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The possibility of social critique

Between critical social theory and social movements

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June 2018

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

Word Count: 81.037

Abstract

The waves of mobilisations that took place after the 2008 financial crisis in several locations across the globe prompted some social movement scholars and radical thinkers to highlight the ability of social actors to resist capitalism and develop new forms of radical democracy. This initial moment of 'effervescence' has been followed by a longer period of balance and critical evaluation. In this context, critical theorists have welcomed the renewal of social critique after a long period of withdrawal and the enunciation of a post-critical era. However, this renewal has taken place at the expense of critical theory's social significance. In this work, I propose a productive cross-fertilisation of the various realms in which the social critique of capitalism has (separately) taken place: critical social theory and practices of social criticism carried out by social movements. Drawing on Fredric Jameson's notion of an 'aesthetic of cognitive mapping' and on Luc Boltanski's critical sociology, the thesis argues that the affinities between the two forms of critique provide a basis upon which a politically and theoretically productive articulation might be built. In the first part, I explore four different styles of theoretical critique – from David Harvey to Luc Boltanski – highlighting their merits and limitations, while emphasising critical social theory's structural limitations in making sense of individuals' lived experiences. In the second part, I delve into the practices of criticism of capitalist society carried out by two Chilean social movements: the *pobladores*' movement and the student movement, respectively, in order to explore how social critique is performed in the context of concrete social struggles. *Pobladores* and students have been resisting, mapping, and contesting neoliberal policies in Chile since the beginning of the 2000s, actualising old practices of resistance in a new and fragmented social context. By disclosing the affinities between the practices of social critique at both levels, I contend that critical theorists can learn from social movements' descriptions and explanations, and thus rehabilitate its political emancipatory dimension.

Acknowledgements

Bringing this thesis to fruition would not have been possible without the help, support, and patience of many people.

I am very grateful to my supervisors, Gregor McLennan and Terrell Carver, for their generosity and constant support throughout the entire process. Both provided me with essential practical and academic guidance since the first day I arrived in Bristol. Since then, they have been a fruitful source of inspiration and encouragement. Crucially, they pushed me enthusiastically to finish the work whenever my energies started to wane.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the activists, leaders, and participants of the Chilean *pobladores'* movement and the Chilean student movement, who generously gave me their trust and time in taking part in the interviews that inform crucial parts of this thesis. The work's core motivation was to learn from the experiences of resistance and critique of neoliberal capitalism in contexts where knowledge is created and mobilised with emancipatory aims. Thank you for allowing me to see the work behind years of struggle, resistance, and organisation for a more egalitarian future. Thank you for showing me the possibilities of social critique.

I also want to express my gratitude to colleagues and friends, who provided me with insightful conversations, materials, and comments on specific topics during the writing of the thesis: Mauro Basaure, Claudia Jordana, Antonia Garcés, Camilo Sembler, Carlos Azócar, Nicolás Angelcos, Rodrigo Fernandez and Alvaro Jiménez.

I am also enormously grateful to the 'office people' group for their friendship and companionship. Thanks to Magda, Lenny, Karina, Maria-Teresa, Pato, and many others for always being there with the right words, coffee, sweeties, and pints. I am particularly indebted to the amazing and generous Rosa, Rodrigo, Matt, and Mark, who read early versions of some chapters and greatly improved the text as a result.

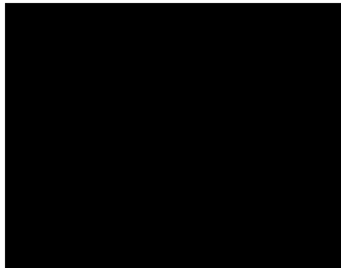
My gratitude also goes to the 'Chilean gang'. Thanks to Giani, Cristian, Berni, Andres, Yoci, among others, for introducing us to the Chilean-Bristolian world, and making us feel at home. And to Pancha, Nica, Isi, Diego, Hector, Matías, Jose, Pancho, Goya, Dana, Jesu, Ricardo, and many others (we are legion!), for their companionship and support throughout this process. Their friendship has been vital.

I dedicate this thesis, with gratitude and love, to my parents and brothers. Thanks for being affectionate, strong, and patient, and for showing me how to stay affectionate, strong, and patient, especially during the past few months.

Finally, I would like to express my personal thanks to Barbara. Without her precious advice, insightful ideas, eagle-eyed critique, and innumerable conversations, this project would probably still be ongoing. I am greatly indebted to her relentless commitment, which has helped me to navigate the complexities of academic and extra-academic life with support and love. This thesis is also dedicated to her.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:  DATE: 18/06/2018

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INTRODUCTION

The renewal of social critique

During the course of the past decade, the popular Gramscian slogan – 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will' – has been updated twice: first on the optimistic side, and second on the pessimistic one. The waves of protests, revolts, and uprisings that took place following the 2008 financial crisis, in several parts of the world, led social movement scholars (Della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Della Porta 2015) and radical theorists (Butler 2011; Hardt and Negri 2011) to highlight the ability of new and old subjects to resist capitalism and develop new forms of radical democracy. In light of these heterogeneous expressions of unrest in divergent political settings, the sense that 'change' was coming gained momentum. In the preface to one of the three large-scale conferences on the *Idea of Communism* we read:

> The long night of the left is drawing to a close. The defeat, denunciations and despair of the 1980s and 1990s, the triumphalist 'end of history', the unipolar world of American hegemony – all are fast becoming old news (…) Greece, France, India and Thailand are introducing wide sections of the population and, critically, young people to ideas of resistance, rebellion and emancipation. If 1989 was the inaugural year of the new world order, 2001 announced its decline, and the collapse of the banking system in 2008 marked the beginning of a return to full-blown history. If that was our 'new world order', it is the shortest the world has even seen.
>
> (Douzinas and Žižek 2010, p.2)

However, this initial moment of 'effervescence' has been followed by a moment of balance and critical evaluation. 'Now, after a year, there is not a day that does not provide new evidence on how fragile and inconsistent that awakening was' (Žižek 2016, p.6), as the editors of the third occasion of the same conference wrote four years later. Regardless of the position one occupies on the optimism-pessimism spectrum, the main assumption underpinning this research is that critical social theorists can use this moment of political awakening and its subsequent disillusionment or reflection to reconnect with critical theory's explicitly political emancipatory aims.

This thesis emerges out of a context in which this shift from 'effervescence' to critical evaluation has been noticed but yet to be subjected to an in-depth study: namely,2011's

mobilisations in Chile. Considered as a 'model' of economic development during the 1990s and one of the first 'neoliberal experiments' in the world, the degrees of social mobilisation in Chile had remained minimal since the return to democracy in 1990. After 17 years of military dictatorship, Chilean society was not used to massive public demonstrations nor to public debates over the principles upon which the celebrated 'Chilean model' was built. Thus, the year 2011 was significant not only because a wave of protests developed, but more crucially because such protests marked completely unexpected expressions of 'social outrage' in a context of political and economic stability. Students demanding free and high-quality education burst into the streets and sustained a mobilisation over eight months, challenging Chilean market-based educational policies, influencing the political agenda and, more generally, questioning the principles of the political system and the socio-economic order. Along with students, miners, feminist groups, mapuches, ecologists, and *pobladores* also protested, calling into question the democratic character of Chilean political institutions, and condemning inequalities and exclusion. Despite the fact that each mobilisation can be situated within a broader historical context, for the majority of politicians and people participating in protests, mobilisations were wholly unexpected: a truly political event.

As a former sociology student at the Universidad de Chile, I was familiar with diagnoses that emphasised both the causes of and the limits to any serious attempts to contest neoliberalism in Chile. I had learned that, unlike other countries in Latin America (such as Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia or Brazil) in which the introduction of neoliberal policies was followed by considerable levels of social mobilisation and protests, in Chile the possibility of mobilising against neoliberalism was blocked by a number of objective and subjective conditions. Indeed, the 'sociology of transition' in Chile emphasised that the path of modernisation taken by the centre-left Coalition that came to power after the dictatorship – The Concertación – created the seemingly paradoxical scenario of a transition to democracy without the participation of relevant social actors: the combination of a democratic political regime with a highly demobilised society. The pervasiveness of a technocratic ideology in the state, the persistence of authoritarian enclaves, but also a consensus over the inevitability of the socio-economic model imposed during the dictatorship, served to form a society in which the stability of the political regime was obtained at the price of the demobilisation of the popular sectors (Silva 2009). This is the reason why the process of normalisation that

followed the mobilisations – epitomised by the election of Michelle Bachelet, former president and member of the socialist party, who integrated many of the protesters' demands into her campaign – was experienced by many of the protesters with a mixture of excitement and caution at first, and then frustration. The political and economic reforms proposed by the new government did not secure the establishment of a free and public system of higher education in the long term. Key social services – housing, health, social security – and natural recourses – including a privatised water supply – were (and remain) highly commodified areas and important sources of capital accumulation in Chile. In other words, the programme of radical social, economic, and political reforms advanced by Bachelet in her campaign did not deliver fully on her promises (Fernandez and Vera 2012). Consequently, Bachelet's government was unable to secure another period in office for the Concertación. In 2017, the former president, right-wing billionaire Sebastian Piñera, won the presidential election. With the election of Piñera, the 'classic' priorities of governments previous to the period of mobilisations were brought back into the public agenda – national and domestic security, economic growth, and employment – and with them a new period of 'tranquillity', which the recent mobilisations had managed to disrupt.

Social movements' scholars are still trying to understand this and other political events in order to fully grasp their significance and scope. In this context, critical social theory, which has typically served the purpose of analysing the realities of capitalist society in all its contradictions in order to contribute to the enactment of progressive change (Calhoun 1995; Browne 2016), has seemed to be less responsive to the processes of contestation led by old and new social movements. As Luc Boltanski and Nancy Fraser have argued in debating the state of social critique in the contemporary world, after a period of withdrawal from the 70s to the 90s, the social critique of capitalist society has re-emerged with a new vitality and vigour, albeit at the expense of its social significance (Fraser et al. 2003; Dörre et al. 2015). This thesis contributes to the ongoing exploration of potential routes to the renewal of social critique and suggests possibilities for the rehabilitation of the latter's political dimension.

Given critical social theory's radical autonomy and its social irrelevance to the current situation, one might ask why not rid ourselves of its ineffective procedures and move toward a more "strategic" and direct political analysis of the issues of rebellion, emancipation, and

resistance to oppression? This is precisely what post-Althusserian radical thinkers – such as Étienne Balibar, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Rancière – have done over the last thirty years. Yet, by interpreting these upheavals as processes of political subjectification that introduce a radical discontinuity in history, radical thinkers have tended to downplay the relevance of the social as both a space of critical enquiry and the context from which disruptive political subjectivities emerge. This omission of the social is particularly problematic if we consider that the identification of social patterns that lead to irrationality and experiences of indignation is one of the major tasks in which activists themselves engage when they become transformative collective agents.

Significantly, the context in which social critique's renewal has taken place not only includes the resurgence of experiences of resistance to contemporary capitalism, but also a re-evaluation of its most lucid critic: Karl Marx. As several commentators have noted (Fuchs and Mosco 2012), in recent years, and especially on the occasion of his 200th birthday, the sense that 'Marx is back' has become pervasive. A considerable number of the 2011 protesters – the Occupy movement, the *Indignados* in Spain, or the *pobladores* in Chile – have invoked Marx to critique capitalism as an immoral, unjust, and irrational economic order. For many of these activists, Marx's critique of capitalist society provides a realist theory of the essential functioning of capitalism, and as such constitutes a valuable resource for acting and conceiving of alternatives to it. It is important to clarify that even though the tendency represents more a return *of* Marx – that is, of the intellectual and activist verve derived in his work – than a return *to* Marx in any of his theoretical 'canonisations', they all share the basic Marxist emphasis on the systemic and global nature of capitalism and its pernicious and uneven effects (Carver 2017).

