

This is the author's accepted manuscript version of a chapter that has been later published as **Schlack, E., Turnbull, N., Arce Sánchez, M. J. (2018) Learning from La Vega Central: Challenges to the survival of a publicly used (private) marketplace.** In **González, S (Ed.): *Contested Markets Contested Cities. Gentrification and urban justice in retail spaces*, London: Routledge, pp. 36 - 53.** The author's version is broadly the same as the published one although it may have minor typographical and bibliographical errors, and it lacks any images. The final published version can be purchased [here](#).

Learning from La Vega Central: Challenges to the survival of a publicly used (private) marketplace¹

Elke Schlack, Neil Turnbull, and María Jesús Arce Sánchez

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the pressures of gentrification which threaten La Vega Central, a market privately owned by its stallholders in Santiago de Chile. Here the threat of gentrification is a process which benefits the affluent users of the market at the expense of the poor, encouraging a significant change in the social profile of its users. This in turn challenges the public characteristic of the market as understood as a universal space for all (Habermas, 1990). Given that the market already represents the phenomenon of privatisation of what was previously a public asset, any modification of its public role is linked to the debate about exclusion and the public realm (Weber, 1922). Public space becomes a lens by which the issues of access to the market and the right to the city debate as discussed by Marcuse (2009) can be explored.

When spaces of commercial exchange are privatised there is a challenge to the continuity of their contribution to the public space of the city. Public space has long been associated with markets and they are in this sense a spatial archetype of Western urban culture and represent in the field of urban sociology the construction of the public sphere (Weber, 1922). Using this idea, we reflect on the traditional indoor market of La Vega Central, placing emphasis on the way in which it produces public space.

Significantly, La Vega is administered by an association of stallholder tenants who engender a character of publicness which is more elusive in the other private retail spaces of supermarkets and shopping malls in Santiago de Chile. In addition, the surroundings of this market constitute a shelter for vulnerable groups because of the proximity and availability of accommodation, work opportunities and low food prices.

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As landowners, the condition of la Vega Central's traders stands in stark contrast to the contestation of market traders in parts of the Global South who struggle for the right to be present and make a living on the public streets of the inner city (see Skinner, 2008; Bromley and Mackie, 2009, Brown et al., 2010). For this same reason the situation is also different from the pressures of trader displacement through increasing rents in indoor markets, seen in parts of Europe (González and Waley, 2013). The risk of gentrification in the case of La Vega Central is the expulsion of street vendors, informal workers, beggars and the more vulnerable consumers whose presence today defines the publicness of the market.

La Vega Central is an indoor market with 1,041 individual stalls and 889 formally-registered traders (Servicio de Impuestos Internos, 2014), which support a population of around 2,100 stall traders and 400 workers employed in the wholesale areas. These 'formal' workers are joined in the market by around 120 hawkers and porters who sell empanadas and *humitas* (a boiled corn snack), dispense hot drinks from converted supermarket trolleys or make a living by transporting goods for a small fee. The market serves around 20,000 customers daily.

The aim of this chapter is to outline the current public role of La Vega, which whilst having survived processes of privatisation, nonetheless remains contested as those on lower incomes are threatened with displacement through processes of gentrification. We argue that the current accessibility of the market is being challenged through processes of urban renewal and the eradication of the affordable landscape surrounding the market. In addition to this threat the attractions of the market are being transformed and re-orientated towards a public with greater purchasing power as it enters into the logic of tourism.

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Through analysis of surveys and interviews with the users, workers and the stallholders of La Vega and a review of local newspaper reports we will examine two main issues:

- How the traders are securing ownership of the land, contesting their potential displacement from the city centre and manage its public character through offering accessibility and activity for a diverse public.
- The emergence of three main threats: the risk of the commodification of authenticity (Zukin, 2010); the danger of tourism; and the impact of regulatory plans which promote inner city urban renewal, tourism and displacement of the existing lower-income population.

To conclude we discuss what implications this could have for urban policy.

The current ownership model of La Vega Central

When considered from a historical perspective, the 'private' status of trade has always existed. Studies of medieval squares show that markets commonly took place on private land and that these 'private' medieval markets were intended for public use while being operated by a private owner, or were the subject to feudal control (Berding et al., 2010; Guàrdia and Oyón, 2015). In these cases the right of public access concurred with the wishes of the owner who defined that the space would be for public use (Selle, 2003; Siebel, 2000, 2007; Wehrheim, 2007, 2015).

