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Chile Despertó – The Reasons for the Mass Protests in Chile 2019/2020

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Abstract:
Starting on 18 October 2019, Chile experienced the largest mass protests in its history. The movement was immensely broad in its demands and diverse in tactics and participants. The citizens' discontent went beyond solely one issue, addressing a more equal welfare system and social justice, among other things. But it was not only about street protests; the social movement also caused an avalanche in social media exchanges and initiated a dialogue among Chileans in the form of neighbourhood associations. This paper argues that long-standing inequalities, the inability of politics to address them, a growing distancing of the population from politics, and the process of the citizens' politicisation were the reasons for the mass protests.

Keywords: Social movements, Chile, inequality, mass protests, civil society, Latin America, social media, political opportunities, social justice

JEL Codes: O54, I38, Z13, N36

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Abbreviations

AFP	*Administradoras de Fondos de Pensiones*, private pension funds in Chile
ANEF	*Agrupación Nacional de Empleados Fiscales,* union of public sector employees
AUGE	Universal Access to Guaranteed Rights
COES	Centre for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies Chile
CUT	Workers' United Center of Chile
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
INDH	Human Rights Institute of Chile
NSM	New Social Movement
No+AFP	"No more AFP", movement claiming to reform the pension system
NUDESOC	*Núcleo de Sociología Contingente*, organisation of sociology students from the University of Chile
PNUD	*Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo*/ United Nations Development Programme
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
POS	Political Opportunity Structures
RMT	Resource Mobilisation Theory
SMO	Social Movement Organisation

1. Introduction

> *Everybody's there, everybody's having a good time. It's a very relaxed atmosphere. Everywhere you look, there's culture. Everywhere you look, there are people who are passionate about what they're doing. And you feel like you're in great company. […] You feel a sense of belonging. (Interviewee 2 about the protests in Santiago)*

In 2019, a prodigious wave of social movements occurred in Latin America, spreading from one country to another. Large parts of the continent were in turmoil, and significant protests erupted in Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Venezuela. People took to the streets for different reasons, and likewise the political systems of the countries vary from socialist to right-wing governments.

Chile's uprisings, triggered by increased metro prices, surprised the public with their vehemence and intensity. The country is known as the most prosperous nation in Latin America and is a poster child for international organisations (Ferreira and Schoch, 2020). The supposedly economically successful country, which President Sebastián Piñera shortly before the beginning of the mass protests called an "oasis" of political stability (Páez, 2019), fell into a far-reaching social crisis.

With these demonstrations, Chile experienced the largest mass protests in its history, leading to weeks of unrest and violence on the streets (Franklin, 2019; Käufer, 2019). Especially from October to December 2019, there were massive street protests all over the country. *Chile despertó* (Chile woke up) chanted thousands of demonstrators all over the country (Taub, 2019).

This paper aims to systematically analyse how the Chilean protests arose and developed into such a mass movement in 2019 and 2020. I explain the occurrences in Chile with the help of social movement theory, in order to trace the events' timeline and identify the key actors involved. Thus, the research question is how and why the Chilean social movement of 2019 and 2020 developed. The media emphasised that inequalities triggered the protest wave in Chile (Davies, 2019; Luna, 2019; *Financial Times*, 2019; Massing, 2020). In social movement research, there is an ongoing debate about how inequalities and social grievances influence social movements' emergence. In the case of Chile, I therefore intend to further evaluate the extent to which discontent about inequalities can explain the developments.

2. Social Movement Theories

There is no consistent definition for social movements as they already state theoretical assumptions. According to Giddens and Sutton (2017, p.936), social movements are the most common type of unconventional political participation outside of established institutions. Social movements are a form of collective behaviour, which can be defined as all kinds of voluntary and non-institutionalised group actions (Little, 2014).

Della Porta and Diani (2020, pp.14-15) establish three elements that characterise social movements:

(1) Collective action is conflictual, and social movement actors promote change articulated in social or political terms.
(2) Social movement actors are connected through dense informal networks.
(3) Social movements are characterised by a collective identity enabling a shared commitment.

Theoretical approaches to social movements can be divided into structural paradigms focusing on economic resources or political structures and social network or agency approaches with a focus on frames, identities, emotions or constructionism (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004, p. 7; van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009, p. 18; Donoso, 2013, p. 23). These approaches also fundamentally differ when it comes to the causes of movements' emergence. For some sociologists, it is clear that discontent with living conditions will result in greater protest activity, but other scholars also predict a contrary effect, meaning that collective action will be impeded.

Karl Marx was one of the earliest theorists researching social movements. He primarily focused on the reasons why revolutionary movements occur and explained them with class conflict, leading to his identification of a revolutionary working class within capitalism. Marx's most important contributions were the purposefulness of protest activity, the reasoning with class concerns and the importance of organisations for social movements (Morris and Herring, 1984, p. 4). Marx discussed the context of economic inequality resulting in frustration and collective action. He argued that “a house may be large or small; as long as the neighboring houses are likewise small, it satisfies all social requirements for a residence. But let there arise next to the little house a palace, and the little house shrinks to a hut” (Marx, 1847, as cited in De Juan and Wegner, 2019, p. 40).

Ted Robert Gurr's “Theory of Relative Deprivation” focuses mainly on violence in connection with protests and explains collective violence or aggression with increasing frustration (Gurr, 1970, pp. 23–24). Relative deprivation is defined as the discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities. Similar to Marx, Gurr's Theory of Relative Deprivation sees economic circumstances as an important motivating factor for collective action. People compare their value expectations, which can be, for instance, income, political influence or status, to other individuals or groups. The discrepancy between the relative share of an individual or group in wealth or power is linked to protest activities (Gurr, 1970, p. 52).

By contrast, some scholars argue that grievances and deprivation do not necessarily lead to the rise of social movements (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, pp. 1213–1215). The questioning of the existing theories led to the development of the Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT), which is known as the most influential American perspective (Buechler, 1995, p. 441). RMT deals with the dynamics and tactics as well as the variety of resources necessary for social movements (ibid.). The RMT predicts a negative correlation

between economic inequality and participation in protests. According to this theory, the emergence of social movements depends on organisational resources, which are higher for more economically developed countries, leading to increased mobilisation (Moseley, 2015, p. 8). There is little agreement about the resources relevant for initiating a mobilisation (Jenkins, 1983, p. 533). Referred resources can be tangible like income or access to certain goods, but also intangible resources such as leadership or skills. McCarthy and Zald (1977) introduced the terminology "social movement organisations" (SMOs), which are formal groups aiming for a change in society.

In the 1980s, the RMT was then supplemented by the theory of Political Opportunity Structures (POS) and framing theories (Kern, 2008, p. 11). POS theory especially considers the context in which social movements occur. It includes a diversity of exogenous analysis, explaining why protests emerge in some cases and not in others, and why specific alliances, strategies and claims are chosen rather than others (Meyer, 2004, p. 126). When considering the environment of a social movement, the government is the most important and influential actor, but other (social movement) groups can also provide opportunities or threats to an organisation. Changing political agendas have a direct impact on encouraging or discouraging protest activities. Interest groups opposed to high repression have a higher cost to engage in collective action and, hence, decreased power (Tilly, 1978, pp. 3-5;3-6).

The concept of frames derived from Erving Goffman's ideas from 1974 (Della Porta and Diani, 2015, p. 74). Framing processes brought the role of grievances back into the discussion and address the question of how social movement actors raise awareness. Thereby, framing theories focus on the agency necessary to establish meanings of social movements. This active consolidation of a common view is usually attributed to visible leaders of social movements (Snow, 2007, p. 384). " […] [C]ollective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614). Frames are individual cognitive structures but also of organisations and their interpretations (Snow, 2007, pp. 404–405). Media plays a crucial role in defining protest issues and also the responsible for the social problems. Social media in particular facilitates the formation of affinity groups and mobilisation for short-term campaigns (Della Porta and Diani, 2015, p. 156).

