

## Social rebellion in the city Notes on political significations of Chilean October

*Rebelión social en la ciudad*  
*Notas sobre significaciones políticas del octubre chileno*

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**Suggested citation:** Rodríguez-Mancilla, M., Vargas-Muñoz R., Contreras-Osses, P., & Quiroz-Rojas, R. (2020). Social rebellion in the city. Notes on political significations of Chilean October. *Universitas*, 33, pp. 195-216.

### **Abstract**

*This essay proposes some notes on the political significations of the social rebellion which occurred in several Chilean cities on October 18th, 2019. It is argued that the current scenario of mobilizations represents a reaction to the historical process of neoliberalization of Chilean society. Among the most important characteristics of this rebellion is the diversification of the political uses of urban space and the subaltern re-appropriation of the social articulation of the city. This process intensifies and extends the social conflict resulting from the deepening of the contradictions of capital accumulation's pattern imposed by the civic-military Dictatorship, and shows the exhaustion of the subsidiary State and semi-sovereign democracy. Based on an analysis of the political climate, complemented by the description of the main cycles of social mobilizations in urban space since the second half of the 20th century, it is argued that the current social rebellion partially evidences the breakdown of the neoliberal consensus, the politicization of the social and the strengthening local power in the cities. It is concluded that the novelty of social rebellion relies on the intensity, breadth and diversification of forms and contents of the political exercise of diverse social and territorial sectors.*

### **Keywords**

*Social rebellion, neoliberalization, citizenship, politicization, local power, Chile.*

### **Resumen**

En este ensayo se proponen algunas notas sobre las significaciones políticas de la rebelión social, ocurrida a partir del 18 de octubre del año 2019 en diversas ciudades de Chile. Se argumenta que el actual escenario de movilizaciones es una respuesta al proceso histórico de neoliberalización de la sociedad chilena. Entre las características más importantes de esta rebelión, se encuentra la diversificación de los usos políticos del espacio urbano y la reapropiación subalterna de la articulación social en la ciudad. Este proceso intensifica y extiende la conflictividad social producto de la profundización de las contradicciones del patrón de acumulación de capital impuesto en la dictadura cívico-militar, y muestra el agotamiento del Estado subsidiario y de la democracia semi-soberana. A partir de un análisis de coyuntura, complementada con la descripción de los principales ciclos de movilizaciones sociales en el espacio urbano desde la segunda mitad del siglo XX, se sostiene que la actual rebelión social evidencia, parcialmente, la ruptura del consenso neoliberal, la politización de lo social y el fortalecimiento del poder local en las ciudades. Se concluye que lo novedoso de la rebelión social es la intensidad, amplitud y diversificación de formas y contenidos del ejercicio político de diversos sectores sociales y territoriales.

### **Palabras clave**

Rebelión social, neoliberalización, ciudadanía, politización, poder local, Chile.

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## **Introduction**

On October 18, 2019, a phenomenon of social rebellion unprecedented in magnitude and intensity in the history of Chile begins. This phenomenon

has provoked an important flow of reflections in search of its significance. The slogan that is usually heard in the streets is “Chile woke up.” But what did she wake up from? Apparently, there is a certain consensus that this awakening results from the erosion of the neoliberalization processes of Chilean society, which has been submerged in a deep sleep induced by the utopia of the open, deregulated, and competitive market, as an ideal mechanism for economic development and individual integration. Utopia that *de facto* has succeeded in the continuum of the capitalist accumulation pattern in peripheral countries like Chile, but which is interrupted by the eruption of its own contradiction. That is, the inability, by definition, to construct a more democratic, egalitarian, and social rights guaranteeing society that makes substantial improvements in the daily life of citizens and their territories.

In this sense, various explanatory axes have mobilized the reflections. It has been stated that we are witnessing a systematic crisis of political representation, fundamentally linked to discredit and mistrust towards the political elite (Salazar, 2019; Garcés, 2019). This expresses a crisis in the system of restricted, supervised, and low-intensity democracy since 1990, reflected in a continuous decline in electoral patterns (Grez, 2019). Since 1991, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has been registering a significant distrust of citizens (54%) towards the State, political parties, and politicians. Between 2017 and 2019, the figures fluctuate between 80% and 95% (Salazar, 2019). On the other hand, we are facing the exacerbation of social unrest induced by the growing social inequality that has fractured Chilean society (Matus, 2019), and the new expectations generated from a process of increased schooling and university training (Araujo, 2019).

When reviewing the spectrum of contingent reflections of the social rebellion (Araujo, 2019; Folchi, 2019; NEMESIS, 2019), we verify that the conjuncture analyzes that resort to historical and territorial aspects have been scarce. Along these lines, we postulate that social rebellion is a response to the neoliberalization process of Chilean society with particular and novel intensity. It is about a diversity of political, social, and cultural uses of urban space and a dispute for the subaltern re-appropriation of the social articulation in the city. This implies a geopolitical recomposition of daily life, as the reconquest of urban space by the self-convened masses, and a symbolic dispute over the political representation of social unrest; that directly antagonizes the role of the subsidiary state and restricted democracy. In sum, the social rebellion accounts for a triple movement: the breakdown of the

neoliberal consensus, the politicization of the social, and the strengthening of local power in the city.