Perhaps today, more clearly than at the beginning of the 2000s – when the alter-globalisation movement burst onto the scene – Marx's critique of capitalism can function as an overarching interpretative horizon for both critical social theorists, as well as protesters and activists. The fact that social movements started out from very specific demands in different fields, and had been able to publicly mobilise an anti-neoliberal discourse that questions the current organisation of society as a whole, should be seen as a way to re-pose the problem of the possibility of social critique and its multiple political articulations. Consequently, I construct the main object of study of this thesis – social critique – as a field

that encompasses both the realm of what has traditionally been understood broadly as critical social theory, and the practices of social criticism carried out by social movements. Following the work of Luc Boltanski (1999, 2011), my assumption is that if theoretical social critique is meant to be socially relevant, it must take seriously the practices of social critique carried out by ordinary actors. Differing from Boltanski, however, who has mainly focussed on individuals' practices of critique in everyday contexts, I will delve into experiences of social criticisms performed by social movements.

As this thesis contends, social movements utilise critical social theory's tools of generalisation and totalisation in their attempts to map the realities of neoliberal power, using them to transform private demands that are often experienced as individual problems into collective and public issues. When enacted by social movements, social critique has the power to situate individual problems within broader contexts, triggering solidarity bonds among individuals in scenarios marked by social fragmentation. Likewise, critical theorists can rehabilitate the political sense of their 'theories' by recovering and using the vivid descriptions of social movements' first-order 'critiques', which are explicitly political from the outset.

During the 1980s, the powers and ambitions of a totalising social critique, capable of exploring the relationship between concrete individuals' experiences and the systemic character of capitalism, lost much of its purchase in light of the 'postmodern' critiques of totalising thought. What was understood as the rationalist, reductionist, and unifying character of totalising theory was roundly rejected by postmodern theory on the political grounds that it served to obscure and suppress the plurality of concrete individual experiences (Susen 2015). The rationale behind these 'wars on totality' (Jameson and Grossberg 1988) were largely focussed on the ideological assimilation between the procedures of social critique and the politics of the Soviet Union. Notwithstanding years of debates about modernism/postmodernism across multiple intersecting and diverse fields, it is possible to take some distance from those readings that directly linked social critique and totalising thinking to the terrors of totalitarianism. From numerous endeavours to create a non-orthodox new left in both Europe and the US in the 50s to the Zapatistas' upheaval during the 90s to the developments of Third World feminisms, a firm and sustained position, that is not reducible to ideological dogma, has continued to flourish.

It is precisely the present political context which allows for a re-reading of critical theorists and the rediscovery of a non-dogmatic type of totalising thinking that has been at the core of critical social theory since Marx. As Martin Jay (1986) has shown, in the Western Marxist tradition there are multiple notions of totality, working at different levels and in various contexts, which preclude any 'totalitarian' reading of this conceptual tool. As noted by other scholars (Kellner 1990; Couzens Hoy and McCarthy 1994), the very idea of a critical theory as opposed to traditional theory emphasises the 'pragmatic' use of conceptual instruments to grasp both the changing and intricate nature of capitalism and its relationships between concrete individuals. In defining the very 'subject' of critical theory, for example, Max Horkheimer says: 'Its subject is rather a definite individual in his real relation to other individuals and groups, in his conflict with a particular class, and, finally, in the resultant web of relationships with the social totality and with nature' (2002, p.211). Therefore, as exemplified in Marx's critique of idealism and naïve materialism, and its subsequent 'Western' developments, the use of totalising thinking has been tied from the outset to the political necessity of coming to terms with the (capitalist) system and its different mediations, without the metaphysical assertion of a 'homogenous totality'.

Whilst this link between the social totality and individuals' relationships with other individuals and groups has usually been couched in terms of the agency/structure debate within social theory, this issue has not been translated into the field of collective action studies. On the contrary, social movement studies arose out of a dissatisfaction with macro-structural frameworks, as they were incapable of making sense of and to the dynamics of mobilisations in more concrete situations. It is not trivial in this context that Donatella Della Porta (2015) has recently advocated for a return of capitalism to social movement studies.

In that context, this thesis proposes a productive cross-fertilisation of the realms in which varieties of the social critique of capitalism have (separately) taken place: critical social theory and practices of social criticism carried out by social movements. This attempt at making connections between both realms is intended not so much as a reconciliation between theory and practice, as a recognition of the necessity of a political articulation of social critique; the recognition that pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will are not separate schools of thoughts, but rather the very fate of a transformative modern politics – whether reformist or revolutionary. My intention, thus, is more modest than providing a

comprehensive survey of the contemporary and varied styles of social critique or an analysis of contemporary expressions of radical politics; instead, I would like to explore the main tensions and possibilities of social critique precisely where the latter has been practised. In so doing, I make no pretence that this thesis is primarily a contribution to activism as such, or indeed a devaluation of the theoretical moment. My point is that theory does – and should – seek to learn from people's concerns and acts of resistance in actual struggles.

Indeed, the revitalisation of social critique cannot be achieved without a clarification of the main tensions, commonalities, and possible modes of articulation between different styles within the complex realm of critical social theory in the present. Most of this work will be devoted to that task. One of the main features, when attempting to offer a panorama of the field of critical social theory, is the fragmentation and isolation of different traditions. To be sure, hyper-specialisation across disciplines, thematic focalisation, and the relative lack of communication are characteristic of the very process of capitalist modernisation, which is not without its benefits – the deep scope and conceptual clarity that each disciplinary field can achieve within their own walls, for example. But the stark disconnect between differing styles of critique, which explicitly call for a critique of contemporary capitalist society with transformative or emancipatory ambitions, negatively affects the 'spirit' of this very aim. I will claim that a more positive *attitude* to social movements' practices of social criticism can help critical social theory to attain moments of articulation. This does not amount to a forced pacification between competing traditions of critique; rather, it fosters a recognition that each style of critique – including the 'critique of critique' – can be seen as a different dimension and unique moment within the practice of social critique.

The examination of different modes of critical discourses can also be located in the broader context of global capitalism's latest developments, and the varied intellectual responses of the left's thought to the 'crisis of Marxism'. In *From Marxism to Post-Marxism?* Göran Therborn (2008) offers an account of the legacy and prospects of Marxism, identifying the main social, cultural, and intellectual changes that have occurred between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. According to Therborn, the breakdown of the typical Marxist triangulation of historical social science, critical philosophy, and socialist politics has prompted new and creative responses from the left. He goes on to identify six responses of left-of-centre scholars to the challenges posed by postmodernity: 'American Futurism',

‘Displacements of Class’, ‘Exits from the State’, ‘Return of Sexuality’, ‘Homage to Networks’, ‘Political Economies’. All these ‘responses’ are different modes of dealing with the ‘crisis’ of Marxism in the context of postmodern critiques of modernity, but they can also be seen as modes of side-lining some of the most crucial aspects of Marx’s social theory.

In *The Resources of Critique*, Alex Callinicos has also addressed the question of the conditions of possibilities of social critique in the present. Callinicos aims to trace the philosophical foundations of what he calls a renewal of social critique, in a context marked by the resurgence of experiences of resistance to contemporary capitalism. He surveys the most prominent styles of contemporary social critique in order to evaluate their theoretical and political plausibility. Callinicos’ main concern is how different traditions of thought have dealt with the questions of the possibility of transcending capitalism within the limits imposed by its social and physical materiality. In the prevalent modes of critique he analyses, Callinicos identifies two responses to this question: transcendence coming out of Being, or transcendence coming immanently from within Being. Neither of these two positions is tenable for Callinicos, for whilst the first reduces transcendence to a sort of miracle, leading to political decisionism, the second entails a vitalist philosophy that reduces politics to a moment of passive waiting. In order to overcome this impasse, Callinicos proposes the articulation of three aspects, which must be considered as the correct or more productive philosophical presuppositions of contemporary social criticism: a critical realist ontology, a Marxist theory of social contradictions, and a substantive principle of justice.

Other attempts at providing a panorama of left-thought after ‘postmodernism’ have been made (Tormey and Townshend 1996; Keucheyan 2014). But while giving space to the voices of both theoreticians and activists, these works have not advanced possible modes of articulation or relatedness between critical social theorists and activists. Katia Genel and Jean-Philippe Deranty’s edition of a face-to-face debate between Axel Honneth and Jacques Rancière is symptomatic of this articulatory effort. Although salutatory, the instance proved to be more like two soliloquies – in which each thinker affirmed his own position as incompatible with the other’s – than a fruitful dialogue. Deranty sums up the conclusion of the encounter as follows: ‘The exchange between the two philosophers ends on this “disagreement” between them over the forms of critique and, in the end, over the forms of politics’ (Honneth and Rancière 2016, p.129).

For the purpose of this thesis, I have followed the spirit of these critical endeavours and focussed, in depth, on five specific responses of critical social theory's impasse. In what follows, I proceed to describe them and spell out the rationale behind the strategy I have chosen to adopt.

Thesis overview and rationale

The thesis is divided into two parts. In part I, I will explore different styles of critical social theory in order to point out its main insights and limits, in an effort to offer both clarification and critical evaluation. Within the wider panorama of contemporary social critique, I have chosen four topics, which I think allow us to think of critical social theory's recent trajectory and current state: 'Neo-Marxism and the question of Utopia', the 'aesthetics of politics', the 'normative intervention', and the renewed project of a 'critical sociology'. Each of these styles of critique addresses and expresses the tensions arising when one intends to grasp capitalist society's contradictions and the vivid experiences of concrete individuals suffering, resisting, and combatting those conditions. Overall, in this part, I will argue that even though a more unitarian vision can be reached by stressing the commonalities between the different modes of critiques, the tensions arising from the difficulties in balancing a totalising vision with the realm of individuals' concrete experiences nevertheless remain. I will go on to suggest that an exploration of the pragmatic register of the realm in which concrete experiences of criticisms of neoliberal power take place could greatly reduce if not resolve these tensions, so as to make them politically and theoretically productive. If critical social theory provides conceptual tools for maintaining a critical distance, a 'distance of distancing' could produce a healthy estrangement effect on a sphere that tends towards excessive self-sufficiency and hyper-specialisation.

Consequently, in part II, I will consider how the issue of social critique has been addressed directly and indirectly in social movement studies, focusing especially on the recent tendency to integrate macro-dimensions into this field. I include two chapters on recent developments of social movements in Chile, as I seek to illustrate the way in which social movements mobilise an anti-neoliberal discourse and, in doing so, follow a similar structure to the theoretical discourse. As I will illustrate by analysing these two cases, the same types of tensions arise when social movements try to connect specific demands to a broader horizon. Political and social fragmentation are partially fought by recourse to the semantic

tools of totalisation, thanks to which individuals can compare their situations with others in similar positions to theirs and privilege solidarity over the logic of meritocratic competition.

In terms of structure, the thesis follows a 'dialectic of critique' in which the topic of contemporary Marxism and the question of utopia (chapter 1) and the normative intervention (chapter 2) are critiqued by proponents of 'the critique of critique' (chapter 3), leading towards a moment of sociological re-elaboration (chapter 4). The main conclusions of this theoretical elaboration (chapter 5) are then confronted with practices of social criticism undertaken by contemporary social movements, which have been partially analysed by social movement studies (chapter 6), and which are subjected to more fine-grained scrutiny through two specific cases (chapters 7 and 8).

