear about this.

> TA. – What do you think about your neighbours, do you feel they are like you?
> P: Yes, for me being similar is not being noisy. If you want you can say hello to me but you can't have a bunch of dogs that bark the whole night. I value those things here, everyone is... I don't know, if everyone has a problem, you won't realise. But I don't know, I value the silence, not having the typical neighbour gossiping, sowing discord. But at least I haven't met people like that here.

Moral judgment about the use of public space is also involved in producing "internal" status differences among residents. In fact, some of my informants explained how people with more "money" had less time to spend chatting in the street. From this standpoint, street life and a highly busy (and successful) professional lifestyle apparently do not go together. Olga, for example, felt that people from the other side of the square had a different lifestyle as they never spent time in the square. She related this with the idea they had more "things" and they felt "more".

> O: (...) all of them work so during weekends (they rest...). They work a lot, they are not like people who talk, perhaps they have other issues; we are different, I mean, not a big difference but they are middle class, so because they have a little they feel they are more...
> TA. – Is it different on this side?(of the square were he met people)
> O: "Yes, here is much less, people here say hello, there is more communication, I haven't met anyone from the other side of the square.
> TA. – Really?
> O: "It is just that you don't see them, (instead) during weekends we share with people we listen music, we always talk with my husband about the differences between here and there.

It thus appears that moral judgment about public life in the street works as a normative framework from which new places are signified and social positions are defined.

...

This part has described new residents' ambiguous approach to public spaces in Los Pinos. On the one hand, they have expectations of social life and, particularly, they visibly use front gardens and squares as spaces of sociability. In fact, as was described here, in Los Pinos, street life is regular part of everyday life. Within this context, squares are a key space for meeting people and creating the first bonds with the neighbourhood. On the other hand, however residents' normative judgment on street life is a central aspect of the way they differentiate their new neighbourhood from other locations. This involves drawing relations and comparisons with respect to the surrounding area or their previous residential places. By marking differences between different neighbourhoods, different moments in personal trajectories or different areas inside Los Pinos, people refer to a shared normative framework of "propriety" (De Certeau, Giard et al. 1998) to make sense of the change in their spatial and social trajectories. Within this context, most of the informants construed privacy and quietness to be indicative of their new lifestyle. Indeed, this judgment defines an incipient sense of "us and them", where "us" means their new environment and its unspoken rules of politeness and "them" refers to other neighbourhoods where street life is part of the everyday (Southerton 2002). This tension between public and private life was also

embedded in individual trajectories of social mobility: people often complained of the noisiness and movements of their previous neighbours. The use of streets and squares thus mediate the different moments of their trajectories. It may be said that the new stage in the family biography is mediated in the everyday by use and normative expectations of day-to-day life in the neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, even though privacy, silence and quiet appear as central normative narratives orienting newcomers' expectations in terms of public space and neighbourhood, most residents were also active users of public spaces such as the squares or the street, which were important in articulating an incipient social life among neighbours. Everyday practices and street encounters thus "overflow" (Callon 1998) neighbours' normative expectations and discourses of privacy and quiet. Against this backdrop, the ambiguous relation to public space in Los Pinos become a constitutive element in the assembling of both their new residential place and their position: while in terms of everyday practice, the street is the place for social encounters, normative expectations in terms of public spaces are also key mediators of people's trajectories of upward social mobility.

2. Shopping: local commerce, the mall and supermarkets

Shopping constitutes a central practice in the neighbours' everyday life. Unlike street life and squares, shopping is not about staying in one place but about moving between different places. Indeed, shopping trips accounted for most of people's movements inside Los Pinos and beyond. Shopping appears, thus, as a prime means of helping newcomers to get to know the area by establishing a routine of trips around Los Pinos. Additionally, contrasting with the more visible and "spacialised" realm of street life, shopping practices are almost invisible in terms of the use of public space. In fact, like the domain of home decoration described earlier, shopping is immersed in daily routines and family relationships (Miller, Jackson et al. 1998: 17) In spite of this invisibility, daily purchases or the "big" weekly shop also articulate shared rhythms, knowledge and ordinary routines among Los Pinos residents. Knowing exactly where to shop was regarded as key local knowledge; an essential requisite for mastering the rules and stratagems of the new neighbourhood. Here I will discuss how shopping forms another important space in negotiating the experience of moving to the suburbs.

This part will examine two shopping practices: daily purchases in local shops and supermarkets and major purchases in the mall. Although these may be studied as a meaningful practice in their own right, they are explored here in relation to the links between shopping practices, neighbourhood and the assembling of people's social and spatial positions. This connection will be explored on two fronts. First, local commerce in Los Pinos, looking both at its daily use and at the controversy over the existence of local shops in the area at all. In line with Allen, Powel et al., (2007) I explore how some actors identify local commerce as something that detracts from the neighbourhood's middle-class status. Second, I will look at shopping practices in supermarkets and malls, particularly the way these expand the neighbourhood, figuratively speaking, through participation in a more extensive network of urban middle-class locations.

2.1 A place without commerce

Most local stores in Los Pinos are small shops built into porches of existing houses. They often use the main door or house window as a sales point and display the day's special offers on the wall.

Figure 24. Photos of sales quiosk and local commerce. Picture 1 shows Rosario's quiosk; picture 2 the hairdresser saloon. Pictures 3 and 4 show new local commerce. Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.
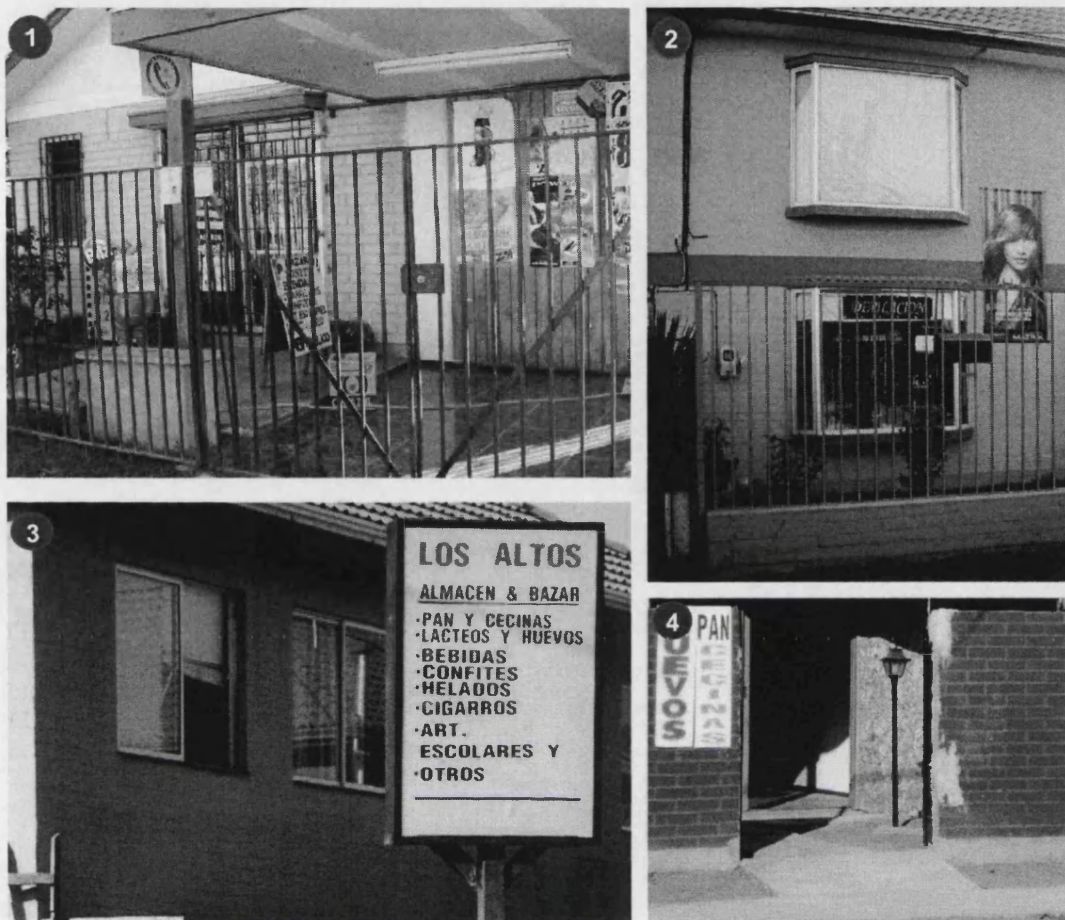
People go to local shops for daily groceries such as bread, milk and soft drinks. There are three small shops in Los Pinos but a few more were in the process of opening during my fieldwork. The oldest store in Los Pinos is owned by Rosario, who is also one of the area's first settlers (figure 24, picture. Given the strategic location of her house —facing the main avenue— she decided to open a small shop at her front door. She adapted the living room window as the entrance and installed a freezer and some shelves in her porch. During my fieldwork, Rosario was busy finishing the most recent extension of her shop, bringing the dining room into the store. Rosario's shop is open during mornings and evenings. She sells different types of snacks, drinks and groceries. She also offers some gifts, cards and stationary. Her main clients are Los Pinos residents, people who work in the area or passers-by. Local residents usually buy food and groceries for home-cooking while local workers tend to buy snacks and drinks. She also caters to many children who come to buy sweets. Rosario has been working in her shop for over two years. She explained that she started because of a depression: her doctor suggested that she should start a new activity. During my visits,

she often complained that her business was not as profitable as she expected. However, she thinks that it has helped her to meet more people and enjoy herself. In terms of clients, her shop is a great success, with buyers entering every few minutes.

Places like Rosario's shop are central to everyday life. They are assumed into family routines as complementary to their main purchases, as Oscar explained:

> O: In those places you make day-to-day purchases. (Things like) bread or sausages, if you need something extra. What else can you buy there? Eggs, specific things, mainly bread.

They are, indeed, part of most families' daily routines and therefore a central reference in the neighbourhood. In fact, most neighbours visit these stores on a daily basis, which may be the only time they walk across the neighbourhood. Furthermore, some of the shop-owners became the most visible faces around the estate, helping to make their stores focal points in the area. When we talked about their knowledge of the neighbourhood, almost all my informants talked about local commerce, which they told me they use for "emergencies".

Although regarded as useful, shopping in local stores does not involve the kind of sociability that is present in the squares. Purchases are usually brief and involve a quick conversation with the owner. They can be understood more in terms of the reproduction of ordinary routines than as spaces of sociability. Indeed, during my fieldwork I was unable to observe or participate in informal encounters in the local shop like those I found in squares or front gardens. In fact, the interchange in local commerce is governed chiefly by a respectful courtesy like that described by De Certeau et al. (1999). In these cases, propriety involves being polite and friendly, showing a general level of engagement, but not entering any long conversation. De Certeau's description of propriety in a French neighbourhood perfectly fits this situation:

> One needs to assume a point of "social neutrality", to manifest the least amount of deviance in relation to stereotypes allowed by the neighbourhood, however, it must affirm the greatest participation in the standardization of behaviour (De Certeau, 1998:19).

In Los Pinos shops, propriety works as a subtle, almost indifferent courtesy between buyers and sellers. A short joke, a compliment on the other person's appearance or at the least a courtesy salutation set the tone of the interchange. In some cases, sporadic interchanges give way to a further relationship, often "rewarded" by the seller's use of the client's first name. Local commerce is, thus, not a space of encounter or social life such as the square, but it does articulate a common horizon of shared practices and a

common engagement in the reproduction of normality. These shops may be considered further central pieces in the common horizon of places, practices and knowledge that shape place in Los Pinos. . Like other practices examined in the thesis, such as home improvements, shopping and local commerce may be said to help shape an emergent "community of practices" (Laurier, Whyte et al. 2002) related to the reproduction of the family and daily family maintenance. As was discussed, this production is not linked with sociability or associative ties, but to a shared engaging in the same types of routines.

