

## SOCIAL UPRISING IN CHILE AND PATRIMONIALIZATION PROCESSES: A RESIGNIFICATION PARADIGM OF MEMORIES

Estallido social en Chile y procesos de patrimonialización:  
un paradigma de resignificación de las memorias

Explosão social no Chile e processos patrimoniais:  
um paradigma para a resignificação das memórias

### Mario Ferrada Aguilar

Instituto de Historia y Patrimonio, Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo de la Universidad de Chile. Santiago, Chile.

mferrada@uchilefau.cl

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6995-0926>



Communication taken from the line of research: "Key aspects of new patrimonialization processes in the historic city and the architecture of Chile", developed from 2020 onwards within the Institute of History and Heritage of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Universidad de Chile.

The Law School of Universidad de Chile, building from 1938, projected by the architect Juan Martínez Gutiérrez and declared as a Historic Monument in 2014. Located to the north of Plaza Italia, in Santiago de Chile, it represents one of the national heritage symbols affected by the events of the "social uprising" in Chile (October 18th, 2019). Source: Unpublished photograph of the architect, Fernando Dowling Leal (2019).

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, both globally and locally, a profound change in the paradigm has been seen with respect to what has been traditionally accepted as a manifestation of heritage. In part, this conceptual and methodological transformation is due to the emergence of patrimonialization processes, driven by social conflicts that go against the institutionalized discourses of heritage. This results in resignifications of the stories and memories in the territory, the city and the architecture, associated with new categories of heritage that need to be addressed. This work is about this new paradigm, taking as a case the so-called 'social uprising, which has affected Chile since October 18th, 2019. Beyond being perceived as a destructive phenomenon, which initially targets aspects of a socio-political nature, the presence of the conflict in Chilean society points to a sharp criticism of the heritage representation system. In its spatio-temporal trajectory, new socio-spatial practices arise that satisfy the memory expectations of the communities regarding a transforming reality. The article aims to contribute to the field of architecture and the built environment, insofar as it allows reflecting on the transformation of meanings and values of heritage that emerges in the daily reality of our cities. Using a descriptive methodology, based on recent media documents, some emblematic situations of the problem are addressed, manifested in the consolidated urban areas of La Serena, Valparaíso, Santiago, Concepción, Temuco, and Punta Arenas. In them, the patrimonialization operations make visible the contrasts between the discourses of the State and those produced by social organizations, the resignification of elements of traditional heritage and the emergence of the city as a space for negotiation of memories. From all this, the renewal of the values and attributes, traditionally assigned to monuments, is inferred, whether in their objectual, architectural or urban condition, as well as the potentiality of heritage, as a channel for dialogue, coexistence, and cohesion in the ongoing debate about conflicting stories and memories.

**Keywords:** social conflict, patrimonialization processes, discourses, memories, social uprising in Chile

## RESUMEN

En los últimos años, a nivel mundial y local, asistimos a un cambio profundo del paradigma respecto de lo que tradicionalmente hemos asumido como manifestación del patrimonio. En parte, esta transformación conceptual y metodológica se debe a la emergencia de los procesos de patrimonialización, motivados por conflictos sociales que operan en contra de los discursos institucionalizados del patrimonio. De ello resultan resignificaciones de las historias y las memorias en el territorio, la ciudad y la arquitectura, asociadas a nuevas categorías de patrimonio que es necesario atender. El presente trabajo aborda este nuevo paradigma, tomando como caso el denominado "estallido social", que afecta a Chile desde el 18 de octubre de 2019 y que se extiende hasta la actualidad. Más allá de percibirse como un fenómeno destructivo, que inicialmente apunta a aspectos de carácter sociopolítico, la presencia del conflicto en la sociedad nacional señala una aguda crítica al sistema de representación del patrimonio. En su trayectoria espacio-temporal surgen nuevas prácticas socio-espaciales que satisfacen las expectativas de memoria de las comunidades respecto de una realidad en transformación. El artículo pretende aportar al ámbito de la arquitectura y el ambiente construido, en cuanto permite reflexionar sobre la transformación de los significados y valores de los patrimonios que emergen en la realidad cotidiana de nuestras ciudades. Mediante una metodología descriptiva, basada en documentos de prensa recientes, se abordan algunas situaciones emblemáticas del problema, manifestadas en las áreas urbanas consolidadas de La Serena, Valparaíso, Santiago, Concepción, Temuco y Punta Arenas. En ellas, las operaciones de patrimonialización visibilizan los contrastes entre los discursos del Estado y los producidos por organizaciones sociales, la resignificación de elementos del patrimonio tradicional y la emergencia de la ciudad como espacio de negociación de las memorias. De lo anterior, se infiere la renovación de los valores y atributos tradicionalmente asignados a los monumentos, ya sea en su condición objetual, arquitectónica o urbana, así como también se detecta la potencialidad del patrimonio, como canalizador de diálogo, convivencia y cohesión en el continuo debate por las historias y las memorias en conflicto.