A more detailed summary of each chapter is offered here as a guide that I hope will be useful for readers approaching the text.

Chapter 1 begins by looking at the work of a group of authors who explicitly articulate strong elements of continuity with the work of Marx (crucially, Marx's idea of a critique of capitalism scientifically informed by a substantive socio-economic analysis of it), with some elements of the utopian tradition. This effort of bringing together both aspects of critique is reflected in the ideas of a Dialectical Utopianism (D. Harvey) and Real Utopias (E.O. Wright). By focusing on this theme, I will evaluate the attempt to combine an explanatory critique that reveals the mechanism of capitalist exploitation with the utopian desire of moving beyond the oppressive conditions of the present.

In Chapter 2, I move on to address the *'normative intervention'*. Another relevant response to the crisis of Marxism was the replacement of socio-economic explanations with the discussion of the normative principles structuring capitalist society. The issues of justice, democracy, and human rights took the place of enquiries into the material base of society. Within the tradition of German critical theory, the works of Jürgen Habermas and most recently Axel Honneth provide a good insight into what is at stake in approaches that privilege normativity over other aspects of social critique. What is particularly interesting within this 'normative intervention' is that normativity appears as an internal prerequisite of social critique, and not as something externally added (as might be the case with the other two styles of critique). At the same time, however, to put normativity at the centre results in 'ultra-

normativity': an idealistic account of society where the political aspects of emancipation tend to be neglected.

In Chapter 3, I critically analyse Jacques Rancière's *'critique of critique'* based on his aesthetics of politics. Contrary to the idea that critique must contain a socio-economic diagnosis of what is wrong with capitalism in order to think of the possibilities of emancipation, thinkers like Rancière have denounced the 'oppressive' logic behind the traditional mode of critique. Interest in the institutional aspects of the reproduction of capitalist society is replaced here by an exploration of the re-ordering of senses or 'redistribution of the sensible' that occurs in emancipatory moments. At the core of this idea is the very notion of politics, which is conceived not as a transformative collective action of social institutions (like the State), but rather as a process of symbolisation by means of which a collective becomes a subject by contesting the distribution of parts, functions, and social spaces. Thus, emancipation is not only a matter of social institutions; it also entails changing the way in which life and subjects within it become intelligible as such. I will explore the main consequences of following an aesthetic mode of critique, highlighting its key insights and notorious shortcomings.

The renewed project of critical sociology is described in Chapter 4: the French sociologist Luc Boltanski has developed an ambitious programme combining the main aspects of critical sociology with what he calls a sociology of critique. The particularity of Boltanski's approach relies on the assumption that ordinary actors engage in practices of social criticism in social contexts or situations that are constantly negotiated. He also provides an analysis of how institutions determine social action and at the same time how they depend on the questioning and criticism of social actors. Based on this framework, Boltanski advances an idea of emancipation where social and aesthetic critiques are seen as two different but complementary moments of a process leading not to the elimination of institutions, but to their emptying. The role of critique in this context would be that of unmasking the fact that the power they exercise is based on an empty place, and at the same time to give these institutions a new content that promotes the overcoming of domination.

In Chapter 5, I explore the ways in which the different styles of critique can be articulated, drawing on their commonalities and differences. I also highlight the common tension underlying each mode of critique and make the case for a necessary articulation that

draws on the descriptions that the experiences of social criticism of neoliberal society carried out by social movements can provide.

Before showing how social movements mobilise a critical, anti-neoliberal discourse, in Chapter 6 I review some of the main aspects of social movement studies, focusing particularly on the 'return' of macro variables to the analysis of collective action and social movements. I trace the trajectory of social movement studies and the response of scholars of the 'common agenda' to 'macro' and reductionist accounts of collective action, and identify possible areas of convergence between critical social theory and recent developments in social movement studies.

Finally, in Chapters 7 and 8, I analyse the practices of social critique of the *pobladores* housing movement and student movement in Chile. In these chapters, I 'reconstruct' their critique of Chilean neoliberal society, emphasising how the main aspects of the different styles of critique are mobilised and articulated at this 'pragmatic' level. Significantly, both movements face a social and political scenario of fragmentation, and both have been able to mobilise an anti-neoliberal discourse beyond the realms of their specific demands. The 'cognitive mapping' of the neoliberal city and the neoliberal educational system led them to problematise the living conditions of ordinary people, opening up spaces for utopian projections based on a process of collective memory and the accumulation of critical forces.

Rationale for the case

As previously mentioned, the exploration of the 'movement of critique' that has shaped the intellectual debate over the political and social significance of critique in contemporary capitalism during recent years, will be complemented by an analysis of how critique unfolds in social movements. Among the variety of recent episodes of protests, I will focus on some recent developments within social movements in Chile. There are several reasons why Chile is important as a case study in this thesis. Described by David Harvey as the first 'neoliberal experiment of state formation' (Harvey 2007), and by Raúl Zibechi as a 'neoliberal paradise' (Zibechi 2007), Chilean society has been largely seen by advocators of neoliberalism, scholars, and politicians as a model of economic development and political stability ((Martínez Bengoa and Díaz Pérez 1996). Chile was not only the first country in the world in which a radical programme of neoliberal policies was carried out as a reaction to a socialist

agenda; it was also one of the first countries in Latin America in which the democratic governments that succeeded the dictatorship administered and deepened the neoliberal policies introduced by the military government. The Chilean experience has shown how neoliberalism can be translated into social programmes that favour citizenship participation and social protection, and the extent to which liberal democracy provides a fertile institutional framework for capital reproduction. Indeed, whilst during the 90s Chile was taken as a model of economic growth and development, in recent years the country has been once again heralded as a model, this time of a new, reformed neoliberalism, in which social issues become important for the state.

As Marcus Taylor (2006) has claimed, Chile thus can be conceived of as a successful Latin American version of a 'third way' between orthodox neoliberalism and leftist projects. The origin of neoliberalism in Chile dates from 1973, when a military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of the Popular Unity and its president Salvador Allende. After the coup, the new Junta started an unprecedented process of neoliberalisation that eroded the foundations of the import substitution development model, prevalent in most Latin American countries since the 1930s. Under the Popular Unity government, the earlier compromise that the national landowning oligarchies and upper classes had reached with the middle classes and popular sectors in previous decades was broken, leading to Chilean political and economic elites to violently protect their interests. The Allende government radicalised the principles of national developmentalism – inward economic expansion, universal welfare, agrarian reform, nationalisation of key national industries – which resulted in the paradox of a state dependent on global capitalist dynamics in order to secure recourses for the application of a socialist agenda. Through state terrorism, the military dictatorship began a radical transformation of Chile's social structure and institutions. Whilst the national developmentalist model was oriented toward protection of the national industry under a Keynesian interventionist state, the set of reforms carried out two years after the brutal coup by a group of economists and policymakers educated at the Chicago School – the so-called 'Chicago Boys' – aimed to free the market from state constraints, and more generally, to create a society modelled, in all spheres, by the rationality of the market. In order to achieve this, the 'Chicago Boys' implanted an extensive programme of privatisations and market liberalisation. This programme included the introduction of a market-based model in key

areas of social provision – such as pensions, healthcare, and education. Along with the proscription of political parties, the Military Junta dismantled the organisational social bases of the Allende Government, significantly debilitating the power of workers' unions. After 17 years of dictatorship, and due to the capacity of social actors such as pobladores and students to resist and mobilise against Pinochet, a democratic coalition took office. Paradoxically, the post-Pinochet political system excluded and discouraged the organisation and participation of those social actors who pushed for Pinochet's overthrow. Moreover, the Concertación maintained the principles of neoliberalism, modernising the state and creating a subsidy-based system to provide social services such as housing, higher education, social security, among others (Vergara et al. 1999).

Until 2006, Chileans did not significantly dispute the foundations of this model. Discontent and neoliberal violence were normalised during the process of democratisation. But in 2006, a massive student uprising took place, challenging for the first time since the return of civil governments the foundation of what students called 'Pinochet's education system'. Five years later, in 2011, a new wave of protests erupted. This time many families and other social movements joined the students in demanding social rights and, more crucially, in criticising Chilean society as a whole (Donoso and Von Bülow 2017). Although the wave of mobilisations that took place across the world was heterogeneous and influenced by specific national contexts, the 'Chilean case' shows the extent to which a systemic critique of neoliberalism can occur within a socio-political and economic context largely shaped by the forces of capital, and the limits and possibilities of political subjects to resist and emerge as a powerful force of solidarity and contestation.

Among the variety of recent social movements in Chile, I will focus on the *pobladores* and the student movements. Although divergent in terms of the social composition of their members, their size and repertoires of action, the demands of both movements are highly influenced by the acute effects of the financialisaton of capital, and more specifically, the crippling burden of household and student debt. Moreover, both movements were important social actors during the 60s and the 80s, and both have resisted and reinvented themselves in the contemporary context. As I will show, the commodification of housing and education provides common ground for these movements, which they go on to map out, allowing them to go beyond their specific demands.

Finally, it is worth noting that most of the organisations involved in the *pobladores* and the student movements, along with other organisations and extra-parliamentary left-wing forces, came to create the Broad Front, a political coalition aimed at challenging the centre-left and right-wing political duopoly in Chile. Though formed instrumentally for the 2017 general elections, the political coalition has gained momentum. The Broad Front's presidential candidate, Beatriz Sanchez, came third, just 3% below the candidate of the centre-left. Although it is uncertain if the Broad Front will incarnate the Chilean new left and succeed in its articulatory effort, it is significant that the two cases upon which I base my theoretical observations on social movements' critiques have found in the Broad Front an effective organisational tool with which to contest political power at an institutional level.

PART I: CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY

Chapter 1. Contemporary Marxism and the question of Utopia

Among recent attempts to revisit Marx's ideas in a context marked on the one hand by the renewal of social critique and mobilisations against neoliberal capitalism, and on the other by the re-emergence of right-wing populism, the question of utopia and imagination has become one of the most interesting and controversial topics. Recognising the ideological closure that contemporary capitalism exerts on our imagination, and the difficulties in thinking of alternatives to it, authors such as E.O. Wright, David Harvey, and Fredric Jameson have tried to articulate Marx's critique of capitalism alongside the question of Utopia. As I will show in this section, utopianism is an important source of critique for neo-Marxists.

The question of Utopia, as tackled by these authors, relates to a question posed by Ruth Levitas in her book *Utopia as Method* (2013). Here Levitas asks: 'How can we approach the question of utopian ontology without evading the question of human nature and human flourishing yet while preserving the sense of their historical determination?' (2013, p.179). 'Having one's cake and eating it', as Alex Callinicos (2004) puts it, seems to be a major challenge for those authors who want to maintain historical materialism at the core of their projects and yet integrate a utopian dimension that Marx at least partially rejected (Leopold 2007).

Davis Harvey's dialectical utopianism

The distinctiveness of Harvey's utopianism relies on his ontology and method: dialectics. According to Harvey, dialectic utopianism opposes naïve utopianism, as it is built upon the rejection of blueprints and other idealist projections that can be seen as forms of escapism from the present. From a Marxist point of view, utopianism does not arise as an idealist shortcut to avoid the problems of our current historical situation; rather, it emerges from the necessity of imagining and thinking of a way out of contemporary global capitalism.