To develop this argument, we first describe a contextual framework of the five major cycles of social rebellion that have been documented from 1938 to 2016. We made the temporary cut in 1938 because it is from there that it is possible to place a cycle of political, social, and economic transformations, which helps to understand the first historical blowout in the city in 1957, which was triggered, like the rebellion of October 2019, by the increase in the price of public transport. We plotted the first two revolts by means of a nationwide map, which was drawn up based on the book “*Violencia política popular en las grandes alamedas. La violencia en Chile 1947-1987* (Popular political violence in the great avenues. Violence in Chile 1947-1987)” by Gabriel Salazar (2006). In it, three historical scenarios are presented, the main distinction of which lies in a double dynamic chart that recounts the events of social upheaval that are scenically determined and, at the same time, establish their projectively determining tendencies. The other two cycles are mapped thanks to the review and compilation of national-local digital press files, from which the hotspots of student and regionalist-environmental mobilizations in the main cities of Chile were spatialized. Second, we narrate the development of the main conflictive events that arose in the social rebellion of Chilean October. We rely on a nationwide map that was produced from an exhaustive review of more than 350 digital press records from the main regional and provincial capitals, according to the daily chronology of the protests. And, thirdly, relating the historical-contextual elements to the October rebellion, we test some reasons and conceptualizations about the political meanings of the social rebellion, highlighting the emergence of new strategies for the exercise of local power in the cities, as the most innovative and interesting aspect to discuss in the face of the eventual and unprecedented Chilean constituent process.

## **Social rebellions in Chile between 1938 and 2016**

In Chile, the second half of the 20th century is crossed by violent episodes, known as “*historical reventones* (blowout)”, in their most varied forms and geographical expressions. There was a cyclical reproduction of events of popular political violence in the urban space that has stressed the current

institutionality, together with a repressive counter-movement of the State, as a tactic to “return the historical beast to its cage” (Salazar, 2006, p. 51). During the last eighty years of political life (Salazar, 2006; Milos, 2015; De la Maza & Garcés, 1985; Mayol & Azócar, 2011; Valenzuela et al., 2016), it is possible to identify five major cycles of mobilizations in cities: 1) composition and decomposition of national-developmentalism (1938-1958); 2) recomposition and crisis of national-populism (1958-1973); 3) days of a national protest against Pinochet (1983-1986); 4) mobilizations of the educational sector (2001-2011); and 5) environmental and regionalist mobilizations (2009-2016) (see image 1).

The first cycle of mobilizations is part of the process of democratic consolidation and substitute industrialization of the State (1938-1958). In this period, a new social actor emerges that left behind the national business community linked to British capitals and commercial houses. Due to the consequences of the First World War and the crisis of the 1930s, the technocratic-fiscal businessman entered the scene to build the notion of the corporate or manufacturing state. This process, according to Salazar (2006), presented contradictions since the business state was less autonomous and efficient than its predecessor. Therefore, the displacement and sharpening of tensions between actors were politically managed, adopting a clientelist relationship of political movements. There was, therefore, subsumption in the “national electorate” without social content.

In the second government of Ibáñez del Campo, the economic crisis implied a shift from national-developmentalism to *laissez-faire* free trade. This led to an increase in prices, a decrease in industrial productivity, and inflation. Thus, the increase between 50% and 100% of the public transport rate triggered the first historical blowout in April 1957, which spread through Valparaíso, Santiago, and Concepción (see image 1). The mobilization lasted twelve days with more than twenty deaths, hundreds of wounded, and considerable material damages. This blowout expressed a generalized discontent regarding a deeper rupture in society: that between those who were or felt integrated into social life and those who were or felt marginalized from it (Milos, 2015).

The second cycle of mobilizations (1958-1973) was the scene of a crisis of the State, mainly of the ruling civil political class. To face the problems of the model dependent on the world market, at the mercy of its primary-exporting vocation, the liberal recipe book was applied in the political and

social sphere. That is why Salazar (2006) refers to this period as a second chance for mercantile capitalism but under other types of practices, such as planning and social participation, which allowed satisfying the imperative of modernization.

The blowouts between 1960-1968 transformed the forms of struggle of the massive movements: from functional strikes in industries and other productive sectors that took over the first years (Mademsa, Madeco, metallurgists, coal miners, Chilean Electricity Company, among others), to forms of occupation and territorial control. In other words, the most relevant expressions were mainly factory seizures and land seizures, and in 1968 they struggled based on concerted actions by various social groups of the “lower town”.