In the case of La Vega, the public condition of the market has evolved over time. At the end of the nineteenth century, new structures to house the market were built on a large plot of land donated by a private owner and the 'Association of Businesses of La Vega Central' was created in 1895 as a private company in order to manage it. The market was in close proximity to the marginalised poor who lived in the adjacent boarding houses and rented rooms and who were subject to renewal strategies and campaigns to

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tackle the unsanitary conditions (Castillo, 2014). By 1930 the market was under the ownership of the municipality and became the most important wholesale and retail supplier of agricultural produce in the city (Bastías et al., 2011). This dominant position in the supply chain was challenged in the 1960s with the construction of larger distribution facilities as part of a modernisation programme for food distribution (I.M. de Santiago, 1961) and the introduction of supermarkets (ODEPA, 2002). These changes brought about economic decline by removing part of the market's wholesale business and increasing competition to its retail trade. By the 1980s national economic policies to reduce municipal costs led to the market being put up for sale, placing its future in doubt. At the time there was growing interest in developing urban policies to promote the repopulation of the inner city through urban renewal and there was a risk that new owners might find greater profit in the sale of land rather than in the running of an 'obsolete' market. This threatened the displacement of the traders from their place of work and the removal of a centre of supply for the inhabitants of the inner city. However traders resisted this privatisation and the uncertainties that it represented by organising themselves into a collective of approximately one thousand of the existing tenants, each obtaining the right of domain to a percentage of the total area (Bastías et al., 2011). This is the basis for the current ownership model of La Vega Central, where an organisation of traders administers their own management of the market as proprietors of the land.

Conflict as a privately-owned market

While ownership does give the stallholders power over their own land, it does not automatically guarantee the continued existence of the market itself. This became apparent in 2001 when the local municipality imposed restrictive night-time hours of access for the delivery of goods and prohibited the use of forklift trucks in the vicinity of the market impacting upon its functional operation. This led to days of protests by the traders who saw this as a direct threat to La Vega. A declaration in the press by the national sub-secretary for transport, claiming to be supported by the Ministry of

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Housing and Planning the Ministry of National Assets and the local mayor, stated that the wholesale of produce should not take place in the city centre, that the larger distribution facilities on the periphery of the city should do this job and that government efforts were necessary to reduce vehicle congestion and the levels of pollution in greater Santiago (*El Mercurio*, 2002). The traders responded by stating that they wanted to maintain the market where it was, pointing out that it provided employment for over 20,000 people. An agreement was finally reached but the traders were left under no illusion that they were not welcome in the city centre.

Securing political support for La Vega

More recently there has been a change in the relationship between the market and the political establishment, as La Vega has become a populist stage for national politicians. A review of newspaper reports reveals that between 2010 and 2013 at least eighteen visits to La Vega were undertaken by government ministers who were involved in delivering either explicitly political messages or participating in softer propaganda such as watching Chile's football team play in the World Cup and attending events for International Women's Day (see *El Mercurio* 2010; 2012a; 2012b; 2013a). These associations suggest that the traders have been actively building relationships with the political class in a bid to win over their support to protect their position in the city. One emblematic visit took place in October 2013 when the then President of Chile, having given a speech on the direction of his final months in office, handed over to the traders land titles to a small part of the market that they had appropriated but which was still owned by the State (*El Mercurio*, 2013c).

It is useful here to reflect on the trajectory of the status of the traders themselves by using Marcuse's (2009) categorisation of power in relation to the right to the city debate. In his analysis of Lefebvre's right to the city, Marcuse (2009) underlines the importance of understanding the distinct opportunities different groups have to exercise

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their rights. In broad terms these can be outlined by three situations: i) A demand for rights by those who in economic terms can be described as the excluded or parts of the working class who are deprived of material and legal rights and may also include those directly oppressed through cultural exclusion; ii) An aspiration for greater rights by the alienated, in order to be able to lead a satisfying life, who may include small business owners and occasionally some of the gentry; iii) The practice of already-established existing rights by the gentry, capitalists, establishment intelligentsia and the politically powerful (Marcuse, 2009). The change of the status of the traders would therefore see them move from a position where they demanded their rights as the working class tenants of the publicly-owned marketplace up until the 1980s to a position where they aspired for greater rights as small business owners and landowners of the market. In this sense the traders of La Vega have consolidated some basic rights to work in the city.