**Palabras Clave:** conflicto social, procesos de patrimonialización, discursos, memorias, estallido social en Chile

## RESUMO

Nos últimos anos, global e localmente, assistimos a uma mudança profunda no paradigma relativo àquilo que tradicionalmente assumimos como uma manifestação do patrimônio. Em parte, esta transformação conceptual e metodológica deve-se à emergência de processos de patrimonialização, motivados por conflitos sociais que operam contra os discursos institucionalizados do patrimônio. Isto resulta em ressignificações das histórias e memórias no território, na cidade e na arquitetura, associadas a novas categorias do patrimônio que precisam de ser abordadas. Este trabalho aborda esse novo paradigma, tomando como caso de estudo a chamada "explosão social" (estallido social, em espanhol), que tem afetado o Chile desde 18 de outubro de 2019 e que continua até os dias de hoje. Muito além de uma visão dessa "explosão" como um fenômeno destrutivo, que aponta inicialmente a aspectos de natureza sociopolítica, a presença do conflito na sociedade nacional é um indicador de uma forte crítica ao sistema de representação do patrimônio. Em sua trajetória espaço-temporal, surgem novas práticas sócio-espaciais que satisfazem as expectativas de memória das comunidades com respeito a uma realidade em transformação. O artigo pretende contribuir para o campo da arquitetura e do ambiente construído, na medida em que nos permite refletir sobre a transformação dos significados e valores dos patrimônios que emergem na realidade cotidiana das nossas cidades. Por meio de uma metodologia descritiva, baseada em documentos de imprensa recentes, são abordadas algumas situações emblemáticas do problema, manifestadas nas zonas urbanas consolidadas de La Serena, Valparaíso, Santiago, Concepción, Temuco e Punta Arenas. Nelas, as operações de patrimonialização tornam visíveis os contrastes entre os discursos do Estado e os produzidos pelas organizações sociais, a ressignificação de elementos do patrimônio tradicional e a emergência da cidade como espaço de negociação de memórias. De tudo isto, infere-se a renovação dos valores e atributos tradicionalmente atribuídos aos monumentos, seja na sua condição objetual, arquitetônica ou urbana, bem como a potencialidade do patrimônio como canal de diálogo, convívio e coesão no debate contínuo das histórias e memórias em conflito.

**Palavras-Chave:** conflito social, processos de patrimonialização, discursos, memórias, explosão social no Chile

## INTRODUCTION

### FROM SOCIAL CONFLICT TO PATRIMONIALIZATION PROCESSES

The social conflict that has been in place in Chile since 2019, is a kind of socialization, destined to seek a relative social cohesion, through "reciprocal actions" between different individuals and groups that struggle to spatially and temporally coexist (Simmel, 2014, p. 103). The subjective experience the social conflict has, leads to a certain way of perceiving the real problems. It is discovered that the conflicts not only question or alter orders in the short-term, but, above all, change the collective mentalities in the long-term, developing epistemic views, intellectual twists, and social behavior unheard of before the social movement (Lorenzo Cadarzo, 2001, p. 250).

Behind the social conflicts, powerful patrimonialization processes are created, where different points of view, and interests in play are detected, led by heterogeneous social groups, which have as a result, a critique of the "authorized" discourses that are exercised when the social crisis unfurled. However, as García Canclini states, the growing inequalities in the processes of formation and appropriation of cultural heritage, demand studying this "as a space of material struggle among the classes, ethnicities and the groups of contemporary societies" (1999, p. 18). Following Ballart, the value of heritage, is a relative concept, not inherent to the things that it designates, and which depends on human perception and behavior, provided with historical, intellectual, cultural and psychological references (1996, p. 218). In these processes, the cultural and natural elements are chosen and reworked in response to new social uses (Roigé & Frigolé, 2010, p. 12), and the inherited traditional norms and models are questioned, challenged and subverted, specifically from the moment in which a new categorization of understanding the present emerges (Davallon, 2006, p. 95).

According to Iniesta (2009, p. 479), this process comprises four phases: a) identification, through evidence, of the elements that a social collective considers significant; b) their validation by a socially legitimized institution; c) their proclamation and marking to make the values of these elements visible; and d) the transmission and activation for the preservation of the integrity of the resulting heritage, to keep it in the production circuits of knowledge, imagery, and memories. This implies that civil society, immersed in the conflict, does not just take part in some phases of the heritage value chain, but in the entire process (Sánchez Carretero, 2017, p. 196-197). Throughout, what is vindicated in the social conflict and heritage formation relationship, is the right to a social memory that aims at being collective. The activation of heritage that emerges in this way is, as Prats indicates (2005, p. 18-19), the result of a fundamentally political activity, where the individuals and collectives appear as a place of materialization of social practices and, they themselves are producers and reflections of their own representations (Larraín, 2010, p. 49).

The resignification of heritage values corresponds to a spatial-temporal process that emerges alongside a crisis of its condition of representativity, in the complex framework of the conflictive relationships that the different social players star in [Figure 1]. All this explains why heritage objects, be these public spaces, architecture, or objects of remembrance, may be, in a given moment of history, subject to veneration by groups of power, to become, in another moment, subjects of criticism and reworking of meanings. On the other hand, the monument and document tension come together in this phenomenon, where the first would not have historic existence without its transformation in a documental testimony of time, or said in another way, in a bearer and anchor of discourses about an interpretation interested in the past. The conversion of a monument into a document brings with it, the testimonial need of a reading of history and a form of discourse, born at the heart of a group that controls the power and the associated knowledge.

**Figure 1**

Protest of "Heritage is all of us" social groups, Santiago de Chile, 2014.  
 Fuente: Radio Cooperativa (24 mayo 2014) (<https://www.cooperativa.cl/noticias/cultura/patrimonio-cultural/cerca-de-4-mil-personas-marcharon-por-el-patrimonio-de-chile-ensantiago/2014-05-24/195400.html>)



As Riegel claimed in 1903, the monumental role of heritage asserts its ability to represent meanings and values in the present, through a citizen awareness that tries to gather a sense of contemporaneity from its historic past, to, in one way or another, be driven to an idea or project of the future (1987, p. 23). In this measure, the structure of the space itself, its architecture and monuments, act as a mirror that reflects these historic absences, but also voices and memories that are updated with the clamor of the social demands.

