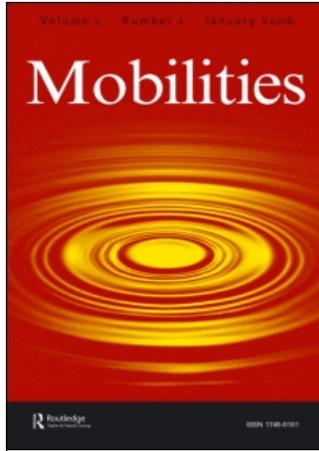


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### To Move or Not to Move? Social Exclusion, Accessibility and Daily Mobility among the Low-income Population in Santiago, Chile

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# To Move or Not to Move? Social Exclusion, Accessibility and Daily Mobility among the Low-income Population in Santiago, Chile

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**ABSTRACT** *Changes in the patterns of quotidian physical mobility of the population are at the very centre of transformations in contemporary urban life. The city of Santiago, Chile is no exception to this trend. But these changes do not affect the whole population in the same way. This paper is based on a case study of a low-income population group and how their situation of social exclusion interferes with their patterns of everyday mobility. In order to do so we describe in-depth their everyday mobility in two central interrelated aspects: where and how these individuals travel during workdays and weekends. We conclude that in contemporary Santiago the low degrees of motility of low income population constitute one of the main ways in which contemporary social exclusion is enacted in everyday practice.*

**KEY WORDS:** social exclusion, accessibility, transport, low income, motility

## Introduction

The last decade has seen a growing interest in the study of physical mobility as a central characteristic of contemporary global society. The central idea behind this surge of both theory and research is the recognition that places are not isolated. Different urban places are deeply connected and related to each other through multiple systems and means of transportation and communication, from streets and highways to electrical supply and sewage systems. These transportation and communication systems constitute the technical background to multiple kinds of mobilities that are at the centre of the contemporary dynamics of urban life. Telephone calls, clean water, visitors, electricity, soap operas, bread and vegetables: all are examples of the enormous amount of mobile material and immaterial, visible

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and invisible, wanted and unwanted elements that cross our everyday places at every given moment of time.

However, as has been widely noted, this increasing importance of mobility in the managing of daily life also means the development of the opposite phenomena: immobility or the lack or deficiency of capabilities to move when wanted, which appears as a central aspect of social exclusion in contemporary societies. All over the world there are growing signs that the barriers related to the movement of people, goods and communications are at the very centre of what it means to be socially excluded, both at the local and global level. This perception has meant that the connection between spatial mobility and social exclusion has been increasingly considered as a subject of research and policy in itself.

Until now, most of the specific empirical research on the area has been done in countries in the developed world, such as the United Kingdom (Kenyon *et al.*, 2003; Raju, 2007; SEU, 2003), Germany (Schonfelder & Axhausen, 2003) and the United States (Clifton, 2003; Sanchez *et al.*, 2003; Scott & Horner, 2004). There are also several examples of empirical research in developing societies like Niger (Manvell, 2006), Guatemala (Puri, 2002), India (Baker *et al.*, 2005), Tanzania (Diaz Olvera *et al.*, 2003) and Sri Lanka (Kumarage, 2005). This last body of research has provided a valuable first approach to the subject, highlighting the central role that access to means of transport has in the alleviation of poverty in these societies.

In this context, the aim of this paper is to contribute to the empirical study of the connections between social exclusion and mobility as an everyday experience of a group of low-income families, inhabitants of the city of Santiago, Chile. The research questions that guide this paper are twofold: where and how do the low-income population move in contemporary Santiago? Is this mobility related to their relative social exclusion? In order to answer this question, in the following sections we will firstly summarize the main theoretical concepts and ideas regarding mobility-related social exclusion. Secondly, we will study the destinations of trips made by a low-income population group in the city of Santiago, taking special care in highlighting the group's connection with relative social exclusion. Thirdly, we will analyse the main mode of transport used in these trips with the same focus as in the past section. Finally, in the conclusion, we will apply some of the literature reviewed to the case under study in order to set out some indications about the general relationship between social exclusion and mobility for low-income inhabitants of contemporary Santiago.

### **Social Exclusion, Mobility and Urban Space**

In order to study the connections between social exclusion and mobility we must start with a working definition of the former. In simple terms, social exclusion can be defined as the condition of 'people being prevented from participation in the normal activities of the society in which they live or being incapable of functioning' (Atkinson, 1998a, p. 27 quoted by Brady, 2003, p. 724). Then the central issue here is participation or, more exactly, of capabilities to participate when is needed to fulfil your roles as a member of a certain society.

As Richardson & Le Grand (2002) recognize, social exclusion is a concept that summons four key elements: multiple deprivation, relativity, agency and dynamics.

Multiple deprivation ‘implies that social exclusion is about more than simply income poverty or lack of employment’ (Richardson & Le Grand, 2002, p. 2). Relativity refers to the idea that ‘there is no “absolute” social exclusion’ (Richardson & Le Grand, 2002, p. 2), in each particular context and time social exclusion will mean different things. Agency is related to the fact that social exclusion is always a product of practices being developed by certain agent(s). Finally, the dynamics aspect means that social exclusion is not only related to not having a job or money at a certain moment in time, but also ‘with little prospects for the future’ (Richardson & Le Grand, 2002, p. 3). Regarding the causes of social exclusion, in the available definitions we can find a wide variety of aspects, such as a lack of access to the job market or qualifications, or lack of recognition of a certain lifestyle (for a good analysis of the term see Peace, 2001).