The third cycle of mobilizations includes the National Protest Days against the Pinochet dictatorship between 1983 and 1986. According to various authors (Delgado & Maugard, 2018; Hunneus, 2016; Valdivia et al., 2012), this cycle of demonstrations proved social defeat of the regime, once the centers of the political dispute were concentrated in the popular populations and sectors, expressing their discontent and “putting at stake even the very stability of the regime” (Delgado & Maugard, 2018, p.35).

These protests burst onto the urban scene as a result of the deep economic crisis that Chile was going through between 1981 and 1982. The banking system practically went bankrupt, the external debt was unsustainable, as well as inflation and unemployment levels that ranged from 10% to 20% (De la Maza & Garcés, 1985). This crisis, added to the harsh repression and political violence of more than ten years of authoritarian rule, created conditions for social politicization and the emergence of protest in the cities with broad participation of the popular sectors.

Almost two decades later, we locate the fourth cycle of mobilizations. From 2001 to 2011, there were highly recurrent protests linked to the educational sector, which tensioned the neoliberal pact in democracy. This type of mobilization was characterized by the occupation of public space via marches and rallies in strategic places in the city, in addition to the control and massive occupation of school and university campuses, which shows greater organic capacity and radicalism.

The first student mobilization was known as the “*mochilazo*” (backpack) in 2001, at which time the high school students managed to stop the rise of the school pass and extend the benefit throughout the year.

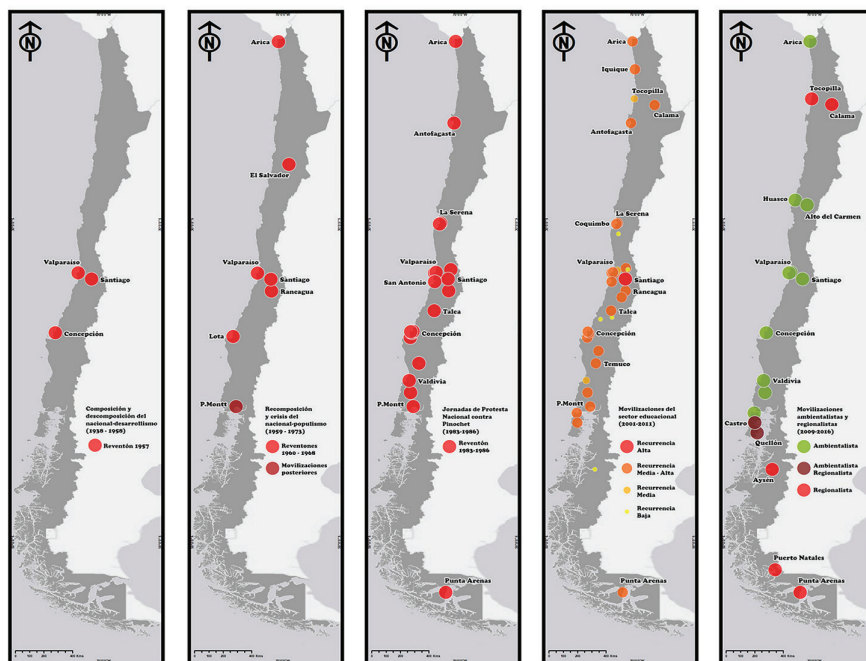
The second student protests, “The Penguin Revolution” of 2006, inaugurated the legitimation of the mass protest, as it was supported by vast sectors of Chilean society. Situation that will be amplified by the university movement of 2011 that covered the streets and squares of the country with more than 200 thousand people, developing urban performances (runs, kissing marathons, choreography, etc.), use of social networks and university occupations.

The fifth cycle of environmentalist and regionalist mobilizations (2009-2016) evidences “the construction of discourses favorable to political autonomy and sharing in the income that is territorially reduced” (Valenzuela et al., 2016, p. 226). At least three factors explain the cycle of these protests: the production of socio-territorial inequalities between regions; the consequences of the environmental devastation generated from the main primary productive sectors; and the low return of added value to the communities and territories, from where the goods are extracted. All of this, integrated into the fact that the main political parties became oligarchic elites, which did not channel the demands of the citizens (Valenzuela et al., 2016).

Thus, as the map shows (see image 1), at least sixteen cities in Chile have had mobilizations during the last decade. For example, one of them corresponds to the conflict that arose in the city of Calama during 2009 due to the high value of copper, which led to the development of a petition: recovery of 5% of copper profits in producing areas; b) compensation for the relocation of the Chuquicamata camp; c) declaration of Calama as an extreme zone; d) compensation of 400 million dollars for the 34 years in which the city has not received the returns from copper; e) renationalization of copper and water resources.

The five cycles of mobilizations described above represent a historical-structural dilemma between the tendency to commodify everyday life, which results from the dominant socio-economic model and its different political, social, and environmental crises; and the need to dignify life and guarantee social rights. It has been through various forms and contents of social politicization and urban and territorial re-appropriation of subalternized groups, that the mobilizations have been consolidated, which are increasingly intense and extensive and show a broadening of social awareness of structural inequality Chilean society.