The crisis of representation of heritage and its monuments-documents, is something that affects the image of the matter, or the matter of the image. In this historic process, the dynamics of obsolescence of meanings and values of the elements considered as heritage emerges, which is the result of the weakening of discourses that were strong in one era, due to the hegemony exercised by some groups of power over others. Thus, a crisis of heritage representation appears, where the "absence of the presence" is experienced, that is to say, when new senses are produced in response to the historicity of socio-cultural changes occurring in a community. In an unceasing movement of presences and absences, the represented reality of heritage, does not accurately or statically reflect the primary nature of the daily and natural life of human beings (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 30).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **REPRESENTATIONAL ANALYSIS OF HERITAGE THROUGH ITS DISCOURSES, HISTORIES AND MEMORIES**

Due to the complexity of the issues that arise in the patrimonialization process, which come from the Chilean social conflict, an approach has been used that understands heritage as a system of social representations, that comprises two dialogic natures. The first of these is determined by its physical-material presence, through the diverse categories of heritage worth conserving and regulating: territories, urban constructs, architecture, objects, etc. On the other hand, the second nature, is representational, the image that we have of the first, which is acquired and transmitted socially through the act of language, produced intellectually, whose ingredients are the memories, recollections and imagery (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 30).

Looking to characterize the patrimonialization process that is currently occurring as an effect of the social uprising in Chile, as an example, the re-

levant cases that took place in some urban areas of the country have been used, like La Serena, Valparaíso, Santiago, Concepción, Temuco and Punta Arenas. These were chosen on being monuments and/or public spaces that are present in the national and/or local memory, where there has been a permanent questioning regarding the meanings attributed to them, through major physical and spatial changes. The intention here is not to evaluate the entire national heritage, nor to develop an exhaustive analysis of the situations mentioned, but rather to establish the presence of the phenomenon in those examples that has been matter of public opinion, trying to present their similarities and differences.

The documental material used consists of specialized bibliographical references and recent documents, comprising iconographs, photographs and news stories. Through their investigation, it is possible to detect the conflicting voices, social imageries, and the new types of heritage that would be emerging in the process. The patrimonialization mentioned, is faced using three perspectives: a) the preparation of conflicting discourses between the State and social collectives; b) the resignification of spaces and objects of heritage memory, given by monuments, urban spaces and, renowned architecture; and c) the activation of practices in the city, as a space for the negotiation of memories.

## ANALYSIS

### SOCIAL UPRISING IN CHILE: TRIGGER OF A NEW CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUATION PARADIGM

#### a) From the new discourses to the activation of contradictory memories of heritage

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the so-called “social uprising”<sup>1</sup> broke out in Chile, an event with cross-sectional protests and claims that had not been seen since the time of the civic-military dictatorship (1973-1989). The phenomenon, not exempt of violence, has laid bare a fracture in Chilean society, that transcends the ideological and party-based positions. Along with the demand of conditions for a dignified and equalitarian life, the level of representation of the institutions and of the authorized elements of the national cultural heritage have been questioned. From this moment forth, a true revolution in public spaces and monuments in the country’s main cities was let loose. Social media based calls to marches and urban occupation, have become a constant ritual [Figure 2].

In cities like La Serena, Valparaíso, Santiago, Concepción, Temuco and Punta Arenas, the heritage involved has been the unprecedented appearance of spatial and use practices, with attempts to resignify the symbols of the national historic memory. The conflict has essentially unfolded on the discursive plane, between the traditional institutions of the Republic and the State, and the social organizations immersed in the conflict. An important percentage of the social critique aims at the authorized discourse of heritage, systematized by the State, the elites, and academia. This has led to heritage protected by legislation, works as a tactical device of rejection, not because of their intrinsic qualities, but rather because of the discourses of cultural hegemony these embody. To give visibility to the discourses marginalized by the traditional system, public spaces, places of memory, traditional architecture, and public monuments have been intervened.

Under this logic of confrontations, it is possible to identify two dimensions of the discourse, where different ways of perceiving and evaluating reality are revealed:

The first is the *institutionally authorized discourses*, born from the structures of power represented by State agencies, in particular by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, as well as the political and economic decision groups, but also from academia and disciplinary communities. In a second group, there is

1 The chronology of the popular uprising is marked by the following milestones: October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the Government announces 30-peso rise in urban transportation fares. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, secondary-school and university students collectively organize and call for a “widespread evasion” of these fares. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the movement radicalized and, in just a week, the protests stepped up with the destruction of numerous stations and metro lines.

**Figure 2**

The persistent protests of the Chilean social uprising that took place in Plaza Italia in the historic heart of Santiago, later renamed by the groups as "Plaza de la Dignidad", or Dignity Square.  
Source: Unpublished photograph by Fernando Dowling Leal (2020).