Local commerce v/s the homeowners' association: "it lowers the tone"

As happened with squares, while local commerce shapes a common horizon of shared practice and routines at the level of everyday life, it is more controversial in terms of discourses and expectations. Indeed, the existence of and regulations concerning local commerce in Los Pinos are the subject of an ongoing discussion among neighbours. In fact, house-shops like Rosario's were not well viewed by the board of Los Pinos homeowners' association (HA). One of the HA's main quarrels with them was that they "tarnish" the area's image and status. Particularly, they could spoil the scheme's identity and suburban peace and introduce potential disorder and security issues, thus jeopardising its reputation. Indeed, as the administrator explained:

> O: If I see this on my doorstep I understand that this is a social necessity for people. But we have always fought these places; we don't want commerce in the villa because of security. I realise that the neighbourhood is getting bigger but on the other hand these (type of things) lower the tone, we already accept one grocery store out of necessity but not more, it is damaging for us.

Keeping up the tone of the area is one of Oscar's main concerns. What he meant by "lowering the tone" is that this type of commerce detracts from the scheme's status by making it look like other, lower-class neighbourhoods. Oscar partly explains the increase in commerce as a consequence of the arrival of some of the new residents. As he said:

> O: There is a "mix" down there. You can see this, they arrived and set up shops, for example, it is related with that.

These claims about local commerce and the status of Los Pinos relate to the HA manager's expectations of living in "a well organised, clean and buoyant community". However, despite his expectations, he understands the utility of these shops. New arrivals need to buy things and the owners rely on their business as an important

crutch for their budget. This is why the HA has not complained too strenuously about the existence of minor commerce. In fact, such businesses appear inevitable, since many residents of Los Pinos need them to make their budget stretch to the end of the month. When I discussed these aspects with Oscar, he said that he still wants to keep up the "level" of the area. One of his ideas was to allow only "high-level commerce", a clearly ambiguous aim given that all potential commerce there is home-based and it would be very difficult to differentiate between businesses as they all look and operate similarly. A discussion over the set-up of a hairdressing saloon illustrates this point.

TA. – But you also have a hair salon here...

O: "The salon owner said to me, we will build a high-profile salon, a good quality salon, so it was accepted because they said it was of good quality, it is not like other salons, it is a beauty salon and as a beauty and hair salon it is OK. Although, to be honest, we are not completely happy with it".

TA. – And Mrs Rosario?

O: "This is a thorn that we have and, in fact, we are having some difficulties with her monthly payments, [to the HA] she said she has economic problems, but I doubt it because her shop serves all the neighbours in the villa.

In many cases, the position of the Los Pinos HA on local commerce differs from that of the shop-owners. One of the families who arrived during my fieldwork decided to start a small shop in their entrance by connecting their living room with the garden (figure 24) . They decided to invest in this shop at the same time as they moved. Their idea was to seize the opportunity and build a small shop to help generate more income. The most difficult part has been getting official permits and dealing with the reticence of Los Pinos HA. But they know that, as a private body, the HA cannot obstruct their business. Their shop, called Los Altos, is the first in the recently inaugurated north stage of Los Pinos. Its owners do not think that having a shop in their house spoils the neighbourhood's status; on the contrary, it can improve residents' lives and help them budget. When we talked about this issue they could see no problem with that.

It is interesting to note here the divergence between the more shared space of everyday practices and use of local shops and the normative discourses and imaginaries in relation to those places. While local commerce appears to be at the heart of the reproduction of normality —as it relates to shared routines and spaces— its existence also creates tension in terms of how Los Pinos is imagined as a middle-class place; particularly because it may "spoil" its social status (Allen, Powell et al. 2007).

Figure 25. Existing and planned commerce in Los Pinos. Green marks show existing commerce. Blue marks show planned commerce. Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.

Within this context, the controversy over whether local commerce should be allowed involves producing and defending different normative frameworks to define new social and spatial positions. Aspirations to make Los Pinos a "middle-class" neighbourhood are actively negotiated among the neighbours. While for the HA these ideas include preventing local commerce, other residents see this as a normal and necessary part of any neighbourhood. These controversies over the meaning and uses of commerce are both a prime domain in which the neighbourhood, as a place, is produced and contested (Massey 1994) and a realm in which class imaginaries of suburban lifestyle are performed. Indeed, as was described here, most of the discussion over the existence of local commerce concerned the area's reputation and status as a suburban

residential zone. Through controversies over local commerce, different ways of appropriating new social and spatial positions are negotiated.

2.2 Mall and supermarket: the extended neighbourhood

Mall and supermarket purchases are another main vehicle for the performance of families' shopping practices. It is not viable to buy the monthly provisions from the local grocery store, as it is too small and often more expensive, so supermarkets are a better option. Where to buy is no easy choice, but often the subject of extensive research to build up and lock into local knowledge about cheaper and nicer commercial places. Since arriving in Los Pinos, most neighbours have gone to much trouble to find the best value supermarket for their monthly or weekly shop. During my fieldwork, the preferred sites for these purchases were Lider supermaraket and Mall Plaza Norte. Lider is a large supermarket chain which has a store a few blocks away from Los Pinos. It is a big box supermarket (a hypermarket) offering not only food and groceries but also several other services, such as healthcare, post-offices and banks. It operates as a services hub that meets many of residents' daily requirements.

Figure 26. Photographs of the mall and supermarket which are part of Los Pinos residents' shopping circuits. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

The other site, Mall Plaza Norte, is a relatively new shopping centre located fifteen minutes' drive east from Los Pinos. Plaza Norte is located in Huechuraba, a more "middle-class" area and the site of many real estate development projects during the last ten years. The mall has several department stores, a range of restaurants, a cinema complex and a supermarket. Los Pinos families often go to the mall at

weekends, either to go to the supermarket or spent leisure time with their children. Unlike the Lider supermarket, the mall is thus a place where families go for recreation. For example, Rosa and Matias explained that one of their favourite weekend activities is to go to the mall, have an ice-cream, see a movie and, if necessary, buy something. They go there mainly for their children. Although they personally associate the mall with consumerism, they go because their two daughters love it there.

The monthly supermarket shop is rarely defined as a leisure activity. For most neighbours, it requires careful preparation because it often involves spending a large chunk of the family budget. Nothing is left out of the plan and the calculations: families keep a record of their budget and shopping list. They typically buy a long list of groceries from either the Lider or the mall supermarket, and a few other things in local shops on a day-to-day basis. Maria and Pedro explained their system:

> P: We buy everything once a month. (...) all we buy on a daily basis are bread and vegetables, because my mother-in-law has a stall in a street market,
> M: We do a monthly shop and then we only make up what we need.

As a practice, shopping is often undertaken by both members of the couple together at weekends to maximise time and ensure better choices; sometimes they do this by making the shopping list together. Food and daily expenses are one of the budget's largest items, so must be carefully managed in order to make it to the end of the month. Besides the monthly shop, families also visit the mall and supermarkets during the week for services or to buy specific things outside the major monthly or weekly shop. For instance, during fieldwork Oscar invited me to accompany him to the doctor. He was feeling sick so he needed to make an appointment. We headed towards to the Lider supermarket by car, with his wife. When we arrived he made his appointment and then we went into the supermarket to buy some tomatoes and ham for tea. During this visit, Oscar told me that they used Lider or the mall for several everyday proceedings (such as going to the doctor and the bank or buying the monthly purchases). For Oscar and his family, the supermarket and mall are not only places for buying groceries, but central services hubs.

There are several shopping places around the area. Quilicura town centre has other large supermarkets and there are several medium-sized shops around Los Pinos. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that most Los Pinos neighbours are regulars at the same supermarket and mall. In fact, almost all the families I met explained they were regular visitors to those places. The mall and the supermarket therefore constitute a central part of neighbours' shared everyday routines and understandings. This relates not only to the frequency of their visits to these places (for example, during my fieldwork I found

quite a strong likelihood of meeting neighbours in the nearby supermarket), but also to their extensive knowledge of how these stores function. In fact, through shopping there, Los Pinos residents have developed a large body of knowledge about the shops and things that can be found there. One fieldwork experience illustrates this point. During one of my meetings with Joaquin and Pamela, I was received into their home where we had coffee and spent some time watching an episode of The Simpsons. At the end of the programme, when I was preparing the recorder, I realised that it had a flat battery. Joaquin explained how and where to buy batteries. But instead of sending me to a small shop near Los Pinos, he proposed to go directly to the mall as, in his opinion, it was easier and faster.

Los Pinos neighbouring practices cannot be reduced to the physical area as such, but also involve performing an extended network of other places which, together, articulate residents' experience of the neighbourhood. In this way, supermarkets and malls constitute a sort of "extended neighbourhood", as they are both places that help to define the experience of Los Pinos residents.

Figure 27. Residents' shopping routes near Los Pinos. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**

It can be argued, from here, that mall and supermarket visits represent participation in a more extended urban scale that relates to the use of car. The car is a common possession among Los Pinos residents, but not so common in other residential areas nearby. It is a 10-minute drive to the mall along highways, crossing several deprived neighbourhoods. While car transport is fluid (the highway to the mall and only a few blocks to the most used supermarket), visiting those places without a car is more problematic. In this context, the use of the car works as a "scaling device" that allows families to participate in a broader shopping network, differentiating them from car-less residents from nearby lower-income neighbourhoods. Having a car enables most Los

Pinos residents to incorporate visits to "modern" shopping centres located in other areas of the city into their daily routines.

Nevertheless, besides the car, these visits are also the result of conscious decisions on where to shop: although there are several shopping possibilities nearby, most families prefer to go to the big supermarket and the mall. In doing so, new residents consciously choose to use the middle-class, "modern" network of shopping venues and make them part of their daily life—and to exclude other places. This means that they reinforce relations between Los Pinos and particular places and dismiss the connection with others. In fact, while visiting these "modern" shopping places is conceived as a regular practice, families rarely decide to shop in other locations such as Quilicura town centre. This despite the fact that some more traditional shopping areas are actually closer than the mall. Indeed, only a few of my informants were regular visitors and users of Quilicura town centre. Indeed, contrasting with their rich use and knowledge of the mall and supermarket, Quilicura town centre was not interiorised as part of Los Pinos landscape. Alberto and Lucia, for example, explained that they seldom move outside their normal circuit:

> A: We have been to different parts of Quilicura but I have never been in the town centre; for shopping [for us] the Lider and the mall are the norm (place). For going further afield, Vespucio (a highway) allows us to go easily wherever we want.

Like for many other residents, Quilicura town centre it is not part of Alberto and Lucia's daily routines. Instead, they frequently visit the mall or the supermarket which are further away from Los Pinos. Neighbours, thus, actively connect their place of residence with a network of places and disconnect it from others. As this shows, this mobile geography involves performing a "variety of spatial scales" as part of their everyday life (Savage, Bagnall et al., 2005:208). Hence, by performing this "extended" neighbourhood, families make sense of their neighbourhood by living in it in terms of their own expectations.

The neighbours of Los Pinos construe its connectivity with more extended shopping places as something that adds value to their residential location. In fact, being well connected with urban shopping networks reaffirms their perception of Los Pinos as part of a broader middle-class geography. As Rodrigo explained when he was describing the best features of Los Pinos:

> R: "First of all, the location is well connected; you can come and go easily. I am close to work, and close to the mall. I have everything close. I have, for example, two supermarkets".

In her analysis of the links between place and the middle classes, Massey argued that class identities are shaped not only through the production of meaningful places but also through the articulation of different regimes of spatial mobility. She defined this as *social spatialities* (Massey 1995), whereby a particular relation to *the spatial dimension of social life* is performed (Ibid, 337). As she analysed, the ability to scale and connect different urban spaces appears to be a distinctive part of the middle-class relationship with their neighbourhoods (1995). Following Massey, shopping practices in Los Pinos produce a class distinction that is connected not only to a place but also to the ability to articulate networks consisting of several places mediated by material devices, such as the car. These places are, however, not external to the neighbourhood but are integrated into families' everyday home-making routines, and are therefore part of what people regard as their neighbourhood. Furthermore, the production of these networks involves making decisions on which type of places will form part of families' everyday experience of the neighbourhood. Following Savage (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2005), the elements described here show that relationships with other places are at the heart of the production of the neighbourhood and its connection with the assembling of social trajectories.