**Image 1**  
**National map according to cycles**  
**of social mobilization in Chile 1938-2016**



Source: own elaboration

## A narrative of the social rebellion of Chilean October

On October 14, 2019, protests led by high school students began as a result of the 30-peso rise in the value of the Santiago subway ticket, while the political elite, with a despotic attitude, called on citizens to “get up earlier” to pay less since the price rates are differentiated according to schedule. Faced with this situation, the perseverance of the students together with the slogan “avoid, do not pay, another way to fight”, seems to combine social energy beyond the usual. After noon on Friday, October 18, the main metro stations are suspended and the entire inter-bus system collapses. Thousands of workers and students have to walk forcibly from the city center to their respective ho-

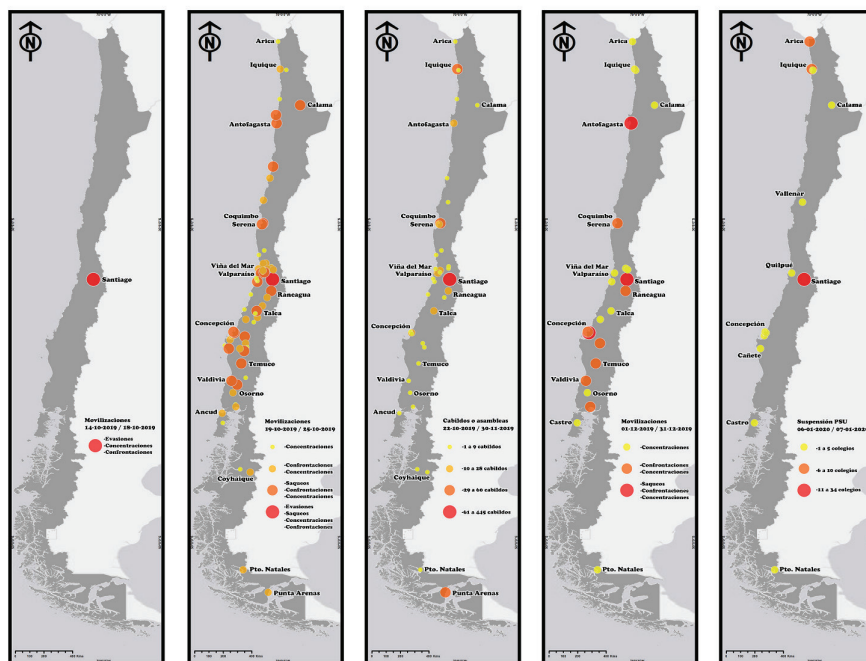


mes, to the peripheries and neighboring communes, where multiple barricades and marches are organized through the main arteries of the city. Popular pressure intensifies with the passing of the hours and some subway stations are penetrated by demonstrations that destroy turnstiles, commercial stores, ATMs, and even wagons. The repressive forces are overwhelmed, concentrating their actions only in those places close to the government authority. At night the popular mobilization becomes a massive and transversely inorganic phenomenon, affecting the entire urban area of Santiago. Thousands of people and groups of neighbors gather in a peaceful way, in corners and neighborhoods of different social strata. The *cacerolazos* began and the barricade hotspots multiplied in various parts of the capital.

The government adopts a delegitimizing discourse, of criminal violence, given the destruction of public property. However, the main neighborhoods and communes of Santiago are occupied by neighbors, families who empathize with the protest. “It was not thirty pesos, it was thirty years”, is the slogan that synthesizes said horizontality and massive legitimacy. The columns of smoke and barricades are also multiplying. The building of the electricity company of Italian multinational capitals, ENEL, burns in flames. Around 11 pm, the first images of completely burned subway stations, as well as commercial stores and collective locomotion buses appear. The government decrees a State of Emergency and appoints a Chief of National Defense in charge of the Armed Forces and Public Order. The military returns to the public space after three decades.

The following day the demonstrations in the public thoroughfare intensified. Multitudinous intergenerational *cacerolazos* take control of the city, paralyzing the transport circuit and urban communication throughout Santiago. The press tries to criminalize protest actions due to acts of vandalism, however, the mobilization grows quantitatively and qualitatively. The first looting of supermarkets and large commercial stores also began, which multiplied with the passing of the hours and days. The government, at 6:00 p.m., announces a curfew from 10 p.m. However, in the cities of Arica, Iquique, Antofagasta, Calama, Coquimbo, Valparaíso, Rancagua, Talca, Concepción, Temuco, Osorno, Ancud, Coyhaique, Punta Arenas, among others (see image 2), the mobilizations are amplified.

