

SOCIOLOGY

The Theoretical Construction of *Pobladores* and *Favelados* as Social Movements in Latin America

Alexis Cortés

Universidad Alberto Hurtado, CL
cortes.alexis@gmail.com

How did the social sciences theoretically contribute to producing the movements of Chilean *pobladores* and Brazilian *favelados* during the twentieth century? Through a critical review of the main theories that seek to understand the political actions of the urban poor in Santiago de Chile and Rio de Janeiro, this article shows the close relationship between these movements and the production of social sciences, in which a double hermeneutic operates—a mutually influential reflexive process that eventually contributed to the constitution and recognition of the movements as such. This research analyzes how social sciences perform the same social struggles that they attempt to describe, in other words, how certain academic contexts interact positively or negatively with the political and social disputes generated from the movements in question. I review theories of marginality and dependent urbanization, urban social movements, utilitarian views, and new social movements, showing how these interpretations alternated between requiem, rediscovery, and denial of the *favelados* and *pobladores* as social movements.

¿Cómo las ciencias sociales contribuyeron a producir teóricamente al movimiento de pobladores en Chile y al de favelados en Brasil durante el siglo XX? Mediante la revisión crítica de las principales teorías que buscaron comprender la acción política de los pobres urbanos de Santiago de Chile y de Rio de Janeiro, este artículo busca mostrar la estrecha relación entre estos movimientos y la producción de las ciencias sociales, en la cual operaría una doble hermenéutica, es decir, un proceso de reflexividad mutuamente influyente, que eventualmente podría ayudar a la constitución y reconocimiento de los movimientos como tales. Esta investigación analiza cómo las ciencias sociales performan las luchas sociales que pretenden describir, en otras palabras, cómo ciertos contextos académicos interactúan positiva o negativamente con las disputas político-sociales generadas por los movimientos en cuestión. Para ello, se revisan las principales perspectivas que han estudiado la cuestión social urbana en la región: las teorías de la marginalidad, la urbanización dependiente, los movimientos sociales urbanos, la visión utilitaria y los nuevos movimientos sociales; mostrando cómo estas interpretaciones oscilaron entre el réquiem, el redescubrimiento y la negación de *favelados* y *pobladores* como movimientos sociales.

Introduction

The Latin American urban poor engendered broad imagination in local social sciences. In practice, no theory that sought to understand the Latin American path to modernity did not also engage in significant reflection on the political role of inhabitants of urban settlements. Different paths of popular urbanization taken by the urban poor on the continent alarmed or fascinated social scientists in the twentieth century, and the urban social question became one of the most explored dimensions of Latin American social thought.

What relationship was established between the social sciences and the urban poor movements in Latin American cities? By examining the paradigmatic experiences of the *favelados'* movements in Rio de Janeiro and the *pobladores'* movement in Santiago de Chile (Cortés 2018; Giannotti and Soares Gonçalves 2020), I will show how social scientists contributed to the constitution and recognition of the urban poor as political actors in their respective societies.

In the case of Brazil, the favela is commonly associated with the Latin American mode of urbanization, feeding a specific urban social imaginary and promoting dense academic reflection (Valladares and Medeiros

2003). In the Chilean case, the trajectory of the *pobladores'* movement was associated with an ideal type of radicalized mobilization, occupying a central place in the construction of theories such as marginality theory (Vekemans and Silva 1969) and urban social movement theory (Castells 1977).

One assumption of this research is that between the worlds of social science fieldwork and social movements a double hermeneutic relationship operates (Giddens 1993)—a mutually influential reflective process between social movements and the academy. Neither the social sciences nor the movements were indifferent to the imaginaries, conceptualizations, and discursive constructions produced by them. Thus, *pobladores* and *favelados* debuted in the public sphere, dismantling the negative descriptions produced by marginality theory, but also incorporating academic concepts when elaborating their own speeches. The most recent case is the use of the “right to the city” as a central claim of various urban movements (Burgos 2012; Castro-Coma and Martí-Costa 2016). The social sciences are influenced by the ideas, actions, and positioning of the movements when elaborating their theories as well. This happened when the Chilean *pobladores* fed the radical urban social movements theory their slogan “Nos tomamos este sitio y luego el poder” (take this land and then take power) during Allende’s government. Also, the cycle of mobilization of the movements alters intellectual cycles, tilting research agendas toward collective action in the rise of mobilization.

This article focuses on only one direction of this relationship: How did social scientists contribute to producing the *pobladores'* and the *favelados'* movements? These movements are not an invention of the social sciences, but academia provides key elements for enacting them, affecting its own interpretations and the very constitution of the subjects that social scientists aim to understand. Social sciences not only describe these movements but also have a performative role in their construction; this implies an assumption that social sciences, in their operation, produce not only scientific facts but social facts as well (Ramos 2014). In other words, the social sciences participate, with varying levels of awareness, in the social struggles they aim to describe (Bourdieu 1999). They have an intermediary role between social movements and society but do not determine them. Social scientists participate in the construction of social movements in a way analogous to other external agents in the Latin American context, such as the Catholic Church and political parties. Researchers have been the organic intellectuals of the movements; they have given both technical support (as architects, urbanists, lawyers, and social workers, and so on) and political support, intermediating with authorities and supplying resources, or they have participated as educators in “escuelas de formación.”¹ In certain cases, the intellectual is indistinguishable from the movement itself. But how do the theoretical constructions of social sciences contribute to the formation and recognition of these urban struggles and the social actors that star in them?