In this context, current developments in the field of transport studies (Church *et al.*, 2000; Clifton, 2003; Froud *et al.*, 2002; Hodgson & Turner, 2003; Kenyon *et al.*, 2003; Lyons, 2004) have also acknowledged the existence of a mobility dimension of social exclusion, defining it as:

The process by which people are prevented from participating in the economic, political and social life of the community because of reduced accessibility to opportunities, services and social networks, due in whole or in part to insufficient mobility in a society and environment built around the assumption of high mobility. (Kenyon *et al.*, 2002, pp. 210–211)

The growing field of mobility research (Adey, 2006; Cass *et al.*, 2005; Kaufmann, 2002; Sager, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2003, 2006; Urry, 2000) has also taken into account this connection between mobility and social exclusion, understanding it as:

People who are socially-spatially excluded are those who are for whatever reason unable to participate in the social groups, worlds and networks membership of which would, for them, constitute ‘normality’. In other words they are unable to accomplish those practices (many of which involve co-presence and mobility) required for effective social participation. (Shove, 2002, p. 1)

What is common to both definitions is the fact that what is at stake is not mobility in itself, but mobility in relation to the accessibility to certain places and people when needed. Therefore ‘the question of social exclusion and integration, it can be argued, largely revolves around access’ (Madanipour, 2003, p. 185), a temporal and spatial accessibility of individuals and opportunities in a dynamic urban environment. Cass *et al.* (2005, pp. 548–551) identify four dimensions of this accessibility.

- Financial: all forms of mobility, even the simpler ones, involve the expenditure of some amount of financial resources, at least in the form of alternative costs.
- Physical: in everyday movement there are always certain physical barriers that must be overcome to reach a certain destination (escalators, detours, passageways, etc).
- Organizational: even the most individualized forms of mobility (like walking or car driving) depend on certain organizational aspects, from the building of infrastructure to the everyday coordination of flows in urban contexts.

- Temporal: movement always implies a certain amount of time in going from one place to another.

Therefore, it seems that being on the move does not necessarily imply anything, but to have a minimal 'reserve' for potential mobility appears to be a prerequisite to participating in a social order that demands a certain degree of mobility as a key component of social participation and inclusion. Motility is therefore a key tool to analyse the relationship between mobility and social integration (Kaufmann, 2002, 2004). Motility was first defined by biology as the 'ability to move spontaneously and independently' that some living creatures have, even if they don't use it actively (Miller *et al.*, 2003). In social terms, motility can be defined as 'the capacity of entities (e.g. goods, information or persons) to be mobile in social and geographical space, or as the way in which entities access and appropriate the capacity for socio-spatial mobility according to their circumstances' (Kaufmann, 2004, p. 76). Consequently social exclusion from this perspective can be seen as the relative lack of motility needed to access opportunities and significant others.

Especially in an urban context, disadvantaged individuals and groups frequently experience social exclusion centrally because they do not have access in the same way as other groups within urban space. These problems of accessibility, and its consequences in terms of social exclusion, can be seen from two complementary points of view: fixed and mobile. In fixed terms, the lack of accessibility can be identified and studied in the presence of mechanisms developed specifically to control the access of people to certain places and areas. Among them the land and property market appear as a key actor in the process because

these markets tend to fragment, differentiate and commodify space through town planning mechanisms which tend to fragment, rationalize and manage space, and also through legal and customary distinctions between the public and the private spheres, with a constant tension between the two and a tendency for the privatization of space. (Madanipour, 2003, p. 188)

Along with this we can find several other mechanisms developed to control the accessibility of urban spaces, from legal regulations to private surveillance systems. All of them are central actors in the imposition of clear and fixed barriers to access places, controlling the flows of people and commonly generating social exclusion.

However, in contemporary 'mobile' societies (Urry, 2000) accessibility, or its lack, cannot be seen as only based on fixed mechanisms and spaces. Between these fixed places we can observe a growing number of 'new places and technologies that enhance the mobility of some peoples and places, *even as they also* heighten the immobility of others' (Hannam *et al.*, 2006, p. 303). High-speed highways, Wi-fi hot-spots, public transport, mobile phone coverage and all the other networks through which mobility is enacted in contemporary cities are not accessible to everyone. There are always barriers for entry and use, barriers that generate quite different patterns of usage. In this sense 'it looks as if, in a world characterized by flows, a great deal of energy is devoted to controlling and freezing them: grasping the flux often actually entails a politics of "fixing"' (Geschiere & Birgit, 1998, p. 605).

In terms of social exclusion, this ‘politics of fixing’ means that between the highly connected zones of cities there are growing areas ‘in which mobility frequently encounters more boundaries and barriers rather than highways and high speed networks’ (Graham & Marvin, 2001, p. 34). In contemporary cities ‘mobility is, therefore, a highly differentiated activity where many different people move in many different ways’ (Adey, 2006, p. 83). In terms of social exclusion these differentials in mobility mean that frequently the inhabitants of poorly-connected areas are ‘facing ever-more tenuous (and often increasingly expensive) links to even basic access to essential services like energy, transportation, communications, even certain urban streets’ (Graham, 2001, p. 368). Hence, if we want to better understand the configuration and characteristics of social exclusion in contemporary cities we must include in the analysis its connection with everyday mobility, as we are going to do here.

### **Field of Study and Methods**

The research on which this paper is based was conducted over ten months in 2004 in an urban location in the city of Santiago, Chile. More specifically the study was focused on 20 low-income families, inhabitants of a social housing estate called ‘Tucapel Jimenez II’. The estate is located on the western edge of the borough of Renca, in the north-western limit of the city of Santiago. It was built by a private housing company on behalf of the Chilean Housing and Urbanism Service (SERVIU) of the government of Chile and it has been inhabited since June 2002. The housing estate is made up of 876 flats arranged in groups of three-storey O-shaped buildings with an average of 24 flats each.