...

As has been described in this part, shopping practices are central in the production of both the neighbourhood and its relation with the assembling of social positions and trajectories. On the one hand, local commerce, supermarkets and malls help to define a shared horizon of everyday routines and understandings. Shopping in those places is a common practice among Los Pinos residents. On the other hand, however, shopping emerges as a space in which not only neighbourhood but also new social positions are performed. Firstly, as was discussed in relation to local commerce, local shopping relates to normative discourses and narratives concerning the neighbourhood's social status. Here, the very existence of local commerce involves negotiating the meaning and definition of Los Pinos as a suburban middle-class residential area. Indeed, it is a matter of controversy among residents: residents connect new neighbourhood and social aspirations in several different ways. Secondly, shopping also involves situating Los Pinos within a more extended middle-class suburban geography mediated by cars and highways. Through these shopping practices, residents make middle-class shopping venues part of their everyday life, as well as distinguishing themselves from people who use other shopping areas. By participating in this network of places, new residents make sense of and produce not only their neighbourhood but also their new social position.

3. Associative practices and Los Pinos Homeowners' Association: performing community frontiers.

This chapter's final empirical examination relates to Los Pinos homeowners association (HA) and its efforts to consolidate and improve the neighbourhood. In relation to practices involving public space and shopping, HA activities represent a more deliberate and visible attempt to make Los Pinos a "suburban" middle-class community. The aspirations of HA members are expressed through concrete activities and materialities aimed at consolidating the real estate development; their aspirations thus present a strong performative dimension (Callon 2006). Within this context, this final part will describe some HA social activities, as well as its efforts to demarcate and protect the neighbourhood. A kind of tension is unveiled between these two dimensions. On the one hand, the HA's efforts have actively shaped Los Pinos into an organised middle-class suburban community; on the other, however, their efforts to produce a particular type of neighbourhood are often overflowed by Los Pinos residents' everyday life.

Figure 28. Los Pinos community house. Picture 1 shows the tennis court during the Los Pinos tennis tournament. Picture 2 shows a view of the community house from the street. Picture 3 shows the tennis court prepared for use in an HA event. Picture 4 shows a panoramic view of the community house garden. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**
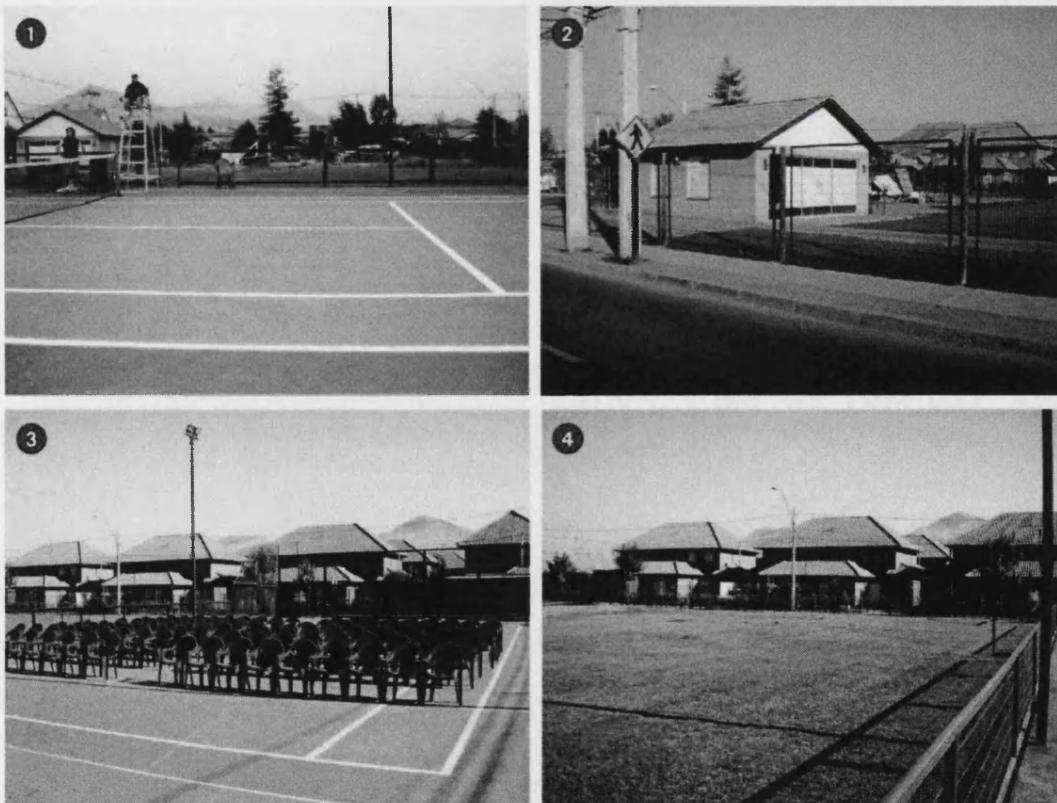
As an institution that encompasses 85% of Los Pinos inhabitants, Los Pinos HA is a key tool in the production and framing of a shared sense of us. It was created less than a month after Los Pinos came into existence. Its original aim was to manage security issues —mainly the risk of burglary— for a small group of approximately 150 households. The HA manager associates efforts to avoid robbery with the production of a quiet, safe environment. Against this backdrop, since the start, the HA has been committed to maintaining and improving the estate's appearance and quality of life. The HA is now three times its original size, as new stages of Los Pinos have opened. Nowadays, more than 85% of Los Pinos homeowners are members of the HA. The Association has eight directors and relies on volunteer work by 29 residents. Additionally, one resident on every street is responsible for collecting the monthly dues. The central figure of the association is the manager (Oscar) who runs the security system and organises the social activities. This role was created as a result of the large increase in the population of Los Pinos. As Oscar said:

> O. At the beginning, with three directors to manage only one or two guards it wasn't an issue, but managing this with 600 houses... we already have 18 guards and this is now like a small company.

Los Pinos manages the security system that aims to cover the 600 families who live in the estate. Importantly, the HA is not legally binding; it is a private association and cannot force new residents to join or pay monthly dues. This legal standing is commonly contrasted with other types of urbanisations called *condominios* (gated communities), whose residents are compulsory members and must participate in the administration and payments. The people who work in Los Pinos HA argue that their scheme's open status has forced them to make twice as great an effort to maintain and improve its organisation. Although it is a private and voluntary organisation, the HA plays an essential role in organising neighbourhood life. As will described here, it not only organises social activities and manages the guards system, but is also involved in the demarcation of neighbourhood borders.

Over the years the HA's role has grown from security issues to include a more community-based focus on social activities. One of the main aims of these activities is to create and reinforce a sense of "community". To this end, the HA organises sports tournaments, children's activities and celebrations. All these activities act as additional —institutionalised— spaces of neighbouring. They deliberately aim to transform Los Pinos into an exemplary organised and lively community. In doing so, they undertake the production of the neighbourhood as a conscious project. Indeed, the HA is proud of

being an exceptionally well-organised association. Its greatest achievement to date has been the creation of a multipurpose clubhouse. This is a small house and a sports centre with tennis, football and basketball facilities. It was built using government funds and proceeds from fundraising events. One of the current administration's main goals is to improve these facilities and add a swimming pool. Oscar wanted it to be a proper clubhouse. At the time of my fieldwork, the house measured approximately 20 squared metres and was used mainly for leisure activities, such as dance classes, and administrative meetings (see picture 2). The HA facilities are a key piece of its organization; they are used for meetings and for all the activities conducted during the year. In order to use those facilities, Los Pinos residents must be registered members of the Association and be up-to-date with their monthly fees. This house is regarded as the main landmark in the centre of Los Pinos. As Oscar told me:

> O: We organised several activities and we closed the area. Then we built the community centre, and then, with the help of some neighbours, we applied to Chile Deportes (a government sports department) to make the sports field. We have being growing since then; by adding projects that allow our associates to participate.

The history of the HA can be summarised as the history of their efforts to produce a particular type of neighbourhood "community". This involves promoting a clean, crime-free, drug-free, quiet version of the neighbourhood; a place that differs from most of their previous residential experiences and relates to their expectations of a new type of life. In doing this, the HA not only follows residents' expectations but also seeks to "educate", as Oscar put it, people's relationship with the neighbourhood; it attempts to regulate and govern how residents live their new social and spatial coordinates. As was discussed in the previous part, this was a main theme in their position on local commerce.

The HA's expectations of how the neighbourhood "should be" are based on comparisons with other residential areas that work as a reference point. Indeed, Oscar, the manager, explained that his aim was to transform Los Pinos into something similar to or even better than other, more expensive urban developments located in Quilicura. Most of his references come from Lo Campino (another middle-class urban development) and the gated communities and developments in Huechuraba (see map in chapter 4). His intention was to emulate and even surpass the organisation and facilities of these other developments. As in the case of shopping and the connections between Los Pinos and commercial centres, the manager's expectations for the scheme are mediated by other places that form a key reference for his aspiration to make Los Pinos a more comfortable, middle-class type of neighbourhood.

The HA attempts to frame everyday life and neighbouring practices in Los Pinos are a function of its own expectations. These attempts have been highly efficient in creating links between neighbours and articulating new associative spaces and activities in the area. However, as Oscar often complained to me, the neighbours do not always fully conform to the Association's plans to produce a "better community". In fact, regardless of his normative expectations, Los Pinos neighbourhood was produced in more complex and ambiguous ways. As a neighbourhood, Los Pinos emerges as an output of a combination of HA activities and ordinary shared practices and understandings. The next section will describe how these efforts combine to produce a sense of "us", which also relates to the production of residents' new social and spatial coordinates. The following paragraphs will explore two HA initiatives: first, its efforts to frame and expand membership among Los Pinos residents; and, second, its attempts to delineate and protect the scheme's physical borders. The main argument here is that these efforts to "frame" neighbourhood life under a particular normative framework are "overflowed" by other everyday practices which emerge as further elements in the shaping of the neighbourhood and the sense of "us".

3.1 Producing "community"

The HA runs several social activities aimed at strengthening community ties among its members. The idea was to help new residents to get to know each other, bring them into the Association and also to maintain its highly proactive reputation. These practices are also intended to impress new arrivals and show them the level of organisation in Los Pinos. Oscar was very clear about this when we were talking about the September (Chilean Independence Day) celebration:

> O: "This is a festival, people come and sit and enjoy the show, we want to show to the newcomers that this is a great organisation, to say to the new people: "Look at this, this not just an ordinary organisation, even the council wanted this event", and this is true because it was published by the council news".

Most of these activities are organised at weekends and during holidays. So, whereas the temporality of the more informal sociability is connected to evenings in squares and streets, that of associative activities is Saturday, the day of the week when most HA activities take place. During my fieldwork, for example, they organised a Saturday-morning tennis tournament and ran most of the board meetings on Saturdays. They also organised Christmas and New Year celebrations, a neighbourhood bingo and children's activities.

The original aim of these events was to bring together HA members and create a community bond that would identify and consolidate Los Pinos. While, in principle, their idea of assembling the new residents appeared feasible, in practice it was very difficult to convene and identify Los Pinos residents. During the fieldwork I realised that these activities created a much broader, dissimilar and varied type of social life than the HA expected. Here, a tension between the normative aspirations of "community organisation and cohesion" and the more chaotic flow of the activities themselves emerged as a constitutive feature of neighbourhood life.