Since the 1960s, several academics state that "New" Social Movements (NSMs) started to emerge (Melucci, 1984, p. 199). NSM theory evolved in Europe and is based on Marxist ideas, albeit distancing from the assumption that social movements emerge due to material redistribution issues or labour concerns (Buechler, 1995, pp. 441–442; Martin, 2001, p. 362). Melucci (1984, p. 826) attributes NSMs to post-industrial and advanced capitalist societies and argues that the reasons for social conflicts shifted from solely materialist or class concerns to cultural grounds, personal identity and life projects. The focus on symbolic and cultural meanings is often criticised as it undermines the connection of structural inequality and social recognition (Martin, 2001, p. 379). NSM theorists emphasise the variety of loose, temporary organisations forming a social

movement, which promote individual autonomy and are not connected to established political institutions (Melucci, 1984, p. 872; Buechler, 1995, p. 442). It is therefore characteristic that there is not one person leading the movement and that NSMs turn away from typical bureaucratic or political structures.

The scholars commented on above name various factors for the analysis of social movements at a macro, meso and micro level. Thereby, inequality and also perceived inequality are important contributing factors. The importance of agency through SMOs and framing to address structural issues, makes it difficult to predict the emergence of social movements because of inequality. Thus, there is no fixed procedure for analysing social movements. To obtain a more holistic picture, I combine the theories to analyse the emergence and extent of the movement in Chile.

3. Inequality and the Neoliberal Economic Model in Chile

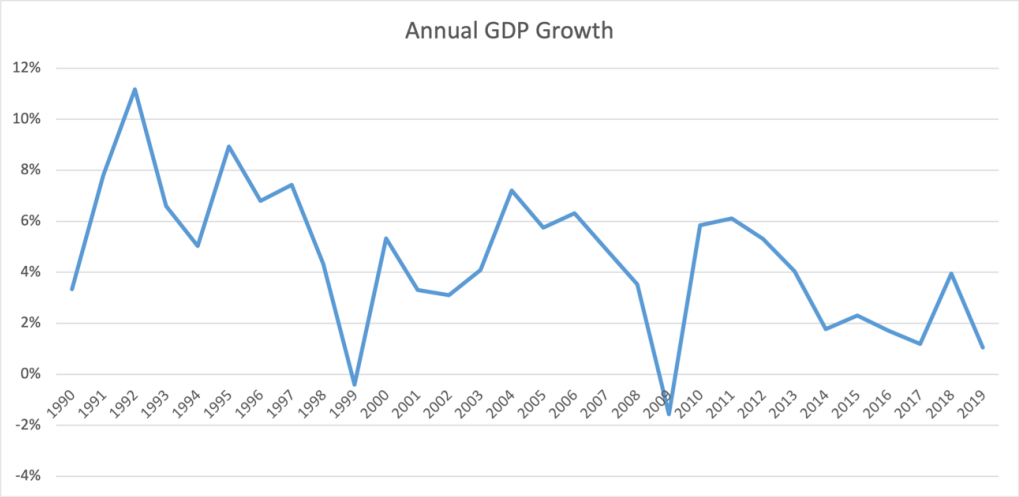
To better understand citizens' motives for mobilisation, the broader context of economic development, relations between population and politics, and social movements that preceded Chile's 2019 *Estallido Social* (Social Outburst) are highly relevant. Various fragments of market society are approaches to discontent in this context.

Chile's economy and society is highly influenced by the military dictatorship led by General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte from 1973 to 1990. By 1975, the economists in charge, called the Chicago boys, started to implement comprehensive neoliberal structural reforms of trade opening and stringent austerity policy (Davies, 2019; Vásquez, 2019a, p. 5). The Pinochet reforms greatly strengthened the role of private providers in pensions, health, and education (Pribble and Huber, 2013, p. 6). A new financing system of educational vouchers inspired by Milton Friedman, one of the Chicago boys, was established and government expenditure on education fell by 22% between 1982 and 1990 (Cox, 2003, pp. 7, 12). Moreover, Chile became the first country in the world to close public pensions and privatise its pension system. The for-profit pension fund managers are known as *Administradoras de Fondos de Pensiones* (AFP). The system included a defined contribution of 10% from the income and an undefined benefit, meaning that the pension is uncertain and depending on several factors (Arenas de Mesa and Mesa-Lago, 2006, p. 150).

In 1988, Chileans decided about the continuity of the Pinochet dictatorship in a plebiscite, and the coalition of sixteen central-left political parties called *La Concertación* started to govern. Chile retained their constitution from the dictatorship, which hampered reforms due to high legislative thresholds. Following the fall of the military regime in 1990, *La Concertación* governed Chile bringing political stability (Jara, 2014, p. 26). The democratisation process quickly led to one of the most stable party systems in Latin America (Castiglioni and Kaltwasser, 2016, p. 8). After the period marked by protests and unrest at the end of the Pinochet regime, the approval rates for the government increased, and the middle class, as well as purchasing power, grew

(Castiglioni and Kaltwasser, 2016, p. 8). The country enjoyed national stability, and in 2010, Chile became the first Latin-American OECD member (OECD, 2010).

Figure 1 Chile's Annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth 1990 - 2019



Own elaboration based on data from World Bank, 2020

From 2000 to 2017, Chile's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 3.76% on average per year, driven by an increased value of copper exports (OECD, 2018a, p. 8; World Bank, 2019). Especially between 2000 and 2015, Chile was the main destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) in South America thanks to increasing investments in the service sector, which helped the country to diversify and promote labour-intensive activities (Vásquez, 2019b, p. 6). The unemployment rate in Chile remained historically low, hitting 7.3% by the end of 2019 (World Bank, 2020). With economic growth, the number of people living in poverty steadily declined. The poverty reduction was achieved by creating new jobs, rising real wages and the increase in labour protection (Gammage, Alburquerque and Durán, 2014, p. 8). During the 2000s, Chile, like almost all Latin American countries, reduced their income gaps, albeit from very high inequality levels. Those developments increased families' income, expanded their access to assets, and led to overall rising living conditions in Chile. Nevertheless, between 2000 and 2016, the percentage of people who say they agree very much with the statement "income differences are very large" increased from 42% to 52% (PNUD, 2017, p. 22). The reduced poverty and inequality indicators do not compensate for the fact that Chile is still a country with a high level of socioeconomic inequality and a concentration at the top. When comparing the top 20% of household income relative to the bottom 20%, Chile has the highest income inequality among OECD countries (OECD, 2020). Chile's Gini coefficient, another indicator for income inequality ranging from 0 (perfect equality) to 1, declined for several years in line with the trend across Latin American (SEDLAC (CEDLAS and World Bank), 2020). In 2017, the coefficient slightly increased again and amounted to 0.44 (ibid.). This figure is very similar to other South American peers but considerably higher than in most other OECD countries.

Until today the structures of neoliberal capitalism and extreme deregulation remain. Even with the reforms of leftist governments, non-contributory social transfers and social assistance programmes remain poorly developed (Huber, Pribble and Stephens, 2010, p. 89). The centre-left administrations regularly adjusted minimum wages, regulated subcontracting of workers and introduced unemployment insurance (Huber, Pribble and Stephens, 2010, pp. 89–90). Nevertheless, still a lot of workers, especially informal employees, are not included in the social protection measurements. Since the dictatorship, trade unions have played only a marginal role, making it difficult for workers to bargain for their rights and facilitating precarious employment conditions (Sehnbruch and Donoso, 2020, p. 55).

