

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG  
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
SEMINAR



**Dr. Cristian Silva**

Lecturer, School of Natural  
and Built Environment,  
Queen's University Belfast

## Sustainable Urban Sprawl? The Ecologies of Land-Fragmentation in Chile's Suburban Spaces

### ABSTRACT

Urban sprawl in Latin America has been described as one of the major problems of 'the growth machine' considering its social, economic and environmental impacts. In response, most planning policies have been designed on anti-sprawl narratives to restrain urban growth and intensify inner densification as synonym of urban sustainability. However, the reality is that urban sprawl has been thoroughly consolidated by all tiers of governments and has become a longstanding pattern of urban development. On this basis and assuming the inevitability of urban sprawl, I use the capital city of Chile – Santiago – to explore the different ecologies defined by suburban land-fragmentation that characterises Santiago's sprawling growth. To do so, I focus on the wide spectrum of undeveloped areas, open tracts, vacant lands and other interstitial spaces, to identify their environmental potentials and propose an alternative point of entry in the studies of suburbanisation from the ecologies of land-fragmentation and what is apparently still undeveloped, under-developed or non-urbanised. This paper aims to challenge anti-sprawl policies in light of these emerging ecologies, and emphasis land-fragmentation as a value for a more sustainable suburban development. It is also proposed that if land-fragmentation is included and even codified in planning, it may help to improve long-term policies and inspire modernizations beyond anti-sprawl narratives. Lastly, the paper suggests that more sustainable urban development of city-regions might include these varied suburban interstices that operate upon the transformation of sprawling geographies, and consider them as rich sources of environmental assets to inform more comprehensive planning solutions.

### LANGUAGE

English

### DATE

10 Sep 2020 (Thu)

### TIME

4:30 – 6:00 pm

### ZOOM MEETING

ID: 973 6037 5790

<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/97360375790>

(no password required)

### ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr Cristian Silva's profile lies in the intersections between urban planning and urban design. Between 2005 and 2010 he developed research on urban informality, social housing and local development, but since 2012 his research interests have been focused on the explorations of contemporary patterns of urban growth and change, urban sprawl and (post)suburbanisation, and the role of 'Interstitial Spaces', vacant lands and leftover zones in restructuring city-regions. Part of his work has been published in *Geoforum*, *Urban Studies*, *Town Planning Review*, *Urban Sciences* and *Asian Geographer*. He is currently finishing a book about suburbanization in Chile and the implications of 'interstitial spaces' with Routledge for early 2021.

Dr Silva finished his PhD in Urban Studies at the Bartlett School of Planning (2017, UCL), worked as Lecturer in Urban Design (Theory and Practice) at University of Auckland (2017-2019, New Zealand) and is currently a Lecturer in Spatial Planning at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland (UK), in which he teaches spatial planning focused on the institutional and policy context of planning practice in the UK.

For inquiries, please contact Prof. Calvin Chung (Tel: +852 3943 9791; Email: [calvin.chung@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:calvin.chung@cuhk.edu.hk))