Playing tennis in Los Pinos

I had not visited Los Pinos on a Saturday morning for several weeks. The rhythm of this part of the day makes it a difficult time to talk to people. Families seem not to expect visitors at this time. People expect visitors for lunch but not in the morning. When I arrived I found a group of about 5 children playing tennis with an adult. Oscar was at the side of the court working on the audio installations. He often arrived at 8 when the tennis classes started and waited for the teacher to finish at around 12. After classes finished, he paid the teacher by counting the number of students he had. The Tennis School had more than 42 children and 12 adults.

Oscar told me that they hired the tennis court out to members to raise money. This had become an important source of money for the HA, as tennis was now quite fashionable. They had even held a tournament for residents, which attracted more than 40 participants.

The HA Christmas activity, held on 23 December, illustrates this dynamic. This was a traditional activity in Los Pinos and had been organised several times before. When I arrived at Oscar's house he was finishing the final details. He told me they had hired some inflatable games, a clown and an entertainer who would coordinate the festivities. The party venue was the sports court and the HA charged CLP $1.500 (£1.50) per child, mainly to cover the cost of the clown and the entertainer and to buy some sweets. An explicit tension began to be felt as soon as the party started because many children from the nearby estate were aware of it. I discussed this with Oscar: he was sorry about it, but this was exclusively for Los Pinos members. Despite the restricted access, he also told me that they were coordinating Christmas festivities with the council. This means that the HA was organising a present for all the children living in Los Pinos. Oscar counted them all, to arrange the delivery of council presents to the children. At 6.30 p.m. the children and their parents started to arrive and play with the games. Despite Oscar's pretensions to exclusivity and membership only, many children who were not HA members or even residents were taking part in the celebrations. Indeed, when the clown's show began the area was full of people from different parts of the area and it was almost impossible to distinguish between members and non-members. The show lasted until 9.30 p.m., when a fire-fighting truck appeared with the council gifts. Despite Oscar's warnings, none of the organisers made an issue of this

mixture between "members" and non-members, they understood it as the way things were.

The HA Christmas party is a good example of how the HA's attempts to frame neighbourhood life by deploying particular strategies to delineate the community and define the type of sociability fail to completely regulate a social life that is, in essence, more mixed and fluid. In this particular case, an observer or participant would have had difficulty in drawing a sharp distinction between members and non-members or producing a clear demarcation of the Los Pinos "community". So, while the HA successfully met its objectives in terms of organising and producing encounters, the outcomes of the activity moved far beyond its expectations, as they involved a rich and ambiguous array of social life; the participation of people from other residential areas, and other aspects that were not part of the original plan. In this case, the attempt to restrict access to the activities was overflowed by the spontaneity and heterogeneity of Los Pinos residents. Hence, the HA's attempts to perform a coherent and bound community coexist with a much richer set of practices and social engagements that are also central in defining the neighbourhood as a place. Within this context, the manager's plans to encourage a thriving middle-class (gated) community appear as tensioned. Oscar complained about the scant commitment of Los Pinos residents:

> O: If the neighbours at least could understand that this is an issue, someone taking care of their house... they don't understand that. [Things like] security, clean streets, ordered squares, free of crime and drugs, this is the environment and it doesn't come free, people don't understand.

What the HA administration construed as an organisational failure or as lack of commitment on the part of the neighbours is the fact that, as a place, Los Pinos is produced in several different manners. HA activities are only one of several shared practices and understandings (such as the use of public space or shopping), through which the neighbourhood is produced in everyday life.

3.2 Establishing the borders of Los Pinos

A second key area of action of the HA relates to the physical delimitation and protection of Los Pinos. Like the case of Association events, the practices and materialities deployed for "bordering" comprise an attempt to define "us and them" in which the Association has actively attempted to define the estate's physical and geographical boundaries. When Los Pinos started up, there was no major trouble as it was the only scheme in the area. The houses were surrounded by farms and most streets were closed. Now things have changed, as Los Pinos has two main entrances

that connect the area with other developments. New access has substantially increased the flow of non-residents through the area.

Figure 29. Los Pinos entrances. Picture 1 shows Los Pinos main entrance with its advertisement portal. Picture 2 shows the secondary entrance with the advertisement structure but no advertisement. **Source: prepared by the author on the basis of fieldwork material.**
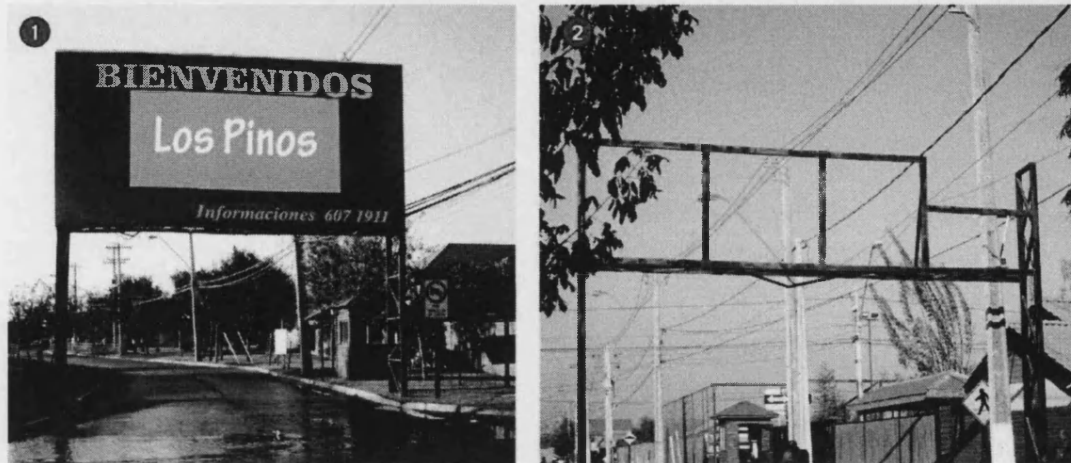
One of the ways the Association has dealt with the increasing complexity and porosity of the estate's borders has to with the demarcation of its geographical borders. In this task, they have been helped by the company which has an advertisement over the accesses. In practice, the HA built arches over the two entrances to Los Pinos, with a picture and a welcome message. The Association also built guard posts at both entrances (see illustration 1). The HA manager and residents explained that the original intention was to close and control all access to Los Pinos, but this was impossible given the area's status as "public streets". Residents from adjacent neighbourhoods complained to the council and the barriers had to be left open. When I talked to Oscar about this issue, he said that the demarcation of Los Pinos borders and the protection of its access was mainly related with the risk of being robbed: burglars come through there, they use "los Europeos street" as a shortcut. As he said:

> O. For us it was a disaster, because all sorts of people started to come in, they started to look around. We had to close this street, we made a gate because the burglars started using it, but now they have to cross los Europeos Street. Then we made a portal (in los Europeos, the main entrance) and people complained, they even tried to take it down.

At the same time, however, he recognised that these arches do little to increase security. They are chiefly visual elements that help to create a sense of "us" and delineate the area of Los Pinos, separating it from other schemes. As Oscar explained:

O. This portal is there to welcome people to Los Pinos, when you say welcome to Los Pinos it is if you were entering a neighbourhood, your are entering a place, you even ask, is this a condo or a housing scheme?

Elements such as welcome arches are essential for the production of the neighbourhood because they differentiate Los Pinos from other developments —most of which are lower-income and social housing projects. These barriers help to defend the notion of a collective undertaking. At the same time, they establish connections with other "equivalent" middle-class neighbours. They do in fact resemble the main entrance of other real estate projects that are closed schemes, as Oscar explained. Besides the entrance arches, the HA has introduced other devices to help mark the neighbourhood's limits and membership. Two elements are particularly important in this regard. First is a car sticker displayed by Los Pinos residents who are members of the HA. The sticker enables neighbours to recognise each other and helps with the management of security. Second, the HA built guard posts at the two main entrances and in several other locations in the neighbourhood. These were originally intended as dissuasion for potential burglars but, in practice, they also work as distinctive sign of the area's identity. Like the stickers and arches, the guard posts help to identify the area as a homogenous location. Thus, these materialities not only define the borders and membership of the neighbourhood, but are also spaces in which a notion of "us" is produced.

Another element is crucial in performing the spatial and social boundaries of Los Pinos: security guards. Guards and the security system perhaps constitute the clearest attempt to close and protect Los Pinos borders and to provide an atmosphere of cleanliness and security. The guards do not merely assume the responsibility for security but in doing so they demarcate Los Pinos borders and boundaries. There are approximately 18 guards in Los Pinos, working in shifts to patrol different areas of the neighbourhood. They represent the largest single item in the HA's budget and the object of much of their concerns. During the day, their job is to patrol the streets to deter potential burglars. They have special bicycles for this (with the Los Pinos HA logo). As discussed earlier, Los Pinos has no community status under the law, which means the streets cannot be closed to control access. Because of this, the guards can only be on site and call the police if "something happens". Meanwhile, they spend most of their time socialising, reading newspapers or waiting under the shade of a tree. The unpredictable street rhythm makes it virtually impossible to distinguish who belongs to Los Pinos and who does not. Paradoxically, guards not only help to frame Los Pinos borders and boundaries, but also produce links and connections with places and people outside the estate. Guards often intermediate with vast networks of informal

work inside the scheme, which makes them connectors between Los Pinos and people from surrounding areas, in addition to barriers. Some of them are important links in the informal economy network of home-improvements (see chapter 5). For example, during my fieldwork, I often met Danilo, one of the estate's oldest guards. He was not only a guard, but also the main provider of improvement work, which was the only way he could earn enough to support his family. He would often bring in assistants from nearby areas to help him with his improvements business.

The different elements described here are important in the production of a sense of us and them in Los Pinos. Most of them were deployed by the HA in order to make the scheme into a more respectable, secure and differentiable urban location. They thus reflected the HA's aspirations to raise the area's status by either differentiating it from other (lower-income) surrounding areas or taking ideas from other real estate urbanisation.

<p align="center">***</p>

This final part has described the HA's attempts to transform Los Pinos into a particular type of neighbourhood: a place that fits its members own expectations of what a residential area should be like. In Oscar's words, they want to have a place with "security, clean streets, ordered squares, crime-free and drug-free". In the process, they have not only actively worked to create a distinctive identity, but have also taken ideas from other middle-class suburban developments. All in all, it can be argued that those efforts are at the core of Los Pinos residents' attempts to produce and define their new spatial and social position. This relates to creating a sense of "us" and "them" among new residents. Nevertheless, like most of the practices explored in this chapter, the HA's efforts articulate several subtle and ambiguous ways of producing the neighbourhood. The practices (meetings, tournaments and guards) and objects (stickers, welcome arches, guard posts, community house) involved in the HA's associative activities are pervaded by the more subtle rhythms of everyday life. To borrow Callon's concepts of framing and overflowing (Callon 1998), it can be argued that the HA's efforts to fit Los Pinos neighbourhood into a particular middle-class imaginary are overflowed by residents' everyday-life production of their place of residence. In exploring this ambiguity, it has been argued that neighbourhood emerges as the outcome and negotiation of several different processes, in which associative activities are merely one more domain for the negotiation of place and social position.

4. Concluding remarks: neighbouring as a class-making practice

This chapter has explored how Los Pinos neighbourhood emerges as the outcome of several everyday practices, spaces and, by describing three neighbouring practices: a) uses of public spaces, b) shopping life and local commerce, and c) the activities of the homeowners' association (HA). These practices were chosen not only because they illustrated how neighbourhood and local attachment is achieved in everyday life; but also because they appeared to be one of the main dimensions in the assembling of residents' social and spatial position. In line with previous chapters, it can be argued that the production of the neighbourhood is an additional arena for the negotiation of the meaning of class and social mobility. This chapter has thus followed Doreen Massey's thesis regarding the connections between the production of place and the production of class (1995).