In the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of 2015, Chile was the country where students' socio-economic background most influences their performance (OECD, 2017, pp. 61–64). Similar inequalities also persist in the health system. The left government of the former president Bachelet introduced the programme Universal Access to Guaranteed Rights (AUGE) in health care inequalities to protect the most vulnerable of society. According to the National Health Survey of 2016, the percentage of people who say they have confidence in access to health care in case of emergency or severe chronic illness is 63% in the high socioeconomic level and only 17.5% in the low socioeconomic level (PNUD, 2017, p. 30). In *Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo*/United Nations Development Programme (PNUD) surveys, people with less education and lower incomes in particular said they had experienced unfair treatment in the health system (PNUD, 2017, pp. 207–208). Also, the private pension system with AFPs having the sole purpose of administrating the pension funds remains until today. Pension fund managers have charged fees ranging from 25 to 36% of the contribution (Borzutzky, 2019, p. 209). The reasons for the high profitability of AFPs today is that only six AFPs exist and the desired effect of cost reduction due to competition did not occur (Borzutzky, 2019, p. 209). This results in 80% of Chilean pensioners receiving less than the minimum wage of 330 Euros (Mander, 2019). Public spending on pensions amounts about 0.6% of the GDP compared to a 6% average in the OECD countries (ibid.).

Overall public spending as a proportion of GDP is particularly low in comparison to most other OECD countries (OECD, 2018b). In 2018, Chile's government spending amounted to only 25.5% of GDP and was thus lower than the spending of Latin American peers such as Colombia or Costa Rica (ibid.). Private companies provide channels of communication, water and electricity (Somma, 2017, p. 4). They also feature prominently in the selection of suppliers for education, retirement pensions and in parts for the health system.

4. Social Protest and Re-politicisation of Civil Society

NGOs and social movements played a vital role in ending the dictatorship (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2011, p. 133). The NGOs collaborated with the newly formed political parties to support the plebiscite, and later many of their leaders obtained essential positions in

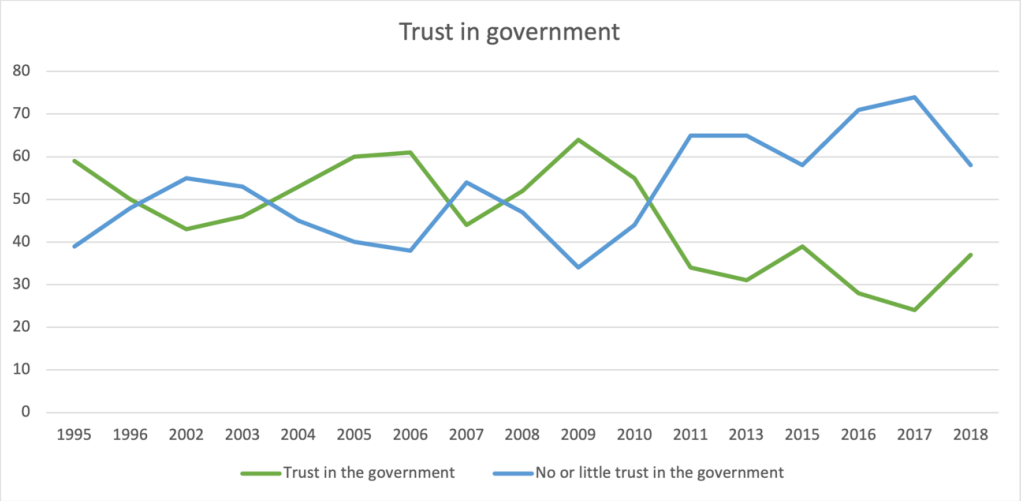
the new government. Those roots in protest organisations resulted in strong links between political parties and organised civil society after the military dictatorship and a marginalisation of non-affiliated NGOs (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2011, p. 133). This proximity provides an explanation for the lack of protest activity during the administration of *La Concertación*. After the massive protests during the economic crisis in 1982, leading ultimately to the democratic transition, there was a sharp decline in general strikes and demonstrations in the 1990s (Donoso, 2013, p. 82). The interaction of the government in the 90s can be defined as continuing exchange, communication and search for consensus with the opposition and representatives of civil society (Jara, 2014, p. 30).

This non-politicised sentiment of the 90s gradually changed. Over time the primary desire for consensus turned to a growing dissatisfaction with Chilean politics. This gradual detachment of civil society from politics is reflected in various empirical indicators: voter turnout, perceived representation by political parties, interest in politics and overall trust in the government.

After the return to democracy, voter turnouts in Chile steadily declined. According to a PNUD report (2019, p. 106), between the re-democratisation in 1989 and the presidential elections of 2017, participation in elections has fallen from 87% to 50%. The substantial drop of almost 40%, especially among younger people, stresses the institutional stability and political representation (Roberts, 2016, p. 139; PNUD, 2019, p. 106). From 2008 to 2018, the percentage of people not identifying with a political party at all increased from 53% to 74% (PNUD, 2019, p. 114). In the Latin American context, the population's interest in politics and identification with political parties is particularly low (ibid.).

With this lower party identification, trust in politics has also gone down. Moreover, trust in the country's institutions is steadily declining. The PNUD report (2019, p. 45) explains this dwindling trust as the result of scandals of corruption, collusion and abuse of political institutions, but also of the police, the armed forces and the Catholic Church (ibid.). This trend of turning away from political institutions is a worldwide phenomenon of recent years. Furthermore, this indicator is particularly low in Latin America compared to most western industrialised countries (PNUD, 2019, pp. 54–55). However, in Chile, the loss of trust has been more pronounced than in other Latin American countries (PNUD, 2019, p. 45).

Figure 2 Chile's Trust in Government Indicator 1995 – 2018



Own elaboration based on data from Latinobarómetro

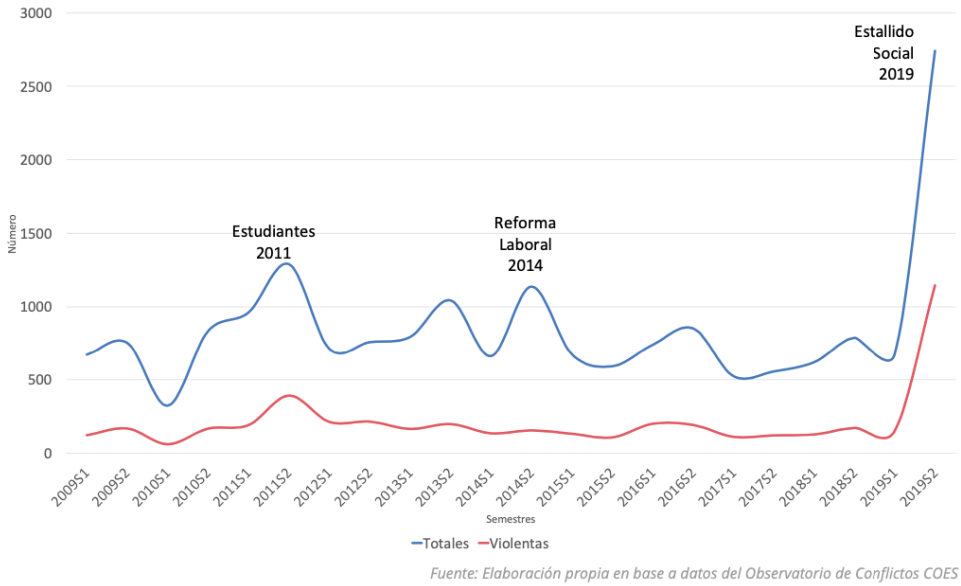
While at the beginning of the *La Concertación* government, political parties and organised civil society were strongly linked, from the mid-2000s onwards, a process of detachment occurred. Somma and Medel (2017, p. 31) argue that the national government failed to incorporate civil society's needs, and through the discontent with political elites, the demand for new forms of representation emerged. Thus, during the first Bachelet government (2006 - 2010), interest groups began to organise themselves away from the established party system. Especially students, contract workers, indigenous groups and environmental activists advanced political mobilisation and put their issues on the political agenda (Roberts, 2016, pp. 139–140).