Santiago is of special interest for research on the subject given the changes it has experienced in the last few decades and the consequences in terms of daily mobility. On the one hand, we found an important increase in both the population and the extension of the city. In accordance with the data of the Chilean 2002 Census, the population of the inner city of Santiago was 4,668,473 (INE, 2003), but if the entire population of the metropolitan area is included, there are more than 6 million people living in the city. These numbers represent an increase of 7.5% in the total population of the city over the last 10 years (INE, 2003). In terms of its extension, the urban area of the city covers 61,395 hectares (Ducci, 2002, p. 3), which represents an increase of 1339 hectares per year during the 1990s, the highest in its history.

On the other hand, some large infrastructure projects have been carried out in Santiago in recent years, including several high speed highways, such as Costanera Norte, Autopista Central or Vespucio Express. Three new Metro lines (Santiago’s underground) have been built, to reach highly populated areas such as Recoleta or Puente Alto. In addition, access to cars has greatly increased. The data show that in the period from 1992 to 2002, the percentage of the general population who have a car increased from 24.3% to 36.7% (Larrañaga, 2004). Even amongst the 20% of the population with the lower incomes, the number of families with a car increased from 15% to 20%.

One of the main consequences of these changes is the increase in mobility of the population of the city. In the Origin–Destination survey (SECTRA, 2002), a comparison between the degrees of mobility of the population in the years 1977,

1991 and 2001 shows that the total number of journeys per person per day increased from 1.04 in 1977 to 2.39 in 2001, with an increase in the number of people using a motorized means of transport from 0.87 in 1977 to 1.75 in 2001. In contemporary Santiago people are more mobile than ever before, a tendency that can only intensify in the years ahead due to several causes, such as the continued enlargement and diversification of the city areas, the current high investment in transport infrastructure and the growth in car possession.

The 20 families in this study can be characterized mostly as young adult couples (with an average age of 35 years) that have around 2.8 children, each one with an average age of 10 years. In terms of education, none of them had a university degree or technical studies qualification, and only 68% finished secondary education. For this reason the majority work in the primary sector (as security personnel, taxi-drivers, blue-collar workers, etc) and the levels of integration of women into the formal labour market is still very low. In only two families did both parents have permanent jobs.

In terms of methods, the research was based primarily on three in-depth interviews with all the adult members of the 20 selected families. They talked about their life in the housing estate, especially in terms of their adaptation to their new living space (at the time of the fieldwork they had only been living there for a year and a half). This material was complemented by more general information about the housing estate and the living conditions of the low-income population in Santiago, in order to set a general framework for the analysis.

### **Destinations of Mobility in Everyday Life**

When asked about the relevance of mobility, most of the members of the families under study recognise it as a key factor in their everyday lives. For example, Diego, a married 39 year old father of one, told us in one interview:

[Nowadays] we must move to have good things, things that make life more or less easier for us. If I do not move many things stop ..., practically. When one is stopped, it feels as if everything is falling down. For the most desirable things we have to be on the move, so that things continue functioning. Imagine if the motor stops, [then] everything goes to hell. So if I stop, everything goes to hell, it is quite clear.

As Diego clearly recognizes, mobility plays a central part in his everyday routines. For him this movement is not only related to concrete activities, but represents both the improvement ('for the most desirable things we have to be on the move') and the maintenance of their current standard of living ('if I stop, everything goes to hell'). This second aspect, the need to be constantly on the move in order to keep their current standard of living, is also clear in the case of Valeria, a recently divorced woman who lives with her four teenage grandchildren.

Since I broke up with my partner the movement has been constant. I cannot stand still; because at the very moment that I stopped everything would collapse ... My family depends on me so I can't stand still. (Valeria, 52 years)

Beyond representing an opportunity to improve their living conditions, at least in the case of Valeria, mobility is something central in their everyday strategies for dealing with their situation of precariousness. Mobility is not the 'magical key' that will liberate them from poverty, but a structural part of what it means to be poor in contemporary Santiago. As we saw in the preceding sections, mobility is a compulsory characteristic of contemporary urban order, even for people in a situation of social exclusion, like the families under study here.

The members of these families are not only forced to travel relatively frequently, but also, since moving to the housing estate they have been forced to enlarge their levels of daily mobility, in order to respond to demands related to their growing integration into a social order that puts spatial mobility as one of the central elements of its present dynamic. As Jessica clearly acknowledges:

[Before coming to the housing estate] there were less needs, less things to do. We didn't care that much about material things or time. Now we do. This is very important. Before we didn't have to do so many things, now everything is an errand. Nowadays we want to put in a telephone line here. So we have to follow a procedure. They [the telephone company] don't want to put telephone in here so we have to go there to complain. Everything is go out and go out. You have to go to follow a procedure there, then we have to go to pay the *dividendos* [monthly instalments for the flat] then we have to go to the SERVIU [Housing Office] with documents that you need, [to pay] water bills, light bills, medical assistance. Everything is to go out and go out, to follow procedures and errands. (Jessica, 30 years)

For Jessica, living in her own flat introduces her to a system that is not only more complex but also that demands higher degrees of spatial mobility. As she said in their current situation 'everything is to go out and go out'.