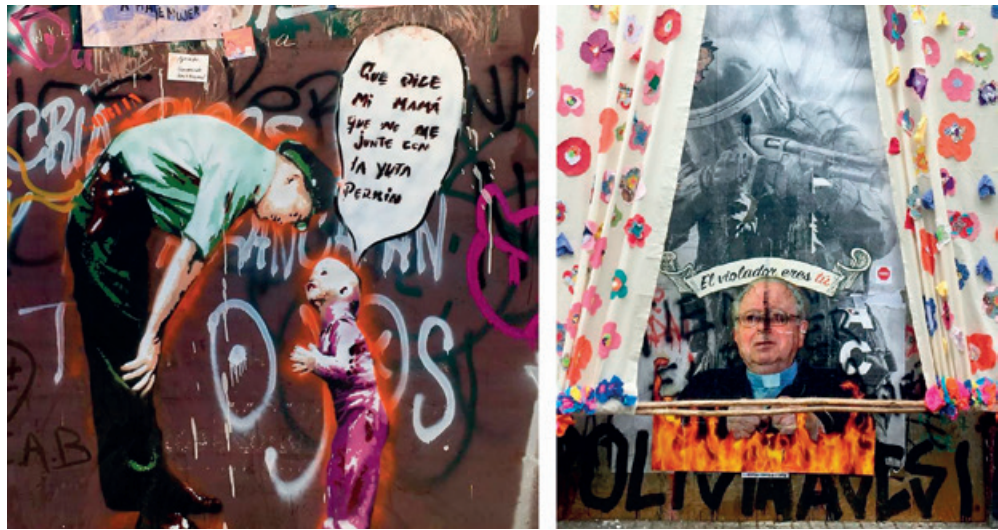


the flow of the *socially radicalized discourses*, ones of a more or less spontaneous emergence, represented by communities, social groups, ethnic groups, union and political entities who state being outside the traditional decision-making system.

In the institutionally authorized discourse, the social uprising is perceived as a threat to the historic and cultural heritage the Nation has managed to instill, through the National Monuments Law and the General Urbanism and Constructions Law. In this case, the supposedly shared memory, tends to close upon itself, becoming static and monolithic, ultimately becoming a powerful mechanism of denial and exclusion. In this case, the heritage discourse is dressed as a mythical character, and stands up as a sort of self-defensive strength. However, in the socially radicalized discourse, it is possible to see a tendency towards making the issue horizontal, and undermining the precept of the formal institutions. The discourses of the elite end up strange and unintelligible for the reality experienced by the petitioning social groups. A discourse that refutes and that, at the same time, exposes the erosion of the figure of the State, of the business entities and the juridical-legal structures. Social discourses reflect a true crisis of representation with an explicit questioning of the meanings and values of a set of heritage items that were unquestioned for many, many years [Figure 3 and 4].

In the reality of the conflict, a representative flow of what is understood as heritage is determined, through which, the relations between the ways society, its histories and collective memories exist, are redefined. It is confirmed that each representation of the identities annulled and/or marginalized from the institutionalized discourse, refers to others, in a timeline, until building a complex network of meanings that have not yet been stabilized (Castoriadis, 2013, p. 505). This is, for example, what explicitly appears in the field of memories demanded by indigenous peoples, especially the Mapuche, that tend to be visible and overlap the memories bequeathed by the Creole, demanding dignity in a public space that has historically been culturally and politically denied to them.

Both types of discourse are territorialized in the city, in public spaces and in architectonic devices, changing the static and reverential sense that they had had until then. The discourse flow is inserted in the current framework of the relevant legal changes, through which the tale of history that has led to the presence of the monuments and the space marked by



**Figures 3 and 4**  
The new iconography of the socially radicalized discourses, accusers of the traditional institutions of the Republic: the State, the Catholic Church, the Armed Forces and the Police. Source: Unpublished photograph by Fernando Dowling Leal (2019).

the few, for the memory of the Nation, is under stress. These are the bills of the laws on Cultural Heritage, Social and Urban Integration, modernization of the Environmental Impact Assessment System (SEIA, in its acronym in Spanish), the amendments to the bills that create the Indigenous Peoples Ministry, the National Advisory Body and the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Body. For the detractors, these legal initiatives that affect culture and heritage, would only hide the goal of consolidating the presence of the market as the crux in decision-making, generating even more fragility than now. Particularly, the Cultural Heritage Bill, which would replace the current National Monuments Law, which dates back to 1970, has been the backdrop for the criticism of some social organizations outside the authorized discourse. In this regard, in March 2020, the “Community for Chilean Heritage” stated that the Government was acting in a simplistic and reactionary way, on connecting the deterioration of the monuments with the destruction caused with the social uprising. The criticism aimed at that the country “demands a profound reflection regarding the social and cultural transformation that are under dispute today, which we cannot reduce to the solely normative” (*El Mostrador*, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

## b) Resignification of civic spaces and the objects of heritage memory.

In the social conflict, the urban spaces have been brutally affected by physical destruction, but they have been relieved in their role as places for rebuilding memories, entering in conflict with the authorized history of the city. In these places, the social protests, the imageries, and the identities are expanded to the traditional streets and squares that form the ramification of the resignified public space. The modern resignification of the monuments seen in Chile, is manifesting itself as a response to the socio-political context of a clearly defined social time. Unlike the commemorative role of intentional monuments, that were promoted by the erudite elites, in the case being analyzed, they are becoming the result of a subjective appropriation, where the social observer-subject is established as the central factor in the constitution process of values that are ever more relative when it comes to permanently changing points of view (Riegl, 1987, p. 25).

In Santiago, the circuit comprising Plaza Italia, starting from Alameda Bernardo O'Higgins, Parque Forestal, and Avenida Vicuña Mackenna, has been consolidated as a hotspot for new meanings and values attributed to a heritage that is being made. The current Plaza Italia was renamed as Plaza de la Dignidad (Dignity Square), which reflects the rejection of the injustice and lack of representativity of the most cross-sectional values of Chilean society. Unlike the mass-scale traditional actions that have taken place at Plaza Italia, here the national flag coexists with Mapuche flags and other symbols taken from social daily lives, accounting for the real existence of an ethnic, social, and ideological diversity, that has not been acknowledged in the multiculturalism of the national identity. The statue of General Manuel Baquedano, the work of the architect, Gustavo García del Postigo and the sculptor, Virgilio Arias Cruz, built at public expense and inaugurated in 1928 in commemoration of the battles of the Pacific War, was displayed for 98 years in the center of this square. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the National Monuments Council decreed the removal of the monument and the building of a metal perimeter fence, aiming at performing preventive and restorative conservation works, as well as works to safeguard the stone plinth and the remains of the "unknown soldier", that rest there.