The idea is to neither underestimate social movements nor overestimate the ability of the social sciences to construct reality. On the contrary, this performative emphasis of social sciences in the construction of the social movements in question assumes the heteronomous character of the *pobladores'* and *favelados'* movements. In other words, the movements do not emerge in an auto-referential way, as their trajectories are isolated from the rest of society. *Pobladores* and *favelados* are the protagonists of their own history but count on collaboration with, or hampering by, the social sciences for political recognition and consolidation. From this point of view, the theoretical production of the academy becomes a constituent element of the movements themselves. Social scientists can be seen, therefore, as theoretical coproducers of these movements.

This article attempts to reconstruct the Latin American scholarship that influences the theoretical construction of *pobladores* and *favelados* as social movements, transforming scholars and their interpretations into objects of study. For this purpose, approximately 250 academic references (papers, theses, books, working papers, and conference presentations) produced by social scientists during the twentieth century were reviewed. The critical analysis of this literature will show how social scientists, when theoretically constructing social movements, indirectly participate in the coproduction of them as political actors. Thus, this article will revisit the trajectories of two very important urban movements while using scholars themselves as a unit of analysis.

From the Margins to the Core of the Political Arena: Marginality Theories

The first attempt to understand the specificity of Latin American urbanization was marginality theory in the 1960s. It represents the pioneering essays of indirect, negative, and unintentional recognition of political agency of the urban poor in the region. Marginality theory sounded an alarm about the political consequences of the wild urbanization that reproduced settlements as the principal solution to the housing problem in developing countries (Rosenblüth 1968).

¹ “Escuelas de formación” refers to educational presentations meant to provide civic/political education for political party members or social leaders, such as lectures, workshops, and training exercises.

Initially, the concept of marginality emerged in the context of development theory; the version of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was the most influential, politically and academically. The head of this organization, economist Raúl Prebisch (1950), sought to promote “ingrowth” through a policy of import substitution industrialization (ISI), which made possible the modernization of the production of the continent and helped to overcome the disadvantageous terms of trade that left it on the capitalist periphery. But the existence and concentration of settlements was one of the negative characteristics of Latin American development. The precariousness of their inhabitants aggravated social tensions, causing an insurmountable imbalance for conquering underdevelopment. Thus marginality is defined as an underworld antithetical to development, yet more development is the only solution (CEPAL 1963). ECLAC gave marginality theory visibility in the scientific and political worlds. Previously, UNESCO organized a social science summit in Santiago in 1959 to discuss urbanization in Latin America. Scholars such as Herbert Blumer, Gino Germani, Philip Hauser, José Matos, José Medina, and Andrew Pearse (Hauser 1962) gathered to understand how urbanization affected development (Gorelik 2008). Settlements were defined as degraded mechanisms for integration in a context of high rural-urban migration. At the same time, the urbanization problem was viewed as an opportunity to produce their own theory.

That was precisely the aim of marginality theories, which advance two main perspectives: dualism and polarization. The first has a functionalist and culturalist bias and borrows some notions from the Chicago School, while “Latinamericanizing” the debate. The polarization view is more structuralist, with an economic bias that originated in its Marxist inspiration. Despite their differences, both perspectives share an understanding of marginality as a dysfunction and a view of settlements’ inhabitants as potentially disruptive actors. Consequently, they stress the need for social change in Latin America: reform for the dualists and revolutionary change for the adherents of the polarized view.

Dualistic marginality

Gino Germani (1980) incorporated the phenomenon of marginality into his theory of social change and modernization in Latin America, and thus, marginality gained conceptual substance. When transitioning from a traditional society to a modern society, characterized by “structural dualism,” that is, the cohabitation of two or more structural forms in one society, marginality was defined as an asynchrony that hampered surmounting the most persistent features of traditional society.

The topic of marginality gained theoretical autonomy with Roger Vekemans, who arrived in Chile in 1957 to create the Centro para el Desarrollo Económico y Social de América Latina (DESAL). At DESAL, marginality was defined as the lack of participation and membership in society of a sector of the population that was excluded from modern urban life by its persistence in rural and traditional cultural behavior (Vekemans and Silva 1969). Marginality was not only economic but above all cultural, and as such affected all spheres of life for the poor. This was seen as physically determined and solidified in a specific social space: the settlement. These masses were not incorporated into society; their situation was worse than exploitation.

The inconsistency of modernization, with its hyperurbanization, worsened the old exclusion, bringing the marginalized into closer proximity to elites in cities experiencing the process of migration and provoking the horror of urban elites. At the same time, hyperurbanization radically changed the consumer expectations of the urban poor, with negative consequences: “The marginal masses are standing, metaphorically, outside the shop window, yet they have no purchasing power.... Four centuries have passed and, faced with this new reality, we must act to prevent the shop window from being violently shattered” (Vekemans and Silva 1969, 61).

This alarmist tone explains, in part, the political impact of the theory on some Latin American governments. On one hand, the marginalized appeared as people lacking organizational skills and political awareness; on the other hand, the idea of marginality nourished an almost apocalyptic imaginary of urban lumpen promoters of social disruption, because the situation of privation favored the acceptance of populist or revolutionary projects.