The inclusion of vulnerable groups in Chilean markets

At the same time as the traders have obtained certain rights, they have also taken on the responsibility and power to manage a space which has a long trajectory as an important component of the public life of the city and especially one which addresses the needs of the most vulnerable. In Chile one of the essential characteristics of the historic marketplace has been the active role of the poor in the production of this public place based on their own working class culture (Salazar, 2003). In the historic Chilean market, the practice of trade has coexisted with an 'underworld' of popular culture developed in taverns, gaming houses, including folk dancing and drinking (Bastías et al., 2011). The market is therefore not simply a place to which the working class have access, but becomes an important place for the development of public life suited to the needs of those who would otherwise be excluded.

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Public accessibility and public use of La Vega

Universal accessibility is a condition that defines a truly public space to which everyone has the right of access (Habermas, 1990). This discourse conforms to the ideal of public space which can promote encounters between strangers and initiate meaningful associations (Fincher and Iveson, 2008; Valentine, 2008). This refers to the possibility of the enactment of free communication between people whilst at the same time this activity is dominated by an individual or group which exercises their control over the space (Habermas, 1990). Wehrheim (2015) states that it is essential to understand how this control over space determines the ways in which it is used, while also recognising the role of its spatial characteristics.

Any study of the public character of a market needs to examine the accessibility and management of the space in terms of who the intended 'target' customers are and what activities and uses are employed to attract them. In addition, analysis of who is actually in the market, why they are there and how they access the market provides information on the characteristics which help describe the public function of the space. This dimension of 'publicness' of La Vega and other markets is part of the analytical sphere that we have already advanced in the introduction of this book which sees markets as spaces for sociability and where actors can develop meaningful social relationships, though not without tension and conflict.

The traders' 'target audience' and their openness to vulnerable workers

Responsibility for the management of the market rests with the traders and it is they who play a key role in determining the profile of the 'public' which uses it. Interviews with the stallholders reveal their intention to welcome a wide variety of users from the *pituquitas* ('posh' women from wealthy families) to the lower-income consumers. According to the stallholders, the diverse range of customers are attracted by the

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quality, variety and low cost of the produce, as much as by the friendly and individualised service. Significantly traders also mention the participation of the homeless and destitute in the public life of the market through acts of solidarity. This aspect could be described as a practice that provides an important safety net for the poor. As one stallholder comments:

[P]eople who are in bad way, they have La Vega, it has vegetables, fruit, everything ...some [people] come for the fruit, I would say every day. A piece of fruit that is a little damaged and [the stallholders] leave it to the side and people come to look through the boxes later.

(Interview with stallholder, 2014)

As stallholders mention, the market is an important place not only for the most marginalised who require food for their survival, but also the alienated in society, as a place of work:

Look, the market is very supportive, if someone arrives here who has done something wrong, made a mistake say, but wants to turn things around, it is possible here in La Vega. No one will ask them about their past, if you want to work, if you want to make a living, come on then, let's go.

(Interview with Stallholder 2014)

The background of stallholders is relevant in this respect; Traditionally stallholders were economic migrants to the city who came to make a living through the sale of their produce, and these origins along with the traders' recent experiences in contesting privatisation means that they may be more likely to empathise with the working class.

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The actual public in la Vega

In order to examine the actual public present in the market, why they are there and how they access it, a detailed survey of 200 users was undertaken. Data collected reveals that there is a wide range of users with some living nearby who arrive on foot while others drive by car from more distant parts of the city. Interviewees had very diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from people with little formal education, who tend to be immigrants, homeless, beggars, to those with a university education.

The presence of a diverse public in La Vega is supported by its spatial characteristics. The building itself is permeable and connected to the surrounding streets, leading to an increased footfall resulting from the movement of pedestrians taking short cuts through the market, and, in doing so contributing to its public nature. The majority of the surrounding inhabitants are generally on lower incomes and their close proximity to the market is important as they can take advantage of the possibility of purchasing goods at low prices and can avoid paying transport costs, since they can walk there. The spatial proximity of this group is due to the opportunities that they find in the surrounding area. The neighbourhood provides a variety of spaces which are accessible to those on lower wages, such as low-cost accommodation in the adjacent rooming houses of the *cités*² and numerous affordable spaces for leisure, entertainment and social interaction (Arce, 2015).