Where do the members of these families move in Santiago? In order to answer to this question we have to start analysing the more general patterns of everyday mobility of the low income population in the city. Here the starting point is to affirm that these mobilities are intimately related to a series of changes that the city has experienced in the last few decades. Among them there are two processes of special relevance for daily mobility of low-income individuals: the growth in the area of the city (Ducci 1998), explained in the last section, and the high levels of residential segregation characteristics of contemporary Santiago (Sabatini, 2001). In relation to this last phenomenon, from the second half of the 20th century, in the city:

The wealthier classes began to move further and further up the slopes of the Andes to the east of the city, while shifting their offices away from downtown and closer to their homes. They also moved the factories north of the city, to within easy automobile reach. ... Shopping and head offices relocated alongside the major road transport axis of the 'upper' neighbourhoods. ... (Tomic & Truppen, 2005, p. 55)

At the same time, newly built low-income housing began to be located farther and farther from the city centre, especially to the south and west areas of the city. The

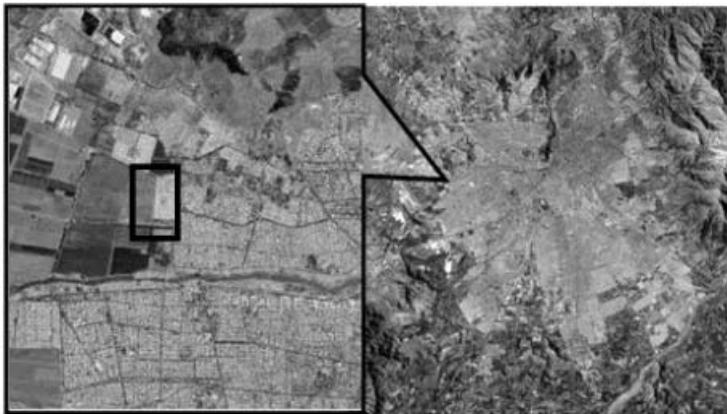
main explanation of this movement was the search, by public and private developers alike, of the cheapest land to build housing for this population, especially in the form of housing estates (Galetovic & Jordan, 2006; Tironi, 2003). For example, in the period from 1978 to 2002 more than 80% of the social housing built was concentrated in 11 boroughs of the city (out of 34), with most of them located on the outskirts (Hidalgo, 2007, p. 68). As a consequence of both situations we can even talk of the existence of two cities in one, because ‘the poor and rich areas of Santiago are practically independent one from the other’ (Ducci & Soler, 2004, p. 51).

This was also the situation in the housing estate under study. As can be seen in Figure 1, the Tucapel Jimenez II housing estate (the rectangular shape inside the left box) is found literally on the border of the urban area of Santiago, in the western corner of the Borough of Renca. This borough is also quite isolated, being located in the north-western end of the city with a few industrial areas to the east, the River Mapocho to the south and the Renca Hills to the north.

But the problem is not only the location of the estate. Under a condition of ‘splintering urbanism’ (Graham & Marvin, 2001) the relevance of distance in terms of mobility becomes strongly related to the access to networks of transport and communication.

Distance is not only perceived in terms of geographical space crossed, but also ‘depends on the mode and duration of the journey ...[and] the convenience of travelling’ (Jiron, 2007, p. 59). You can live quite far from your place of activity, but if you have good access to highways and other mobility infrastructures the relevance of such distance diminishes greatly. Therefore, in the case of the housing estate under study we are not only talking about distance, but also about difficult access to mobility technologies and networks.

In our case study, this problem of accessibility to networks of mobility can be divided into two main types: transport and communication. In terms of access to transport infrastructure, as can be seen in Figure 1, the estate is only connected to roads on its eastern side. Although its connectivity to the borough’s centre is not



Source: Google Maps

**Figure 1.** Location of the housing estate in Santiago. Source: Google Maps

bad, especially using buses, access to any other area of the city is difficult both through private and public means of transport. On the one hand, for the few families who owned a car, the lack of points of entrance to the highways located nearby (Costanera Norte and Vespucio Express) means that they have to cross a busy area of the borough before they can reach them, commonly spending a great deal of time. On the other hand, for the families whose only means of mobility is public transport, the lack of easy access to the Metro network (the closest station is Cerro Blanco, located more than five kilometres away) means that in practice their only way to mobilize beyond the walking area are buses, which are relatively expensive and usually take a long time, crossing the whole borough before accessing other areas, as we are going to see in the next section. In terms of communication networks, at the time the fieldwork was conducted these families did not have access to landline telephones or internet services in their local area due to the reluctance of telephone companies to provide the service. Along with this, although all families had a mobile phone, most of them rarely had money or credit to talk, limiting its use only to receive infrequent calls from relatives or friends (Ureta, 2008).