Since his first attempts to provide geography with a revolutionary theory – a geography 'grounded in reality', as he emphasises in *Social Justice and the City* (2010) – Harvey has exerted much of his effort throughout his extensive career towards developing a 'historical-geographical materialism', which constitutes the base upon which he delivers his thoughts on utopianism. Utopianism grounded in reality, Harvey argues, is a type of utopianism that

embraces the contradictory character of reality and seeks in those inherent contradictions the sources for transcending its limits. By critically reading the tradition of utopian thinking, Harvey distinguishes between two forms of utopia: spatial and processual. Spatial utopias seeks to spatially realise the utopian design. For utopians of space, the utopic vision should be materialised in concrete spaces, otherwise it loses it utopian sense. But while the 'realist' and 'materialist' approach to utopia is a good remedy for those who equate utopias with blueprints, spatial utopias usually involve the colonisation of the utopian project by the very historical process in which they want to intervene. Utopias of process supersede the limitations of spatial utopias by abstracting the constraints imposed by a concrete and material situation, but the problem, as Harvey goes on to say, is that they are usually trapped in a 'romanticism of endlessly open projects that never have to come to a point of closure (within space and time)' (2000, p.174). Harvey wants to add more complexity to these incomplete forms of utopianism and sets out a spatio-temporal utopianism capable of integrating both dimensions. On the one hand, Harvey's utopianism differs from spatial utopias as it is aware of the socio-economic conditions of the present and of the social character of the 'matter' and 'space'. On the other hand, dialectic utopianism also differs from processual utopias since it does not avoid the 'authoritarian' moment of closure. Moreover, for Harvey, what makes utopias a source of negativity and, accordingly, a powerful resource for critique and action, is precisely a provisional 'authoritarian' moment of closure and a perspective of the social historical totality. Without this always fragile and precarious moment of closure, Harvey argues, the perspective of totality is lost, and with it, the very idea of the possible realisation of utopia and its anchoring in reality. In this context, a clear and detailed examination of contemporary global capitalism – which, in Harvey's work, takes the form of a theory of uneven geographical developments – is vital to trace the progressive and regressive forces at work in it, and in so doing to uncover the real possibilities for its utopian realisation.

The theory of uneven geographical developments

Harvey connects the problems inherent to spatial utopias with his theory of 'spatial fix'. Drawing on the geography implicit in the *Manifesto* and in Marx's critical vision of the Icarians, Harvey (2000) argues that imperialism and colonialism create a spatial fix so as to obtain new spaces for capital's production and realisation. The island Utopia is thus transformed by capitalism into an enclave of colonial power, which reproduces the internal

tensions of the capitalist mode of production in this ‘other land’. In the end, Harvey (2000) says, the spatial utopia – another ‘land’ – is not achievable, either for workers or for capitalists, for in this spatial fix, labour and land, the two very sources of wealth, are finally annihilated by the dynamics of capital. What the utopian ontology based on space does not take into account is that imperialism and colonialism are not only or primarily a matter of ‘space’, and that it is capital – considered not as a physical thing but as a social relation – which shapes spatiality (Harvey 2010, p.65).

In order to illuminate the ‘objective conditions of the present’ and correct spatial utopias’ downplayed vision of history, Harvey develops the theory of uneven geographical development (2006; 2010). Broadly speaking, the theory of uneven geographical development states that capital produces different spaces at different scales. ‘What happens’ (individual actions, for example) happens at different scales – global, national, local, etc. Things look different in relation to these different scales, and precisely because of that, they cannot be understood without referring to the relationships between the various hierarchies of scales and changes over time. For Harvey (2000), contemporary hierarchies of scales are in fact different than thirty years ago. Consequently, we must use this scalar and stratified perspective if we want to correctly grasp the ecological, technological, economic, and political conditions involved in the process of globalisation. It is only by examining these conditions that we will be able to understand the terrain on which global and local social political struggles may develop.

One of the main characteristics of the process of globalisation, in terms of the production of geographical differences that it entails, is its volatility and dramatic dynamism. It is not simply a matter of recognising the process of deindustrialisation that society has undergone, or the shift of economic powers from one (or more) pole(s) of investment to others, but the fact that ‘whole cities and metropolitan regions have been reconfigured and geographically transformed in the space of a generation’ (Harvey 2000, p.78). What is important from the point of view of dialectical utopianism is that behind the surface of volatility and anarchy – topics theoretically favoured by postmodernism – we should be able to recognise the working of the systemic global forces of capital and the uneven geographical developments it constantly produces. As we will see later, this would involve the elaboration of an aesthetic of cognitive mapping, an attempt to make capitalism visible amid its uneven

developments and the fragmentation that it fosters (Jameson 1991; Toscano and Kinkle 2015). The strategic necessity and political character of an exercise of this kind are at the core of Harvey's utopianism, as the dialectic for him should allow us to address the question of how a general interest can emerge out of a scenario with different agents acting at different scales and experimenting with the processes of capitalist globalisation in an uneven way (Harvey 2000).

With the theory of uneven development, Harvey intends to provide an accurate vision of the contradictions of globalisation, which, Harvey suggests, has created economic inequality, bankruptcy, devaluation, destruction of natural resources, the collapse of services, unemployment, among other harms, leaving a complete set of forms of life at risk and distributing these risks differentially from one place to another. A possible way of thinking of this 'general interest', thus, is to think of the structure and the pattern behind this systematic form of damage, or in other words, to bear in mind the 'uneven geographical consequences of the neoliberal form of globalization' (Harvey 2000, p.81). Singular events and local struggles can be connected under this framework across different scales and different places. Only if we look at this pattern, and its contradictory character, we will be able to uncover the class content or the general interest behind and build an international community in class struggle. In this regard, Harvey poses the problem as follows: 'how to reconnect the abstractions of such a diagnostic with the "organic conditions of daily life"?' (Harvey 2000, p.84).

Harvey's proposal to tackle this gap between individual experience and the broader social structures of capital includes an analysis of the body – a topic favoured by postmodern theorisations – in connection with the process and capacity of labour. In analysing the struggle for a living wage in Baltimore, Harvey (2000) shows how the dialectic between particularity and universality underlines a 'body politics' that is not at odds with a macro diagnostic of socio-economic patterns and structures and a global capitalist discourse. At the same time, however, this is also the point at which the mere recognition of the power and the mechanism behind these structures reveals a necessary but not sufficient condition for thinking of a revolutionary rupture with the capitalist order. Here is where the necessity of a utopian imaginary appears more clearly delineated.

It is worth noting that utopianism appears in Harvey's work alongside a more general reflection on normative issues, as well as a specific interrogation of the role of class politics and the fight for universal human rights. Baltimore's struggles for a living wage reveal not only that labour is at the same time part of a strategy of accumulation of capital and a locus of political resistance, but also the transformative and creative capacities of human beings, and the inescapable moral dimension of these struggles. There is no clear line of separation for Harvey between the struggle for a living wage and struggles for the dignity of labour. He expresses the logic underlying this process of local protest and its possible connection with a more revolutionary politics as follows: 'If those claims are unrealizable within the circulation of variable capital then, it seems, the revolutionary demand to escape such constraints is a fundamental aspect of what body politics must be about' (Harvey 2000, p.131).

But between the 'must be' to the factual, daily reality of millions of workers, there seems to be an impossible gap. And this is where utopianism arises as an opportunity to go beyond the limits of capitalism. The examination of the socio-economic, institutional, and ecological constraints of capital should thus be supplemented with an exploration of our critical imaginaries so we can radically reimagine society. Utopias, in this regard, bear an oppositional and critical force.

Architects, universal rights, and human nature

There is another line of argument in Harvey's theory of global capitalism and utopianism that is relevant to the argument of this thesis. According to Harvey (2000), the global character of the economy and the unavoidable connections and dependency between everyone raise matters such as the nature of our 'species being', 'otherness', and universal claims and rights. Harvey is aware of the dangers of holding to a discourse of universality, which can work as a mere vehicle for domination and repression, so he turns to the Zapatistas' experience in order to show how particularity and universality can be dialectically combined. According to Harvey, the Zapatistas' relation to globalisation and global issues provides a good example of how this can be done, as they successfully combine a (universal) appeal for dignity and respect with demands for autonomy, locality, and cultural history.

What lies at the core of Harvey's position towards the discourse of globalisation is that the contradictory process of globalisation poses the question of human nature as 'species

being' in a way that, correctly considered – i.e. in a non-reductionist way – might lead to a redefinition of the conception of universal human rights and its paths of concrete application. In this context, Harvey believes that 'such rights will not be freely given or conferred precisely because they may lead towards revolutionary changes in social orders and political economies' (2000, p.112). And he later provocatively asks: 'But if workers of the world are to unite then surely it has to be around some conception of their rights as well as of their historical mission? As a matter of practical politics some notion of rights appears indispensable' (Harvey 2000, p.94). But are normative issues and rights only a matter of practical politics for Harvey? How far do Marxist utopians venture into the *theorisation* of these normative issues?

What is interesting in Harvey's recognition of the political potential of struggles for rights in particular, and the establishment of universal rights in general, is that his discussion of rights leads to a discussion of the more general topic of natural law and human capabilities and determinants. In order to insist on the necessary recognition of our twofold condition as biologically and socially constrained, and on our capacity for imagination and action, Harvey cites Marx's letter to Kugelmann, in which he states that 'no natural law can be done away with' (Marx in Harvey 2000, p.174). And drawing upon Marx's famous formulation, according to which the distinction between the worst human architect and the best of bees is precisely the human capacity of imagination, Harvey affirms our universal character as natural beings and our innate creative and transformative capacities.

In tune with what Levitas (2013) calls the 'architectural mode' of Utopia, as the moment of construction of a hypothesis about the way society and people in that society are expected to be, Harvey proposes the figure of the architect as a productive metaphor for thinking of a spatio-temporal utopianism. The figure of the architect is useful for Harvey because, on the one hand, it recognises our human capacity to dream, to create, and to transform our world, while on the other, it is aware of the constraints that we create (social structures and dispositions, cultural traditions, etc.) when exerting that very transformative capacity. As he puts it: 'The architect is not a totally free agent in this (…) Regulations, costs, rates of return, client's preferences, all have to be considered to the point where it often seems that the developers, the financiers, the accountants, the builders, and the state apparatus have more to say about the final shape of things than the architect' (Harvey 2000, p.204). Despite

this, however, the utopian moment, with its free play of imagination, is an essential aspect of this process of construction. This assertion allows Harvey (2000) to stress both the 'artificial' character of capitalism (its modifiable character) and our condition of human beings as species beings.

The political preoccupation with the dialectic of universality and particularity in the case of social struggles in Baltimore logically should lead us to a discussion about a more general vision of 'strategic options for human action'; options which, according to Harvey, derive from our evolutionary experience. This basic repertoire includes competition and the struggle for existence, adaptation and diversification, collaboration, cooperation and mutual aid, environmental transformations, and the production of spatial and temporal orderings, all of which must be understood relationally and not as mutually exclusive. The ways in which the elements of this repertoire involve conflict and struggles may vary, but Harvey's main point is that they are essential to our nature as human species.

Harvey (2000; 2014) states that an important part of the aforementioned 'nature' has been increasingly transformed by the uncontrolled forces of capital production and circulation, so he calls for a class content approach to environmental issues. The architect should become an insurgent architect, Harvey affirms, eager to change the world we inhabit while showing respect and care for the 'other' and the environment, conscious of the different scales at which our actions work, the possible unintended consequences of those actions, and remaining aware of the existence of different and legitimate types of knowledge (non-reducible to the mechanical model of science) connected through what Harvey calls 'the web of life' (2000, p.218).