The monument to General Baquedano sums up the tensions experienced at Plaza Italia, as if this place treasured a profound density of historic meanings that require a reinterpretation in modern-day Chile. The figure of Baquedano "continues to be valid, and returns to life, it is not a dead monument, it is a living monument" (De Ramón, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020). Currently, and despite the international Covid-19 pandemic, Plaza Italia has continued to see confrontations, and the ever more attacked statue of Baquedano, has experienced attempts to forcibly cut the legs from the soldier's horse [Figure 5].

In Valparaíso, a standout case is represented by the area around the National Congress. Here, the claims against the symbols of political power are clear, as these occupy a large part of Avenida Argentina, Avenida Pedro Montt, Calle Victoria and Plaza O'Higgins. In this urban space, a visceral reaction is read against the elite and the normalized memory of their power. In the city, Plaza Aníbal Pinto was also rebaptized as Plaza de la Resistencia or Resistance Square on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, underlining the role as a trench this historic space has had during the protests. In both cases, a generalized rejection of an official history and memory embodied in the urban space, is seen. It is worth stating, that in this city, the phenomenon is doubly raw in nature, as a consequence of the endemic condition of poverty, abandonment, and deterioration that the public space, and architecture in general, and that of heritage in particular, has experienced. This fact, fosters that patrimonial-



**Figure 5**

Plaza Italia, the site of social transformations and reappropriations of the symbols of the Nation's historic and cultural heritage. At the heart of this urban space, the image of General Manuel Baquedano, turned into the spoils of war within as of yet established discursive flows and memories. Source: Unpublished photograph by Fernando Dowling Leal (2020).



**Figure 6**

Valparaíso. Occupation of Avenida España and the surroundings of the National Congress, in the "March of all marches" called in Valparaíso on October 28th, 2019. Source: Aranda (2020, p. 58).



**Figure 7**

Concepción. Gathering at the Plaza de Tribunales de Concepción, October 23rd, 2019. Televisión Universidad de Concepción (October 23rd, 2019) (<https://www.tvu.cl/prensa/tele-entrevista/2020/10/05/a-un-ano-del-estallido-social-cales-son-las-demandas-ciudadanas-pendientes.html>)



zation actions, or those of transgression of the legally protected monuments have an urban and environmental scenario that is prone to the effervescent social claims [Figure 6].

Towards the south of Chile, the city of Concepción has seen its rhythms, rituals and images of daily life, changed. The radius of spatial action has comprised the Arch of Medicine of Universidad de Concepción, the civic center, Plaza Independencia, the Court sector, and the intersection of Avenida Bernardo O'Higgins and Paicaví [Figure 7]. In Concepción, the social uprising has presentified ephemeral places that denote overlapping layers of social meanings, that translate into a "great temporal project that symbolizes the struggles for rights and freedoms" (De Souza 2020, p. 160).

Meanwhile, the resignified objects of public memory have mainly been statues, busts and foundations that portray historic events, characters and

**Figure 8**

Public monuments act as devices of resignification of history and memories. The figures of the poet, Rubén Darío, and the sculptured works of Fuente Alemana, located in the historic hub of Santiago, are shown. Source: Photographs by Francisco Ubilla (2020) ([https://elpais.com/cultura/2020/01/23/actualidad/1579806166\\_111949.html](https://elpais.com/cultura/2020/01/23/actualidad/1579806166_111949.html))



**Figure 9**

Plaza Sotomayor, Monument to the Heroes of the Naval Battle of Iquique, located in the ceremonial civic center of Plaza Rafael Sotomayor, in the Port sector of Valparaíso. As a result of the constant attacks on the monument, the Chilean Navy reinforces the security of the site where the remains of Arturo Prat and other naval heroes rest. Source: Sebastián Cisternas, Aton Chile, 2020.



symbols revealed as reverences of memory by the elites at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>. According to a survey made by the National Monuments Council, between October 2019 and February 2020, 1,353 national monuments were damaged throughout the country. The main focal points of aggression are against representations of historic events, heroes and characters of the Spanish conquests of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the republican symbols of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. In the monuments intervened, readings appear that place national pride against forgotten stories (Gaete, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020), expressing disgust for Eurocentrist symbols, that do not match the representation of indigenous peoples, the Mapuche, especially.

In Santiago, sculptural works of a great historic and artistic value, mostly from the Centenary of National Independence (1910), have succumbed to graffiti and being dragged from their perch by the enflamed crowds. Among many other cases, is the monument to Rubén Darío, inaugurator of literary modernism in Latin America [Figure 8] and the Fuente Alemana or German Fountain of Parque Forestal. On Alameda Bernardo O'Higgins, the outer walls of the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Center (formerly UNCTAD) have received popular interventions, ones which the Government tried to remove at the time, finding the ferocious opposition of their authors. In this operation of resignification, there was no real destruction, but rather a kind of overlapping of complex historical meanings.