In 2006, a protest campaign by middle school students called the penguin movement, due to their school uniforms' colours, formed the first significant mobilisation after the dictatorship (Somma, 2012, p. 299). The 2006 protests can be seen as the basis for the massive student demonstrations of 2011 with around 15,000 participants, also known as *Chilean Winter of Discontent* (Guzman-Concha, 2012, p. 2; Donoso and Somma, 2019, p. 158). The students occupied schools and universities, organised rallies, flash mobs and other repertoires of action (Donoso and Somma, 2019, p. 160). The two protest waves of 2006 and 2011 opposed the neoliberal, exclusive education system, and called for an improvement of public education and better financing mechanisms for the high university fees (Somma, 2012, p. 307; Donoso and Somma, 2019, p. 158). Both mobilisations of 2006 and 2011 were successful in bringing educational inequality topics onto the political agenda. In 2006, the government of Bachelet introduced four bills aiming to improve the educational system, and in 2011, the Piñera administration lowered the interest rates on student loans (Guzman-Concha, 2012, p. 3; Donoso and Somma, 2019, p. 167).

Figure 3, a diagram provided by the Chilean Centre for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies (COES), shows the development of contentious actions in Chile. The blue line

depicts the total actions, and the red the violent ones. It becomes visible that the student movement of 2011 was the largest in terms of protest activity until the occurrences of 2019. Nonetheless, the student movements were not the only mobilisations of the last twenty years in Chile. Already during the 2011 student movements, the leading national labour union (CUT) and environmental activists joined the demonstrations (Guzman-Concha, 2012, p. 3; Somma, 2012, p. 304). Mobilisation extended to a variety of previously demobilised groups in the subsequent years (Medel and Somma, 2016, p. 165). Other influential protests included those against the construction of a five-dam hydroelectric project in Patagonia, protests by miners for better working conditions, protests for the indigenous rights of the country's largest ethnic minority, the Mapuche, and the No+AFP (No more AFP) movement claiming to reform the pension system (Donoso and von Bülow, 2017, p. 4; Borzutzky, 2019, p. 222).

Figure 3 Evolution of contentious actions in Chile 2009 - 2019



Source: Joignant et al., 2020, p. 5

Established parties in Chile play a marginal role, and were only present in about 6% of the protest events from 2000 to 2012 (Somma and Medel, 2017, pp. 37–38). Thus, the burgeoning of protest against neoliberal policies began in the late 2000s and was primarily organised by new organisations that were not covered by the established left. This distancing of organised civil society and political parties confirms the findings of growing detachment and disidentification of the population from political elites.

5. The Unfolding and Development of the Protest Wave 2019/2020

On 6 October 2019, the Chilean government introduced a slight increase in metro fares of 30 pesos (Holland, 2019). In order to protest against the increased prices, students of the *Instituto Nacional* started to jump over the turnstiles of the metro stations in

Santiago. In the week from 14 to 18 October, protests against the increased fare prices intensified, and more high school students called for not paying the metro fees in Santiago (Garcés, 2019a). The protesters used the hashtag #EvasionMasiva on social media and advocated against paying the higher ticket price (Londoño, 2019). On Thursday 17 October, the *Carabineros de Fuerzas Especiales* (armed, militarised police) began to guard the stations, with violent clashes between protesters and the police.

On Friday 18 October, the protest against the fare rise expanded and more people met in the metro stations to demonstrate. In reaction to the massive payment boycott, the police started to close some stations. In an "explosive escalation", protesters began to destroy the stations and in some cases even set them on fire (Gonzalez and Le Foulon Morán, 2020, p. 3). During that day, twenty stations were burned down, and forty more were damaged (Chacón, 2020). The police reacted by closing the city's 136 metro stations in the early evening (Miranda and Ramos, 2019). Violent protesters also set the corporate building of the energy company Enel and a branch office of Banco del Chile on fire and plundered supermarkets in the capital. "The protests' support and quick expansion, and especially the surge and spread of the violence, took everyone by surprise." (Gonzalez and Le Foulon Morán, 2020, p. 2). During the night, the government of Sebastian Piñera met as a matter of urgency. The administration resolved to declare the state of emergency, allowing the military to be present in the capital (Montes, 2019a). The military took control for the first time since the 1970s during the dictatorship (Páez, 2019).

However, the government's harsh response only made the protests bigger. On Saturday 19 October, the protests expanded all over the country with larger demonstrations in the cities of Valparaíso and Concepción and the government reacted with curfews (Garcés, 2020, p. 10). On that day, the media recognised the movement as the *Estallido Social*, a social outburst that no one could have foreseen on this massive scale (Garcés, 2020, p. 32). The *Plaza de Italia*, a square in the city centre of Santiago, soon became the epicentre of the protest. The protesters symbolically renamed it as *Plaza Dignidad* (Dignity Square) and rallied there every Friday (Interviewee 2)

On Sunday 20 October, Piñera made the famous statement *Estamos en guerra* (we are at war), leading to further escalation (Pribble, 2019). On the streets, one could rapidly see banners saying *No estamos en guerra* (we are not at war). Esteban Maturana, public health union leader, stated that the problem is not the 30 pesos. It is the 30 years of corruption and abuse by the political class, the church and the armed forces (Waissbluth, 2020, p. 30). The slogan *it isn't thirty pesos, it's thirty years* went viral and became a famous slogan of the movement.

On Monday 21 October, congress succumbed to protestors' demands and reversed the increase in transport costs. Piñera dismissed the whole cabinet and announced the introduction of new social support for low-income households, an increase in the minimum wage and higher taxation of the richest part of the population (Gonzalez and Le Foulon Morán, 2020, p. 4). Nevertheless, in the following week, the *Marcha más grande de Chile* (the biggest demonstration of Chile) was organised. On 25 October, 1.2

million people (about 6.4% of the country's population) marched through the streets of Santiago (Ferreira and Schoch, 2020). The protests became more peaceful in that second week and in most cities of Chile, people protested.

On 27 October, the state of emergency ended (Waissbluth, 2020, p. 30). However, protests continued. At the end of the month, President Piñera was obliged to cancel the conference of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25). The government continued to respond to the demands of the protesters and negotiated a national peace agreement (Sehnbruch and Donoso, 2020, p. 53). The administration announced the start of the constituent process through a constituent congress on 10 November. Due to the numerous eye injuries, the police suspended the use of rubber bullets. Moreover, the government approved an anti-abuse agenda, and the Senate passed a law enabling the plebiscite about the new constitution for April 2020 (Waissbluth, 2020, p. 32). The agreement to replace the Pinochet-era constitution led to the pacifist protests not being as massive as before (Somma et al., 2021, p. 499). Nevertheless, nation-wide demonstrations with episodic riots continued throughout November and December (Palacios-Valladares, 2020, p. 222). Violent protest action decreased later than the peaceful mass protests and only became less in mid-January. Furthermore, students disrupted the university entrance exams in January. Test centres had to be partially closed as the students protested for a fairer education system and against the unequal preparation for the test depending on the attended school (Miranda and Ramos, 2019). The protests also got smaller due to the Chilean summer holidays from mid-December to March. Protest participants hoped that in March the demonstrations would regain massiveness (Albert and Köhler, 2020). However, that did not occur with the first case of COVID-19 on 3 March in Chile, quickly followed by restrictions of public life. According to the assessment of Interviewee 3, there would have been more protests again if the pandemic had not spread. The protests every Friday, like the first major demonstration on 18 October, continued on *Plaza Dignidad* (Interviewee 2). However, they got much smaller in size, keeping distance due to the pandemic.