Beyond the issue of how far Harvey enters into the theorisation of normative issues in order to underpin his dialectical utopianism, there is clearly an articulated *normative position* behind his theory. This stance, which Harvey refers to as a secular revolutionary humanism, is built upon both the recognition of the failures of liberal bourgeois humanism or 'insipid humanitarianism' and the danger of embracing a complacent vision of the humanist tradition (Harvey 2014). Drawing on Fanon's revolutionary stance, Harvey (2014) claims the necessity of recovering a sense of humanity on the basis of the dehumanising practices prevailing in contemporary world, and more than offering an articulated normative *programme*, he calls for a conversation on what it would mean to be human within the conditions of the present.

Therefore, the fact that the realms of informed exploration, explanation, and critique of the mechanism and systemic patterns of these dehumanising practices and the normative aspects of Harvey's utopianism remain organically connected – so that humanism does not appear as a set of wishful desires evolving out of the conditions of the present – depends crucially on the dialectic and its orientation towards the totality of global capitalism.

From dialectical utopianism to real utopias

Erik Olin Wright's *Envisioning Real Utopias* (2010) project has been widely discussed (Borowiak 2012; Williamson 2012). Different scholars have pointed to the main potentials and limitations of this project, focusing on the 'radical alternatives' to existing capitalist institutions sketched by Wright. More than a detailed evaluation of the feasibility of the particular institutional principles and designs put forward by Wright (2010), I find Wright's theory an interesting case of utopianism within neo-Marxist attempts to deal with the question of how to coordinate historical determination and utopia. Indeed, many of the most important aspects of Wright's project of an emancipatory social science intertwine significantly with elements already present in Harvey's. However, as I will show, Wright's lack of a dialectical ontology capable of productively bridging the abstract realm of theory with his powerful analytical insights on empirical reality, renders his oxymoron – i.e. Real Utopias – problematic.

Morality, diagnosis, and critique

There are, according to Wright (2010), three main tasks that an emancipatory social science has to accomplish in order to envision 'real utopias'. The first task is the diagnosis and critique of the sources of social suffering and injustice, with a special focus on the 'causal processes that generate these harms' (Wright 2010, p.11). The second task consists of theoretically elaborating alternatives to existing capitalist institutions that might eventually mitigate and/or eliminate those harms. The third and final task for an emancipatory social science is to develop a theory of historical transformations, which includes an analysis of the obstacles and possibilities for the realisation of the already identified alternatives.

From Wright's point of view, diagnosis and critique necessarily involves an exploration of the normative elements underpinning an emancipatory social science. To describe something as producing harm already entails a moral judgement of what constitutes

damage or a harmful situation. For this reason, Wright (2010) goes on to affirm the necessity of a theory of justice that underlies the project of an emancipatory social science; specifically, of a radical democratic egalitarian programme.

In order to define the main aspects of this normative programme, Wright (2010; 2012) draws a distinction between social justice – based on the notions of human flourishing (i.e. people's possibility of developing their capacities and talents) and equality – and political justice, conceived broadly as people's capacity to make choices about things that affect their lives. Two features stand out in Wright's approach to this version of radical egalitarianism. First, the idea of equality is tied not to an equal income or equal standard of living, but rather to equal access to *necessary* means to live a flourishing life. Secondly, the concept of political justice connects the idea of individual freedom to that of democracy by affirming a 'real freedom for all'; that is, equal access to power for everyone, an idea that Wright (2010; 2012) encapsulates in the concept of *social power*.

Wright (2010) cites William Ryan's book *Equality* (1981) in order to unpack his own version of social power. Ryan's formulation is summarised in the following phrase: 'Fair Shares until everyone has enough; Fair Play for the surplus' (Ryan in Wright 2010, p.15) where 'enough' might refer to 'the necessary means to securely satisfy basic needs or enough to live a flourishing life' (Wright 2010, p.6). In this regard, Wright says: 'while the conception of flourishing proposed here does not privilege a particular way of flourishing, it is not neutral with respect to those cultural conceptions of the "good life" which inherently deny some categories of people access to the conditions to flourish' (2010, p.6). Consequently, in order to secure an open and non-exclusionary approach to the variety of cultural forms of life, Wright appeals to a 'global principle for humanity'. The most important upshot of this elaboration is that equal access to the 'means to flourish may not mean equal access to the necessary means to cultivate whatever talents one wants to cultivate' (Wright 2010, p.18). Here we find a moral dilemma involving two poles: on the one hand, a strong 'moral perfectionism' cannot state a priori any substantive form of good life or human flourishing without excluding other forms of life; on the other, if only a general or abstract theory of 'virtues' is offered, this theory cannot specify which of these virtues we should achieve, nor on what grounds. In light of this, Wright's solution seems to be tautological: the concept of a flourishing life depends on a definition of what the necessary means for accomplishing that

kind of life are, but at the same time, the definition of those means depend on what a flourishing life means.

At this point it is useful to bring up a similar proposal put forward by Callinicos (2006). Like Harvey and Wright, Callinicos faces the problem of how to integrate normativity into the broader ontological framework of historical materialism. Discussing the intellectual merits of the liberal egalitarian tradition, Callinicos defends a notion of equality as equality of 'resources or opportunities to achieve wellbeing' (2006). For Callinicos, it is crucial that the concept of wellbeing is not reduced to the satisfaction of a person's actual preferences. He draws on Griffin's concept of 'informed desires' to obtain a more objective notion of wellbeing. According to Griffin, desires are by nature subjective and individual, but when it comes to the concept of wellbeing (as distinct from pleasure or mere enjoyment), these desires must be 'informed'. Informed desires thus are those 'formed by the appreciation of the nature of its objects' (Griffin in Callinicos 2006, p.232). An objective conception of wellbeing such as this one is necessary, Callinicos argues, because it provides the analytical tools for distinguishing between individuals' actual wellbeing and the subjective perception of that condition. Without an objectivist notion of wellbeing we would leave out of sight phenomena such as the 'ideological' delusions or self-delusions that people face when defining their own wellbeing, or the practices of 'adaptive preferences' that can also be seen and experienced subjectively as wellbeing. Wright's proposal, however, is on the horns of a dilemma, with a tendency to favour a more individualist account of wellbeing, leaving untouched the possible ideological mediations between equality as a normative principle and a more concrete and workable operationalisation.

Socialism, justice, and power

The second normative pillar of Wright's critique is radical democracy (2010; 2012). Radical democracy involves the exertion of what Wright calls 'social power'. Taking as a starting point a general definition of power as the capacity to generate effects, and considering the different 'social basis for the capacity to generate effects in the world' (2010, p.10), Wright identifies three different forms of power: economic power (defined as the ownership and control of economic resources), state power (defined as ownership and control over rule making and rule enforcing), and social power (defined as 'the capacity to mobilise people for

cooperative collective actions of various sorts in civil society') (2010, p.121). In this context, socialism can be understood generally in Wright's succinct formulation as the 'subordination of economic power to social power' (2010, p.12). This idea of socialism evidently entails a departure from the classical Marxist idea of the control or ownership by the working class of the means of production. But what is truly problematic in this formulation is Wright's assumption that civil society – the terrain on which social power can be realised – is a neutral, non-conflictive terrain. Wright (2010) acknowledges that in the empirical actual world there are hybrids of structures of powers and conflictive relations between 'people'. However, when he goes on to *theorise* the notion of social power and civil society, he does not include in his theorisation the contradictory character of the capitalist class structure that he has described and analysed extensively throughout his career.

A closer examination of Wright's concept of civil society shows that this notion is both a crucial requirement of radical democracy and the very limit to the radicalness of his proposal. As in the liberal tradition, civil society for Wright is a plural and open space; it is 'built around different goals, with different kinds of members based on different sorts of solidarities' (2010, p.146), so there is no guarantee of a coherent power oriented toward the control of economy. Therefore, radical democracy does not exclude, as a possibility, the existence or development of exclusionary associations. But while this can explain the radicalness of the type of pluralism endorsed by Wright, it does not say much about the radicalness of the type of social empowerment that, in Wright's own formulation, underpins socialism. The use Wright makes of the concept of civil society leads him finally to contradictory statements like the following: 'There is no guarantee that a society in which *power rooted in civil society* predominates would be one that upholds democratic egalitarian ideals' (2010, p.147). In this context, what would be the aim of a socialist politics? It seems that for Wright the main aim of a socialist politics would consist in the achievement of the values of radical democracy. Not only is this at odds with the tradition of Marxism, but it also entails a chicken-and-egg problem of what comes (logically) first: the people who exert social power in which the values of social democracy are already embedded, or the values that the people (a pluralist civil society) would seek to fulfil?

To summarise Wright's stance on civil society and the idea of social power, the concepts of 'class' and 'people' are not elaborated at the same level of abstraction; and

accordingly, they do not pertain to the same form of power. While ‘class’ works as a descriptive category in the realm of economy, ‘people’ and/or ‘civil society’ are parts of the political agenda seeking to advance social power. To be sure, at this stage Wright is defining conceptual elements of a ‘socialist compass’; his aim here is to advance institutional principles and designs for the realisation of a society in which social power exerts democratic control over the economy, and not to perform an analysis of the actual conditions of capitalism (as in the case of diagnosis and critique). But it is precisely at this point of transition from diagnosis and critique to the envisioning of ‘real utopias’ – that is, from the first to the second task – where the problematic aspects of Wright’s theory reveal the limits to the very aim of an emancipatory social science.

Sociological Marxism

The second task of an emancipatory social science involves the creation of a credible theory of alternatives to existing capitalist institutions. Wright’s critical diagnosis of the present includes the depiction of capitalism as a dynamic harm-producing machine. Capitalism is ‘wrong’ because it perpetuates eliminable forms of human suffering, blocks the possibility for human flourishing, destroys the environment, and violates basic moral principles such as freedom and equality, among others. In this context, the job of a theory of alternative institutions is to sketch out institutional and social forms capable of mitigating or eliminating these injustices and suffering.

Taking into account the reality of capital, its harmful effects, and the causal mechanism that underpins them, Wright argues that it is necessary to develop a set of alternative institutions to the capitalist institutions that produce these harms. But why not pick up on Marx’s own work to perform this task? One possible reason might be Marx’s own reluctance to develop a complete and detailed account of the future alternatives to capitalism; for Wright, however, the most important reason is a conviction that Marx’s theory of defining an alternative to capitalism has proven to be highly unsatisfactory.

Sociological Marxism is the label under which Burawoy and Wright (2000) attempted a renewal of Marxism against its instrumental use by some sections of academia and against the attacks of postmodernism in general. According to Burawoy and Wright (2000), classical Marxism is in need of a major revision insofar as, although valuable, Marx’s theory of the

fate of capitalism – which is the basis upon which to define an alternative to capitalism – has proven to be wrong. Although recovering some of the core elements of Marx's thought, the authors criticise him against the backdrop of his failed predictions. Capitalism has proved to be more flexible and less fragile than Marx thought, Burawoy and Wright point out, and its class structure more complex. Accordingly, the inevitability of a class politics based on a unitary working class and the end of capitalism due to an intensification of its crisis should also be discarded. What is left of Marx or Marxism then? According to the authors, the idea of 'class as exploitation', and the assertion according to which: 'the dilemmas and dynamics of the reproduction and transformation of capitalist institutions are broadly explained by class' (Burawoy and Wright 2000, p.17). The advantageous point of view of Marx's theory therefore lies in his *explanatory power* of the reproduction and transformation of capitalist *institutions.*

Burawoy and Wright's synthetic and schematic formula of 'class as exploitation' can be summarised as follows: Exploiters, defined as the owners of rights over productive resources, appropriate the labour power of the exploited such that the former's wellbeing depends on the deprivations of the exploited. Understanding 'class as exploitation' thus involves the recognition of an asymmetrical and interdependent type of social relation where the rights and powers over the sources of production are unequally distributed and exerted. Armed with this conceptual framework, Burawoy and Wright go on to develop an account of the 'contradictory reproduction of capitalist relations', another aspect on which Marx's theory can be illuminating. What is interesting in this interpretation of Marx is that the focus of attention is not that of the relations of production and the forces of production, but rather 'capitalist institutions'. Wright's basic claim is that due to their asymmetrical and untestable character, class relations need institutional arrangements in order to reproduce themselves; however, Wright (2010) says, there is a point at which the development of capitalism renders these institutions obsolete, pushing for the replacement of earlier institutions. The conclusion from this statement is that institutional renovation is consubstantial with the contradictions of capitalist relations.