In Valparaíso, the Monument to the Heroes of Iquique, raised in 1883 in commemoration of the Naval Battle, located in the heart of Plaza Sotomayor, has suffered constant graffiti [Figure 9]. The Chilean Navy, the institution that safeguards this national heritage site, while condemning this "cowardly attack", stated that "the damage affects the memory and history of all those



**Figure 10**

In the city of La Serena, the monument to Francisco de Aguirre, replaced by the figure of the Diaguita, Milanka. Source: Photographer Lautaro Carmona (2019) (<https://www.thematelevision.cl/2019/10/24/en-la-serena-instalan-torso-de-mujer-diaguita-donde-se-encontraba-la-estatuade-francisco-de-aguirre/>)



**Figure 11**

In the south of Chile, in the city of Temuco, the figure of the Mapuche *toki*, Caupolicán, holding the head of the statue of the Chilean aviator, Dagoberto Godoy, removed from its original site. The flag of the Mapuche people adorning the scene. Source: El desconcierto (29 noviembre 2019) (<https://www.eldesconcierto.cl/nacional/2019/11/29/temuco-mas-justicia-menos-monumentos.html>)

**Figure 12**

At the southernmost point of Chile, in the Plaza de Armas in Punta Arenas, the bust of the rancher José Menéndez was changed for a figure representing a Selk'nam hunter. Source: Crítica sur (7 noviembre 2019) ([https://criticasur.com.ar/nota/21974/en-punta-arenas-derribaron-un-busto-de-menendez-y-en-su-lugar-colocaron-el-de-un-cazador-selk\\_039\\_nam](https://criticasur.com.ar/nota/21974/en-punta-arenas-derribaron-un-busto-de-menendez-y-en-su-lugar-colocaron-el-de-un-cazador-selk_039_nam))



born in this country (...). We will not allow that an act like this happens again and we will use all the resources the law grants us to protect the place where the nations heroes rest" (CNN, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020).

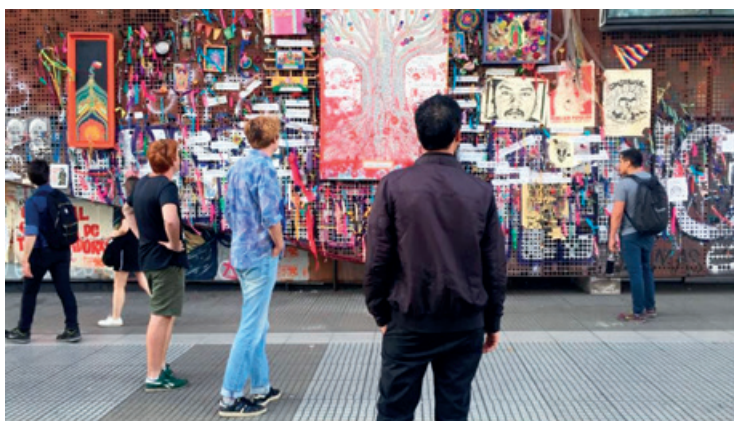
In the city of La Serena, the statue commemorating the Spanish soldier, Francisco de Aguirre, located on Avenida Panamericana (Paseo de las Esculturas or Sculpture Boulevard), and made in Madrid in 1950 by the sculptor Juan Adsuara, in the framework of Plan Serena, during the rule of President Gabriel González Videla (1946-1952), was torn down and burned, experiencing deformation to its face. In the same place, the monument was replaced for another, honoring a Milanka or a Diaguita woman, made with paper, cardboard and paint [Figure 10]. The occasion of its enthronement as a new monument, was celebrated with a Diaguita ceremony, and the collective behind this, demanded changing the name of Avenida Francisco de Aguirre to Avenida Diaguitas. A while later, amid the social fray, Milanka also succumbed to fire, set by persons unknown. This event represents the obsolescence that the monument to Francisco de Aguirre has experienced, for many years part of the collective imaginary of the city, as well as other similar figures in the country, facing the growth in recent years of discourses that vindicate indigenous content. It also shows, that in a climate of social conflict, the representativity of the new elements is ephemeral and changing.

In Temuco, the statue of Pedro de Valdivia, the Spanish conquistador and founder of Santiago, was decapitated. While, the head of the aviator, Dagoberto Godoy, was hung from the hand of the sculpture to the Mapuche *toki*, Caupolicán, symbol of resistance against the Spanish conquests. On the pedestal of the monument, reads the message "New Constitution or Nothing", and on the head of the *toki*, the Mapuche flag flaps [Figure 11]. Meanwhile, Punta Arenas has seen the destruction of the statue to the Spanish rancher, José Menéndez, identified as the symbol of the genocide of the now extinct Selk'nam people. On the same plinth that held Menéndez, the figure of a hunter from this indigenous culture of Patagonia was later placed [Figure 12].

Facing the criticisms that traditional groups have made about the vandalization of these monuments, other voices have appeared that appeal for a different reading. An interpretation along this line, is the one that says that destruction is a natural reaction to the violent imposition that the State has exercised so that those monuments are objects of remembrance. Referring to the monuments vandalized in Araucanía, Ema de Ramón said: "was it not an act of bullying to plant a figure of Pedro de Valdivia or Cornelio Saavedra in the Araucanía?" (De Ramón, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

**Figure 13**

Walls of Gabriela Mistral Cultural Center (formerly UNCTAD). The city and its architecture turned into metaphors of change and new practices of citizenry. Source: Unpublished photograph by Fernando Dowling Leal (2020).



### c) The city: space of negotiation of memories, meanings and values.

In a context of social conflicts, the city itself, with all its components, is conceived as a questioned heritage, and on doing this on a heritage scale, it becomes a place for negotiation of social memory. This memory construct constitutes a geographical truth, where monuments are located, acquires concrete shape and appearance on three scales: the city, its public spaces, and its architecture. The imagery of this geography marks aspirations of groups and people that acquire a configuration in the spatial order of the city (Claval, 2012, p. 32). In the historic city, the communicational dynamics of the uprising present a porous and active society, where the claim is expressed in an urban body that is “tattooed” to make visible the social needs that were invisible, and the architecture dilutes its initial meaning (Manzi, 2020, p. 1) [Figure 13]. In this measure, it is possible to understand how, in the social construction of heritage, the city and its networks work as anchors for the materialization of the social representations with their respective meanings (Castoriadis, 2013, p. 525).