Since the beginning of the movement, the police were accused of human rights violations. In the period from 18 October 2019 – 18 March 2020, the Human Rights Institute of Chile INDH reported 3,203 infringements (INDH, 2020).

On 18 October 2020, one year after the start of the mass protests, there were again larger demonstrations at *Plaza Dignidad* and one week later, on 25 October, the plebiscite on the new constitution took place. With a voter turnout of approximately 50%, Chileans voted for a new constitution written by a directly elected constitutional convention with gender parity (Mojica, 2020). The plebiscite about the constitution will be followed by two more elections.

a. The Repertoire of Actions and Tactics

The *Estallido Social* started among students with the boycott of subway fees and protests in the metro stations. This was followed by larger mobilisations in public places

in Chile and turned into violence during the first week of the movement. The development of the social movement led to a tremendous internal diversity and thereby also to a wide range of actions and tactics. Overall, the number of protest actions increased significantly during the protest movement. From 18 October until the end of 2019, more than 3,300 protest action were registered by the COES in Chile. In a similar period in 2011, the year with the most protests up to then, around 1,100 (one third) actions occurred (Joignant et al., 2020, p. 11). During the protests of 2019, the number of actions was nine times higher than the average in the ten years before (ibid.). At the same time, not only the number of protests increased but also their size. According to media estimations, very large actions of more than 3,000 participants accounted for more than one-fifth of the total, compared to only 7% of actions before the Estallido (Joignant et al., 2020, p. 13).

Tactics varied from pacifist, disruptive and openly violent actions (Somma et al., 2021, p. 498). As Interviewee 2 described, the mass protests at *Plaza de la Dignidad* included conventional pacifist demonstrations, violent actions but also cultural expressions and art. Figure 4 provides information about the distribution of pacifist tactics (demonstrations or events with speakers, etc.), non-violent disruptive tactics (strikes, takeovers of buildings or occupation of places) and violent tactics (destruction of public and private property, attacks on police forces and the burning of cars and buildings). The data is taken from the 2019 conflict report and includes all actions up to the end of 2019. More up-to-date figures for 2020 are unfortunately not yet available. Moreover, the COES compared the data of the *Estallido Social* with the actions observed previously (1 January 2009 to 17 October 2019). During the *Estallido Social,* around 14% more violent tactics were applied than in the period before (Joignant et al., 2020, p. 12). Nevertheless, the social movement was a multi-tactical event with complex repertoires that also changed and diversified throughout the period.

Figure 4 Distribution of Tactics from 18 October - 31 December 2019

Own elaboration based on data from Joignant et al., 2020, p. 12

The main repertoires included *Cacerolazo* and massive concentrations on main squares, as well as marches in the provinces and occupations of public places (Garcés, 2020). *Cacerolazo* is a pacifist form of protest of banging pots typical in Latin America. The most visible occupations were at *Plaza de la Dignidad* and *Plaza Ñuñoa* in the east of Santiago (Garcés, 2020, Interviewee 2).

The first week of protest in October is particularly recognised for the mass destruction of metro stations and looting. The logistical difficulties of burning the metro stations and the extent of the destruction indicate that the actions of the first week were orchestrated by organised criminals (Somma et al., 2021, p. 498). The violent actions consisted of clashes with the police, destruction of the stations and other public goods, arson attacks, plundering and vandalism in commercial shops. The looting of shops was a persistent practice, especially in low-income communities. In the case of the *Primera Linea* (front line on the fringe of the protest), the violent actions, like clashes with the police, also have the purpose of defending demonstrators against the coercive actions of the police (Valenzuela Beltrán and Toro Maureira, 2020; Interviewee 2). Often hooded groups formed the *Primera Linea* throwing stones, building barricades and preparing Molotov cocktails (Somma et al., 2021, p. 498). These violent protests spread mainly in the evening hours, including to oppose state political violence. The COES empirically examined the mutual interaction between police repression and violent protest. The researchers determined statistically significant positive causal relations in both directions: violent protest increases police repression and vice versa (Joignant et al., 2020, p. 19). Furthermore, the effect of a violent reaction after police repression was very significant and immediate. However, after the very violent tactics of mid-October, more and more people demonstrated peacefully and festively on the streets, with a peak on 25 October (Somma et al., 2021, p. 497). Interviewee 1 also observed that as the peaceful mass protests diminished, violence increased again. Thus, the proportion of violent actions dynamically changed throughout the movement.

Besides classical large street protests, new repertoires of action were also applied (Garcés, 2020, p. 61). Artistic actions included songs discussing the issues of Chile, anonymous artists painting the walls all over the city and dances and performances during the protest. Other musicians symbolically reissued songs of the 1970s and the National Symphony Orchestra of Chile played a concert on the streets (Montes, 2019b; Somma et al., 2021, p. 498). Together with the marches, neighbourhoods organised improvised town meetings (*cabildos*) and assemblies to discuss the crisis (Albert and Köhler, 2020; Somma et al., 2021, p. 498). People shared information and expressed their discontent not just on the streets, but also online via social media channels. Especially on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, users have called for action and have shared relevant content (*La Tribuna*, 2019).

b. Who Protested and Why?

There is little data available and no comprehensive report of the people who protested and their socio-economic backgrounds. Noticeable was the wide participation of younger people (Garcés, 2020, p. 16; Palacios-Valladares, 2020, p. 216). In the first week of the protest, the younger population started with gatherings in the metro stations. Especially secondary students called for action. According to Garcés (2020, pp. 16–17), young people not only initiated the movement but were the driving force behind almost all kinds of mobilisation. Garcés identified them as the new actors with enormous internal diversity, taking advantage of their own digital communication channels. My interviewees valued the fact that all people regardless of political party, age, income or social class took part in the protests.

An organisation of sociology students from the University of Chile called *Núcleo de Sociología Contingente* (NUDESOC) surveyed 886 people protesting on the *Plaza Dignidad* on four different days in November 2019. 75% of the surveyed people were under 40, and the highest concentration was around 25 years, while elderly people were the least frequented age group (NUDESOC, 2020, p. 5). Moreover, the survey examined the claims of the people protesting by asking the demonstrators if they could point out three main demands for which they were demonstrating that day (NUDESOC, 2020, p. 10). The results (Table 1) show a wide range of demands.