**Image 2**  
**National map of the social mobilization process**



Source: own elaboration

As a result of the looting in peripheral communes of Santiago, the first three fatalities appear on October 20. On the same Saturday night, President Sebastián Piñera declared war on a “powerful enemy”, consolidating the radical antagonism between the spontaneous popular mobilization and the ridiculous response of the government. After the third day of the curfew, “The right to live in peace” begins to play, one of the most significant songs by popular singer-songwriter Víctor Jara, assassinated in the dictatorship. In social networks, different musical performances are shown and amplified in cities across the country, condensing the sense of social protest in the song of Víctor Jara.

On Friday, October 25, more than two million people gathered in downtown Santiago. Across the country, hundreds and thousands are demonstra-

ting to challenge the government and open a social agenda: a new constitution, no more AFPs (Administrator of Pension Funds), quality health and education. The next day, the government suspended the curfew as a sign of negotiation, although the protests prevailed mainly through the destruction of street sings and the direct confrontation with the forces of public order. In this way, the government announced a new package of social measures and budget allocations in matters of pension, health, and basic services. However, the mobilizations begin to acquire new organizational features through territorial assemblies and self-convened councils, which fluctuate between 800 and 1,000, in forty cities of Chile (see image 2).

On Friday, November 8, Gustavo Gatica, a psychology student, was seriously injured in both eyes. This fact, which meant the total blindness of the student, marked a turning point. According to information from the Institute of Human Rights (INDH) and the Medical College (COLMED), as of November 10, there were about 200 people with eye damage, 5000 people detained, 1700 seriously injured, and 22 dead.

Product of the intense popular mobilization, on November 15 the main party leaders, representatives of the right, the center, and a part of the left, sign the Agreement for social peace and a new constitution. That Friday morning, the “Plaza Italia” dawns covered in white.<sup>1</sup>

In December, the Chamber of Deputies approved the draft “anti-looting law” to modify the Penal Code and make the alteration of the public peace a crime. Despite the onslaught to criminalize the protest, the latter continues to multiply and consolidate throughout the territory. On Friday, December 20, the Intendent of the Metropolitan Region decided to occupy the “Plaza de la Dignidad” with the police, a situation that led to new mobilizations, in addition to the constitutional impugnation against the Intendent, who finally got away with impunity.

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1 It should be noted that Plaza Italia is the nerve center of the protests in Santiago and perhaps the country, being a strategic and symbolic place for the urban re-appropriation of the upward mobilization process. In this bifurcation urban center, which hierarchically and socially separates the rich eastern and poor western sectors of the city, a good part of the political action that keeps the mobilization and its negotiation process active emanates. Plaza Italia is today called Plaza Dignidad (Dignity) and becomes, geopolitically, the center of the ascending territoriality of unrest and an emblematic place of the organization that resists the repressive actions of the State as Ground Zero. In symbolic terms, there is a spontaneous consensus of the narratives of the protest in renaming it as *Plaza de la Dignidad*.

By the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, although the protest shows certain signs of wear and tear, the town councils and territorial assemblies continue to be one of the most important active political expressions on a national scale. In fact, Zambrano and Huaiqui (2020), from a self-convened virtual platform, showed that, between October 22 and November 30, a total of 1,047 councils and assemblies were reported in Chile. In short, the current map of social mobilization not only allows to reveal the differentiated impacts of the Chilean neoliberalization process but also the multiple responses and diverse manifestations of territorial re-appropriation that crystallized the geography of a new political terrain throughout the country.

### **Towards the breakdown of the neoliberal consensus, the politicization of the social and the strengthening of local power**

A first aspect that allows us to understand social rebellion is the breakdown of the neoliberal consensus. But how was this consensus built and what are its essential operational characteristics? Well, with the civic-military coup of 1973 an unprecedented path of neoliberalization and social disintegration was opened, where a large part of the popular sectors was converted into a marginal mass, relegated to inhabit the outskirts of the cities, and constituted as citizens by average consumption and indebtedness (Vargas, 2019). The paradox of this citizenship via consumption is that it was not possible to deepen liberal citizenship. It was a long historical process of structural de-citizenship, due to the loss of social and union rights. Precarization and labor flexibility, extreme competition, privatization of rights, the commodification of social life and social insecurity, trace social life in neoliberal Chile.

From the 1990s onwards, the neoliberal consensus between the political elite and the economic elite materialized. The project of the “Concertation of Parties for Democracy” deepened the neoliberalization imposed during the dictatorship in two main ways: it undermined the State in its subsidiary form and restricted the contents of the incipient liberal democracy. This deepening is observed in the particular and progressive realization of the principle of commercialization of social rights. Let’s look at some examples. The 1981 water code empowers the State to grant water use rights free of charge

and in perpetuity. In the Frei government (1994-2000), the public water management companies were privatized, completely, or partially. In 1980, the Pension Fund Administrators (AFP) were created as an individual capitalization system. As of December 2018, 50% of the 684,000 retirees obtained a pension of less than \$ 151,000 Chilean pesos. Even in the segment of those who contributed between 30 and 35 years, 50% received a pension of less than \$ 296,332 (see <https://bit.ly/3gk7IA4>). This considering that the minimum salary as of March 1, 2020 is \$ 320,500. In the university education sector, in 2005 the State Endorsement Credit (CAE) was created to facilitate access. In 2011, 40% of young people from low-income sectors entered higher education. More than 70% of students go into debt. Even 2 out of 3 students drop out for financial reasons (Páez, 2017). In the field of health, in 2005, the Universal Care Plan with Explicit Guarantees (AUGE) was implemented to guarantee the care of citizens with certain diseases. When the public system is not able to provide care, it is transferred to the private sector. This resulted in the transfer of US \$ 6809 millions of public funds to the private health network, which increased its capacity by 20% between 2005 and 2011 (Goyenechea & Sinclair, 2013).