Santiago, Valparaíso, La Serena, Concepción and Temuco have become urban scenarios of these social reappropriations of heritage. The city has seen the daily rituals that were thought as being so permanent and solid (housing, services, trade and mobility) paralyzed, being replaced by a social control and real experience of biopolitics. The resulting urban geography presents new boundaries, policed-military territories and differential spaces, whose players have changed their roles and practices of use. The cost has been the physical and violent destruction experienced by the architectonic and urban heritage, canonized by the legislation that tried to protect it. In these cities, the spaces for urban protest have acted as territories activated for different collective projects that refer to the Nation, the State, the hegemonic institutions and, the more or less marginalized communities, that uphold differentiated and contradictory forms of transformation of reality, and projecting it over time. The set of these more or less visible footprints, between the current and the obsolete, is what appears as the essence of current heritage conflict.

From this perspective, it can be said that the Chilean social protest is outlined in what Lefebvre has called the construction of the “democratic public space”, a meta-discourse that vindicates the right to exist and live in the city, through the appropriation of the public space (1975, p. 123-139). The concept of citizenry, while expressing the democratic access to political decisions, also alludes to the sense of belonging and identity, of participation; fact which allows that in the city, the inhabitants are recognized as activating subjects of the space of the *polis*. The notion of public and democratic space that socially discusses the symbols of the new heritage, is being resolved through the



**Figure 14**

During the social uprising, urban perspectives of Santiago and around Plaza Victoria in Valparaíso. The physical destruction and spatial entropy hide keys for the activation of collective projects. Sources: Unpublished photographs by Fernando Dowling Leal (2020) and Mario Ferrada Aguilar (2020).

appropriation of the public space. The historic city is living through a stage that is trying to recover its role of *civitas* and *urbanitas* at the same time, being activated once more as agoras of collective debate.

The set of implied urban symbols is rejected, because it is perceived as a device of repression by the dominant groups, but, at the same time, it channels the possibility of other alternative symbols. Thus, social practices break the physical, regulatory and hegemonically authorized memorial frameworks, constituting legitimate acts of reappropriation of the public space and of materialization of the right to the city (Oliva, 2020, p. 5). In the Chilean cities exposed to the social uprising, a tendency towards the resetting of a framework of references is seen, that is spatial and temporal in nature [Figure 14]. Following Iniesta (2009, p. 476), this would be a framework formed by three complementary ideas. The first determined by a desire to find a sense in the present existential experience, through knowledge of the past. The second, is the unconscious construction of a historic narrative that facilitates the political activation of memory and of the private and collective identities. And third, fruit of the former, appears a reconstitution of the urban landscapes, where social groups activate their knowledge and narratives, where at the same time, imageries achieved and the heritage objects that allow the spatial anchoring of their memories, appear.

## DISCUSSION

Following the phenomenon seen in the cases above, what would deserve greatest attention to understand the new paradigm of Chilean heritage, is the identification of the hidden keys that those institutional and social discourses hide in the context of the conflict. First of all, are the heritage properties that are no longer relevant and obsolete, as their meanings are not in tune with contemporary social ideas or perceptions. Then appear the architectonic and/or urban elements that, prior to the social conflict did not have an explicit value, but through it, are reactivated and *patrimonialized* to translate the new existential reality of the communities. Finally, there would be those monuments that, recognized by the official, institutional and legal discourse, are interpreted by urban tribes within the social conflict as violent elements the counter the new contents that they seek to instill. This situation is represented by the statue of Manuel Baquedano in Plaza Italia in

Santiago, or the Monument to the Heroes of Iquique in Plaza Sotomayor in Valparaíso, through which the elitist sense of power is rejected, advocating for a cross-sectional, participative and popular view. In an analog manner, the actions of amputation and changing of symbols in the monuments of Francisco de Aguirre in La Serena, of Pedro de Valdivia in Temuco, or of José Menéndez in Punta Arenas, reflect the reaction facing the aggression perpetrated against the voices of the ethnic groups made invisible in the country's history.

In this sense, the dynamic articulation of social demands around converting the public space and the monuments, into devices of transgression to the symbols of the institutionalized memory could be identified as common elements presented in this work. This is the case of heritage whose meaning was changed, through discourses of ethnic, social, gender, class and ideological identities, that transform the artifacts of heritage embedded in the city into 'political places' for the debate of participation, justice, and dignity, as well as for those discourses marginalized from the official narrative. Likewise, the elements particular to each case would be determined by the degree of intensity and persistence of the historical narrative that affects each monument and grants new uses, morphologies, and meanings to the public space, and the architecture that surrounds it. It is enough to mention, in this sense, Plaza Italia or the surroundings of public monuments of the republican tradition, where physical changing actions and markings are taken to an extreme, through new icons, murals, or actions of art for the public space, all of which momentarily or permanently changes the landscape and the daily urban geographies.

It is with this clarity, that the technique of conservation, management and intervention in the patrimonially valued elements, resulting from the claims of the active communities (Prats, 2005, p. 22), acquires sense. An interpretation of the *patrimonializing* effect of the Chilean social uprising would be that it makes people face a scenario of definition and selection of what deserves to be remembered and what does not. It is for this reason, that it would be an error in reading and a cunning operation in reverse to reinstall or relocate the monuments brought down, or "to cleanse" the reappropriated civic spaces, returning them to their previous appearance, as if nothing had ever happened.