Table 1 Principal Demands of the Respondents

Demands	Absolute frequency	% of the total demands
Pensions	411	24.8
Health	316	19.1
Education	310	18.7
Social justice	124	7.5
New constitution	117	7.1
Employment and fair wages	87	5.3
Human Rights and no to impunity	56	3.4
Others	36	2.2
Natural resources and the environment	34	2.1
Rejection of the government and the political class	33	2
Democracy, participation and organisation	28	1.7
Child protection and no more SENAME (state agency responsible for the protection of children)	27	1.6
Corruption and exploitation	22	1.3
Feminist, gender and dissident demands	20	1.2
Against neoliberalism	14	0.8
State transformation	11	0.7
Housing and the city	11	0.7
Quality of live	10	0.6
Transport	10	0.6
Indigenous peoples	8	0.5

Own elaboration based on data from NUDESOC, 2020, p. 10

The claims mainly concern the neoliberal socio-economic model favouring the private sector in welfare. Protesters criticised the segmented education and health system and the private pension sector (Somma, Bargsted and Sánchez, 2020, p. 2). This is linked to the unequal treatment by private and public institutions. Those demands go in line with the desire of the majority of the protesters to change the constitution, which originates from the dictatorship and favours the neoliberal model. Those results are very similar to the answers of my interview partners.
A central topic, like in previous movements, was the for-profit education system:

> *I have never understood, for example, how the university can cost like 700,000 Chilean pesos, when the minimum wage is 350,000 Chilean pesos, or half that. So, the country is not really made for everyone to study, for everyone to have the same opportunities in no matter. And that is for several years now. (Interviewee 1)*

My respondents questioned the lack of redistribution:

> *There is a structure in this country that is too unequal. There are many people who suffer, (…) the whole structure is set up so that the people who have a lot will have more, accumulate more. Education is not equal for all. Neither is health. (Interviewee 3)*

People protested against the government, people with economic power, and how these two interest groups benefit from each other (Franklin, 2019). Topics such as women's rights, environmental protection, rights for indigenous people and the LGBTQ community also have been addressed.
Besides, many respondents of the NUDESOC survey (2020, p. 8) stated they protested due to civic responsibility. Also, my interview partners 1 and 2 stated that they wanted to march due to empathy with people less privileged than themselves. Therefore, the motivation to protest arrived not just out of being directly affected by inequalities but also from a process of solidarity and identity building. Interviewee 2 further described the movement as providing a sense of belonging and helping each other.

c. Changing Political Opportunity Structures

When examining the timing of a movement, changing POS might give an answer. POS considers the political environment of a social movement and attempts to draw conclusions about the emergence of movements and why they develop as they do.
In the past years, Chile experienced a crisis of politic legitimacy generated through deep distrust in political elites, missing identity with parties and shrinking voter turnouts. This detachment goes hand in hand with an awakening and re-politicisation of civil society, filling that vacuum of missing representation. Already in the decade before the movement of October 2019, waves of protest increased in Chile (see Figure 3).
In the conversations with the interview partners, I observed deep mistrust towards the government. According to their statements, established political parties did not

participate in the protests, as was also the case in previous movements in Chile. Politicians were not welcome at the marches “because you always know that politicians want to take advantage of that to wash their image” (Interviewee 2). People on the marches perceive the elected politicians as illegitimate (Interviewee 3).

Indeed, it got increasingly difficult to set up a functional government in Santiago. In the 2017 elections, the number of parties represented in parliament increased from 17 to 26 (Prange De Oliveira, 2017). The high number of parties increased fragility, at the same time disunity weakened the centre-left coalition, which formerly was known as *Concertación* (*The Guardian*, 2017). “[Piñeras'] victory owed as much to the divisions on the left as it did to his appeal to voters.” (Pribble, 2019). There are no large political blocks capable of governing anymore, combined with the constitution which makes it difficult to implement reforms anyway.

Coming back to the theory of POS, electoral instability and division of elites are crucial aspects of opportunity structure (Tarrow, 1996, pp. 55–56). This internal dissension of the governing coalition *Chile Vamos* but also of the opposition are important opportunity structures facilitating the protest wave in an otherwise rather closed political system (Mårtensson, 2018, p. 59; Zuniga, 2020). The closed political environment also explains the very limited involvement of political parties in the protests, as it is characterised by small distribution of power and limited accessibility for the public (Kriesi, 2007, pp. 69–70). Due to the centralisation of politics in Santiago, it is harder for citizens to have an impact on the decision-making process, and it hinders social movements on a local level (Della Porta and Diani, 2015, pp. 202–206). The centrality of governance makes a national dispersal, as it occurred with the *Estallido Social,* more likely (Tarrow, 2011, pp. 49–50).

In addition, there are recurring allegations of corruption, which had a direct influence on citizens' confidence in the congress (Castiglioni and Kaltwasser, 2016, p. 12). In 2015, a corruption scandal in the Bachelet government, including some of her closest political allies as well as her family, caused her approval ratings to plummet (Castiglioni and Kaltwasser, 2016, p. 12; Borzutzky, 2019, p. 217). However, this did not only affect Bachelet's government, as there have also been multiple corruption accusations against the *Chile Vamos* coalition (Borzutzky, 2019, p. 218).

President Piñera, who according to Forbes has a wealth of USD 2.8 billion, with his particular political leadership style, was another factor increasing the citizen's frustration (Waissbluth, 2020, p. 23). Piñera was, with the help of his personal fortune, able to run a powerful election campaign and to build up an elitist cabinet. Two-third of the administration went to the renowned elite Catholic University of Chile (Waissbluth, 2020, p. 23). The out-of-touch government and a president repeatedly accused of conflicts of interest and fraud are important factors that better explain the outbreak of civil unrest.

At the same time, mobilisation occurred all over the region. In countries like Ecuador or Bolivia, one could also observe mass protests due to deep distrust in the political elite and frustration of the middle classes with the unfolding recession (Waissbluth, 2020, p.

8). The politics of the whole region found itself in a weak moment with declining legitimacy of the governments. Even if the situations differed and the protests did not interact directly with each other, this supranational movement created images and framed the discontent with the elites.
To conclude, rather repressing than facilitating opportunity structures can be observed in Chile. However, the fragmentation of Chilean politics and its difficulties to govern effectively created space for new social actors, who were an important factor for the success of the mobilisation.

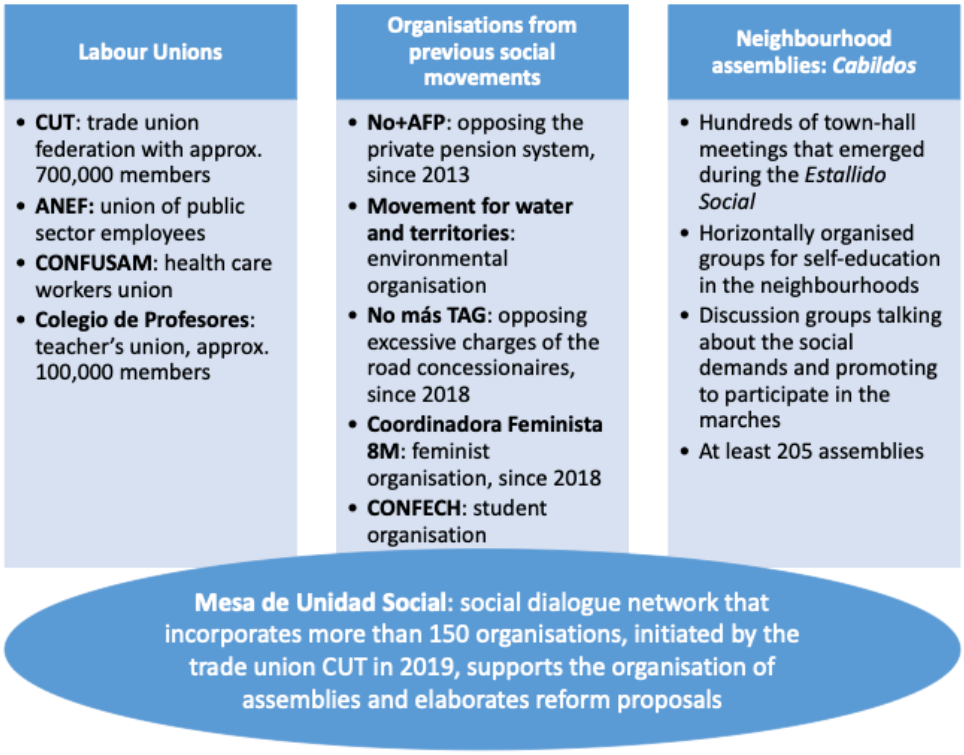
d. The Role of Social Movement Organisations

