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Abstract

During the last decades, Latin American cities have transformed their organizational setting and urban layout. Taking the case of Santiago (Chile) I analyze the effects triggered by the construction of material and symbolic walls surrounding new neighborhoods and housing units, exemplifying a new model of urban structure. Many authors have equated these related processes with the formation of gated communities in North America; others as a turning point to a medieval way of life. Challenging such understandings, it is also relevant to consider that tendencies toward segregation and social separation have a long tradition in Latin America. That is why new neighborhoods constructed recently, are ingrained in cultural backgrounds that must be considered and analyzed. However, researchers must not lose sight of the influences of such processes as globalization, lessening of governmental controls, deregulation of land markets, and more flexible planning schemes. All these forces reinforce, dialectically, the process of segregation.