In terms of the elements examined here, this production can be analytically separated into several different aspects. First, neighbourhood may be construed as the output of several everyday practices that involve articulating shared routines and understandings about life in the area. It can be argued that the neighbourhood and local attachment were the result not only of deliberated associative efforts or the area's pre-existent sign value, but, even more, the outcome of an ordinary cultural production through which the new place is appropriated. Elements such as informal encounters, shared knowledge regarding "ways of doing", routines and expectations are the building blocks of this production, of which several aspects have been explored here. Street life and the ambiguity between aspirations to privacy and the fulfilment of social life expectations were described as key instances for new residents to get to know each other and become familiar with their new location. Furthermore, the tensions between public life and expectations of quietness and order are crucial in connecting the new neighbourhood with families' aspirations and residential trajectories. Here, the production of a shared sense of propriety (De Certeau, Giard et al. 1998) is an important vehicle in the development of a sense of place. Similarly, local commerce and visits to malls and supermarkets are practices that underpin shared routines and knowledge. Through their shopping habits, neighbours articulate an unintended "community of practice" (Laurier, Whyte et al. 2002). Similarly, in terms of the HA's activities, the sense of "community" is the outcome of the combination of deliberate communitarian efforts by the HA and the emergence of spaces of informal social life. Finally, the different materialities deployed for performing a bounded space and community were also significant in mediating the production of a sense of "us" and

"them". Indeed elements such as guard posts, welcome arches, stickers or the community centre work as strong identifiers of Los Pinos borders and membership.

The assembling of newcomers' new social and spatial position is also connected to the production of the neighbourhood. Here, in line with Savage, Bagnall et al., the connections between residential location and people's trajectories and positions emerge as a relational property (2005). First, the meaning of the neighbourhood is connected to a network of other places, which operate as key referents for making sense of the new place. Shopping visits to the mall and the supermarket envelop newcomers in a more extended middle-class urban geography. By choosing places for shopping, Los Pinos residents participate in a different scale related to Santiago's modern shopping infrastructure consisting of malls, big box supermarkets and highways. Similarly, other middle-class developments offer points of comparison for "catching up" and, therefore, for moulding HA aspirations. By actively connecting their neighbourhood with those other localities, Los Pinos residents also differentiate themselves from other, lower-status areas, such as nearby social housing projects or the traditional local commercial areas of Quilicura town centre.

The production of the neighbourhood also involves articulating social positions and trajectories, as it is connected to several moral frameworks and expectations. In fact, people draw on their residential trajectories to make sense of the new situation and draw comparisons with their previous one. Here, to paraphrase Southerton (2002), it is not only a question of producing boundaries between "us" and "them" but also of drawing a distinction between "us in the new house" and "us before, when we lived elsewhere". These expectations and normative frameworks were also deeply embedded in the HA's activities. Indeed, it may be argued, the HA's work basically revolved around the normative expectation of transforming Los Pinos into a particular sort of middle-class suburban community. By construing of the neighbourhood in relation to normative frameworks and expectations, residents make sense of the place as such and situate their new residential location within their own biographical process of upward social mobility.

Last but not least, the production of the neighbourhood and its relation to class and social mobility was not a straightforward process, but a consequence of a live process of negotiation involving several agents. For instance, this chapter explored how neighbourhood life involves the deployment of active efforts and narratives to promote a collective sense of us. Within this context, it described a number of controversies that arise in terms of the expectations generated by a new neighbourhood. At the core of this are the HA's aspirations to mould a particular suburban middle-class lifestyle, since

its efforts to frame neighbourhood life under particular normative ways tend to be "overflowed" by the other ways in which neighbourhood is produced in everyday life. All in all, the neighbourhood thus emerges as a cultural achievement articulated in several different realms. The practices, narratives and materialities deployed in this production are elements through which new residents test and negotiate not only this new place of residence but also their new social positions.

CHAPER 7
Conclusion: assembling middle-class cultures

This thesis has examined the experience of a group of young families who bought and moved into new houses in Santiago's suburbs, analysing how middle-class cultures are being assembled in contemporary Chile. Throughout this exploration, moving home was construed as a key space of cultural creation through which people perform their social and spatial trajectories. A bottom-up approach was taken to explain class cultures less in terms of structural changes in professional position than as the outcome of a rich and dynamic cultural production involving people's definition and appropriation of their new social and spatial coordinates. Against this backdrop, the thesis examined how this production —namely, individual trajectories of social mobility and a collective sense of us connected to shared practices and understandings— were not only a consequence of newcomers' efforts but also actively mediated by several other agencies. Specifically, hierarchical social positions were described here as an assemblage of everyday practices, objects, places and narratives. The following paragraphs will briefly review the main elements described in the three main empirical chapters. Sections two, three and four will then offer a final reflection, exploring the links between moving home and the middle classes in contemporary Chile.

The three empirical chapters of this thesis focused mainly on three interrelated moments of the home-moving experience: a) house design and purchase; b) the process of moving home and the home-making practices of improvements and decoration; and, c) the production of Los Pinos as a neighborhood.

Chapter 4, the first empirical chapter, dealt with real estate production and purchase. By taking a cultural economy approach, it analysed the spheres of house production and purchases as sites of intense cultural creation. The housing market was unravelled as a realm in which cultural calculations on class played an instrumental role in the design and production of real estate projects. It was discussed how executives negotiate and display different class-related stereotypes and classifications at the different stages of project qualification (Callon, Méadel et al. 2002). Hence, it was argued that executives work as "sociologists at large", since they perform several meanings and categories of middle class when designing and selling houses. Those class-cultural calculations appear during different stages of production, such as choice of location, house design and marketing strategies. Particular relevance was attributed

to marketing and advertising as these relied heavily on the use of middle-class imaginaries and lifestyles to attach houses to families.

The second part of chapter 4 moves on to analyse families' house-buying experience, looking at why this is a key moment in their biographies. House-hunting was described as a process in which family relationships are reproduced and negotiated, as well as a practice that helps families to insert their personal experience into an extended geography of class-related residential choices. Their engagement with the housing market thus becomes not only a biographical milestone of economic and emotional investment but also a practice that frames their trajectories within a more general context of social hierarchies. Furthermore, the actual purchase was explored as a time at which both economic and cultural values were produced. Indeed, I argue that the overall process involved a first cultural appropriation of the house as well as the deployment of a number of instrumental calculations to frame the purchase in strictly financial terms. Hence, it was not possible to place "cultural entanglement" in opposition to "economic disentanglement", as they each implied the other throughout the purchase process (Slater 2002b). Within this context, I described how materialities such as showhouses actively framed purchases, both economically and culturally speaking. Considering all these elements, chapter 4 concluded by arguing that production and purchase practices in the housing market formed a first key vehicle for the assemblage of people's social position and trajectories; a dimension in which producers and consumers negotiate the social meanings of moving home.

Chapter 5 dealt with the material culture of the new house. This involved shifting from the "cultural economy" of the housing market to a material culture analysis of the home and domestic possessions, which were regarded as central aspects in the production of people's new social and spatial coordinates. Specifically, the chapter examined newcomers' practices of improving and decorating the new house, which emerged as the most important home-making practices. It looked first at home-improvements, which the fieldwork showed to be the single most visible home-making practice and a main concern of new owners during their first weeks in the new home. I described here how newcomers circumvent budget constraints, deploying a variety of tactics to undertake the improvements they see as essential to make their house into a home, while still maintaining their newfound autonomy.

Like the purchase stage, transforming the house into a home is closely associated with the production of family trajectories. Here, elements such as ownership, self-achievement and the prospect of biological and economic reproduction emerge as central pieces not only of the improvements as such but also in terms of how families

come to define their new social and spatial coordinates. Within this context, I also described how house-improving practices enshrined a first hint at shared practices and expectations among neighbours and thus began to articulate a community of practice (Laurier, Whyte et al. 2002).

The second part of chapter 5 discussed decoration, the second key home-making practice. Contrasting this with the more visible and public home-improvements, I described how, by decorating, families perform their new position in more discreet ways. I noted that decoration brings families face-to-face with external narratives and taste expectations in terms of their new home and residential location. "Authenticity" is found to be important for knitting the new home into individual biographies. Nevertheless, the quest for authenticity was always defined in relation to more mainstream discourses, expectations in terms of "good taste" and "proper" ways of decorating. I highlighted this tension, arguing that class and social categories appeared not as collective labels but as key points of reference for individual trajectories (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001; Mendez 2008).

Based on this argument, the analysis presented here followed Mendez's findings on the axis of authenticity/ordinariness in the production of contemporary middle-class identities in Chile. The final part of the chapter described how old material possessions were treated as key pieces in the assembling of families' trajectories of social mobility. Personal belongings and mementos, as well as notions such as comfort and inventiveness, are deployed to make the home a "unique" place related to the performance of individual trajectories. Like the practice of decoration, home possessions as such mediate the way families experience their social and spatial change as a process of upward mobility.

The sixth and final empirical chapter focused on the production of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood was understood here as a meaningful place (Massey 1995) created not only by neighbouring practices, shared temporalities and understandings, but also by its relations with other places. From this starting point, I analysed different neighbouring practices and how they converged in the production of Los Pinos as a neighbourhood. Three significant realms were explored here. First, the different uses of public space in Los Pinos, in which I described the square and people's front gardens as spaces of neighbourhood sociability, particularly the way in which these spaces involved the creation of shared routines and understandings.

A central element here was residents' ambiguous attitude to sociability in public spaces as both a recurrent and normal practice but one that lay uneasily with their new expectations of living in a quiet, clean location and their support for indoor family life. I

described this ambiguity as a main mechanism through which people make sense of their new social position. Indeed, people were concerned that, having moved to their new neighbourhood, they would have to deploy certain rules and expectations in terms of public space in new ways. Here, expectations regarding "propriety" in the use of public space (De Certeau, Giard et al. 1998) were cardinal in the production of a sense of "us" among residents. These new rules of propriety were regarded as a central element of their new experience. Furthermore, their expectations inherently implied a comparison between their new neighbours and those in other, lower-income housing schemes as far as use of streets and public space was concerned. With these expectations, people performed social boundaries not in terms of income or job differences, but by comparing different ways of managing public spaces in everyday life. In this vein, this chapter also explores how people deployed these rules of propriety to draw distinctions within their family's own residential trajectory, particularly how new ways of using the public space emerged with the new life. The section concluded by arguing that, as people defined propriety and expectations of neighbourhood life in terms of other neighbourhoods or their own residential history, they also articulated their new social and spatial coordinates.

The second key realm of neighbourhood production explored was shopping practices. Here, I first described local commerce as a common reference and obligatory passing point in residents' daily trajectories. Together with squares, local shops were one of the building blocks of neighbourhood production. Nevertheless, local commerce was also the subject of some controversy, related to the neighbourhood's status and image. Specifically, I examined the expectations of the homeowners' association (HA) as regards creating a more distinguished, commerce-free, quiet suburban area and how these contrasted with other residents' expectations of local shops as an essential and legitimate feature of the neighbourhood lifestyle. This tension between residents' varying perspectives on the neighbourhood's status was one of several dimensions in which new cultural repertories associated with home-moving were negotiated.

The analysis then shifted to mall and supermarket shopping, looking at how shopping in other places allowed Los Pinos residents to participate in an extended middle-class urban geography. Trips to shopping malls and supermarkets were described as key practices through which newcomers make sense of their everyday life in Los Pinos and perform a sort of extended neighbourhood. In doing so, they defined and evaluated the new neighbourhood in terms of its connections to other places in Santiago, embedding it in a more extended map of highways and other residential areas regarded as middle-class locations. Visits to malls and supermarkets were

contrasted with the almost non-existent use of traditional, less conspicuous urban infrastructure nearby. On the basis of this tension, I argued that the middle class's shopping flows are at the heart of the production of an experience of social mobility and class distinction. These elements were explored in terms of Massey's argument in terms of the centrality of place and space in the process of class formation (1995).