According to RMT, SMOs play a crucial role in the emergence of a social movement and in gathering support. Especially at the beginning of the *Estallido Social*, however, SMOs had almost no role in mobilising people (Somma et al., 2021, p. 496). The organisation was completely different with the student movements in Chile, where the students themselves formed organisations with known leaders and spokespersons that played a vital role in the unfolding protests (Donoso, 2013, pp. 159–160).
At the beginning of the protests, the students used social media channels like Instagram, Facebook or Twitter to announce events (Montes, 2019a). The rapid sharing of political information with social media provides low transaction costs for political engagement (Breuer, Landman and Farquhar, 2015, p. 765). Those first protests were very spontaneous and without the guidance of any organisation or party. Also, my interview partners informed themselves primarily through social media and could not name any visible leaders or leading organisations (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2), which is characteristic for the *Estallido Social* and comparable to the French yellow west movement (Taub, 2019). Interviewee 3 also said that she believes people are fed up with following strong leaders and rather want to organise themselves. “SMO leadership seems to be partially replaced by the ‘weak ties’ of social media, which provide alternative venues for expression and activism.”, (Somma *et al.*, 2021, p. 496).
Before the *Estallido Social*, organisations had been present in 56% of the protests in Chile. During the *Estallido,* this number decreased to 22% (Joignant et al., 2020, p. 17). Thus, organisations were not the main driver for the mobilisations. Nonetheless, more organisations, including those developed during protest movements of the last ten years, preceded the movement and enriched its claims. Typical for the 2019 Chilean protests were the small grassroots organisations that emerged all over the country. From 24 October, various cultural, student, trade union and political organisations established in neighbourhoods and territories began to call for neighbourhood, community and sectoral assemblies (García, 2020, p. 44). The Mapuche movement, the student, secondary and university organisations, the "No + AFP" movement, the "Feminist May" of 2018 and the various social-environmental and "water and territory" movements, among others, joined the protest wave and were visible groups in the marches (Garcés, 2019a).

Figure 5 provides an overview of which organisations participated in the protest wave, making the diverse and decentralised organisation more visible. The *Mesa de Unidad Social* is a new umbrella organisation that includes organisations from trade unions and SMOs.

Labour unions called for protest and organised national strikes in October and November. Nevertheless, historically speaking, union organisation is very weak in Chile, which did not fundamentally change (Garcés, 2019b, p. 7; Sehnbruch and Donoso, 2020, p. 55).

Figure 5 Overview of Social Movement Organisations during the Estallido Social



Own elaboration based on data from *El Libero*, 2015; Albert and Köhler, 2020; Claro, 2020; Garcés, 2020; Joignant et al., 2020.

A loose association called *Mesa de la Unidad Social* started to organise itself at the beginning of November. They organised meetings, marches and calls for strikes (Palacios-Valladares, 2020, p. 216). Among the members are the largest labour union CUT, the union of the fiscal employees (ANEF), No+AFP, the teacher's association *Colegio de Profesores* and numerous other SMOs (Altamirano Castillo, Arroyo Olea and Maldonado Salazar, 2020). While there are no exact numbers or further investigation into the development of organised civil society during the *Estallido* in Chile, there are indications that more people are engaged in organisations and networks than before the movement (Valenzuela Beltrán and Toro Maureira, 2020). Also, two of my interview

partners engaged in organised action (Interviewee 2, Interviewee 3). Interviewee 3, like a lot of Chileans, engaged in local organisations and connected with people from her neighbourhood and work. According to the survey of NUDESOC with people protesting in November, around 65% of the respondents were not involved in any organisation linked to the protests. Only 3.1% stated that they went to the protests with members of an organisation (NUDESOC, 2020).

The loose organisation and various identities are in line with the characteristics of a NSM. Melucci (1984) considers such movements as a network of small groups submerged. Self-organised activities, neighbour groups or learning communities emerged all over the country. They are characterised by flat structures and missing representation (Valenzuela Beltrán and Toro Maureira, 2020). However, they play a crucial role in accumulating resources and identity-building. Melucci (1984, p. 823) also emphasises the importance of searching for a common identity and solidarity. My interview partners described the wish to help others less privileged and to put themselves in the position of others (Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2).

As explained in the economic contextualisation, Chile's GDP increased significantly in the past twenty years, and poverty rates steadily declined, which led to a release of personal resources. Increased prosperity, together with rising levels of education, enable more tangible and intangible resources to be used for non-essential activities such as protesting (Somma, 2017, pp. 12–13). Better access to education also led to increased awareness of social problems and the right to protest. According to RMT, this release of intellectual but also material resources is an important driver for the social movement.

The degree of organisation also has an influence on the tactics applied. The small professionalised SMO landscape in Chile hinders the possibilities to mediate with established institutions and leads to disruptive actions (Kriesi, 2007, pp. 157–158).

The decentralised organisation of many individuals via social media contradicts with the RMT. Classical RMT considers centralised and formally structured movement organisations as more effective in mobilising (Jenkins, 1983, p. 528). However, digital networks fundamentally change social movement organisation worldwide. New decentralised campaigns can use significant multiplier effects of personal networks and generate enormous mobilisation as it was also the case in Chile (Breuer, Landman and Farquhar, 2015, p. 765).

e. Collective Action Frames and the Role of Media

Collective Action Frame scholars argue that mobilisation never comes naturally out of grievances and measurable material conditions. It is equally important "to frame social problems and injustices in a way that convinces a wide and diverse audience of the necessity for and utility of collective attempts to redress them" (McCarthy, Smith and Zald, 1996, p. 192). With the help of resources, organisations and leaders can construct their claims strategically, helping to legitimise the claims and broaden support (Donoso, 2013, p. 173).

With the high school student protests of 2006, civil society in Chile politicised and the country experienced several waves of protest. SMO's, like the Confederation of Students of Chile in 2011, served as agents for the articulation of demands, developing frameworks of collective action (García, 2020). Recognised frames refer to the disadvantaging neoliberal economic model and a political elite not addressing them but acting in favour of businesspeople (Somma, 2017, p. 11). Examples include awareness of inequality in the Chilean education system, which is one of the most expensive in the world, police repression of the Mapuche people, lower pensions than promised, and exploitation of the environment. Through the organisation of movements at a community level, no single movement frames emerged (Somma and Medel, 2017, p. 43). However, the SMOs, for example from the environmental and student movements, not only addressed the practical concerns for which they started to demonstrate but also put these demands in a wider context and questioned inequality or exclusive policies. Awareness and articulation of issues questioning the economic and political system increased, legitimating the protest claims (Donoso, 2013, p. 173).

To increase recognition of societal issues, media coverage plays a vital role. In Chile, mainstream media is dominated by neoliberal and right-wing conservative viewpoints. According to Garcés (2019b, p. 1), mainstream media acted as an ally of the government, becoming part of a political definition that does not question the pre-established systemic order. There is only a small number of large companies controlling the market and focusing rather on vandalism and the cost of protest than their claims (Saavedra, 2014, pp. 93–94). My interview partners criticised the media for their proximity to the government and for not analysing the reasons for the protest.