While at the neighbourhood scale there is support for those on lower incomes, at the city scale, it is those on higher incomes that are catered for. The market is accessible to those in other parts of the city through the use of private transport. The market's proximity to important trunk roads allow shoppers' access by car and the recent construction of an urban highway connects the market with the more affluent inhabitants in Santiago's eastern neighbourhoods.

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Activities and uses that attract customers and workers to la Vega

The principal reason users give for visiting La Vega Central is to buy goods. Customers are attracted by the low prices and the variety of the products on offer, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, dried fruit and nuts, meat, frozen foods and hard-to-find produce from other parts of Latin America. Furthermore the produce is seen as contributing to a sense of quality and fairness that the market represents, which is not limited to the products it sells but also as a place of work, as expressed by one customer:

People that seek quality food have some kind of idea that makes them refuse to go to a supermarket ... that is one of the big reasons why I will not, or rather why I will go to La Vega and not a supermarket. I don't like the concept of the supermarket, of big business, of financial gain and low salaries for the workers.

(Interview with customer, 2014)

Another aspect which attracts people to the market is the atmosphere created by the traders. The traders' congenial relationships with the customers turn shopping into a friendly and enjoyable task, where going to La Vega is seen as a leisure pursuit. This attraction was understood by one customer as the intangible heritage of the market:

This is a place, I think, that should be preserved and preserved precisely because it has a character ... I would say that shows in the relationship between users and vendors that you can't find elsewhere, and I think this is heritage, or rather I think those things should be preserved.

(Interview with customer, 2014)

The existence of less privileged actors in the market is evident and the appeal of the market for these groups underlines an important relationship between the market and its

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neighbourhood and in part confirms the stated intentions of the market traders in practising solidarity with the excluded:

We [the homeless] move around more at night, by day we are here very close to La Vega because here they give us food, because as people here say "After God, La Vega". La Vega is very good here, they give us food all day [breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks of fruit], be it during the week or at the weekend.

(Interview with homeless person, 2014)

The market is also a place where street vendors benefit from living close by; 'I am here every day with my juice stand and the clientele is good. Moreover I come from close by [From a street seven blocks from the market], so I don't spend anything to get here not even on a bus ride' (Interview with Peruvian street vendor, 2014; See Figure 1).

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Title: Street vendors in La Vega Market benefit from close proximity to the market,

(Source: Neil Turnbull, 2015)

Finally, the convenience of the market is revealed by one local resident:

I come every day to La Vega to shop as I live close by. If I was missing some ingredient for *escabeche* (typical Peruvian dish of chicken or fish) I'd pop out and would go to La Vega to buy it. It's great to live so close, we are like neighbours, some days I go twice a day or more, today I have been and I'm sure to go back later with my son when I collect him from school, we often both pass through the market without buying a thing, it's like going on an outing.

(Interview with Peruvian shopper, 2014)

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The market is accessible to a wide spectrum of the poor and the vulnerable. By returning to Marcuse's (2009) previously outlined categorisation of different actors in relation to the right to the city debate it can be said that much of the public present in La Vega share similarities with the group who Marcuse says is engaged in a demand for their rights. Within this group we can identify those who are excluded economically and culturally: the informal workers, porters, ambulant traders and lower-income customers of La Vega are indicative of the economically-excluded in class terms, surviving at the margins of society; the immigrants from other Latin American countries who work in the market are indicative of those who may be oppressed in cultural terms along lines of race or ethnicity.

The potential threats to the public of La Vega

The market's current conditions allow for access by a diverse population and significantly a group who are often oppressed and excluded. However this 'public' is vulnerable to emerging processes which if fully developed will turn the market into a place for the affluent at the exclusion of the poor. These processes are influenced by both the traders of La Vega as managers of its space and the state through the actions of municipalities who manage the surrounding neighbourhood. The traders' operation of the market along traditional lines offering a friendly personalised service may have the unintended consequence of attracting tourists and is in danger of becoming commodified as a mark of 'authenticity'. This could re-orientate the market towards a public with greater purchasing power having the potential to transform the retail offer and exclude the poor. In addition the poor and the working class who live next to the market are vulnerable to displacement through state-led urban renewal and the promotion of tourism which would lead to the eradication of the supporting landscape which surrounds La Vega.