The final part of chapter 6 focused on the HA's associative activities and its attempts to make Los Pinos a participatory middle-class suburban community, describing the Association's activities and gatherings and how these relate to other ways in which Los Pinos was produced by its residents. Then, I explored the HA's efforts to delineate and secure the neighbourhood and how these efforts reflected a class-related differentiation between "us" and "them". Finally, I moved on to examine the agency of different materialities and practices in terms of this process of marking out physical and symbolic borders. Here I argued that elements such as entrance arches, HA stickers and guard patrols were central in creating Los Pinos as a distinctive area.

1. Between individual trajectories and the collective sense of "us": the ordinary production of class cultures

Based on the empirical findings presented in this thesis, I will attempt to outline some concluding reflections regarding the links between the production of middle-class cultures and the home-moving experience. These reflections will be structured in three consecutive arguments. First, I will describe how new residents in Los Pinos talk about class and use class labels —a theme that, though present in all the empirical analysis, has not been examined systematically. It is argued here that class categories appear as an external and rather distant "label", which does not always coincide with families' performance of their new social and spatial coordinates. From here, in the case of the families studied here, hierarchical positions are produced and maintained regardless of whether people talk about their lives in class terms or not (Bottero 2004). Yet those class labels still appear as a key area in which social positions are marked.

The second section re-examines different practices, discourses and materialities through which social positions and trajectories were performed during the process of moving home. Specifically, it distinguishes two related modes in which these social positions are constructed. First, it explores the connection between moving home and the assembling of individualised trajectories of upward social mobility. In terms of the material discussed here, these trajectories are experienced as processes of social and personal achievement involving a change in people's ordinary routines. Social mobility is, thus, produced through people's involvement in the new set of practices, expectations and materialities as they adjust to life in their new location. Second, it explores the existence of a more collective and spatialised production of middle-class cultures. Following Southerton (2002), it is argued here that the differences between "us" and "them" in terms of local shared practices and moral frameworks mediate people's definition of their social position: a "weak" collective identity thus emerges as a consequence of engagement with local communities of practices (Laurier, Whyte et al. 2002) —shared routines— and understandings of social positions.

1.1 Talking about class

What do people say about class? First, it is notable that people in Los Pinos seldom use the word "class", let alone the term "middle class". Indeed, during informal conversations and interviews about moving home and family history, class was seldom used as a label to describe individual positions or trajectories. These words were simply not part of the lexicon used to refer to the house-moving experience. When I

explicitly asked my informants to position themselves in terms of class categories, they found the exercise rather uncomfortable as it brought these categorisations into a conversation not initiated on these parameters. People were very self-conscious about these labels and viewed them as rather distant. Most regarded them as a specialised external system of classification that did not fit their own personal experiences. Instead of talking about class, they felt more comfortable describing themselves as an "average" or normal sort of family. The following explanation by Alberto is very illustrative of this. When I asked him if he felt he was middle-class, he told me:

> *A: I believe that those classifications depend on the situation, I mean, yes, the politicians have their own classification, but we don't bother about it because it is quite distant (from us). Now, middle class? I don't know, we have an economic situation which allows us to live relatively quietly, without too much worry, we haven't yet had financial problems that keep us awake at night, we live on what we earn and we can save a little, this is very important, we always save for when we earn less because we think about the future, if something happens and we have to use that money.*

Like Alberto, most of my informants felt uncomfortable using the term "class" or "middle class" to identify themselves. Instead, they preferred to describe themselves as people who "can live quietly". Indeed the issue here is that their process of social and spatial mobility is understood in terms of their individual trajectories. This is homologous to Savage's findings on British middle-class respondents' claims of ordinariness as a strategy for dealing with class categorisations (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001). In a similar vein, Mendez (2008) found complex and ambiguous identifications of middle class in Chile.

Newcomers to Los Pinos understand class labels chiefly as a category used externally, by policymakers, market researchers or sociologists, for example, but not as a common way to describe their personal experience. The research participants were also very reluctant to use labels that they thought failed to reflect their biographical uniqueness. As Alberto told me:

> *A: So, this [thing] about the social classes, I don't know, it mainly depends on the classification because, if you look at salary, you can have two or three families with the same salary but in different conditions, one could be a homeowner and other could be renting and the third living with his family. And, for example, the guy who is living in a borrowed house can save a lot of money, for example. So this matter of the middle classes is very relative.*

Other informants judged class labels in terms of negative moral connotations. For them, class involved evaluating and "objectivising" people in terms of economic

resources. Conversely, people's ordinary experience was understood as a more "real" source of categorisation. In some cases this was precisely a matter of not feeling part of the middle class. One respondent (Pamela) offered a more accurate representation of class categorisation based on her personal experience.

> P: To be honest, I have always wondered about what "middle class" really means. I understand the word, but I talk with people and I realise that they don't use this concept. I personally consider myself more of a sort of working middle class; I see middle class as having a better car than mine or a house on the beach, living in another neighbourhood.
>
> TA: And what does working middle class mean?
>
> P: It means us, those who have to work hard to have their own house, a piece of property, those who have to make a huge effort, planning and counting the budget, who can indulge themselves in the supermarket but then have to budget on other things.

Although for Pepa the term "middle class" was a rather vague category, she still used a class categorisation, albeit one defined in her own terms: she used the term *working middle class* to remark her situation in the middle, rather than at the extremes of rich or poor. She contrasted those extremes with her own lifestyle, of having to work hard and count the money in order to meet her needs. In other words, "working middle class" was used to describe the situation of having to struggle and work for a living, rather than forming part of the privileged elite or the lower-income groups supported by the State. Interestingly enough, descriptions such as Pepa's recall those academic discourses that describe the Chilean emergent middle-class identity as individualised and struggling to cope with the market.[15]

In the light of these quotations it seems appropriate to revisit one of the main guiding questions of this thesis: how are class cultures produced? Or, more specifically, how do actors assemble social positions in their everyday lives? Based on the foregoing description of the use of middle-class labels, actors themselves clearly do not use these labels as a main category. Moreover, people are evidently aware of the different connotations of these labels. As several authors have noted, labels of class should be understood as another sphere in which social positions are produced and maintained; this means that class labels are not necessarily reflection of class positions but spaces in which symbolic borders are produced and negotiated (Bourdieu 1986; Devine, Savage et al. 2005).

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[15] This characterisation was discussed in chapter 1.

Within this context, the existence of more ambiguous ways of dealing with middle-class labels should not necessarily be read as decline of the experience of having and moving through hierarchical social positions but a change in the way in which these experiences are signified and produced (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001). Indeed, in this thesis, the analysis has explored several ordinary practices, narratives and materialities through which class positions are performed. Consistently with the theoretical point of departure, it has focused on the ordinary production of class rather than on the analysis of class as pre-existing categories into which people are sorted. In this approach, class was understood as an outcome of actors' production. In other words, class positions in terms of hierarchical boundaries and trajectories have been studied here as an outcome of everyday life, not only in terms of the use of labels and categorisations.

This analytical starting point thus coincided with our respondents' view of class labels as limited for describing their own experience of social mobility and their new social and spatial positions. Indeed, middle-class labels are not a central resource in terms of actors' experience, but just another mediation through which they make sense of and perform their new social position. Accordingly, the analysis conducted in the different chapters has looked at the centrality of different ordinary practices, understandings and materialities in producing and signifying social positions and trajectories.

Against this backdrop, the following sections will propose two themes that synthesise the links between middle-class cultures and moving home, and which were present throughout the different empirical chapters of this thesis. One of these themes is how moving home ties in with the assembling of individualised trajectories of upward social mobility. The other is how that same process is involved in the generation of a more collective sense of "us", which emerges in relation to people's experience of social mobility. I argue here that this "weak" collective identity is not as explicit as class awareness, but a sense of "us" that is mediated by the practices and understandings that shape the new life in the suburbs.

1.2 Assembling social mobility

The experience of moving home is a landmark in the production of people's social trajectories. Indeed, the new house and neighbourhood represent a point of transition in their process of social and economic achievement. Furthermore, they prompt the emergence of a new set of practices and narratives that implies a break with the

routines and expectations of the previous neighborhood. The assembling of social mobility involves at least three related components.

The first of these components is the sense of individual achievement and personal betterment attached to moving house. The new home and neighbourhood are experienced as major milestones in a process of family realisation, understood in terms of economic accumulation and family reproduction. As Bourdieu argued, the whole process of moving home appears to be closely related to the implementation of a project of social, economic and biological reproduction (Bourdieu 2001). Previous chapters have discussed how this milestone not only constitutes a gain in the family's economic assets but is also a landmark in their broader family and personal trajectory. The different stages of the house-moving process involve performing a major breakpoint, in terms not only of previous routines but also of expectations and future projects. All in all, the new house consolidates a sense of advance and "ticking things off": it materialises an achievement which is pivotal in shaping an experience of upward social mobility.

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the whole process is connected to the notion of autonomy (for instance, see chapter 4). All these elements appear in the different practices related to moving home. The house purchase, home-making practices like improvements or decoration and neighbouring practices all involve decisive moments in the definition of families' trajectories and reproduction projects. Specifically, this is about defining the new life in terms of its differences relative to the "old" one. Home and family combine to form a realm in which people evaluate and perform their narratives of economic and personal achievement. In all these cases, it was relatively difficult to separate the financial dimension of home-moving (in terms of the investment) from the broad array of other social changes that occur in the process. Economic and cultural calculations were thus entwined into the same process. Furthermore, families were highly creative in assimilating their new home and residential place. It can be said, thus, that the experience of social mobility involves a process of appropriation of the new social coordinates; in fact, people engage in a new set of practices and understandings through which they make themselves feel in place. This process of cultural appropriation has to do not only with neighbours but also with objects, spaces and expectations.

Secondly, the "style" of this cultural production is tactical (De Certeau 1984) and ambiguous. People negotiate their "upward" move by bypassing economic limitations and managing existing possibilities (through institutions, relatives or personal resources) to find the best possible arrangement. In doing so, they often defy and circumvent the expectations of external agents such as relatives, real estate operators,

advertising companies or homeowners' associations. A central element here is ambiguity. Ambiguity is present not only at the level of class labelling, such as the processes described by Savage (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001), but also, constantly, in several of the practices in which social and spatial positions are produced. Indeed, during the house purchase stage, ambiguity appears as the shell combining different types of expectations, normative frameworks or modes of calculations. It was strongly present, for example, in the way families articulated the cultural and economic dimensions of buying a house.

Thirdly, ambiguity was a main cultural resource in newcomers' dealings with public space, as they juggled different normative frameworks of expectations of social life, on the one hand, and aspirations of living in a quiet "suburban" neighbourhood, on the other. Furthermore, there are certain degrees of awareness to this ambiguity, particularly when new residents have to deal with external narratives or normative frameworks. People related to advertising, showhouses, decoration or HA policies on commerce by actively choosing some elements and rejecting others. Here, the "scripts" in terms of how the "new" life should be produced are constantly "overflowed" by people's own practices.

In conclusion, in terms of the production of individualised social trajectories, moving home is both a milestone of social and economic achievement and a tactical process of cultural creation and appropriation, in which people come to understand their change as part of a trajectory of upward social mobility. We may claim that the process of social mobility is performed here in close relation with spatial mobility. In fact, moving home is associated not only with a change in spatial location but also with the deployment of a new sense of personal achievement and family autonomy which constitutes a cultural sense of upward social mobility. This process was apparent at different times in the thesis work. For example, house-buying involves defining and reproducing family trajectories and aspirations. By buying a house, families confront their trajectories with market-related classifications and imaginaries, thus positioning their individual trajectories within the array of real estate offers and the different modalities of product arrangement through class categorisation. And, as was argued, they experience this as a process of social mobility. Similarly, as discussed in chapter 4, home-making practices such as improvements and decoration work are a key domain for the contouring of the new life, and are construed as defining a new, wealthier, life. Finally, public life, neighbouring and shopping practices also provide a prime arena for people to define their experience of social mobility. Here, new types of public relations, notions of propriety and shopping networks help to shape their new experience in the neighbourhood in terms of a process of upward mobility. All these

different aspects serve as channels through which to perform social mobility in connection with spatial trajectories.