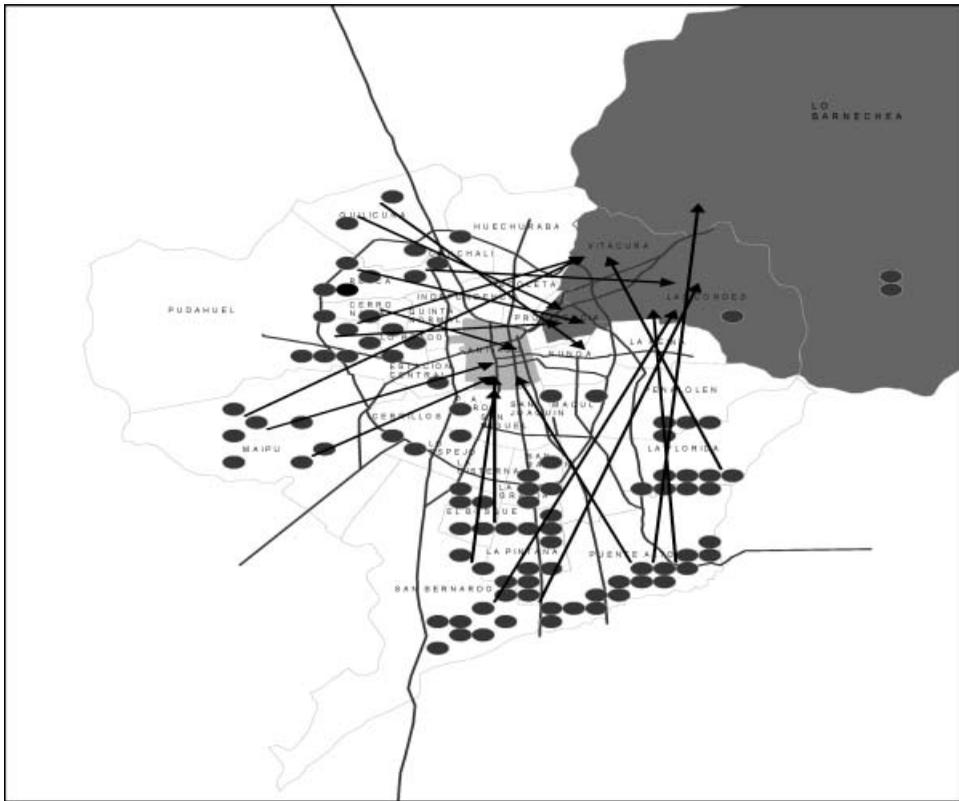
But this distance between high and low income areas does not mean that they are totally independent. As recognized in the Tomic & Truppen quote, the residential movement of the groups with higher incomes from the city centre to the east also means the movement of industries, services and other workplaces to areas within or easily reachable by car from the new high-income areas, especially as most of the service sector is located in these areas. As a consequence of this, 'workers had to travel further and further into wealthy territory to work' (Tomic & Truppen, 2005, p. 55). For example, in 2001, the city centre and the high income boroughs of Providencia and Las Condes attracted almost 50% of the travels to work of the whole population of the city (Galetovic & Jordan, 2006, p. 125).

This situation was acknowledged by the members of these families. For example Catalina, a mother of one, when speaking about the location of the estate with regard to the availability of jobs:

I used to work here in the weekly market, but there's too much poverty here, there's too much people and few jobs, here you have little access to good jobs, there are too many people without a job ... look there [she points in the direction of the empty lots at the back of the estate] there's nothing more there, there's the airport, Americo Vespucio [avenue] and the industrial park and to access one of these jobs is like to catch a star; instead if you are closer to the city centre you have more things, in Estación central, Franklin, Macul, Santa Rosa, there's more people there, more money even, yes, this is the truth. (Catalina, 36 years)

For her, as for many others, the surrounding area of the estate appears practically jobless. With the exception of Santiago's international airport and ENEA, a high-tech industrial park – where, using the words of Catalina, to find a job is as improbable as to 'catch a star' – there are very few places where the members of these families can work.

This situation commonly forces them to travel long distances to work in the city centre or in the eastern areas of the city, as can be seen in Figure 2. The darker area



**Figure 2.** High income areas, location of housing estates and the direction of travels to work by low income population in contemporary Santiago

on the centre of the image represents the city centre and the grey area on the right the high income boroughs of Providencia, Vitacura, Las Condes and Barnechea. The red dots represent the approximate location of the housing estates built in the period 1978 to 2002 in accordance with the information given by Hidalgo (2007). As is clearly visible, few of the estates are located inside the high-income areas (less than 3% of the total). However, as workplaces are located in these high-income areas, the low-income population who work in these areas but live in the housing estates is forced to travel daily there, as represented by the arrows.

Carla, for example, a married 36 year old mother of two, works in a supermarket in the borough of La Florida, southeast Santiago. This place is located at around two hours from the housing estate using public transport, resulting in a general expenditure of more than four hours per day just in going to and returning from work.

I leave every day at 5:20, 5:30 at the latest to take the bus because I start work at 7:30... [In the afternoon] at 4:45 I'm taking the micro [bus] and I'm arriving more or less at 7:00 or 7:30. Sometimes there is congestion and I arrive here at 7:45 ... The work day seems very long to me. The distance [from work] is what exhausts me the most.

Given the low levels of formal education of the adults under study most of them, like Carla, work in low-qualified jobs in the service sector. As an important part of the employment in this area is located in the richest eastern areas of the city, to find a job commonly also means spending a huge amount of time in travelling to and from that area.

In relation to other destinations, like shopping places, schools, public services and recreational areas, the situation is not very different. Although, in recent years, the city has experienced an important growth in the number of sub-centres of services and consumption (Ducci & Soler, 2004), traditionally located in the city centre and the affluent east, in most cases access to them by low-income population is still difficult, especially for people living in housing estates. Commonly, these new sub-centres are located in central areas of the boroughs or in places with good connections to highways and main avenues, relatively far away from the areas in which the estates were built.

In our case study, even though the relevant areas or sub-centres where these families have access to education, shopping and public services were usually closer to their homes than their working places, it was still a common complaint that they were still quite far from the estate. For example, Edith, when asked about her quality of life in the estate answered that:

It hasn't been hard to get used [to living here] what I miss is that things [were closer], because even for a pharmacy you have to take locomoción [buses] to go to the Renca's centre, there are no pharmacies round here, here everything is faraway ... things are quite faraway, I think that there's a need for more shopping places, for example here there's a huge empty lot, there they can build a complete shopping centre so people can have everything at hand, because for everything you have to take locomoción, especially if they are making so many new housing developments [here] I think that they have to make everything more accessible for the people. (Edith, 49 years)

As she recognises, the location of the estate on the outskirts of the borough means that to access even a pharmacy or a medium size supermarket she has to take some form of public transport, mainly buses, spending time and always scarce monetary resources.