However, in the framework of the new paradigm outlined here, the material angle of cultural heritage that undoubtedly has been affected, and in some cases, greatly destroyed, also deserves being questioned. What is the acceptable limit so that from the resignification process, new values and new types of heritage emerge, without this meaning the complete disappearance of the material anchors of the pre-existing questioned memory? Because, this is about trying to give a greater density of meanings and values to our heritage, not just to simplify it based on revealing some memories and histories, while eliminating others. Is it possible to handle this purpose in a setting of social unrest? And, finally, how can the resignification processes be something more than a social demand, so that they are legitimized and institutionalized through the consensus of the communities that promote them?

The impact of the demands to install new memories in the city has allowed that heritage is politically activated, starting with social groups whose social, economic and cultural interests may be different, but that come together in the idea of the right to be the protagonists of their development, and that their understanding of heritage is installed in institutionality. In Plaza Italia in Santiago, around the National Congress and in the squares of Valparaíso, or in the urban enclaves of La Serena, Concepción, Temuco and Punta Arenas, the social critique, transformed into cultural action, has stripped the approaches of a simplifying and verticalized notion of national heritage. In the public spaces of some cities presented here, in particular Plaza Italia in

Santiago, the social conflict has broken down the idea of a single definition of citizenry, eroding the authorized discourse of the powers and institutions that represent it. The evident physical destructions of monuments or the disintegration of public spaces is the high price that must be paid to achieve a coexistence of different citizenries, loaded with imageries and values, that are still being configured.

The social uprising has broken the myth of national unity around symbols and heritage, through which the call is supposedly made to adhere to a robust and single static identity. On the other hand, the tension coming from the wish to install the urban presence of other memories, breaks up the accepted and standardized historic discourse, for which the protected monuments, urban spaces, architecture, and statues are taken from their naturality, to have to face a coexistence with the new interpretation of history. This would explain the iconoclastic and new heterotopic images that emerge with respect to the urbanized historic space, of the public monuments “removed from their place”, and of the architecture used as a stronghold of spontaneous appropriations, a mural of critique, and support of unheard of discourses [Figure 15].

A core historic element in the dispute for heritage, that today is clearly perceptible, is determined by the tendency to use the monument as a means of political destruction of the patriarchal narrative of power, tending to disintegrate the correlation between dominating and dominated, advocating for new forms of freedom, diversity, and justice, that in the end demand means of representation in elements located outside the authorized heritage canon. As Bengoa states, behind it all, would be the rejection of the imaginary of feudal society, currently liberal, which in the collective unconscious of the dominating sectors continues representing the model of order, norms, and decency (2006, p. 46). A symptom of this phenomenon, can be perceived in the presence of common elements among the national demands and those emerging from the Mapuche people. These would be along the lines of political self-determination or an increase in the levels of direct democracy, territorial recovery, or reappropriation of public spaces, demand for language rights, or, regarding the new means of social communication and demilitarization of the Wallmapu (Mapuche territory) or rejection of the political-military control within urban spaces (Alvarado Lincopi, 2019).

**Figure 15**

The social uprising, that began in October 2019, with its accumulated demands has meant the radical alteration of civic order regulated in the city, along with the destruction of heritage elements unquestioned by tradition. Source: Unpublished photograph by Fernando Dowling Leal (2020).



## CONCLUSIONS

First and foremost, it must be stated that, as this work comes from the observation of a phenomenon that is still ongoing, the conclusions that can be reached, have provisional and not definitive results. Likewise, it must be considered that the situations of resignification of Chilean heritage that have been outlined, although they are not representative of the general situation of the country, nor of each city they took place in, do allow concluding the existence of a behavioral tendency of the heritage in other analog cases. As a result of the social breakdown the country is experiencing, it is possible to acknowledge a profound crisis of representativity of cultural heritage, from which processes of resignification and revaluation emerge that jeopardize the monument-document relationship, and through which new discourses, histories, and memories are founded.

The attempt has been made to demonstrate that, under the current social transformation conditions in Chile, an innovative paradigm is being born that affects the epistemic, axiological, and methodological bases of cultural heritage. The new means of appreciating, identifying, and valuing heritage are based on handing back to the communities, their leading role in the social construction of their histories and memories. That is to say, a patrimonialization process that reactivates our relationship with space and time in the city and its monuments, that pays attention to processes, and with these, discourses and imagery, more than on the end products that define the types of heritage to be conserved. The Chilean social uprising allows becoming aware of the main role of heritage at the level of a dynamic and changing entity: that of aspiring to being a "common asset". When this is separated from its social content and its legitimate administrators, agony begins, that is only recovered when the sense of citizenry resurges. Heritage is, along with its capacity of remembrance, a matter of control and power, that will always install a means of appreciating the present, displacing the hegemonies and the representative flows of one place to another.

The phenomenon presented has opened up the need to prepare a renewed historiography of the new narratives that talk of the *ethos* of emerging heritage, of its diverse means of appearing, of its contents of value, and of social players who were unheard until now. Such a challenge, forces accepting the social conflict as a substantial part of any real patrimonialization process, and to move away from the comfortable and contented space of given areas and professionals that respect the heritage that was believed to be so certain, clear, and stable. In a moment of socio-patrimonial transformation, the enormous responsibility the State takes on to guarantee the adequate representative flow of discourse that carries with it identities, histories, and social and individual memories, is undeniable. This would mean making possible, that in these public spaces, the negotiation of histories and memories, is made freely and democratically, in a state of dialog in the *parthesia* that is suitable for an agora. The city, its public spaces, its architecture, and monumental elements, are the places to express and evaluate how the new heritage can coexist with the preexisting.



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