In Brazil, the pioneering works of urban sociology developed a moralizing conception of social life, similar to the DESAL theory. The most influential actor was the French Dominican priest Louis-Joseph Lebret, founder of the economy and humanism movement that incorporated elements from Marxist exploitation theory while proposing a communitarian exit from capitalism. For Lebret, the place where poor people lived was a mirror of underdevelopment, hence it should be researched with scientific accuracy. For this purpose, he founded the Sociedade para a Aplicação do Grafismo e da Mecanografia à Análise de Complexos Sociais (SAGMACS) in Brazil. SAGMACS produced the first and most complete study about favelas in Rio de Janeiro to the present day (Machado da Silva 2012), *Aspectos humanos da favela carioca* (Rios 1960). Advised by Lebret and directed by José Arthur Rios, this research reinforced the idea of degradation of the rural world and

pathological urbanization in Latin America. Here, the favela was defined as popular habitations chaotically and precariously grouped against the regular organization of urban spaces, and represented as a space of social and moral disintegration in the city, caused by rural-urban migration. The rural exodus to Brazilian cities was viewed as an escape from the misery of the countryside, with the city absorbing the excess of national poverty. Thus the favela was an extension of the rural in the urban, an object exotic to “civilized” modern urban life. Its inhabitants were seen as lacking agency, with a propensity to be manipulated by populist or communist influences (Medina 1964). The alarmist tone is repeated: “We must go up the hill before the communists come down it” (Rios 1960, 43). This explains the urgency of intervention: the favelas threatened future social progress and represented its negation in the present. The “red menace” transformed the favela into a critical locus of the Cold War (Fischer 2014).

Marginality theorizing began a pessimistic period in social thought in the region to the extent that marginality became identified as anathema to modernization. However, assuming that it had a transient character reinforced confidence in the policies of urban reform as a possible solution and in social intervention via popular promotion (Chile) and human promotion (Rio de Janeiro). These were an attempt to restructure the society via training and organizing the marginalized, to unify their dispersed solidarities in alliance with the Catholic Church and the state.

The dualistic theory of marginality was demystified by social scientists because it underestimated the integrational power of settlements (Mangin 1967; Turner 1968) and the organizational skills of the marginalized (CIDU 1972; Perlman 1979), besides lacking appreciation for the heterogeneous character of poverty. However, marginality theory positively transformed the question of popular urbanization into a critical topic in social sciences. Additionally, the diffusion of dualistic theories of marginality had consequences for the constitution of urban poor movements. The popular and human promotion initiatives created an institutional structure that recognized the pobladores and favelados as social actors, because with the legalization of *Juntas de Vecinos* in Chile and *Associações de Vizinhança* in Brazil, the urban poor were formally organized, complementing and reinforcing the already existing associations. Also, as I wrote in a previous work,

the idea that “we must go up the hill before the communists come down it” was not only a matter of defusing danger, but also an acknowledgment of the potential emergence of a “radical” political actor. There was fear of the amorphous masses, but the greatest fear was of the masses becoming a radical oppressed class (the manipulable communist masses). The fear was that the amorphous masses would become a political actor outside the predefined boundaries the dominant classes set for the subaltern classes, boundaries based upon the idea of the “good favelado” who “learns” to escape from poverty. (Cortés 2013, 173)

The negative conceptualization about pobladores and favelados made by dualistic marginality theory contributed to generating an affirmative reaction to this popular subject, demonstrating the practical inadmissibility of their descriptions. The debut of the pobladores’ and the favelados’ movements in the public sphere attempted to deconstruct the marginalized concept. The discourse of the leadership of La Victoria in Santiago, which stressed the proletarian character of its 1957 takeover—the event that began the pobladores’ movement (Garcés 2002)—and the baptism of the first organization of favelados as the *União de Trabalhadores Favelados* are proof of this attempt (Lima 1989; Gonçalves 2010).

The polarized version of marginality

The structural, or polarized, version of marginality occurred in dialogue with dependency theory, asserting that underdevelopment is not a stage of development but a function of the peripheral countries in the international division of labor: underdevelopment of the periphery is a precondition for the development of the center. Thus, marginality was defined as an internal logic of capitalism in the dependent periphery: marginality is not an obstacle for capitalism but is the product of its development (Cortés 2017). Dependent capitalism generated a nonfunctional sector for capitalist accumulation: the marginal mass (Nun 2001) or the marginal pole (Quijano 1970).

José Nun, in a heterodox interpretation of Marxism, claims the “marginal mass” is defined as the surplus population that exceeds the necessities of the exploitation of capital, not even as a reserve army of labor. The marginal mass is a product of dependent capitalism but is a virtual factor of the dominant productive organization. For Aníbal Quijano, marginalization is a result of historical conditions defined by the implementation of dependent industrialization and the monopoly organization of production in a socioeconomic structure that combined unequal levels and relationships of production. This resulted in a

dependent urbanization that concentrated urban development in zones directly articulated to the dependent system, which caused an imbalance in society in relation to the level of development and modernity. The migrants that arrived in Latin American cities found the urban labor market unable to absorb them. Dependent urbanization is excluding, and therefore marginalization was inevitable. The marginalized were the most exploited social sector and, in practice, people that were left out economically but not politically.

Polarized marginalization hugely contributed to the politicization of the urban question (Machado da Silva and Ziccardi 1983). For Nun and Quijano, marginality ceased to be viewed as a transitory phenomenon that could be surpassed with reforms. On the contrary, marginality was the consequence of dependent capitalism's own dynamic; hence, the overtaking of marginality was only possible with a revolutionary change of capitalism, and the marginalized could play a protagonist's role in that. This structuralist perspective can be considered as an antecedent of the discussion of urban social movement theory.