Along with shopping places, mobility was mainly associated with access to better schools, located near the borough's 'plaza de armas' [central square] or in other boroughs of the city. Most parents interviewed perceived that, although there are plenty of schools in the borough of Renca, the quality of the closest schools was quite low. For example Carlos (30 years), a father of three told us:

Here [in the borough of Renca] there are no good schools and the only thing that we can give to our children is education, because we do not have many material possessions. Renca has never obtained good results in the SIMCE [the official test of the quality of education] ... Our idea with my spouse is to return to [the borough of] Lo Prado, I don't know, to look for something to rent there. The idea of returning there is motivated above all for the schools. There our children were in a very very good school. Even though here they are in a

private school, the quality is not that good, so this is what we miss the most, [quality] education for our children. (Carlos, 30 years)

As Carlos explicitly said, for many of the parents interviewed, formal education is 'the only thing that we can give to our children', an idea that is stronger among low-income families than in any other group of the population (Elacqua & Fabrega, 2004). For this reason, the perception that the surrounding schools are bad functions as a powerful motivation to spatial mobility, even to the extremes of thinking about returning to live in their former places of residence, as Carlos did. Most parents, though, choose less radical solutions to deal with the problem. The most common solution was to send their children to study in schools located outside the borough, even though this will mean spending more resources on transport for the parents and that the children spend more time travelling on their own.

Commonly this source of mobility not only includes the movement of the children, but also of mothers, especially in the case of younger children. Sometimes these trips even constitute the main source of everyday mobility for them, as recognized by Cristina and Alejandra:

What movement do I make? I go out to pick up my boy [at school], and then I arrive with him at the house to do homework, nothing more. (Cristina, 42 years)

If I didn't go to look after the kids, I wouldn't go anywhere. (Alejandra, 35 years)

Therefore, education-related mobility constitutes the second source of movement in the everyday lives of these families, not only for children but for parents too. In this example we can see how 'mobility biographies are *relational* and tied up with caring, guilt, responsibility and negotiation as much as individual choice' (Larsen *et al.* 2006, p. 263).

Finally, another important destination of mobility, especially relevant for women, was visiting relatives and, to a lesser degree, friends:

Nowadays, because I have my family so far away, I have to move more, but when we were closer it was not so common that I went out in my free time, I only went out to the house of my mother that was close [to my house], but not now, today I have to move out in order to be able to see her. (Edith, 49 years)

This last type of mobility can be associated with an emerging factor in the lives of the families under study. As was described above, these families have recently moved to the housing estate and many of them are living far away from their extended family for the very first time. Formerly, they used to live in close proximity with them, not uncommonly under the same roof. As a result of the more widespread nature of social networks these people are forced to 'travel longer distances in order to maintain the 'same' level of social contact or social inclusion' (Cass *et al.* 2005, p. 545).

This mixture of an isolated location and difficult access to networks of transport and communications not only means that they have to travel long distances in order to reach their quotidian destinations, it also has negative effects on the way they evaluate their daily life, especially their new living areas:

I hope it's going to change or I'm going to get crazy, I hope it's going to change because we, at least me, have talked about it and we want to return there, to the borough where we came from, because here you have nothing at hand, everything is far away... I mean that wherever you want to go you have to take a micro [bus] but not there, there everything was closer and if you wanted to go somewhere you can go walking ... in my opinion, here we are far from everything, like in an un-civilization. It is as if we were a little town in the south [of Chile] and [when we want to go out] we have to go to the city. That's the way I see it, because here there are no supermarkets. There is nothing at hand. Even the micros [buses] to go to the centre [of the city] take at least an hour. It is as if we were very far away, like a little town far away from the city. (Paola, 32 years)

Hence, living in a housing estate like Tucapel Jimenez II, as with most of the estates built in the last two decades, means that to access most destinations one has to involve some form of mobility beyond one's immediate living area.

### **The Modes of Mobility of the Low-income Population**

According to the results of the last Origin and Destination survey conducted in Santiago in 2001 (SECTRA, 2002), the low-income population moves mainly in two ways: by walking and using buses, representing the only mean of transport used in 45% and 29% of travel, respectively (Thynell, 2005, p. 63). In comparison, although car possession among this population has increased substantially in the last decade or so, travel by car only represents 13% of total travel. In addition, the use of Santiago's Metro is quite infrequent, representing only 3% of the total travel. Mobility for the low-income population therefore commonly involves a variable mix of walking and the use of buses. We are going to study each practice in depth in the following subsections.

#### *Walking*

Walking constituted the main form of mobility for the greatest number of members of the families under study. Even though this is a commonly taken for granted part of our daily routines, it usually means much more than the movement from one place to another. Since De Certeau's (1984) analysis of everyday lives in cities we know that walking in cities involves 'a use of space that is itself a production of culture, but which demands of its participants no awareness that they are producing culture' (Driscoll, 2002, p. 386). The production of everyday culture involved in this practice, as also recognized by Goffman, means that 'getting from one point to another is not the only purpose and often not the main one' (Goffman, 1972, pp. 7–8 in Jensen, 2006, p. 154); instead, walking commonly 'becomes a complex set of staged

performances which require us to behave appropriately towards the other people we encounter' (Hamilton, 2002, p. 111).

In our case study, this double nature of walking can be clearly seen in the account of Victor (32 years) when talking about his walks to his workplace:

I like to walk; sometimes I go to pay my bills to Mapocho and then I walk as far as my workplace, as far as Victoria [street], I go walking because it fascinates me to cross the streets, to window-shop; as I start working at midday, in the morning I walk when I have to pay something, I take my time to arrive not so early to my job, I walk through the city centre, I window-shop in San Diego, I make it frequently, that way you don't gain too much weight also, walking your nerves calm down, it's relaxing and good to think other stuff too, in order not to be always thinking in your home and job, it is too much, and this is what I do, walk.