1.3 People like us

As noted earlier, this analysis follows Savage's argument in favour of defining contemporary class identities in terms of individualised class awareness (2001: 888). Nevertheless, while this research by Savage et al. tended to remark the decline of more visible collective class identities (Savage, Bagnall et al. 2001), based on the material presented here I can argue that a collective, class-related sense of "us" was still a central aspect of the home-moving experience. Indeed, in Los Pinos, the process of moving home appears to involve the production of a collective sense of us among newcomers, which mediates more generic class positions (Southerton 2002). This, more collective, sense of us and them does not appear to oppose individualised trajectories of social mobility, but is actually related to them. Furthermore, it does not appear as connected to a shared label, but related to shared ordinary practices, understandings and the sense of having homologous individualised trajectories of social mobility.

In fact, their involvement in the same type of routines and practices —related to moving to the suburbs— made newcomers feel they had homologous individual and family trajectories. So the sense of us was not related to an explicit process of labelling, but mediated by ordinary routines of the new place of residence. It had to do with having similar priorities, achievements, problems and expectations in terms of life in the house. It can be argued that this shared perception appeared in at least two ways. On the one hand, this "common experience" was related to equivalent economic restrictions and opportunities (Thompson 1968). Rodrigo's definition of his neighbours is very telling in this regard:

> R: "People with more money have no problems in paying for fuel, they don't have those types of problems, they have houses at other prices, but the middle class, we have our little car, as best we can, we bought our own house, we are in debt, we have our bank accounts, you understand? You live on your salary, so we, the middle class, are those who're here, struggling and taking the blows from all sides".

For Rodrigo, a sense of us is associated with the perception of having equivalent biographical situations and dealing with the same types of problems and constraints. As discussed in chapter 6, this sense of having a common situation in life appears to be essential to how people a sense of their individual trajectories as shared by others.

On the other hand, however, this collective sense of us is related not only to the range of opportunities available, but also to the production of shared frameworks that are mediated by ordinary local routines and shared practices and understandings. In other words, by being involved in the same day-to-day life, newcomers come to understand themselves as part of an inclusive "us". This was fundamental in defining social boundaries, in terms of "the active maintenance and negotiation with others (whether imagined or in practice) of guiding frameworks of inclusion" (Southerton, 2002:175). Within this context, practices such as home-improvements, taking children to the same square, buying things at the same local shop or facing equivalent normative frameworks in terms of street uses are vehicles for the articulation of a more collective dimension of new social positions. Here, rather than defining a sense of us in relation to "strong" class categorisations or labels, the idea of having an homologous social position represents a kind of "weak" identification born of the awareness of being engaged in the same everyday practices and having similar expectations. Indeed, this sense of "sameness" was present in several aspects of the home-moving process. One such aspect was newcomers' relatively equivalent situation in terms of family and house management, particularly the fact that they all had to deal with the process of moving into and improving the house. These common situations gave rise to a number of shared practices and routines among newcomers. A second aspect was street life and the way it was bound by subtle sets of rules and notions of propriety in terms of public space. Street life was essential in articulating the neighbourhood and offered a dimension in which newcomers voiced the differences between their current and their previous life. A third aspect was the way in which Los Pinos residents participate in extended geographies of shopping centres and supermarkets. As discussed in chapter 6, these shopping locations were instrumental in integrating Los Pinos into an urban middle-class geography and, at the same, disconnecting it from other, less prestigious, locations. In all these cases, people's engagement in new practices when moving home was crucial in defining a collective sense of "us and them".

All in all, by participating in shared practices and understandings, newcomers come to see themselves as possessing homologous trajectories and social positions and differentiate themselves from other people who are not part of this new framework. This process of differentiation does not explicitly use class labels, but engages in different sets of shared practices and expectations from which belonging is evaluated. The following conversation with Oscar about his impression of the surrounding neighbourhoods is a case in point:

> TA: "I wanted to mention, when this neighbour came you talked to him about the neighbouring areas, what was your concern?

O: "Look, my main fear is the entrance, because you have like another world there, you can't imagine that when you cross Matta (the entrance house) you come into another world where everything is clean, there are gardens and no people drinking in the streets".

TA.- Are you talking about the same type of people?

O: "This is separate from income or social levels. It is a matter of education, because I would never hang about in the street drinking beer with no shirt on, I just wouldn't do it, but if you go there you say, something does not fit. Because you could go to the beach and see people in the same situation, it is the same, you get used to having your house clean and tidy, it is the same, I personally want to have my house neat".

As may be noted, "the other" does not appear related to external class labels, but is evaluated in terms of everyday practices and shared expectations and opportunities. Furthermore, as Oscar explicitly stated, the differences between us and them have to do with things that are manifested in everyday life. In this case, ordinary life is understood as the key space in which these, more extended, social categorisations are made. Following Southerton, it can be argued that these shared understandings, contextual codes or practices are major mediators of more general class categorisations, (Southerton 2002). Here, class cultures are performed in terms of a "weak" sense of collective identity related to this shared ordinary experience. It is important to remark here that these same elements were deployed to compare different moments in residents' individual trajectories. In other words, residents compared the lifestyle in Los Pinos not only with other locations but also with their own previous life and trajectories. In doing so, they placed individual trajectories of social mobility and collective identifications in terms of us and them as different sides of the same process of defining the new social and spatial coordinates.

2. Mediations

The previous section proposed that, when moving home, Los Pinos families assemble class in two related ways: they perform individual trajectories of upward social mobility and also a collective sense of us associated with common opportunities, practices and expectations. Against this backdrop, this section will discuss a further key element of the role of other agencies in producing this position: the fact that this process is not exclusively the output of people's own work but relies upon several types of mediations. A central element here is the difference between mediations and intermediations developed by Latour (2005) (please see chapter 2). Indeed, whereas *intermediations transport meaning without transformation,* mediators are central parts of the final output, in other words *their specificity has to be taken into account every time. Mediators transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry* (Latour 2005).

As noted earlier, this thesis focused on three mediations that appeared as central in shaping the home-moving experience and in the assembling of people's new social and spatial positions. These mediations were materialities, space and place, and discourses and categorisations on class and social hierarchies. Albeit without using the term "mediations", all of these have been important topics in contemporary class-culture research (see chapter 2). I used the concept of mediations to underline the fact that class is not represented by these elements, but rather those different elements perform class. In other words, by using this concept of mediation I understand these features not as a "reflection" but the very place in which class cultures are assembled.

Against this backdrop, one of the major aims of this thesis was to describe how people come to terms with their new social trajectory through the mediation of objects, spaces and external narratives. Indeed, as presented in the empirical material, those elements have an active agency in the assembling of the new social position. It can be argued, thus, that class cultures are defined not only by people's own practices and understandings but also by an extensive set of other agencies that are involved in the negotiation and definition of class. These mediations do not reproduce existing class differences and identities but help to shape them as such. The analysis presented here shows three mediations to be instrumental.

2.1 Materialities

A central concern of this thesis has been to explore the role of material culture in the assembling of class cultures. Indeed, by focusing on the house and domestic

possessions, the thesis turns a spotlight on the links between social positions and materialities. This approach thus parallels Miller's ethnography on modernity in Trinidad, in which material culture was understood as a dimension through which people appropriate the rather abstract coordinates of the modern experience (Miller 1994). Although the connection between class cultures and material culture may be extended to other materialities (such as clothes, cars, food and so forth) the main object of concern here was the house and home possessions. Those elements were described as both a blank frame within which people appropriate their new coordinates and as elements that *script* several other, class-related cultural calculations. For example, as discussed in the chapter on housing markets, the design and marketing of real estate projects involve the deployment of several understandings of class and lifestyle which are crucial in terms of the final house.

At the same time, through the house and domestic possessions, people make sense of their new position through appropriation (Miller 1997). I have explored this production in detail by analysing home-improvement practices and decoration. Improvements involve making sense of and performing both individual trajectories of upward social mobility and involvement in a new set of shared practices and understandings. In the same vein, home possessions are important in the way people make sense of their social and spatial change: they not only help to trace trajectories, "furnishing" memory (Marcoux 2001), but also function as spaces in which people reconcile their "unique" biographies with their new coordinates. The solution involves a negotiated agency in which people manage to feel authentic in their new house by mixing old and new possessions.

Besides the central materialities of house and possessions, several other materialities play a key role in the production of social boundaries. In terms of the neighbourhood, elements such as community ownership stickers, welcome panels, barriers and guard posts are central aspects of the efforts to produce "community" by marking differences between us and them. Likewise, I described how the process of real estate production and marketing too is mediated by several types of materialities that are active in moulding both the economic and cultural dimensions of the housing market. For instance, in terms of the buyers' experience, the way the showhouse is arranged actively shapes the way actors make sense of the house purchase as a process of social change.

2.2 Space and place

Space and place were the second key mediation analysed in terms of the assembling of class cultures. This followed Massey's understanding of spatiality as a central element in the production of class identities (Massey 1995). As regards place, most of the analysis offered here focuses on the production of the neighbourhood as a meaningful place and how this process connects with the assembling of class position. Within this context, moving home and the process of becoming familiar with the neighbourhood and neighbours was closely bound up with the articulation of social trajectories. For instance, I explored the significant role played by the neighbourhood and neighbouring practices in producing a sense of a "shared us".

Several aspects of this "place-making" were discussed in detail: the emergence of local moral frameworks in terms of use of public space, the practices and materialities deployed by the homeowners' association to frame the neighbourhood as a particular type of middle-class place and how producing the neighbourhood involves making connections with other places. It may be argued, thus, that the production of Los Pinos as a particular kind of place mediated people's negotiation of their new social position. All in all, in Massey's terms, I would argue that the place-making practices examined amounted to a distinctive process through which social groups actively produce their identities (Ibid: 1995:339).

I also noted other ways in which spatiality mediates the production of class cultures (Miller, Jackson et al. 1998). For instance, I discussed how shopping routines and visits to the mall and to supermarkets mediate the way people make sense of their own social position. Notably, here a particular type of spatial mobility emerged among neighbours, related to these shopping practices. Indeed, this type of "social spatiality" (Massey, 1995) is an essential means of engaging with other middle-class urban scales that connect the new place of residence with modern shopping centres and supermarkets. I argued that such shopping trips are part of marking the differences with respect to residents of other areas and also belong to a more extended geographical network of "modern infrastructure" which implies rejecting other, traditional shopping options. Finally, as regards the real estate company, I explored how meanings of class boundaries and social hierarchies are deployed in definitions of urban space and real estate location. The location of housing schemes and, indeed, the whole housing market as a land-related business is imbued with particular geographies of class meanings and categorisations.

Across all these different aspects of the home-moving experience, space and place were key mediations in the production of newcomers' social positions. Indeed, my

findings coincide with Massey's (1995) and Savage, Bagnall et all (2005) understanding of space, place and class as elements that intersect and constitute each other, emerging as central in the articulation of class cultures. In other words, it is through place and space that people come to perform their social position. It can thus be argued that, like materialities, place not only reproduces class but is also active in shaping class as such (Massey 1995).

2.3 Performative class discourses and categorisations

A final type of mediation relates to performative, external discourses and categorisations of class and social mobility. "External" insofar as these discourses are not produced or deployed by people but by other agencies; nevertheless, as described here, they play an important role in shaping people's experience of social mobility. And "perfomative" because the particular discourses I refer to, in fact, actively construct the reality that they attempt to describe (Callon 2006). Following Latour, it can be argued that these discourses are central in forging the durability of social collectivities such as class. Here, by being "named" and "classified", class boundaries are also *performed* (Bourdieu, 1986).