Urban social movement theory in Chile

A group of scholars in the Interdisciplinary Center of Urban Development (Centro Interdisciplinario de Desarrollo Urbano, CIDU) at the Catholic University of Chile undertook the task of understanding and theorizing the pobladores' movements, the social actors that won centrality in the political conjuncture of the early 1970s (CIDU 1972). The generalization of the takeover as the main repertoire of collective action of the movement, and the dispute between three different political strategies in the settlement (the Christian Democratic, the proletarian left—communist and socialist, and the radical left) challenged even the proletarian political protagonism in this context (Castells 1973b).

For the scholars, the question was: What is the sociopolitical novelty of the pobladores' movement for the struggling classes? Critiquing dualistic marginality as an ideology that aimed to support the Christian-Democratic intervention in settlements, and extending this critique to the proletarian left as an electoral answer for the CIDU, the CIDU researchers viewed the slum as an original experience of political struggle and urban organization, representing a diversified source of social change (housing, nutrition, and justice) (Pastrana and Threlfall 1974) and generating a concrete, popular power laboratory. The innovative character of the pobladores' practices to meet their needs was an original attempt to change the slum's subordinate position in society.

The experience of the pobladores' movements during the government of Salvador Allende nurtured the most important output from CIDU: the urban social movements (USM) theory of Manuel Castells. The USMs were a system of contradictory practices that activated new forms of social conflict related to the collective organization of the way of life. This category had a strong impact on the understanding of the urban question regarding its capacity to modify the urban system and to contradict social domination. For a long time, the USM concept was associated with the Chilean pobladores' experience during this period as a kind of historical realization of the potential of this idea, in spite of its metamorphoses during the academic trajectory of Castells: from the definition as a new form of struggling classes (Castells 1973a), to the principal path toward democratic socialism, and finally, to a reactive utopia (Castells 1986) no different from the culturalistic conception of the new social movement of Alain Touraine (1981).

However, Castells' ideas were also critiqued, even by CIDU's members. Some authors, such as Fiori (1973), claimed Castells and his group reproduced important biases as a consequence of the intense political polarization of the moment; in other words, the radicalization of the pobladores' movement caused a radicalization in scholarly interpretations. Thus, USM theory reiterated the supposed idea of the homogeneity of the urban poor via the concept of "proletariat in crises," but it was a sociological and political fiction to characterize the slums led by the Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR), via a few significant statistical differences between unemployed people and qualified workers, as a "model" slum for MIR. In addition, Castells and his group understood the pobladores' movements belonged to a small faction of the hypothetical "pobladores' world," the segment identified with the political arm of MIR. Castells's group omitted the ideological gap between the partisan vanguard of MIR and the pobladores in its base (Castelain 1975). Furthermore, this group faced the critiques of Alejandro Portes (1970, 1972), who proposed a theory of slum rationality in contrast to dualistic marginality, countering the perspectives that considered the pobladores' movement a verification of radicalism associated with a particular type of popular habitation. The pobladores saw the takeovers more as a unique alternative for obtaining a house rather than a rupture with the social order. A takeover was the result of a calculated sequence of actions that had realistic and concrete goals in a context politically favorable to the direct action of the pobladores. The situation demanded that intellectuals take a position on the polarization of Chilean society, complicating the reception of these critiques, specifically the Weberian ideas of a Cuban-American sociologist such as Portes.

CIDU made important contributions to expanding the conception of the *pobladores'* movement from merely an auxiliary actor of the workers' movement, allocating it a differential political status as a stakeholder that was potentially decisive in the polarization of Chilean society. At the same time, the theoretical discussion of the *pobladores* reflected and amplified political disputes in the intellectual realm. In a moment of extreme division on the left, these scholars chose one strategy and one subject: the revolutionary left and the *pobladores'* movement. Therefore, their analyses were in symbiosis with the *poblacional* strategy of MIR and its popular organizations. On one hand, this inclination implies an overvaluation of the experience derived from MIR's political movement, namely its model slums (revolutionary microcommunities), and, on the other hand, it displays inattention to experiences important for the *pobladores'* movement, because they were associated with strategies considered by the scholars as moderate and electoralist. The fact that the case of La Victoria, the takeover that anticipated the generalized repertoire of the 1970s, is practically never mentioned in CIDU's work is proof of this (Cortés 2014).

The Counterparadigm in Rio de Janeiro: Between the Skeptical Scholar and the Rational Favela

In Rio de Janeiro, authors such as Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos (1981), Lícia Valladares (1978b), and Renato Boschi (1983) elaborated an analytic perspective opposed to the USM concept during the end of the 1970s and 1980s, at least as was understood by Castells. They asserted the existence of a utilitarian rationality as a main feature of the *favelados'* movement, stressing the limits of urban collective action and showing the *favelados'* movements as empirical evidence that USMs don't exist. Dos Santos was an architect and anthropologist who worked closely with social organizations to initiate one of the most important urbanization processes of the favelas in Rio (Brás de Pina in 1969). He proposed modifying the definition of USMs, emphasizing their restrictions and their ephemeral character because of the trend of dispersing their components after a critical situation.

This perspective has as an antecedent the critiques produced by the social scientists of dualistic marginality theory, scholars such as Anthony Leeds, Janice Perlman, and Luiz Antônio Machado. These authors showed the existence of a pragmatic politics of the *favelados* and demonstrated the social functions the favela performed for Rio de Janeiro (Parisse 1969). The favela was the result of the urbanization process, not its denial. The favela is more a popular solution to the challenges of the metropolis than a problem (Mangin 1967). Favelas are not a simple urban pathology, nor a place where poverty, crime, and despair meet. For these scholars, that vision was the result of the exoticization process produced by social scientists interested in describing underdevelopment (Medina 1969). The *favelados* generated adaptation strategies to survive and to improve their poverty. The favela is not a sentence but a manifestation of these strategies. In this place, the *favelados* generate contacts and manage them to obtain resources (material and symbolic), organize to acquire status, and create refuges against the threat of urban life (Machado da Silva 2016).