This position shares some features with other attempts at tackling the power of institutions and their capacity to be flexible and to adapt to the new dynamics of capital, as advanced by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) in *The New Spirit of Capitalism.* In both cases,

the starting point is a critique of Marx's theory of the crisis and decline of capitalism and an insistence on the complexities of capitalism and its capacity for reproducing itself through political and institutional arrangements. However, there is a crucial difference between Boltanksi and Chiapello's stance and that of Burawoy and Wright, insofar as the authors of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* work explicitly outside of a Marxist frame. Indeed, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) seek to stress the capacity of capitalism to absorb and resist critique. Burawoy and Wright (2000), by contrast, think that the renovation of institutional arrangements can present opportunities to gain social power.

As has already been said, Wright's notion of socialism or emancipatory social change involves both the development within civil society of individuals' capacities to influence decisions that affect them and the penetration of social power into the realm of the economy, either directly or via the state. Accordingly, the alternatives or real utopias sketched by Wright go from the experiences of participatory budgeting at a municipal level, to the public and egalitarian financing of electoral campaigns, to Wikipedia and other examples of the social economy. Wright (2010) suggests evaluating these proposals against four criteria: desirability considering the radical democratic egalitarian values, viability in terms of existing institutional arrangements, the degree to which they entail the development of social power, and finally, achievability, which refers to the actual or reasonable applicability of these institutional designs. It is the exploration of Wright's attitude toward this last criterion of *achievability* that reveals the tension at the core of his normative-explanatory programme.

Regarding the criteria of *achievability,* Wright says: 'Other ideas do not seem immediately achievable, but nevertheless it is not difficult to imagine circumstances in which they could become achievable if sufficient social forces mobilized around them' (2010, p.150). The issue of achievability is closely connected to the last task of an emancipatory social science: namely, the elaboration of a theory of transformation. Once we know what is wrong with capitalism, and why, and having conceived of alternative (institutional) realities, the remaining task is to acquire some knowledge of how we can go from the first to the second stage. A theory of social transformation involves mapping out the obstacles that we encounter when enacting social change (the theory of social reproduction), the opportunities that emerge despite those obstacles, the potential unintended consequences of (not) taking these opportunities, and finally, an understanding of how we can collectively face those obstacles

and fulfil the opportunities. Especially important for Wright is the relationship between unintended and deliberate processes of social change. According to Wright (2010), we should be careful in analysing and weighing up the 'real opportunities' afforded by the gaps in the process of social reproduction, for only a limited set of these opportunities will have the potential of having a meaningful effect. Crucially, this also implies that any radical transformative strategy must necessarily be a long-term strategy.

Taking this into account, social empowerment can have recourse to three logics of transformation: ruptural transformation, which entails a radical break within existing social structures, interstitial transformation, which entails the creation of niches of social empowerment in the margins of capitalist society, and finally, symbiotic transformation, which entails the expanded use of existing institutions of social power to solve practical problems that ultimately help the dominant classes. To each of these logics of transformation Wright attributes a typical subject or social actor: classes articulated through political parties, social movements, and popular coalitions that can reach a positive class compromise. Wright does not discard any of these logics of transformation; his point, however, is that in attending to 'real' obstacles and possibilities, symbiotic and interstitial strategies are more achievable. What is significant in Wright's approach to the strategies for transformative practices is that in the assessment of the 'real conditions' of the present, he presupposes a specific type of actor for a specific logic of transformation: class–ruptural; social movements–interstitial; and popular coalitions–symbiotic. But what is logically first? Why do *these* actors create and perform these logics? If the concept of class does not translate into the political realm of civil society, are the actors not created in the very enacting of these logics? To add even more complexity, in explaining the democratic character that any ruptural strategy of transformation must have, Wright goes on to say: 'I assume that if a ruptural strategy is to be a central part of the construction of a robust socialism of social empowerment, then it would have to be supported by a substantial majority of the *population*' (2010, p.217). *Civil society, people, class,* and *population*: these terms seem to work at different levels of abstraction and pertain to different realms of social life in Wright's theory, but he does not clarify how they are to be related. It seems, finally, that when it comes to the moment of diagnosis and critique Wright is a scientific realist, when sketching utopian-real alternatives he is a utopian realist, and when it comes to thinking about transformative strategies he is a naïve pragmatist, insofar

as he does not take into account either the realities or the categories employed at the moment of diagnosis and critique; when it comes to thinking of the political and ideological mediations between the harmful reality of capitalism and the prospect of a realist-utopian transcendence, Wright is closer to the position of a naïve realist who, leaving aside the real abstractions of capitalism, takes the immediacy of the empirical world as the 'real reality'. Without an account of these mediations, egalitarianism appears merely as an individual moral choice, and not as a potential collective normative framework for action. The crucial question of how (given the present social and political conditions) a policy enthusiastically backed by Wright, like the minimum universal wage, could be desired or fought for is not addressed by the North American sociologist.

Having your cake and eating it

The shortcomings of analytical Marxism – a tradition with which Wright is associated – are widely known and have been extensively discussed (Bertram and Celikates 2013). But while some commentators have decided not to engage in further discussions with a tradition that overlooks the basic ontological premises of historical materialism, others, like Callinicos, have taken some elements of analytical Marxism's development more seriously. Callinicos (2001; 2004) recognises the relevance of Wright's Marxist theory of class for the development of an empirically-founded Marxism and praises him for bringing the methodological individualism of authors such as Roemer and Elster to a more 'collective' level. The difference between Wright and other analytical Marxists is that while the latter embrace classic methodological individualism – whose main premise is that the powers of social structures and mechanisms are in the end reducible to the actions of concrete individuals – the former holds a position in which social structures have autonomy with respect to individuals. The problem, however, arises when the very notion of social structure is explored in more detail. Callinicos (2004) argues that, even though Wright gives explanatory autonomy to social structures, in the end he refers to social structures as 'relational properties of individuals' (Wright 2012). In *Making History,* Callinicos (2004) seeks to provide an integration of structural explanation and intentional understanding, acknowledging their differences and limits. This integrative effort is notable to the extent that, in defining the properties of agents and subjects, Callinicos recognises the necessity of

a philosophical anthropology that is capable of delineating the main characteristics of our human nature.

Callinicos justifies his favourable position toward the integration of moral discourses and classical Marxism by relying on Norman Geras' analysis of a normative tension in Marx's economic writings. Callinicos endorses Geras' reading of Marx, according to which Marx has underdeveloped or dismissed normative elements implicit in his own theory. For example, he recognises that: 'in criticizing existing property forms in the name of a society to come he seems very close to just the kind of appeal to transhistorical normative principles that he condemns in others' (Callinicos 2006, p.220). He then goes on to say: 'This gap between Marx's official doctrine and his implied theoretical commitments has helped to create a tendency to counterpose classical Marxism and normative political philosophy (…) The thought is that one can't do both; one has to choose to work within one of these discourses … But I see no need to choose: one can have one's cake and eat it' (Callinicos 2006, p.220). In reviewing G.A. Cohen's *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?*, Callinicos (2001) had already explicitly rejected the common division among orthodox Marxists (including Marx himself) between social explanatory theory and normative theory. In contrast to Cohen's assumption that given Marxism's crisis it would be better to consider it as a set of values, Callinicos argues that the recognition of the tacit principles of justice underpinning Marx's oeuvre is not sufficient reason for the abandonment of historical materialism in favour of an ethical socialism. How then does Callinicos propose to carry out this conciliatory enterprise?

First, Callinicos argues, we should recognise that many critical theorists conflate normative and explanatory considerations in their theories. The first step toward an integration of both discourses consists thus in distinguishing these aspects as distinctive. Once these aspects have been distinguished, we can approach the field of normative political philosophy armed with a scientific realist ontology. Callinicos' own position within this debate is based on the recognition of an adequate theorisation of agents and its dialectical relationship with the powers of social structures. Any notion of agents, Callinicos affirms, implies a notion of human nature. He asks: 'Are there really no properties which human beings share? Or perhaps the thought is that these properties are irrelevant to any understanding of human history. But is it really plausible to say that if human beings

photosynthesised (to take an admirable example of Stephen Jay Gould's) this would make no difference to their history?' (Callinicos 2004, p.21). Callinicos resorts to Geras' distinction between the concepts of 'human nature' – understood as constant and continuous – and 'nature of man' – referring to the degrees of mutability and discontinuities within human nature – in order to defend an 'orthodox' notion of agents whose human nature is defined by their continuity with the natural world, and by capacities such as rationality, intentionality, language, and needs. Only with a clear idea of our human nature and 'the nature of man' in a capitalist society, Callinicos suggests, is it possible to distinguish between those aspects of the social relations of production inherent to the mode of production and those inherent to our human nature.

The integration of morality into a realist Marxist ontology – directed toward an examination of the relation between productive forces and social relations of production – thus requires a specific way of understanding morality and the proposal of a specific morality. As I have previously shown in comparing his proposal on this matter with that of Wright, Callinicos favours a notion of justice based on the principle of equality understood as equal access to an objectively defined wellbeing. Indeed, Callinicos' ideal of egalitarian justice involves the idea that 'each person should be provided with resources that will give her an equal opportunity to achieve well-being' (where well-being cannot be reduced to the satisfaction of a person's actual preferences) (2006, p.239). It is only this specific form of perfectionist egalitarianism that might provide an intersection between normative political philosophy and explanatory social theory for Callinicos. But unlike Wright, the use that Callinicos makes of normative liberal philosophy does not lead him to formulate a positive and detailed normative programme. In discussing the merit of Rawls' theory of justice, for example, Callinicos stresses the necessity of abstract models such as the one advanced by Rawls. Moreover, it is precisely Rawls' lack of realism that makes his theory a powerful tool of critique. According to Callinicos (2004), Rawls' abstract representation of principles of justice can better illustrate the cruelty and injustices of capitalism.

Callinicos' model of integration between normative and factual considerations, between morality and explanatory social theory, is therefore based on their complementary character. Normative theory, if correctly formulated, can be unrealistic insofar as it is useful to negatively show the morally unacceptable character of capitalism. But the sole formulation

of abstract and universal principles is unsatisfactory for any critique of capitalism. Callinicos' image of critique can be summarised as follows: 'egalitarian perfectionism would state principles of justice, while explanatory social theory identifies the social mechanisms that to a greater or lesser extent confer on individuals the opportunities required by theses principles' (2006, p.240). In terms of what Marxist utopianism entails, therefore, Callinicos is close to Harvey as both theorists argue for the necessity of a workable concept of human nature and the necessity of integrating normative aspects into a realist ontology. Both authors try to maintain the 'sense of historical determination' and yet to integrate utopian and/or normative aspects into their theories. But while Harvey does not engage in a detailed discussion with the tradition of liberal egalitarian thought, Callinicos enters the battlefield of liberal normative philosophy. Callinicos relies on a pragmatist stance when it comes to justifying the *necessity* of integrating morality. He says: 'In my view, taking egalitarian liberalism seriously means challenging it by showing, against its own assumptions, that its principles of justice can only be realized, not through the reform of capitalism, but its overthrowing (…) Certainly my aim here is not to water down the Marxist critique, but rather to make it more effective' (Callinicos 2006, p.221). However, Callinicos' proposal for the possible cooperation and complementary character of a scientific realist ontology and a radical egalitarian normative programme is ultimately unsatisfactory. The main flaw in Callinicos' integrative model is that normativity appears as an external realm, disconnected from capitalism's own development. Liberalism seems to be a freely chosen ideology that we should consider mainly because of its dominance.