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Commodification of authenticity and the emergence of tourism

Zukin (2010) writes about how authenticity has become an asset in the gentrification of some neighbourhoods in New York City. The appeal of these initially down-at-heel environments is based on the opportunity to experience the 'authentic' city through its old brick buildings, cobblestone streets and lively crowds while food stores offer 'authentic' freshly-picked produce (Zukin, 2010). Due to these characteristics, these neighbourhoods become renowned in a process similar to Bourdieu's (1984) theory of 'distinction' where preferences for consumption are dominated by the ruling classes. The authenticity of a neighbourhood is at first recognised by the culturally-aware who may not be economically wealthy but are typically able to pay higher prices. Their presence brings change in both the land market, with higher rents, and in the retail landscape, with higher prices and more exclusive products which cater to their needs (Zukin, 2010). These beginnings have many parallels to classic residential gentrification where urban pioneers invest in neighbourhoods, leading to a snowball effect, in turn leading to the displacement of residents (Lees et al., 2008). Zukin et al., (2009) have outlined what this can mean for the retail landscape by documenting the process of the appearance of high-end products suited to more affluent customers in new 'boutiques' which contrast with the disappearance of older stores which cater to a poorer, more traditional and less mobile customer.

Interviews with the customers of La Vega Central reveal that its authenticity is its foremost attraction. This authenticity is produced by the workers who provide a personalised service, offer quality produce at affordable prices and animate the space with raised voices, jokes and friendly repartee between themselves and with the customers, all culminating in a convivial atmosphere evocative of the traditional marketplace.

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Currently the emergence of more exclusive products which cater to the needs of the more affluent does not yet appear to have occurred. The recent appearance of exotic produce which originates in other parts of South America is arguably a new phenomenon which has a mark of distinction and the 'boom' in ethnic restaurants (*El Mercurio*, 2013b) points towards the successful cultural appropriation of these products. However this does not necessarily translate into the appearance of more affluent consumers in the market. Interviews with some of the stallholders who sell these products reveal that their main customers are high-end restaurants. So while their produce is consumed by Santiago's elite who flock to the city's new high-end ethnic restaurants or enjoy typical dishes at home, the produce finds its way to these tables through the working class kitchen staff or the immigrant live-in maids who serve the rich, and it is these actors who are present in La Vega. At the same time these goods are also consumed by the immigrants themselves as an important part of their identity.

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Title: Foods from other parts of South America are on sale to both high-end restaurants and migrants (Source: Neil Turnbull, 2011)

Whether or not the authenticity of the market is now attracting more middle class consumers is tricky to quantify, but there are some signs that small scale reinvestment in the market is taking place. A survey of the market undertaken in 2004 indicates that 10% of the stalls were abandoned (Ducci, 2009), whereas field observations reveal that in 2014 only 1% of stalls were disused or abandoned. A newspaper report from 2013 contributes to this narrative of renovation, with the administrator of the market commenting on the recent rise in the number of upper class customers. 'Before, the middle class came to La Vega, but they didn't amount to more than 2000 per week. Now around 15,000 people come from the A, B and C1 socio-economic groups. It's a big cultural change' (La Tercera, 24/06/2013). The report puts this increase down in part to customers choosing the market for its sense of heritage, emphasising the importance of the cultural authenticity of the market.

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While the increase in middle class footfall is a strong possibility, the rise in media focus the authenticity of the market is clear. In a review of newspaper articles in a national Chilean newspaper during the period 2000-2014, over eighteen different reports, all in the last seven years, refer to the cultural value of the market, including: the promotion of the market as a place that is recognised by artists for its marginality; its adulation by musicians as one of the cradles of popular Chilean music and numerous televised programmes from late night chat shows, daytime soap operas and charity telethons (See *El Mercurio*, 2014a; 2014b). Many of these aspects have parallels to the staged events undertaken by shopping malls (Crawford, 1992), however here they combine with the everyday attractions of the market to create a powerful attraction based on tradition designed to draw in local customers.