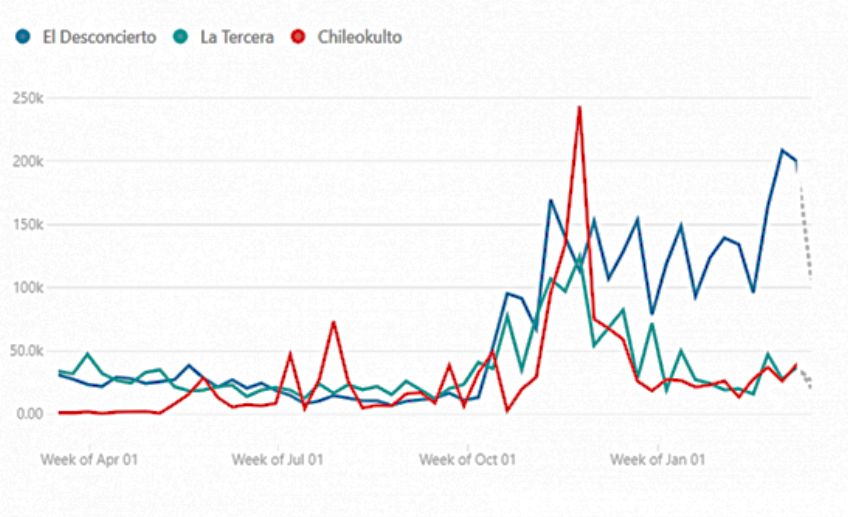
> *I don't know of any newspaper that activates critical thinking in people or leaves questions. I think the press should be like that, to inform. From an unbiased point of view or objectively leaving questions, and that doesn't happen here. (Interviewee 3)*

According to interviewee 2, mass media stigmatised the protesters as criminals and destroyers of public goods. They did not report the human right violations of the police. None of my interview partners used mainstream media channels to inform themselves about the happenings. They were active on social media platforms, resharing informative posts and slogans on Instagram and Facebook. The digital analyst Gustavo Arias identified Instagram as a central platform to organise protest and Twitter to formulate opinions and claims (*La Tribuna*, 2019). In Chile, mobilisation through social media channels also occurred in the previous years, like the women's movements of 2018 (Mårtensson, 2018, p. 7). Already before the start of the movement, words like discontent, social issues, changes and abuses were increasingly used on social media (*La Tribuna*, 2019). Thus, awareness about social inequalities already rose before the *Estallido Social,* framing the demands.

Of course, social media posts mostly consist of very short messages and therefore do not have the capacity to analyse the conflict as a whole. This gap was partially filled by

new alternative media channels such as radio channels or websites. Also, independent press and small radio stations used Facebook to share their content (Interviewee 3). In Figure 6, the increased usage of alternative journalism becomes apparent. In general, the articles of all three newspapers got shared more, attributed to the tense political situation during the movement. However, during the periods of highest mobilisation, Chileokulto, an independent newspaper that wrote extensively about police brutality and protest activities, and El Desconcierto, a critical online newspaper, became substantially more significant.

Figure 6 Development of shared articles from El Desconcierto, La Tercera and Chileokulto on Facebook and Instagram from 1 April 2019 to 17 March 2020



Source: Valenzuela Beltrán and Toro Maureira, 2020

Besides the use of media, the neighbourhood assemblies also played a crucial role in framing the demands. According to Garcés (2020, p. 34), the organisations of the middle-class neighbourhoods are important for diagnosing and identifying claims and also for finding solutions and promoting the constituent assembly. The participants discussed the crisis and possible solutions. They spoke about the human rights violations and encouraged people to participate in marches in WhatsApp messages and emails (Albert and Köhler, 2020). While the *Cabildos* have different emphases, a lot of them nevertheless discussed what the new constitution would be like and engaged in educational activities for people with little political education (Albert and Köhler, 2020; Valenzuela Beltrán and Toro Maureira, 2020).

During the *Estallido Social*, the societal issues of previous protest movements all came together (Sehnbruch and Donoso, 2020, p. 54) and the topic of the constitution as the solution to structural inequalities gained momentum (Cuffe, 2019). Already during the student movements of 2011, protesters called for a constitutional change (Donoso and von Bülow, 2017, p. 81). The claim of a new constitution developed over the protest waves of the student protests, identifying the constitution as an obstacle for educational

reforms. On Instagram, the hashtag #asambleaconstituyente (constituent assembly) includes more than 150,000 posts, and during the protest wave, the term 'new constitution' was more searched on Google in Chile than Estallido Social or protests. Especially during November 2019, the necessity of a plebiscite became more pronounced (Garcés, 2020, p. 36). The experience of previous social movements has shown that the regulations stemming from the dictatorship favour the continuation of the neoliberal economic model and also make it difficult for political institutions to respond to these demands (Aste Leiva, 2020, p. 18). The plebiscite about a new constitution can therefore be seen as the demand unifying the diverse claims of the protesters.

6. Conclusion

The protest wave of 2019 and 2020 by far exceeded the parameters of conflicts previously observed in Chile (Joignant et al., 2020, p. 4). Initially, the demonstrations were triggered by slightly increased metro prices in Santiago de Chile. However, claims quickly went beyond isolated topics. The protesters articulated discontent with a broad range of issues. With its peak in size on 25 October, Chile experienced the largest mass demonstrations in its history.

When coming back to the question about why the social movement emerged, looking at Chile's socio-economic developments is essential. As Pribble (2019) points out, Chile's crisis was decades in the making. The most important claims identified in the NUDESOC survey as well as in my conversations with the protest activists referred to the unequal education, healthcare, and pension systems. In Chile, the Gini index and other inequality measurements did not worsen in the past years. On the contrary, the severe inequalities that have existed since the military dictatorship have improved slightly over time. However, this empirical reality did not hinder the increase of *perceived* inequality. This contradictory phenomenon can be linked to Gurr's Theory of Relative Deprivation, and its explanation of value capabilities and value positions (Gurr, 1970, p. 27). According to Gurr, when people are not in the position in which they had expected or demanded to be in the future, they become discontent because they do not see possibilities for improving their wellbeing and economic status.

Taking those findings into consideration, I conclude that the exclusive neoliberal economic system in Chile provides fertile ground for discontent and protest. In the interviews, it became apparent that the inequality of opportunities advanced to malaise and resulted in anger for significant parts of society. In addition, I assess the re-politicisation and organisation of society as comparably important. There are several explanations for this process. These include the overall better education and thereby awareness about societal issues, the freeing up of resources through increased wealth and the shift away from traditional political participation (Roberts, 2016, p. 132)

Referring to how the movement became so massive, social media can be defined as the central mobiliser, especially of the first weeks of protest (Londoño, 2019; Somma et al., 2021, p. 496). The protest movement is characterised by the absence of a visible leader

and by the complexity in used tactics. SMOs of previous social movements joined the protest, and the new association *Mesa de la Unidad Social* began to call for strikes, meetings and marches (Somma et al., 2021, p. 496). Another important development was the formation of the neighbourhood assemblies *cabildos* and different forms of dialogue. The citizens' discontent went beyond any single issue, addressing a more equal welfare system and social justice, among other things (NUDESOC, 2020, p. 10; Sehnbruch and Donoso, 2020, p. 54). Altogether, the decentralised mobilisation via social media and micro-organisations was characteristic for the social movement and contributed to the rapid unfolding.

Even at this stage, more than a year after the start of the movement, the constitutional process is continuing. The distance and mistrust between the population and the government remains profound, and it is still unknown whether movement actors will become established as a voice for their political demands. It also remains to be seen how a constitution can shape a more equal society. A slogan that could be seen repeatedly in the resurgent protests in 2020: *Chile sigue despierto*. Chile remains awake.

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