One such discourse was examined as particularly important in terms of the empirical analysis of home-moving: the class categorisations deployed by housing market professionals in house design and marketing. As argued in chapter 4, these categorisations were strongly in evidence in shaping the final version of real estate projects and houses and, particularly, in defining the purchase experience of buyers. Indeed, the way real estate companies used class to design and promote their projects was found to be one of the forces making people more aware of their own trajectories of social mobility.

Apart from the housing market, other discourses were described as active in shaping the experience of moving home. For instance, external categories of the "mainstream" and "good taste" as portrayed in magazines were references for people's approach to their own decorating efforts. Similarly, the normative expectations of the homeowners' association in terms of creating a highly organised, clean and safe community represented further building blocks in the experience of the new neighbourhood and in the definition of the area in relation to other middle-class neighbourhoods. Although my research concentrated on those particular discourses, it was apparent that a number of other performative class discourses were also active in assembling people's experience of class, particularly public discourses on the "Chilean middle class" deployed in the media and politics.

It may be argued that these discourses not only script the design of houses or real estate projects but, more broadly, they weave a normative framework that was instrumental in shaping people's new social and spatial coordinates. In general terms and in line with (Latour 2005), I would contend that these discourses operate as "sociologies at large" that actively offer and perform class categories. Nevertheless, although these sociologies at large may have a strong performative role in framing new residents' experience of social and spatial mobility, this thesis also found that people actively negotiate, modify and appropriate discourses in their own way. Here, like objects that shape —yet are shaped by— newcomers people manage to circumvent and negotiate the modes of ordering and classifying class proposed by external agents such as market professionals.

3. Class cultures: non-representational, mediated and negotiated

In this thesis I have explored how class cultures emerge as a part of the experience of moving home. The starting point was that people produce their new social and spatial position when they move home. Within this context, I described how this production involved the active mediation of elements such as materialities, spaces and external discourses. By taking a bottom-up approach, I construed class cultures not only as the outcome of actors' everyday life production but also in relation to several other agencies that were instrumental in shaping class. Several practices related to home-moving were examined here: house design and marketing, house-buying, the material culture of the house and home-making practices, and the production of the neighbourhood.

Across all these aspects, it was possible to distinguish at least two main ways in which class was assembled. First, social trajectories are actively produced in terms of individual/family trajectories of upward social mobility. Second, a hierarchical and more collective sense of "us and them" is also produced as an outcome of sharing the same home-moving experience.

Based on these two conclusions, it can be argued that class cultures emerged more from a common situation related to an individualised and "weak" sense of us, than from visible class identities or labels. I draw here on Bourdieu's differentiation between class in terms of consciousness and class as related to a sense of "sense of one's place" that emerges from mastery of the rules of the new situation (Bourdieu 1986: 729). Following this distinction, this thesis focused more on how people learn to master the rules of the new situation than on the existence of a collective label or awareness.

Furthermore, by focusing on people's experience, this thesis has followed a long tradition of class analysis in which everyday life is construed as an active space of class formation. My conclusions therefore coincide with contemporary class culture literature in remarking on the centrality of everyday life practices and culture in the production of social positions (Devine, Savage et al. 2005). As noted earlier, this line of argument can be traced to Thompson's view of social class as the outcome of people experiences (Thompson 1968).

Beyond representation
This thesis argued that the everyday life production of class does not represent previously existing social divisions or boundaries but is a key site in which such social

categories are created. To borrow Miller's concept of appropriation (1997), it may be contended that class positions are the outcome of people's appropriation of objects, spaces and discourses that define their new coordinates. In other words, social boundaries and trajectories are not a "a priori" but an "a posteriori" production (Miller 1995) ; they are an outcome of people's attempts to live their new coordinates as mediated by materialities, places and narratives. Taking a bottom-up approach, a change in people's options in life —such as the possibility of buying a house or a new financial situation— may explain the starting point of the process but certainly not the final result. Indeed, as described in this thesis, class cultures emerge as a highly mediated production in which a broader process such as moving home is specified through particular practices, narratives and materialities.

Lastly, having adopted a bottom-up approach, this thesis described social and spatial positions not as a sharp process of identification but as a highly negotiated and changeable process. Because of their heterogeneity, class cultures emerge as contingent and changeable collectivities. Within this context of contingency, equivalent life chances or opportunities could produce different types of distinctions between "us and them", related to the definition of hierarchical social positions.

Using theories as methodologies

Against this backdrop, and in line with the theoretical discussion proposed in chapter 2, it may be useful here to discuss some of the implications of researching class cultures by using elements of Material Culture Studies (MCS) and Actor Network Theory (ANT) as theoretical backgrounds. In relation to this thesis, two points are important here. First, although this thesis has subscribed to those orientations and brought them into the analysis, it is important to note that they were used and useful here more as methodological tools than as sources of theoretical categories or explanations. So, it can be argued that the theoretical background was treated mainly as a methodological device. In other words, ANT and MCS helped me to describe my empirical findings more than to introduce concepts or formulate explanations. Indeed, as discussed in chapter 2, this use is consistent with the ANT's pretensions to draw the researcher's attention to the way in which actors produce associations rather than to create social categories a priori (2005).

A similar claim can be made in terms of MCS. Material culture studies were used here as a theoretical device that helped to bring objects into the analysis of class and class cultures. In that vein, MCS was treated broadly as related to the study of culture in terms of the material world. By taking this rather descriptive approach to these two theoretical frameworks I was able to extend the scope of the research beyond the

traditional boundaries of class culture analysis by taking a bottom-up approach. In particular, they helped me to a) frame the empirical research strictly in terms of following actors and b) introduce materialities as a central element in the analysis of how people perform their new social position. By functioning as methodological device that helped to "expand" the field, MCS and ANT thus allowed me to enrich the material used in the analysis.

Second, MCS and ANT arguably constitute a key epistemic pivot of this research. As has been noted elsewhere in this thesis, a central element here is the concept of mediations (as used by Latour 2005) and the critique of any idea of representation or dualism as supported by ANT (Latour 2005) and MCS (Miller 1987). Hence they were used more for facilitating descriptions than for finding or proposing any sort of theoretical causality. In this vein, the analysis of class and middle class in Chile offered here ties in with the descriptive turn that has taken place in contemporary sociology (Savage 2009).

Lastly, it may be worth discussing here whether approaches such as ANT and MCS can be situated in tension or not. Based on this research and the mainly methodological use of these theoretical backgrounds, I found no tensions in the use of the two approaches because they share key elements: the value they attribute to performativity and the role of objects in the analysis of social life, and their commitment to empirical ethnographic research. So I believe that they are not opposed but share a growing contemporary effort to enrich the scope of sociological analysis by bringing materialities into a post-representational approach to sociological research.

Concluding remarks: researching assembled cultures of inequality

Following on from the discussion above, I would like to offer a final reflection on the political and practical implications of adopting a bottom-up approach to research on middle-class cultures in Chile. As noted in the introduction, Chile is one of the world's most unequal societies, a country in which people see class differences as central and, often, unalterable (Portales 2007). Within this context, understandably, the bulk of research work has focused on the causes and consequences of social inequality in terms of the distribution of opportunities in life covering, among other aspects, the different outcomes of education in terms of employment or wealth (Martínez and León 2001; Torche 2005). Against this backdrop, an interesting question arises with respect to the possible political outcomes of an ethnographic enquiry: what lessons may be drawn from a research endeavour that approaches class cultures as the outcome of actors' own productions?

First, it should be said that an approach such as this can offer neither causal explanations nor a prognosis in terms of the distribution or quantitative measures of life opportunities. Nevertheless, I believe that researching people's experience of class can enrich the discussion on class and inequality in Chile. In fact, an approach like this may shed light upon the contingent, changeable and mediated way in which social categories such as class are performed in everyday life, thereby producing richer and more flexible ways of treating issues such as class inequality.

In this light of this, I believe that an understanding of class cultures and class inequalities as the outcome of people's production (and not, as is generally the rule in Chile, exclusively in terms of structural, political or public factors), may help to insert class inequality into political discussion not only in relation to macro policies, but also, crucially, into the micro politics of everyday life, particularly the question of how class inequalities are produced in people's ordinary experience. In other words, a bottom-up approach to class cultures may help to complement the (also necessary) analysis of assets and opportunities by opening the door to a more public awareness of how different everyday "cultures of inequalities" are actively performed and maintained in contemporary Chile.

The concept of "culture of inequality" may be useful as it underlines the fact that class categories and social positions, as things that are actively produced, can be produced in different ways. In fact, as has been argued here, class and class boundaries are not merely matters of income distribution or education, but are also categories that are actively produced and maintained in the multitude of practices, understandings and materialities that define people's ordinary life.

An approach such as this turns attention to the various subtle ways in which social differences are produced and maintained in everyday life. Furthermore, it focuses on aspects that may not initially appear to be class-related, for instance, the way in which marketing professionals define and shape particular understandings of class categorisations. For this we must shift our focus of attention from the macro level and structural changes to the more lively and elusive realm of people's experience. In more public and political terms, a cultural approach to class may help us to focus not so much on measuring points of departure but on understanding how people produce and make sense of their point of arrival. An analysis like this can do much not only to illuminate how different class cultures are performed, but also, more importantly, to throw the different cultures of inequalities present in our everyday life into sharp relief.

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Appendix 1. Research participants' Age, occupation, Educational attainment and Household Structure.

Families		WORK	STUDIES	Household
1	M1 (mid thirties)	Housewife	High school	Married with three children
	W1 (mid thirties)	Accountant	Technical degree	
2	W2 (early twenties)	Housewife	High school	Married with one children
	M2 (mid thirties)	Senior Sales Executive	Technical degree	
3	W3 (mid thirties)	Housewife	High school	Married with three children
	M3 (mid thirties)	Middle Manager	High school	
4	W4 (midthirties)	Housewife	Technical degree	Married with one children
	M4 (early forties)	Accountant	Technical degree	
5	M5 (Late thirties)	Administrative	Technical degree	Married with three children
	W5 (Late thirties)	Administrative	Technical degree	
6	W6 (Early thirties)	Housewife	Technical degree	Living together without children
	M6 (Early thirties)	Civil constructor	Technical degree	
7	W7 (Early thirties)	Housewife	High school	Married with one children
	M7 (Early thirties)	Administrative	Technical degree	
8	W8 (Early thirties)	Housewife	High school	Married with two children
	M8 (Early thirties)	Accountant	Technical degree	
9	W9 (Late thirties)	Housewife	High school	Married with three children
	M9 (Early thirties)	Senior Sales Executive	Technical degree	
10	W10 (mid thirties)	housewife	University degree	Married with one children
	M10 (mid thirties)	Designer	University degree	
11	W11 (early thirties)	Administrative	Technical degree	Living together with one children
	M11 (late twenties)	Administrative	Technical degree	
12	M12 (mid thirties)	Match teacher	University Degree	Married with one children
	M12 (mid thirties)	Match teacher	University Degree	
13	M13 (late twenties)	Administrative	Technical degree	Married without children
	W13 (late twenties)	Social Assistant	Postgraduate	
14	M14 (Late thirties)	Owner of an small company	Technical degree	Living together with two children
	W14 (Late thirties)	Accountant	Technical degree	
15	M15 (early forties)	Administrative	Technical degree	Married with three children
	W15 (early forties)	Accountant	Technical degree	
16	M16 (late twenties)	Administrative	Technical degree	Married without children
	w 16 (late twenties)	secretary	Technical degree	
17	M (Late thirties)	Administrative	Unknown	Living together with three children
	W17 (middle forties)	secretary	Technical degree	
18	M17 (mid thirties)	Administrative	Technical degree	Married without children
	W17 (early thirties)	Administrative	Technical degree	
19	W18 (Mid thirties)	housewife	High school	Married with two children
	M18 (Mid thirties)	Senior Sales Executive	High school	
20	M19 (mid thirties)	housewife	High school	Married with two children
	W19 (mid twenties)	Administrative	Technical degree	