The model of a more or less harmonious division of labour and cooperation between a radical egalitarian normative programme and a scientific realist ontology thus is justified solely on the grounds of Callinicos' desire of 'having one's cake and eating it'. With his dual theorisation, however – in which, on the one hand, we find a realist scientific ontology and, on the other, normative philosophy – we cannot be certain whether the materialist realist cake that we hold is the same as the philosophical-normative one that we want to eat. Perhaps they are two different cakes altogether.

It is worth noting that Callinicos discards other versions of egalitarianism – the one advanced by Badiou, for example – arguing that here equality appears as a moment of truth (of the event) that is politically and philosophically justified but not 'scientifically' grounded.

What results from a notion of equality with no realist anchorage is finally the same as a notion of equality elaborated with a narrow notion of reality (such as the one we observe in Wright): the disjunction between the working class and the proletariat, the impossibility of linking the social and the political; in other words, the obliteration of class politics. Callinicos' engagement with the tradition of liberal political philosophy does not show clearly how a scientific realist approach in dealing with these issues would benefit from such an encounter.

Neo-Marxism, utopia and the quest for totality

The normative impulse behind utopianism as developed by neo-Marxists is related to the necessity of going beyond mere negativity. Harvey and Wright share a diagnosis according to which 'empty negativity' is not enough, and that, accordingly, a positive stance on what socialism, emancipation or an egalitarian society might look like is needed. What I have tried to show in this chapter is that tensions arise when this more positive effort is made. Utopianism as articulated by the neo-Marxists is both a source of critique of the conditions, mechanisms, and structures of the contemporary world and a powerful source of political energy and motivation. But the power of utopias fades if the latter aspect is detached from the former. As Jameson (2005) has argued, when used as a source of progressive or revolutionary theory and politics, utopias and utopianisms importantly imply a quest for totality. In tune with Harvey, Jameson's main argument is that 'our imaginations are hostages to our own mode of production (and perhaps to whatever remnants of past ones it has preserved). It suggests that at best Utopia can serve the negative purpose of making us more aware of our mental and ideological imprisonment' (2005, p.xiii). Utopias therefore can help us to map out the reality of our own mode of production and identify, negatively, the blank spots on the map. Although a complete and stable representation of social totality is impossible, Jameson (2005) suggests, it can be mapped, and small-scale models can be construed and mobilised for political proposes. In order to accomplish this task, however, the complicated and mediated nature of this totality should be recognised. As I have tried to show, the limits of Wright's 'realist utopianism' derive from the absence of a dialectical account of social reality. Wright's empiricist ontology renders difficult the transition from the critical diagnosis of the contemporary world to the more utopian moments that the project of 'envisioning real utopias' entails. Likewise, the consistency of Harvey's dialectical utopianism, the possibility that an exploration of the possibilities of human flourishing

preserves its sense of historical determination, depends on a dialectical understanding of the different scales and levels of reality and theorisation.

Another important issue raised by neo-Marxists is the degree of theorisation of utopian and normative topics that critical theorists should afford. If what motivates the inclusion or integration of any form of utopianism is a political reason – the very possibility of transcending capitalism – should critical theorists engage in a detailed *theorisation* of normative issues? Does the obvious political importance of these topics amount to an equally theoretical relevance? The exploration of the main tensions in the utopian Marxists shows us that an engagement with normative debates is necessary, but whether the criticality of a critical theory will benefit from this encounter will depend finally on the traditions to be discussed and also on the chosen mode of critical engagement. Harvey's recovery of the tradition of humanism in an explicitly revolutionary guise is different in both form and content from Wright's engagement with a liberal egalitarianism; accordingly, the very notion of emancipation and above all the possible subjects of transformative actions also vary. While for Harvey any utopian attempt should have as its horizon the possibilities of a class politics, in Wright the issue of a class politics is left aside in favour of a more 'realistic' account of the complexities of capitalism and its (paradoxically as it may seem) class structure.

Chapter 2. The normative intervention: Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, or the normative reduction of the social

In a similar vein to that of neo-Marxists, the authors working under the label of what I call the normative intervention claim that the possibility of radical critique lies in the combination of three basic elements: a diagnosis of what is wrong with capitalism, an explanation of the structures and mechanisms generating this wrong, and the envisioning of spaces of hope. As Finlayson (2009) has stressed, the very idea of a critical theory of society implies a normative dimension, given that to be critical of something is to say that something is wrong, and consequently, that it should be some other way. The question, however, is not whether a critical theory of society has an inescapable normative dimension, but rather what specific role normativity plays within it. In this section, I will explore some aspects of Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth's theories as they explicitly seek to provide critical theory with its normative *foundations*, advocating for a *strong* or *ultra*-normativism within the field of critical social theory.

Universalism and judgemental pluralism

Jürgen Habermas has been widely recognised as one of the most important and influential contemporary Western philosophers (Outhwaite 2011; Baynes 2016). It would go far beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in a detailed discussion of Habermas' long and extensive career. In the context of this limited section, I am interested in Habermas because I consider his trajectory to be symptomatic of the 'fate' of the Frankfurt School's critical social theory in a postwar context, where classic debates around issues such as rationality, reification, and the possibility of a post-metaphysical reason intersect with discussions about post-secularism, cosmopolitanism, and democracy. Habermas' theory of modernity provides a good example of the potential and limits of an approach that seeks to critically articulate the realm of impersonal structures and powers with the rationality arising from the symbolic structures that undergird everyday interactions. I will summarise the main aspects of Habermas' theory of modernity as developed in the *Theory of Communicative Action* in order to explore some of his most telling tensions when the principle of communicative rationality is mobilised by Habermas in political debates.

One of the most important contributions of Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* is the attempt to broaden the concept of instrumental rationality that had hitherto prevailed in critical theories of modernity and sociological theories of action. Based on the universal pragmatics of speech, Habermas (1997; 1998b) proposes a more comprehensive concept of rationality that is not only oriented towards reaching goals in an effective and efficient manner, but also attuned to consensus-seeking via communication. According to Habermas, communicative rationality, unlike instrumental rationality:

> … carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutually of rationality motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the inter-subjectivity of their life world.
>
> (Habermas 1997, p.10)

By developing this concept of communicative rationality, Habermas can critically assess the project of modernity without abandoning it, providing critical theory with both the normative content of the symbolic structures usually neglected by authors like Marx and Adorno, and a rational foundation upon which the normativity embedded in practical discourses and institutions can be evaluated. For Habermas, it is only by developing this concept of communicative rationality that the conditions of possibility of a lifeworld capable of sheltering rational action orientations, including practical and theoretical criticisms of this society, can be established.

The concept of 'lifeworld', as developed by Habermas, serves to clarify the conditions under which communicative rationality might be realised. In this sense, it is a concept necessarily complementary to that of communicative action, as it serves to explain the background against which communicative interactions are carried out. Habermas emphasises that, since during social evolution the power to prejudge everyday communicative practice is lost, participants are forced to reach understanding by means of their own interpretative efforts (1998b, p.346).

Following Talcott Parsons, Habermas views the process of the rationalisation of the lifeworld as the differentiation between culture, society, and personality. The symbolic

reproduction of these elements is carried out through communicative action in a process of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialisation. Each process can concurrently be evaluated in respect to three factors: cultural reproduction in terms of the rationality of knowledge; social integration in terms of the solidarity of members; and socialisation in terms of greater autonomy and responsibility of individuals. However, due to the very process of rationalisation, in Habermas' classic formulation, these functions are hindered. It is in this context that Habermas introduces the thesis of the decoupling of the system from the lifeworld and the colonisation of the lifeworld by the system, his own version of the Weberian critical diagnosis of modernity and the core of his version of critical theory.

In Habermas' theory, the concept of system refers to the complex of teleological actions that lead to the material reproduction of the lifeworld through money and power. They are 'contexts of interaction that have gained autonomy as subsystems and which go beyond the horizon of the lifeworld' (Habermas 1998a, p.352). According to Habermas, once the already rationalised modern lifeworld has reached a certain degree of autonomy, the process of social rationalisation is carried out by these systems of capitalist modernisation, through the media of money and power, thereby colonising the structures of the lifeworld and producing what he calls 'pathologies of modernity':

> The two functional systems of the market economy and the administrative state, which grew beyond the horizon of the political orders of stratified societies, destroyed the traditional life form of old European society to begin with. The internal dynamics of these two functionally intermeshed subsystems, however, also reacts back upon the rationalized life forms of modern society that made them possible, to the extent that processes of monetarization and burocratization penetrate the core domains of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization. Forms of interaction shaped by these media cannot encroach realm of life (…) without the appearance of pathological side effects.
>
> (Habermas 1998a, p.355)

The pathologies of modernity, which are expressed as cultural impoverishment, a weakening of the public sphere, elitisation of politics, and the juridification of morality through law, are seen by Habermas as the perverse result of the route taken by the process of social modernisation. However, as Habermas has stressed elsewhere against those attempts for discarding modernity and rationality altogether, it is only by developing the potential of

the communicative rationality of discourse and speech that this negative side of modernity can be counterbalanced (Habermas 1998a; Ashenden and Owen 1999). Habermas argues that the Frankfurt School's first generation posed an unsolvable problem: insofar as for Horkheimer and Adorno the self-destructive impulse of the dialectic of enlightenment deprives Western culture of its normative resources – that is, Western culture can no longer provide sources for a 'good life' – the critical approach had no option but to remain negative, and consequently, the normative conclusions derived from the critical diagnosis remained unsupported.

Habermas fights the 'crypto-normativism' present in the theorisation of the first generation of the Frankfurt School with a universal and pragmatic discourse ethics that presupposes the idea of an unconstrained consensus. According to Habermas, consensus is inscribed from the outset in any speech act, or, as he puts it, 'understanding is the inherent telos of human speech' (1997, p.287). This formulation, based on language and communicative action, allows Habermas to satisfactorily articulate those elements that were supposedly neglected by his predecessors: namely, the principle of rationality, a critical analysis of modern societies, and a mode of justifying the normative claims of critical theory.

If, for Habermas, the main problem of the first generation of the Frankfurt School emerged from its disavowal of both rationality and normativity, now he is providing a solution to these problems by revealing the inescapable normative character of practical and theoretical discourses (and social life in general), and the rational foundations of normativity. It is worth noting, however, as Finlayson (2009) has observed, that the Habermasian method is not the one followed by moral political philosophers such as Rawls, i.e. he does not elaborate a moral theory that sets out what is wrong or what is just in any given society, but rather provides a rational reconstruction of the normative content of modernity.

The problems and shortcomings of Habermas' theoretical project have been widely noted by a range of commentators (Thompson and Held 1982; Bernstein 1991), each of which has focused on different aspects of his theory (for instance, Gadamer on the status of practical knowledge, intersubjectivity, and interpretation in Habermas' work; Luhmann on the subject-centred concept of communication; Giddens on the critical deficit of a theory that sacrifices revolution for reason, among many others). I would like to focus on the consequences of

Habermas' alleged formalism because it reveals important aspects of the normative intervention.