The goal was integration into the system, not its subversion. The *favelados* were neither apolitical nor radical. With strong ethnographic evidence, they refuted the overvaluation of the political potential of the urban poor proposed by USM theory. In the same way, they rejected the image of *favelados* as apolitical and disorganized. *Favelados* aren't unilaterally politically manipulated; they also manipulate the political system to serve their interests, but they have difficulty maintaining collective action over time (Leeds and Leeds 2015). For Machado da Silva (2011), the "marginal community" was not a realistic vision of this space but more a value judgment with a paternalistic attitude. Although the *favelados* assumed that their capacity to have an impact on the political system was limited, they knew that some political agreements bring benefits. Thus, the political actions of *favelados* tend to have a short-term, immediate orientation.

The double exercise of demystifying (the marginality and USM theories) made by scholars of Rio de Janeiro diverges from the opinions of their colleagues from São Paulo. During the Brazilian dictatorship a wave of new social movements emerged in this city as a reaction to the crises of traditional political action. At the beginning, the Paulista scholars positioned themselves against the economic version of marginality, arguing that marginality was an essential way of insertion in the productive structure and in capitalist accumulation (Singer 1978; Oliveira 1972). In this Marxist interpretation, marginality is a complementary form of exploitation of the impoverishment of work through the decrease of urban cost reproduction of material life (Kowarick 1979). The city was an amplifier of inequalities and a source of new exploitation. Consequently, the political pressure of urban movements was central for questioning Brazilian capitalism. At the same time, the urban movements represented a hope to go beyond the logic of manipulation strongly established in the labor movement (French 2004).

The peripheral mobilization in São Paulo for housing, urban services, childcare, and so forth focused political attention on these popular organizations, leaving a mark on research agendas. The new movements represented a revolution in daily life (Kärner 1987; Caldeira 1984), a concrete utopia in the practice of popular subjects (Scherer-Warren and Kruschke 1987). For these authors, the urban movements were intrinsically democratic. They opened new, autonomous ways of political participation because institutional paths had been locked by the dictatorship. They fought against the excluding urbanization and anticipated democratic practices that were prohibited by the dictatorship (Sader 2010). The urban movement was successful in its attempt to articulate with the new labor movement of São Paulo State and was improved by ecclesial communities (Doimo 1984). The urban movements challenged populist logic and critiqued issues such as social co-optation and the exchange of political support for urban benefits as immoral, at the very least.

In contrast, the authors from Rio emphasized the political rationality of favelados instrumentalizing the political system for personal or communitarian benefits (Leeds and Leeds 2015). This pragmatic politicization was far from any radicalism or an inherent potential transformation. The carioca scholars did not trust the optimistic lectures that identified new urban movements as promising social change (Santos 1984), choosing a perspective centered more on an institutional dimension as an incentive for, or an obstacle to, popular participation (Boschi 1983), where the favelados' movement was closer to an aggregation of Olsonian "free-riders" (Valladares 1977). The attribution of an emancipatory potential (revolutionary or hyperdemocratic) in these movements was more an expression of a desire of the scientists than the reality of these movements. For the favelados, the political was considered empty activity that didn't offer substantial changes; politicians have a bad image, but the favelados recognized the possibility of profiting from the opening produced by the political (Diniz 1983).

As Bryan McCann (2014) shows, during the 1980s the favelados' movement in Rio defeated the dictatorship and successfully validated the right to stay in their territories, beginning the process of democratization for the city. With that process, the movement greatly altered the political landscape in Rio, enabling electoral triumphs in state and local governments, which became pro-favelado. However, the internal political contradictions in these governments and the economic crises made the urban reform they advocated unfeasible. Even worse, the emergence of well-armed drug gangs and the transformation of the favela amid their operations marked the decline of the favelado movement. Shortly thereafter, the drug traffickers instrumentalized the *associações de moradores* (local neighborhood organizations) for their own purposes, restricting freedom of movement and speech, such as the right of favelados to elect their own political representation.

Although the social scientists in Rio did not produce this scenario of loss of popular prominence, they did little to reverse it and instead continued with their negative reaction to USM theory. As a result, some of the political experiences of the favelados' movement were underestimated. In fact, failed attempts of the favelados to resist the removal policies of the state were identified by some scholars with the absence and the impossibility of creating a favelados' movement (Valladares 1978a).

In sum, the social scientists in Brazil during the dictatorship, sometimes exaggerating the potential of the urban poor's movement, contributed to legitimizing it, validating this actor theoretically and producing a favorable intellectual conjuncture to politically recognize popular manifestations as new forms of social protagonism. However, the optimistic view (São Paulo) caused a negative and skeptical scholarly reaction that stressed the weakness and limitations of favelados' movements (Rio de Janeiro).

The Novelty and Negating of the (Impossible) Pobladores' Social Movement

The Chilean dictatorship (1973–1989) produced a systematic, specific persecution of the pobladores' movement that had inspired USM theory, provoking its decline and a pessimistic trend in the interpretations of social scientists, who questioned the political and revolutionary potential of pobladores. For Touraine: "It is false—as we thought in '60—that there are hyper-radicalized urban pobladores' movements. This reserve army of revolution, in fact, didn't mobilize in '64 in Brazil, or in '66 or '67 in Argentina, nor in '73 in Uruguay and Chile" (Touraine 1987, 219).