In this way, the subsidiary principle of the State supposes a secondary role of the State apparatus with respect to the market, as a privileged place to satisfy human needs. The State intervenes when the private sector cannot do so or is not interested (Guardia, 2015). The lack of protection from the State in the face of the privatization wave overloaded the family pocket of Chileans, which resulted in 2011, in one of the greatest social crises in recent times. Thus, criticism of the commodification of education, territorial-environmental, regional interests, in addition to the legitimacy of the Mapuche ethno-national demand (Penaglia, 2016), are some of the territorial expressions with the greatest recurrence in the process.

The minimal democracy (Guardia, 2015) of the subsidiary State promoted the depoliticization and neutralization of social conflict, radically separating politics from its social base and building “technical” governments. With this, a sustained decrease in citizen participation in the different electoral processes was observed, resulting in a semi-sovereign democracy (Huneeus, 2014). Thus, a population that is a spectator of public policies was established, only socially reserved for the family sphere.

During the seventeen years of ultra-liberal authoritarianism (1973-1990), the historical networks and party structures of the Chilean left chan-

ged based on a set of coercive devices that structurally altered the way of understanding politics. The Chilean dictatorship not only applied the repression and proliferation of terror, but it also took pains to build consensus and dispute common sense for a new project of society (Valdivia et al., 2012; 2015). In this context, the municipal space and the verticalized territorial management of the State in regions became part of the nucleus of the political actions of the authoritarian regime. A new representation of politics was created, understood as family, local and community participation to validate the regime (Quiroz, 2018; Valdivia et al., 2012).

The municipalization registered in the regionalization process implied a new administrative political division of the subnational units, generating higher levels of coordination, resources, and competences (Quiroz, 2018). In parallel, the new regional state was militarily hierarchical and fortified through the operation of the Regional Planning Secretariats (SERPLA), since they had to promote and activate the territorial planning of the new economic model for Chile. Based on this strict military control and the first neoliberal reforms, the transfer of important resources and technical networks to local territories was deployed. This allowed the recruitment of a new political elite that not only was localized but also expanded from the municipalities to other institutional political circuits.

The municipal sphere became the main mechanism of integration, depoliticization, and social validation of the regime (Valdivia et al., 2012). The municipalities and especially the mayors of the period acquire an important political relevance at the local and regional level, by executing programs of minimum employment, delivery of housing, creation of sports activities and family recreation, training for the poorest, in addition to the transfer services such as health and education, among others. These neoliberal-corporatist policies led to an important nucleus of inequalities and conflicts on the rise in the popular sectors. At the same time, they were the mechanism for integrating and validating the authoritarian regime among the poorest and middle sectors, since, in this way, networks and organizations with low-intensity participation and high dependence on the municipal structure were strengthened.

According to Valdivia (2015), the 1979 reform was the device that fully intertwined neoliberalism, military corporatism, and unionism (the three currents that led the authoritarian regime). The actions of the municipality delegated a series of public services to private firms, restructuring the subsidiary State of local management focused on poverty. In this way, municipi-

palization is a key piece to understand the political character of the regime and the territorial deployment of the neoliberal consensus on a local-national scale.

For its part, the unique situation that opens up in Chile after the October social rebellion invites us to think of the mobilization as a radical break with the neoliberal consensus itself. The protest and the political re-appropriation of urban space have been the expression of an accumulation of unprocessed social unrest, which demands what the consensus itself denied them. We are not facing an economic crisis of Chilean neoliberalism. It is a crisis of neoliberal subjectivity, a political and social rejection of austerity policies, and the abandonment by the State, but also a radical critique of the institutional political system.

A second aspect observed in this process is the politicization of the social. One of the main consequences of semi-sovereign democracy was a strong social fracture. Since 2011, we have seen how the political crisis threatened to destroy the legitimacy of the institutions, and in effect, the mobilizations and protests caused politics to explode. Several polls show that the party system and institutions, as well as the political coalitions located in the ruling party and the opposition, maintain considerable rates of disapproval (Salazar, 2019). We are facing a collapse of the legitimacy of institutional politics. Never, since the return to democracy, has a President of the Republic had 6% approval and 82% disapproval of the government's performance.