In his account we can clearly see how for him 'what may appear to an independent observer as a straightforward and relatively uneventful commute to work can actually be saturated with layers and contexts of meaning that subjectively transform a mundane routine into something entirely different' (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 470). For Victor, these hours spent walking through the city centre represent not only a way to reach his place of work, but also a way to experience Santiago's urban space in a different way and give a new meanings to his daily routine, 'in order not to be always thinking in your home and job', as he said.

But this meaningful account of daily walking was not experienced, at least not with the emphasis given by Victor, by other accounts of daily walking. Most of the other interviewees when talking about walking took a much more pragmatic approach to this practice, seeing it as a means to reach close locations and/or to save some money on transport. For them, mainly housewives, walking is normally used to reach places in the locality like small shopping places, schools (especially primary schools) and the homes of relatives and friends living nearby.

My usual destination is go to the kindergarten, everyday, because the children go there, I'm taking both to the kindergarten... everyday at 8 or 8:30 they must be at the kindergarten, at the latest as 8:45, and in the afternoon I have to pick them up at 4:30, every day is the same route, go to the kindergarten and return, morning and afternoon, the kindergarten is close to here, around 7 or 8 blocks. (Cristina, 42 years)

On Sundays we wake up at 9:30, then we go to the weekly market with my husband, sometimes one of my youngest [children] come with us. (Alejandra, 36 years)

When I have some free time, when I have nothing to do, I go to see a friend that I have here on the other side, on the 'Valle de Azapa' [housing estate], I go walking, it takes me half an hour. (Johana, 50 years)

In some cases these walks can be quite long and involving distances that for most of the population would be unthinkable to cross by foot.

It's not very often that I go out and when I go out I go out with my husband and we don't take micros [buses] often, we walk, for example we go out from here, we take a micro to Recoleta and then we walk, we can even arrive to Bio Bio, to Estación Central, there, we go everywhere walking. (Isabel, 25 years)

This last perception is joined by the fact that their home is located quite far from their relevant destinations, forcing them to walk long distances while doing errands or shopping.

The boroughs are too big now, in fact where I grew up, in Maipu, everything was at hand, we walked and we found a consultorio [local surgery], we walk and we found the borough's town hall, not any longer, the town hall is located there, in Renca's central square, the consultorio is in Cerro Navia, then I have to walk at least 10 blocks, maybe more. (Patricia, 30 years)

In addition, risk perception seems to reduce the degree to which walking can be perceived as a meaningful practice. During the interviews, this was mentioned frequently as a reason why they don't make daily journeys more often.

It scares me to walk alone. It scares me. I have seen so many things on television that it scares me to go out. So if I have to do something I wait until the weekend or I tell my husband to ask for leave from work, so that I do not go alone. (Carmen, 26 years)

Most of the members of the families under study perceive their environment as insecure and potentially harmful. This situation is especially relevant to the use of the immediate environment – the housing estate and its surrounding areas, specifically the places that can be reached by walking. This perception of risk is particularly strong in children. Pedro, a 36 year old father of three told us:

[The children have] all their goings to the street regulated... they have their territory demarcated, if they go out they have to play in front of the apartment, from the tap to the stop signal, where I can see them... not to other places, they are not going to play two blocks away, no, I must see them. I demarcate their territory to play and not to give them the freedom to go wherever they want as if they were free. Because of the way the situation is I need to take care of them, as there are drugs, and people can abuse them, for security, for protection.

Many parents perceive the public spaces of the housing estate as particularly dangerous, so they don't let their children use them unless necessary or unless they are watching them personally. This perception reduces the mobility of the children, along with their parents, to the minimum: a walk to and from the school and a few hours of playing time during the weekends, commonly accompanied by an adult.

Thus, walking in the housing estate and its surrounding areas is not the thoroughly meaningful and enriching activity that Goffman and others described. More frequently, walking to these people means experiencing the vulnerability and exclusion to which they are exposed to in their everyday lives.

*Taking 'Micros'*

In a city as geographically extended and segregated as Santiago, one has to use a motorized means of transport if one wants to reach an important number of destinations. In these circumstances the use of buses (popularly known as 'micros') is the main form of transport for the low-income population.

Although the public bus system has changed tremendously since the start of Transantiago in February 2007,<sup>1</sup> at the time when fieldwork was conducted (2004), Santiago's bus network was mostly controlled by a large number of small private entrepreneurs only superficially regulated by the authorities. Under this system, a legacy of Pinochet's neo-liberal deregulation of late 1970s and 1980s, the owners and drivers of the machines 'were paid according to the number of tickets sold; that is, according to the number of passengers carried' (Tomic & Trumphen, 2005, p. 52). As a result, the most important thing was to take as many passengers as they could in each trip, transforming open competition and speed as 'decisive for the drivers' income as it was for the owners' profits' (Tomic & Trumphen, 2005, p. 52). This situation made travel by bus a potentially risky experience as drivers frequently broke most transport regulations, especially regarding maximum speed, in their never-ending search for more passengers. In addition, as the owners were under no obligation to invest in their vehicles, a large number of the buses were quite old, noisy, highly polluting and uncomfortable.

However, this almost complete deregulation also had certain benefits. On the one hand we find an easy accessibility and high frequency of buses and routes. In accordance with data from 2004, 98% of the inhabitants of Santiago lived less than eight blocks from a bus stop (Balmaceda, 2005) and, on average, the passengers had to wait less than four minutes for their bus to arrive (Diaz *et al.*, 2004, p. 7). On the other hand, there was also a high diversity of different routes available at any point. Commonly, one could travel from one point to any other in the city without having to change route or bus (Galetovic & Jordan, 2006, p. 106). In 2002, 'the length of a bus route was 28 kilometres from north to south and 35 kilometres from west to east, meaning that in average each route crosses Santiago almost entirely in one direction or the other' (Diaz *et al.*, 2004, p. 14).