With the coup d'état, the political scene was distressing for social movements, in particular for the pobladores. Nevertheless, the organization of a series of massive protests against the dictatorship at the beginning of the 1980s fomented the recuperation of the pobladores' movements' protagonism (Schneider 1995). In shantytowns, protests achieved their more radicalized and strongest points (Iglesias Vázquez 2011; Garcés 2017). Studies of pobladores had existed since the end of the 1970s, but only with the shantytown protests did the academic interest in this stakeholder win a strategic status: with pobladores' political protagonism recovered, the social sciences rediscovered the pobladores, weighing their role in the return to democracy.

Social scientists debated two trends with the rearrangement of the movements caused by the protests. On one hand, they created a novel interpretation in which the collective action of pobladores emerged as a new promise of democracy (Salazar 2006). On the other hand, they produced a negating interpretation, questioning the ability of the pobladores to establish a global, organized, and articulated critique of the dictatorship (Dubet et al. 2016; Campero 1987). The main referent of this debate was the French sociologist Alain Touraine (1981), who hegemonized the discussion with his theory of new social movements. With his influence and with this analytical fluctuation, three interpretations of pobladores were developed: the communitarian, the impossible social movement, and the spatialist.

The communitarian interpretation views the popular economic organizations of pobladores (Van Hemelryck, Razeto, and Rosenfeld 1987)—produced to survive economic crises—not just as a way of rearranging solidarities (Hardy 1987) but as a repertoire that carries democratic embryos inside it, which anticipated the return of democracy through the creation of a new citizen culture in the shantytowns, without the mediation of political parties (Pozo 1987). The social exclusion produced by the dictatorship had the unexpected outcome of strengthening the internal ties of pobladores. In the most optimistic version of communitarianism, the pobladores' movement opened new perspectives for a socialist project: the rejection of a dependent relationship with parties and the encouragement of popular participation and the pobladores' own strengths (Kriés 1983). The pobladores changed spaces considered traditionally private into objects of public discussion, introducing new ways to do politics, for example, the *olla común*, or soup kitchen (Valdés and Weinstein 1989). The most pessimistic version claims that the "objective politicization" caused by the economic crises and the dictatorship imply, at the same time, a "subjective depoliticization": the pobladores' movement produced political consequences but without having awareness of that (Baño 1985). The divorce between the social and the political sowed doubts about the pobladores' ability to project themselves as a social movement.

This academic skepticism was radicalized and systematized by a group of scholars that applied the theory and the methodology of Alain Touraine to the study of (new) social movements. From an academic NGO called SUR, with French funding, between 1985 and 1986 these authors concluded that pobladores were not a social movement (Dubet et al. 2016); conversely, for one of the more influential sociologists in Chile, they are more readily identified as an "anti-social movement" because of their inclination toward violence (Tironi 1986). For Touraine, the pobladores were an impossible social movement, because their predisposition to fragmentation and disintegration relinquished any possibility for questioning the cultural orientation of the society, the main requisite to consider a collective actor as social movement. In fact, SUR's research shows the pobladores as disarticulated by the presence of different and contradictory action logics. This inconsistency separated the social and the political because the pobladores didn't have a unique and central principle of action to cement their actions as a social movement. There were mobilizations but not movement, that is, the pobladores were a set of demands without a project for society.

As an alternative to the communitarian and the "impossible" social movement views, an urban and spatialist view of pobladores emerged (Sabatini 1989). Some of these scholars, such as Alfredo Rodríguez, Vicente Espinoza, and Mario Garcés, had strong ties with the pobladores' movement, having offered technical and political support for their claims. Without offering a different concept than the Tourainians' definition of social movements, yet showing dissatisfaction with it, this group stressed the role of pobladores in constructing a democratic city (Rodríguez 1983). The pobladores' action territorialized the political and constituted local forms of power that opposed the urban segregation promoted by the dictatorship (Espinoza, Rodríguez, and Rosenfeld 1986). For Gallardo (1985), the shantytown defined the "poblador": the appropriation of urban space constitutes the poblador's identity. Even though the trend of the pobladores is apparently discontinuous, their historical trajectory allows for defining them as popular producers of urban space (Espinoza 1988, 1998). The segregated city thus creates the grounds for its own transformation. The spatial emphasis of this view supports the theoretical relevance of pobladores beyond the transitional conjuncture, establishing some key discussions for the last intellectual cycle, centered on the urban dimensions of social action (Romero 2018; Pérez 2017; Angelcos and Méndez 2017). But the status of pobladores as a social movement continued as an academic challenge.

For some authors, such as Mónica Iglesias Vázquez (2017), the conclusion of mainstream social science ("hegemonic sociology" for her) that pobladores are not a social movement implies a denial of the democratizing potential of the pobladores. This contributed to increasing the role of the political elites in building a democratic transition without popular and social participation, that is, a (market-oriented) democracy less responsive to social pressure (Paley 2001). Thus, if social movements were impossible during the dictatorship, with the return of democracy they were neither necessary nor desirable for its stability. Gabriel Salazar (2013) argues that the goal of this view was to politically and theoretically legitimize a neoliberal transition to democracy, which required demobilizing social actors.