It is worth asking in what sense we are facing a process of politicization of the social. To answer this question it is possible to identify at least three elements. First, it is not about politicization in the classic formal institutional sense, since, before the social rebellion, it is possible to observe low rates of participation in political parties. Rather, the politicization we are talking about here refers to a type of active practice and intensive participation in the various political demonstrations (assemblies, councils, concentrations in public squares, marches, confrontations with the public force), which demand multiple needs, without reducing to one of these. We refer to demands that range from decent pensions, quality health and education, a decent minimum wage; to a new constitution and Constituent Assembly. All this reflects a social clamor for a new norm of coexistence that is not mediated, nor commanded, by the orientation of large international and national capital. In other words, we are facing a real interest in politics, and not an interest in political parties due to their inability to represent the social. This is qui-



te clear when looking at the information from the Chilean Electoral Service (SERVEL). This service shows that as of January 31, 2020, there are a total of 1,014,968 members of political parties, which represent only 7.2% of the total population in Chile as voters. Similarly, for the age range between 18 and 24, these represent 0.6% of the total voting population, specifically 82,417 people.

Second, neoliberalism has generated a process of “de-citizenship”, since in the context of capital’s onslaught against labor, one of the key constituent moments in the 20th century, social rights, is lost. Thus, the general trend at the beginning of the 21st century for greater social security in the face of a weakened subsidiary state tensions the very agenda of neoliberalism. Given the great institutional impact of the social rebellion, the government of Sebastián Piñera was forced to open a consultative process to change the constitution. Therefore, the politicization that began in 2011 with the student movement and that diversified with the protests of regional movements in 2012, the massive marches of 2016 called by the *Coordinadora No + AFP*, the growing marches of the feminist movement of 2018; it has been expanding the limits of what is questionable, deeply cracking the neoliberal political agenda.

Third, a unique characteristic of the Chilean social rebellion has been the destruction of certain symbols of political, social, cultural, and economic domination, as part of the process of subaltern re-appropriation of urban space. Thus, commercial premises (pharmacies, fast food restaurants, car dealerships, hotels) were affected, statues were destroyed, public interventions occurred, walls intervened with, creative changes in the names of plazas, among other expressions, expresses a politicization of the conflict that goes beyond what a formal institutional path can process. It is, ultimately, the conflictive dimension that expresses the political register in the social, which is abnormality and destabilization.

Finally, and directly related to the above, there appears a third aspect to theorize about the social rebellion in the cities: the place of the municipal, of the city government, as a legitimized space. As we argued above, with the return to democracy, the municipalities remained normatively with the same inherited powers, being naturalized a territorial public order unaffected by deliberative and universal political rights. Community management continued to be socially and geographically divided into managing municipalities and precarious municipalities. Although the mayors were demo-



cratically elected, the clientelist structure designed in the dictatorial period was systematized and politically expanded in a transversal manner. Without entering into a dispute with the authoritarian principles of the mayor's office and seeking a non-conflictive administration of neoliberalism, the municipalities gradually took up positions of dissent, but, in most cases, always under the protection of party networks and centralist logics, functional to the practices of political parties (Valdivia, 2015, p. 130).

Despite these contradictions, in certain circumstances, the local authorities came into tension with their own parties and guidelines from the government coalitions (Pérez, 2020). In this regard, the Chilean Association of Municipalities announced the first constituent plebiscite, exceeding the times and agenda of the Ministry of Social Development itself. This took place in 226 communes throughout the country, where more than 2 million people demonstrated through voluntary virtual and face-to-face voting. 91.3% of the people are in favor of a new Constitution and 8.7% against it. This milestone sets the tone and urgency of the constituent process. However, beyond the conjuncture, said sporadic dissidence of the municipalities has not structurally modified the authoritarian communal pact, that is, the clientelist networks and the respective mayoralization of politics in the cities continued to be consolidated.

In this unusual phenomenon, mayors, from the entire national ideological spectrum, appear as the best evaluated politicians. This shows a strategic position of the local authorities, as agents of recognition and social projection of the citizens. One wonders if right-wing mayors can be genuine representatives of recent social unrest? On the eve of the constituent process, several right-wing mayors in Santiago, such as Germán Codina in the Puente Alto commune and Rodolfo Carter in La Florida, became an active part of the mobilizations as protectors of neighbors and locals, being able to articulate and mobilize support networks for an intransigent central government.

Today the main presidential ballot of the right is Joaquín Lavín, a mayor of one of the richest communes in the country and one of the main promoters of Chilean neoliberalism during the last decades.

What was then the rupture of the communal pact in a democracy? There is a milestone that marks a fundamental break with the authoritarian communal pact, which was reactivated after the October rebellion. It is the Ricardo Silva Soto Popular Pharmacy, inaugurated in 2015 in the Recoleta commune. A municipal device that, although continued the same mayora-

lization by promoting the figure of Mayor Daniel Jadue (Communist Party of Chile), radically inverted the content and form of communal politicization. Indeed, this municipal policy quickly became legitimized at the national level, openly questioning the principles of the neoliberal model. Jadue transformed a social demand into an institutional body of popular pretense with high degrees of legitimacy. That is, a body available to dispute the hegemony of the ultra-liberal consensus with significant degrees of parity in a territory (Quiroz, 2015).