Both the negative and positive aspects of travelling by bus in Santiago were acknowledged by Ramon when talking about the connectivity to the housing estate of the network of buses:

The locomoción [public means of transport] is good, the fastest are the buses, even sometimes you are scared of how fast they are driving, they are racing each other ... the locomoción is fast to the city centre, to everywhere there is locomoción here; wherever you want to go, to Quilicura, to San Bernardo, or uptown, to Las Condes. (Ramon, 39 years)

As happened to Ramon, most of the members of the families under study generally have a good opinion of their access to buses. From the bus stop, located in one of the corners of the estate, you can take several different bus routes that go to several places in the city, not only to the city centre but also to the other areas located farther away like San Bernardo in the south or Las Condes in the east; although, as we have already seen, these trips tend to take a great deal of time and monetary

resources. Also, most of the interviewees recognize travel on buses as potentially dangerous, not only because of the speed of the drivers and the lack of maintenance of the vehicles but also due to the possibility of being mugged whilst travelling.

One last point regarding the bus system at the time of the fieldwork was that the price of the ticket was the same for each trip, no matter how far one travelled. This flat fare tended to favour users who made long trips on the buses (who pay comparatively less for the ride) rather than users who travel middle to small distances (who pay comparatively more for the ride). Particularly for the low-income population, this situation made using the bus for middle to short distance travel appear quite expensive, making them opt to replace buses with walking when possible (as we saw in the last section), and reducing their mobility beyond the walking sphere mostly to necessary trips.

I only move from here to work and from work to here. I don't like to go out that much. Today is my free day and I didn't go out. I prefer to stay here. It's not that it is a problem to move, [but] one must have money at least for the 'micro' [bus]. (Ruben, 36 years)

Sometimes I don't go out for economic reasons, because to go out implies spending money that you have to put into a scheme of costs. Going out with the children too means that you have to have something to feed them, that you have to have money to transport, you can't leave them all the day without food, so we have to plan our trips out. Even if we are just going to *vitrinear* [window shopping] we have to have something to eat. You can not go out everyday and at every moment. (Pedro, 38 years)

For this reason, spatial movement that involves the use of any paid means of transport has to be weighed against the needs that the family has to satisfy with their limited monetary resources.

## Conclusions

The study of the mobility patterns of these families allows us to see, from a different angle, the impacts of social exclusion on everyday life. As we saw here, many of the central problems associated with a precarious integration into society are reflected in the way people move through the city and the meaning that they attach to these movements. Therefore, to move or not to move is not trivial but rather a powerful indicator of the way societies are ordered and the positions individuals occupy within it. Particularly in contemporary Santiago, mobility is becoming a determinant factor not only in relation to practical access to goods and opportunities but also in terms of a general sensation of well being and satisfaction with personal life.

As we saw here, the connection between social exclusion, accessibility and mobility in the everyday life of these families can be found in two interrelated aspects of their daily travels: the places to which they go, and the modes of transport used to do so. In relation to the first aspect, social exclusion is manifest in the fact that these family members usually have to travel long distances in order to reach important destinations, especially their workplaces. This fact alone would not necessarily

mean social exclusion if it wasn't connected with the second aspect of their daily travels: their limited access to modes of mobility. When daily mobility is mainly based on walking and the only motorized option available, 'Micros', is perceived as relatively expensive, the capacity of individuals to reach faraway locations is greatly reduced, limiting the degree to which this population can participate in the urban life of a city as geographically extended and segregated as contemporary Santiago.

This situation of difficult accessibility is especially relevant in relation to places to which people don't necessarily have to travel. As we have seen throughout this paper, the individuals and families studied, given the characteristics of their current daily mobility (costs, time, etc) limit their everyday travels beyond the walking sphere as much as possible. In practical terms, they heavily concentrate on travels related to work, education and the maintenance of the house (shopping, doing errands, etc). Frequently, any movement not directly related to some obligation or urgent need is commonly postponed or simply discarded. These families rarely move beyond the housing estate purely for pleasure, either on working days or during weekends. Even trips to go on holiday are rare. During most of their free time they stay on the housing estate, not unusually inside their homes.

In the everyday mobility of these families, social exclusion is present in that it limits participation in the way that the low-income population has traditionally participated in Chilean society. When needed to fulfil their roles as low-skilled workers, students in poor quality schools or full-time housewives, their current levels of mobility seem quite right, or at least enough. But when a change in these roles is demanded, when workers ask for quality free time or housewives start thinking about looking for a job, these demands are necessarily limited by their incapacity to reach the greater degrees of mobility that these activities demand, their very limited motility.

In the case under study here, social exclusion does not mean necessarily immobility. Above all, social exclusion is enacted in the way these families move through the city space, in the way they have to devote most of their motility resources to necessary trips, commonly discarding any other movement as too expensive or unnecessary. The problem is that this unnecessary movement in many cases constitutes the main way in which individuals can participate and make sense of urban space. When travelling is devoted mostly to compulsory places, the whole experience of urban space becomes ruled by the sign of necessity, a space of survival rather than a space of belonging.

## Note

1. *TranSantiago* is a new transport plan for Santiago developed by the Chilean government that started on February 10, 2007. Its measures include a rationalization and complete interconnection between the networks of buses and Metro, the replacement of the old buses, the introduction of a payment card replacing money (Tarjeta Bip!), the reconfiguration of the bus routes and a completely new way to administrate and organize public transport in the city. For more details see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transantiago>.

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