This extremely critical vision transmits a homogenous image of the power of social science (committed to an elitarian transition) to implement reality, but concurrently stresses the academic role in the political recognition or lack of recognition of social actors. In fact, social sciences debated between the optimistic (communitarian) view and a pessimistic view that negated the identity of the pobladores as a social movement. The optimistic interpretation was the product of the illusions and expectations of the social sciences themselves. The academic reaction was to demystify the ultrademocratic or revolutionary role of the pobladores. However, this intellectual fluctuation was tempered by the political conjuncture that favored an elitarian exit from the dictatorship. Thus, a question remains: How much did the social sciences contribute to making the pobladores' movement invisible during the democratic return?

Favelados and Pobladores Exit the Scene

Chile: The absence of pobladores and/or the indifference of the social sciences

"Where did all the protesters go?" was the question posed by Philip Oxhorn (1994) after the return of democracy in Chile. Redemocratization didn't imply the opening of new ways for social participation or for protagonism of the pobladores' movement. Conversely, the negotiation between the dictatorship and the opposition resulted in a consensus about democratization, privileging political stability over social mobilization. The political parties changed their orientation from the grass roots to specific publics, abandoning the shantytown as a relevant political arena. Contemporaneously, the Concertación (a center-left political coalition) took power and enacted an ambitious housing policy that dramatically reduced housing requests from the pobladores' movement. However, this policy, based on family savings, produced low-quality solutions that dismantled the social networks of the pobladores and stimulated new forms of marginality (Ducci 1997). In addition, the deregulation of land prices reduced the availability of land for eventual takeovers, most important in the repertoire of the movement. Political and social conditions were unfavorable for the pobladores' movement. Indeed, the indifference of the social sciences to this actor was not surprising. The prophecy of the death of the pobladores' movement seemed to have been realized.

But, as Vicente Espinoza (1993) stresses, the absence of direct conflicts is not synonymous with permanent extinction of the movement; rather, discontinuity is a primary trait of this actor. Furthermore, the pobladores didn't passively experiment with the urban changes produced by the commoditization of the land. Although the neoliberal city segregates, marginalizes, and demobilizes, it also rearticulates the political subjectivity of the pobladores as a viable strategy of interpolating the state to reclaim a place in the city (Angelcos and Pérez 2017). Paradoxically, the factors used to explicate the disappearance of the pobladores are used to explain their reemergence in this case. Now the pobladores are defined beyond one specific repertoire of collective action—the takeover of land; their political axes now are rights to the city, housing, and a dignified life. Their self-conception as city makers—because the city has been a space for sociopolitical intervention, the autonomy of their organization in the face of traditional political parties, and the insightful and subversive appropriation of state housing policies gave birth to a new pobladores' movement (Pérez 2017).

The (violent) favela without social movement

The favela has not left Brazilian scholars' agendas since the 1990s; on the contrary, there was bibliographic growth on this topic (Valladares and Medeiros 2003). But this academic protagonism portrayed the favelas as spaces of public intervention or the primary scenes of urban violence, not as social movements (Fausto Neto 1995; Paixão 1990). The visibility of the favela as a crime-ridden site was accompanied by the invisibility of the favelados' social action. The explosive urban violence in 1990s Rio de Janeiro exerted a gravitational force on the social sciences, politics, and society. Researchers, even when they were looking for collective action, found the robust reality of urban violence an unavoidable issue for understanding the favela (Zaluar 1985; Zaluar and Alvito 1998; Zaluar 2012).

Urban violence in the favelas reached autonomy as a field of study and was even understood with its own logic or specific way of sociability (Machado da Silva 2016). The appearance of urban violence left the favelados in the crossfire between drug traffickers and police (Machado da Silva 2008). Thus, violence became the main obstacle for popular organization. In some cases, the *associações de moradores* (the local neighborhood organizations) were interveners for the traffickers, and they chose the directors of the favelas. However, some favelados' leaders were executed by police or traffickers for collaborating with the enemy (Pandolfi and Grynszpan 2003). The gangs forbade free circulation between the favelas and limited free speech. Ancient allies, such as the Catholic Church and leftist political parties, ceased to be relevant, and the main popular organization (*associações de moradores*) lost its social support base and legitimacy, so the

activists needed to look for more specialized forms of participation, discarding the mission to represent the favela as a whole (Leite 2000).

Simultaneously, the growth of violent crime in the favelas became the main urban problem in Rio, changing the framing of social conflict and redefining the place of the favelas and their inhabitants in the city (Leite 2000, 2014). Favelas were socially identified as territories of drug trafficking, thus, the war against drugs became the war against favelas as territories opposed to the public order (Cavalcanti 2008). The “red menace” gave rise to the criminal threat of the favela, actualizing the “favela problem” and reactivating the dualistic conception of marginality theory, which opposed the favela and the city (Ribeiro and Lago 2001).

Urban violence and favelas became the main obstacles for the urban project of Rio de Janeiro associated with sporting mega-events (World Cup 2014 and Olympic Games 2016). The public equated urbanization (Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento, PAC) and militarization (Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora, UPP) with an attempt to control and integrate the favela as marginal (Cavalcanti 2013; Leite 2013).

The “pacification” of the favela by the communitarian police (UPP) since 2008 significantly modified everyday life for these neighborhoods and interfered in conflict mediations between their inhabitants and public institutions. The police even acted as organizers of community activities, favoring some expressions and forbidding others, such as “bailes funky” (Menezes 2014; L. S. da Silva 2014; M. C. de A. Silva and Carvalho 2015; Sneed 2008).