The experience of Recoleta not only calls into question the logic of precarious health and its financial impunity in the distribution of medicines but also reveals the content of the public, as the distribution and universal access of common goods on a national scale. In this context, this experience allowed thousands of Chilean men and women, in different communes of the country, to access unscrupulously usurious drugs. In these last five years (2015-2020), popular opticians and pharmacies, municipal bookstores, community supermarkets, among other initiatives, have confirmed the loss of neoliberal consensus and a new repertoire of municipal management of cities in Chile, in open tension with the old depoliticized patronizing enclave.

Consequently, the municipal administration of Recoleta led by Daniel Jadue, symbolically and materially, became a laboratory of neoliberal dissent in Chile: A set of experiences and practices that re-signified the public space in which the municipal administration, which was thought during the dictatorship, and the social articulation was re-configured as open political relations with the local community, were expanded and continue to expand there. This is how the emergence of temporarily reused school spaces via community workshops, the expansion of open courses for the community, the extension of sports practices for the training of middle and popular sectors, the emergence of school co-governments, the strengthening of the working conditions of teachers in public establishments, the creation of an Open University and a Popular Library, that once again exceeded the demand and community organization, are explained and contextualized.

What we are interested in highlighting is that, from Recoleta, an unprecedented local territorial political management was opened up to this moment, available to dispute the neoliberal scenario and open to create conditions of local representation capable of breaking in against the resistant traditional political practices, generally, full of presidential authoritarian-

nisms or parliamentary powers functional to the status quo. Could it be that the municipalities have a structural role in politics after the social rebellion? Could it be that the general malaise is connected by a new territorial morphology that tends to politicize the communal scale?

## Conclusions

There is a relative consensus that the social rebellion of October revealed, on the one hand, the profound crisis of the system of political representation, and, on the other, the expansion of social awareness of the injustices and inequalities caused by the neoliberalization of the Chilean society, and which has been stripped naked by the various cycles of mobilization that preceded it (Mayol, 2019; Folchi, 2019; NEMESIS, 2019; Salazar, 2019; Araujo, 2019). The conjuncture analysis of the social rebellion that we have performed gives a faithful testimony of the exhaustion of the Chilean neoliberalization concentrated in the state deregulation, in the loss of social and union rights; and in the dominance of the accumulation pattern, where financial capital is freed from any type of social guarantee to revalue itself.

What is new about the social rebellion is observed in the intensity of the struggles, the breadth and diversification of forms and contents of political uses of urban space, in urban centers and popular neighborhoods, and their permanence in time-space. This evidences a process of subaltern re-appropriation of the social articulation in the city, since, not only did the number of mobilized people increase, but also the number of cities and territories that rose in unison. The possibility of a plebiscite for the elaboration of a new Constitution of the Republic, as well as the voting exercise carried out by the Chilean Association of Municipalities, is a new phenomenon throughout the political history of Chile. This question shows the need to re-found the subsidiary state as a necessary condition to reverse the deepening of the neoliberalization process on a national scale. This demand has become one of the main references to the politicization of Chilean society, which necessarily implies a change in the bases of the national coexistence agreement.

Citizen demands express the need to build new ways of doing politics. In fact, one of the most novel and interesting topics that we see is the flourishing of self-organized spaces that have been massive and diverse in the country's cities. There, local power has been strengthened from the so-

cial point of view, discussing the general issues of the country and its future, which has been combined with specific issues, such as environmental problems, childhood, plurinationality, feminisms, and the constituent process (Zambrano & Huaiqui, 2020). The local-communal political management of Recoleta in the city of Santiago is also unprecedented, which disputes the traditional way of doing local politics. Faced with an eventual scenario of the constituent process, the challenge arises of contesting it from the community-neighborhood sphere, as a dynamic of deliberative social integration that includes the structural demands of citizens, and that puts geographic scales at the center of the analysis of power (Quiroz & Contreras, 2019).

From now on, it will be possible to assess whether at the national and institutional level the politicization of the social and its local expressions, rebuild a post-neoliberal social interdependence. This is a subject scarcely explored in the literature that has been testing and debating the structural and conjunctural aspects of the social rebellion, which is still in development. For this reason, new research will be necessary on the scope and limitations of the rupture of the neoliberal consensus, the politicization of the social and the municipal dispute for new meanings of authority and legitimacy that are articulated at the national scale. Undoubtedly, this scenario poses new economic, political, and social challenges so that the popular slogan: “until dignity becomes customary in Chile”, is a significant, concrete, and effective horizon for the political, social, and territorial struggle.

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Submission date: 2020/04/12; Acceptance date: 2020/08/21;

Publication date: 2020/09/01