Recently, recognition of the traditional ambience of the market has become international as web-based cultural pundits recently voted La Vega the fourth best market in the world, due not only to the opportunity to taste local foods but also because it is a 'true reflection of the culture of the country' (The Daily Meal website, n.d.). La Vega is catapulted onto the international tourist scene, alongside Barcelona's La Boquería, London's Borough Market and Seoul's Noryangjin Fish Market, who take the first three positions in the list (See also Salinas and Cordero's examination of the role of international gourmet markets in gentrification in Chapter 6 in this book). This development relates to the local character of the place being captured by the media which puts the market in danger of becoming reduced to a 'cultural destination' (Zukin, 2010). See Figure 2.

In other contexts these processes which attract the middle class to the market might combine with a rise in the land value of the market, putting pressure on the traders themselves and undermining the public accessibility of the space. However, here in the context of La Vega the threat comes from the potential for change in the product offer as the traders are the owners themselves. As more middle class people are attracted to the market the stallholders could take advantage of this group through raising prices.

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They may also modify their offer to cater for the needs of the passing tourist, as can be seen in the case of the Mercado Central, Santiago's traditional fish market which sells expensive lunches and snack sized punnets of fresh fruit (Pádua et al., 2012). This may provoke processes of displacement similar to part of Marcuse's (1985) definition, but in this case related to product offer rather than land value, with 'direct displacement' a potential result as lower-income customers are priced out and the 'pressure of displacement' is invoked, as the goods offered to tourists may not suit the needs of the regular customers.

State policy for urban renewal and tourism

While the traders are responsible for the accessibility of the marketplace itself, wider processes are at play which impact upon the surrounding neighbourhood. Three municipalities (Recoleta, Independencia and Santiago Centro) are the custodians of the land around the market and the related warehouses and wholesale trade. These three municipalities have different approaches to the market; however, none of their future projections consider strategies to address the protection of the Central Vega as an inclusive public space to which we refer in this chapter (Arce, 2015).

The current urban planning ordinances of the municipalities are ambivalent and undefined in terms of land use regulation and of the future vision they have for the surrounding area including for the warehouses, related wholesale trade and the residential sector. On the one hand, there are some regulations that recognise existing land uses and try to coordinate the complex logistics involving market flows and the location of warehouses and trade. On the other hand, some regulations propose a change of land use from one which currently combines residential, warehouses and commercial use to one which is predominately residential. This ambiguity in the regulation of activities which are associated with the market leaves the traders and all those who

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undertake supporting activities in its vicinity exposed to a high degree of instability (Interviews with local planning consultants, 2014).

Vital components in the current activity of the market are the existing warehouses, and although they can generate negative external impacts on the functioning of the neighbourhood, it is necessary to acknowledge their role and look for ways to mitigate the issues. It is essential to find a balance between retail and wholesale activities, commercial infrastructure and housing that currently exists within the area where the consumers and the workers of La Vega reside (Arce, 2015). In contrast, policy outlined in the municipal regulatory plans, promotes the intensification of the land use through densification, in particular in the area where the most vulnerable housing has been historically located. In these areas high-density housing developments are permitted which allows for buildings 30 metres tall which have high floor area ratios between 1.5 and 4.0 (I.M. de Independencia, 2014a) and between 2.4 and 4.0 (I.M. de Recoleta, 2006).

These regulations combined with the state-sponsored subsidy for urban renewal creates a lucrative rent gap for private investors and promotes the construction of residential buildings and are responsible for gentrification in the centre of Santiago (See López-Morales, 2011; Borsdorf and Hidalgo, 2013). In the case of the neighbourhood surrounding La Vega, an important determining factor in this process is the ownership model of these buildings where properties are held by a few owners who rent them out to lower-income tenants, leaving them vulnerable to displacement by landlords who wish to capitalise on the value of their land. These conditions have turned the area around the Central Vega into a coveted area for real estate development. This condition, alongside the absence of a policy to stop the risks of expulsion of the most vulnerable people, threatens the neighbourhood around La Vega, endangering both its working population and lower-income customers.