The necessity of urbanizing the favela through the PAC was legitimated in the public sphere by criminal violence; thus, paradoxically, the violence justified public investment in infrastructure. However, this investment changed the structure of authorities, power, and mediation in the favela, renewing the strategic role of the “associações de moradores” as the main intermediaries in the implementation of public policies in the favela (Cavalcanti 2013), and maintaining logics of subordination and dependence (Blasi Cunha 2018).

This process favored the “commodification” of favelas with “poverty tourism” (Freire-Medeiros, Vilarouca, and Menezes 2016; Freire-Medeiros and Menezes 2016) and with the gentrification of these territories (Ost and Fleury 2013). That stimulated a “soft removal” of favela inhabitants by increasing the cost of living, and concurrently, “hard removal” by public power was reactivated. The administration used the mega-events as opportunities to expel the favelados as a way to fight urban disorder and prevent the risk of natural disasters (Magalhães 2016).

As a result, two important movements formed. First, a new collective action fighting the removal process emerged, vindicating the participation of the favelados in the construction of the city as citizens with rights (Magalhães 2017). Second, movements that denounced violence against the favelados were consolidated, especially the organization of mothers of missing people (young and Afro-descendent), at the hands of the state (Araújo 2016; Freire 2017; Vianna and Farias 2011). This fight for the survival of the favela and of the favelados found in social science one of the few resources to recognize this struggle. However, social science’s attention contrasted with society’s indifference to and even support for the extermination of the favela.

Final Considerations

Starting from the assumption of the existence of a mutual reflexive influence between social sciences and social movements (a double hermeneutic), this article centered its interest on one side of this relationship: the role played by scholars’ interpretations as theoretical coproducers of the movements, facilitating or hampering the political recognition of movements as prominent actors. Given that, other participation mechanisms of scholars in movements have not been addressed: organic intellectuals, popular educators, and practitioners of research-action. At the same time, this option neglected the social actors’ and movements’ voices. How are social science definitions assimilated, problematized, or appropriated by the self-interpretations of social movements? This fundamental question demands systematic exploration that is beyond the scope of this article.

Notwithstanding this limitation, this review not only contributes to increasing the reflexivity of social sciences about the outcomes of their production in the social struggles that they attempt to describe, but also aids in an indirect understanding of the social movements. Because, as was shown during the twentieth century, the favelados’ and pobladores’ movements represented a permanent analytic challenge for social sciences. The social sciences contributed to the recognition of the political potential of urban popular mobilization; but the urban movements constantly overflowed the analytical molds within which scholars tried to frame them.

In summary, academic understanding oscillated between optimistic and pessimistic lectures, stimulated by the scholars’ own academic expectations. Thus, culturalist marginality theory, despite its negative conceptualization of the urban poor, contributed to indirectly recognizing them. It was key to transforming

the urban question into a central axis of public debate about overcoming underdevelopment. The Marxist version of marginality and urban social movement theory facilitated the politicization of the urban question, because it recognized the starring role of these stakeholders in changing the power structure. The pragmatist and utilitarian interpretation of the favelados' movement that emerged in Rio de Janeiro between the 1970s and 1980s widened the definition of political, recognizing the agency and rationality of the urban poor, showing their membership in and contribution to the city but, at the same time, highlighting the limitations and weaknesses of social actors. These were reinforced when the mobilizing waves of the 1980s declined. Similarly, during the Chilean dictatorship the preponderant speech in the social sciences was concentrated on demonstrating that the pobladores were not a social movement, despite the huge role they played in the main protests against the dictatorship. A new generation of researchers critiqued this conception of pobladores, arguing that it led to an elitist process of democratization. These scholars, while frequently engaging organically with the pobladores' organizations, announced the birth of a new movement, attempting to show the role of the pobladores as political renovators. In Rio de Janeiro, although the transformation of the favela into the mainstage of urban violence implied that it was no longer being interpreted as a collective action space, a new generation of researchers studying the organization resisted this negative frame, having become one of the favelado movements' few allies.

This vacillation between overvaluation and undervaluation, despite contributing directly or indirectly to the political recognition of these movements, also created a distorted image of the urban poor in some cases. The optimistic readings interpreted the urban poor's actions as spaces of pure spontaneity, anti-institutional and autonomous, which were more a desired reality rising from the internal disputes of movements to guide their trajectory rather than actual empirical description. The idealization of one past or present action played as a powerful distortion of the movement and could eventually lead to demobilization, because the desire could be unachievable and could feed the negative interpretation when reality contradicted this image. High expectations generated by the social sciences during optimistic moments, more than the actual characteristics of the social movements themselves, provided a foundation for pessimistic interpretations.

Cycles of mobilization are related to reflexive cycles in social sciences. Mobilization rose concurrently with enormous interest in the social sciences and with the generation of high expectations related to the political outcomes of social action, and also with interpretations that remarked on the novelty of the movement. The interest of social scientists in these movements is a possible indicator of their centrality in the public scene. However, when mobilization declines, not only is there a loss of scholarly interest, but negative interpretations which question the optimistic hypotheses are also elaborated, in some cases even denying the status of these actors as social movements. In sum, social movements are inseparable from the epistemic effects produced in social sciences.

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Author Information

Alexis Cortés is a professor in the Sociology Department at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado (Chile) and director of the master's program in sociology. He holds a PhD in sociology from the Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Políticos da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. His research focuses on social movements, performativity of the social sciences, and Latin American sociology. He is the author of *Favelados e pobladores nas ciências sociais: A construção teórica de um movimento social* (2018).

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