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The municipalities that regulate the neighbourhood of La Vega demonstrate a certain ambivalence in its management. On the one hand they claim to be unable to make progress in addressing the issues associated with the market, such as traffic congestion and the attraction of informal trade to the surrounding streets, which they find difficult to control as they would like (Interviews with local planning consultants, 2014). On the other hand, they support initiatives to promote tourism in the area and the regeneration of the city centre for the middle class (Gobierno Regional de Santiago, 2014; IEUT and CCHC, 2016).

Reconciling the divergent interests of different actors and people present in the area (traders, residents, immigrants, Chileans and the transient population) is not at the heart of the discussion for the future of the area and the only attempts at coordination relate to the resolution of conflicts that arise from the activity of the market in relation to the use of the surrounding streets and pavements (I.M. Independencia, 2014b).

The three municipalities propose tourism as a future for the sector. There are even talks about the potential of this area, due to its centrality, to become a place of high-end products (Gobierno Regional de Santiago, 2014; Pujol, 2014). In this sense, the market's historic heritage and multi-cultural characteristics are seen as tools to strengthen the tourism sector through a number of projects, among which is the 'Esplanade of Markets'. This project corresponds to an International Competition from 2015, whose criteria asked for the design of an urban-landscaping project with emphasis on the integration of the two banks of the Mapocho River through a tourist hub (Arce, 2015).

In the various remodelling projects that the three municipalities plan, none addresses the concern about the inclusion and protection of vulnerable people and workers. Issues such as the improvement of pavements, parking for customers, the formalization of

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tourist routes, the remodelling of heritage buildings and facades are promoted, as are the remodelling of public spaces for civic character (I.M. de Santiago, 2016).

Conclusions

The focus on the gentrification of public space allows us to address one of the central characteristics of indoor markets, that is to say their role in the public life of the city as a space of inclusion. In the case of La Vega, its specific ownership model is an example of the successful defence of traders' rights to contest displacement from their place of work and has allowed them to continue the tradition of the market in Santiago's city centre. By becoming landowners the organisation of traders of La Vega have not only to some extent safeguarded their rights to work in the city but also those of other workers associated with the operation of the market and other vulnerable users of the market such as the lower-income customers and those who benefit from the traders' acts of solidarity.

Nonetheless, this chapter reveals that the public nature of the market remains contested, even if the right of domain by the traders has been secured, with the rights of some members of the public to access the market potentially eroded. In practice the 'public' presence of the different communities of the affluent and the poor is nuanced and there are underlying potential conflicts between the two groups.

The findings from our research suggest that there is the risk of commodification of the authenticity of the market which has the potential to economically and culturally displace the current working class consumers. There is the risk that the absence of policies which safeguard the presence of the informal workers and immigrants in the surrounding neighbourhood will lead to their physical displacement through urban renewal. These threats challenge the continued role of the market as a public space and,

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in particular, call for a different response from the actors who exert an influence over its operation, directly in the case of the traders and indirectly in the case of the state.

Various questions are raised: To what extent can the traders offer an inclusive environment in the face of state policy to gentrify the area through tourism? Would the traders be able or willing to use their political contacts to advocate for the rights of the more vulnerable users of La Vega as they did for their own survival? How might the different local municipalities encourage development of the area and recognise the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, ensuring their participation in the city centre? And how might urban policy recognise these needs in the context of the development of markets?

Knowledge of how the most vulnerable shop and work at La Vega demands a deeper reflection on how the state and local government's public policy should address the area. Although they may see tourism as an interesting niche to exploit and the importance of promoting urban renewal of this sector of Santiago, we recognise that that in the ecology of La Vega and its surroundings there are several groups who could be at risk due to these actions. If these actors are in danger so too is an important public space in Santiago which attracts tourists and people from around the city precisely because of these qualities. The challenge will be to develop the area on the understanding that the market's activity includes the surrounding wholesale commercial activities, the warehouses, and the spaces where the lower-income traders and customers use of recreation of its workers in buildings and in the public space. The challenge will be to develop a new urban environment where the poor and the vulnerable are housed, have access to services and places for leisure. These might be imagined as new typologies of mixed-use buildings which house storage and offer cheap accommodation (Arce, 2015), accessible social housing in the city centre and affordable public use buildings for sport, community activities and education.

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Finally this is not merely a call for the preservation of the universal public space of the traditional market in the city but also a demand for the rights of the poor to be recognised by those who are responsible for the management of the city.

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² *Cités* are a typology of collective housing from the early twentieth century.