Finlayson (2009; 2013) has correctly defended Habermas' theory of communicative action against the accusations of normative deficit. The criticism of authors such as Schnädelbach and Taylor is that Habermas fails in providing critical theory with its normative foundations. But the idea of normative foundation that such authors have in mind is a substantive ethical theory – a theory that illustrates what is wrong and what ought to be done, or at least a theory capable of providing good reasons for justifying our moral behaviour. Habermas' universal pragmatic, however, can only be universal if it maintains a formal and abstract character. Habermas does not provide a moral or ethical theory as a ground of critical theory; rather, he offers the rational foundation of social action and modernity by stressing its unavoidably normative content. A rational reconstruction of modernity based on the achievements of the process of social evolution and symbolic and cultural rationalisation can only anticipate the conditions under which, if fully developed, rationality can be further realised. Following Hegel on this point, Habermas argues that social institutions are partial realisations of the potential rationality of language. Critical theorists, however, cannot tell people what is wrong or what to do; rather, they must provide accurate and rational information and explanations of the trajectory of rationality, including its pathologies.

In response to Steve Lukes' criticism of the dubious character of Habermas' pragmatic universalism, Habermas writes: 'A norm of action has validity only if all those possibly affected by it (and by the side-effects of its application) would, as participants in a practical discourse, arrive at a (rationally motivated) agreement that the norm should come into (or remain in) force, that is, that it should obtain (retain) social validity … If that is so I do not understand why he regards this requirement as too strong' (Habermas in Thompson and Held 1982, p.257). This 'weak' foundationalism implies that Habermas' quest for universality is in principle compatible with a judgemental pluralism, as long as an intersubjective concept of objectivity is maintained. A universalist and formalist conception of truth and ethics is not the main shortcoming in Habermas' project though; rather, the major problems arise out of the consequences of this when it lands on the concrete terrain of his analysis of Western institutions and democratic life.

Juridification

In *Between Facts and Norms,* Habermas (1996) moves from the abstractions he advances as the only way of grasping the potential rationality of forms of life affected by the experience of modernity, to an analysis of the conditions in which the project of deliberative democracy can be carried out. Although Habermas criticises both the liberal and republican traditions and locates deliberative democracy in the middle of both traditions (that is, between the poles of facts and norms), he finally ends up accepting that the dominance of the functional and systemic imperatives over the lifeworld can only be counterbalanced by a procedural notion of democracy based on modern law and its institutions. As Bernstein has claimed, for Habermas political institutions, on the one hand, 'would represent the normative anchoring of the system in the life-world, and on the other, would protect the communicative structures of the life-world themselves, and secure a rational and democratic control of the system by the life-world' (1991, p.26).

If in the *Theory of Communicative Action* the critical aspect of Habermas' theory relies on the colonisation thesis (i.e. that of the lifeworld by the system) – a thesis that presupposes its modern and inevitable decoupling – now the power of the system is taken in a more pragmatic direction as an inevitable fact to which eventually the deliberative process may contribute. The procedural concept of truth takes the form of a concrete model of procedural democracy anchored in modern law. As some authors have pointed out (Dryzek 2000; Callinicos 2006), although Habermas insists on the relevance of communicative rationality, the public sphere, and civil society, now he is more interested in highlighting the 'judicial discourse concerning how to put collective decisions into legal practice in a way that does not conflict with established rights and other policy programs' (Dryzek 2000, p.25), risking turning communicative power into mere influence over political elections.

At this point it is worth recalling that, for Habermas, juridification is one of the main instruments of the colonisation of the lifeworld by the system. At first, Habermas sees the process of juridification as an achievement of modern societies which made possible the existence of subjective, political, and social rights, and consequently, the protection of the communicative rationality of the lifeworld. However, this progressive tendency shows its

contradictory character under the Welfare state, where citizens – treated as mere beneficiaries, according to Habermas – see their freedom and communicative power threatened by the power of law and the state. What renders Habermas' view on the process of juridification problematic is that, even though he is critical of its modern development in the Welfare state, he equates politics to the legal system and the state, thus conceiving of the spheres of the lifeworld (family, individual, civil society) as pre-political. The result of this equation is finally the assimilation of deliberative democracy to liberal constitutionalism and, more generally, a more flexible or permissive attitude to the 'pathological' character of juridification. Habermas' reluctance to broaden the scope of 'democracy' beyond the limits of the political and juridical system, anticipates and, at some point, conceptually determines his underlying arguments about democratic theory, in which he explicitly emphasises the positive role that liberalism in general and liberal constitutionalism in particular might play in counterbalancing the negative effects of juridification. Habermas sees modern liberal law as an institutional form of communicative rationality on which citizens might rely in order to contain the colonising effects of juridification. However, given that the very terrain upon which citizens might influence democratic institutions is a pre-political realm for Habermas, ultimately he cannot but accept the established rules of the democratic game at the political (institutional) level as a paradoxical but unavoidable consequence of the process of modernisation.

Morality and recognition

Axel Honneth (1991; 1995; 2007) has attempted to intensify the Habermasian approach by furnishing it with the moral content that, according to him, Habermas' formalism failed to provide. More specifically, he wants to correct what he sees as the main fissure in communicative action theory. This 'fissure' involves two aspects: 1) the normative potential of normative interaction based on language leads Habermas to leave aside the question of the normative *content* of interactions by focusing exclusively on the linguistic conditions for reaching an understanding free from domination. According to Honneth, communicative rationality does not appear as a moral state of affairs in individuals' experiences, so we cannot find within the realm of social reality a proper correlate for his pre-theoretical resource; 2)

Habermas' appeal to universal pragmatics ultimately does not allow him to introduce conflict as a constitutive dimension of social interactions. From Honneth's point of view, what Habermas was not able to see is that communicative action is a form of moral conflict. Unlike Rawls and other moral and political philosophers, Honneth does not provide an external moral model or theory, as he wants to preserve an intramundane sphere of emancipation; but unlike Habermas, he does provide a theory of moral experiences based on a weak philosophical anthropology of recognition that allows him to go beyond the Habermasian procedural ethic.

According to Honneth (1991; 1995), modern capitalist society has developed historically three differentiated spheres of recognition – based on the principles of love, law (or legal equality), and achievement (or social esteem) – which establish the normative background for personal identity and justice claims, and therefore constitute the 'normative grammar of social conflicts'. Recognition appears in Honneth's critical project as the precondition for individual identity and human self-realisation. Without a positive relation to self through self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, personal identity cannot be properly developed. Furthermore, as personal identity can only be constructed through others due to its intersubjective structure, human self-realisation is also blocked if individual members fail to obtain recognition. The lack of recognition experienced by individuals, Honneth goes on to say, leads to feelings of disrespect, anger, and unrest, which eventually might encourage struggles for recognition. Honneth thus elaborates on the concept of recognition not only as a moral presupposition of communicative actions, but also as a basic 'motivational driving force'.

Honneth draws on George Herbert Mead, psychoanalysis, and object relations theory in order to show the extent to which recognition, considered as a basic motivational driving force, is connected to the idea of a good society and, consequently to the struggle for a good life. Following Hegel, the psychological aspect of recognition is related from the outset to the idea of the social order and to the idea of the good life within a political community (ethical life); for when the possibilities for the realisation of the good life are threatened by the lack of recognition, actors react and struggle for it, reaching further degrees of institutionalised recognition. As Heidegren has put it: 'Everything we are, as far as concerns our identity and personality structure, beside this moment of basic anti-sociality, we owe to social processes of recognition. Early episodic fusion experiences are thus made to account for the seemingly

invariant trait in man to react to disrespect with the whole repertoire from feelings of shame to open revolt' (2002, p.439). The connection between affectual 'individual' recognition and societal and human self-realisation allows Honneth both to explain why expressions of anger conducted by specific groups or communities – such as neo-Nazis, for example – should not be considered as proper struggles for recognition (insofar as the members of these communities only seek recognition for themselves and thus exclude necessary others), and to elaborate a social theory with normative content that is capable of explaining the contradictions of capitalism without relinquishing conflict and actors' perspectives.

In order to grasp Honneth's argument in all its complexity, some authors have pointed to different dimensions, levels, and constellations at work in his theory. Heidegren, for example, identifies in Honneth's work an 'anthropology of recognition, a social philosophy of different forms of recognition, a morality of recognition, a theory of democratic ethical life as a social ideal, and a notion of political democracy as an ambitious reflexive form of social cooperation' (2002, p.445). Deranty (2009) speaks of the relevance of the concepts of culture action and ethic of recognition underpinning Honneth's critical theory, and introduces a distinction between social theory and social philosophy that helps to evaluate the fulfilment of his intentions. Mauro Basaure (2011) highlights two main argumentative axes in Honneth's theory of struggle for recognition: a moral sociological explicative axis, aiming at explaining the moral motives underpinning subjective action at the root of social struggles, and a historic philosophical reconstructive axis, in which concrete struggles for recognition can be seen as moments of a process of moral learning and development (Basaure 2011). From all these reconstructive efforts of Honneth's theory of recognition, I take the idea of a multidimensional notion of recognition that works at different levels: the ethical-normative level, the socio-critical level, and the political level.

At the ethical-normative level, Honneth successfully complements and corrects Habermas' theory of communicative action by providing a weak philosophical anthropology based on the notion of recognition. Either referring to the development of individual persons or of the society as a whole, Honneth justifies systematically the relevance of conceiving of morality as intersubjective and intersubjectivity as morally and socially constituted. At this level, Honneth's insistence on the consensual and ethical character of human life must not be seen as the reification of one specific 'form of life' (Western civilisation) or as a rejection of

conflicts. Against certain criticisms, such as those raised by Butler (Willig 2012), Fraser et al. (2003), and Kompridis (2007), which note Honneth's misrecognition of the contingent and therefore essentially contestable character of recognition, Honneth responds by emphasising the unequal distribution of recognition, the potential conflicts between different interpretations of recognition, and the always fragile character of social agreements and consensus. Similar to Habermas, Honneth advances another version of universalism and judgemental pluralism anchored in an intersubjective notion of human realisation: 'the guiding notion here is that a morality of social existence places a minimal demand on the equal ability of all to lead a human life' (2007, pp.208–209).

However, it is when these ethical normative considerations are used for social and explanatory purposes that the shortcomings of Honneth's theory of recognition become more noticeable. The starting point of Honneth's contribution to sociology and social theory is based on a diagnosis that can be summarised as follows: 'Moral-theoretical categories have almost disappeared from the theoretical vocabulary of Sociology' (Honneth 2010, p.377). Read against this backdrop, it is not surprising that Honneth's social theory revolves almost exclusively around the notion of recognition. Because of the *constitutive* character of recognition in human life (at the individual, intersubjective, social, and political levels), society must be seen primarily as a normative order of recognition, according to Honneth. In so doing, though, he leaps from the acknowledgement of the primary role of normativity and recognition in social life, to a social theory in which the social is reduced to its normative content. Either in his re-elaboration of the Lukácsian concept of reification (defined as a 'forgetfulness of recognition'), or in diagnosing the social pathologies and contradictions of capitalist modernisation (conceptualised in terms of a 'deficit of recognition'), for Honneth, the category of recognition is the only valid one for addressing the social. Moreover, even when he tackles other key social issues, such as work, class struggle, and economic relationships in contemporary capitalism, these phenomena are reduced to their normative aspects. As an explanatory concept, recognition can only explain the normativity embedded in all social aspects (including its failures and contradictions in contemporary societies) thus reducing society and the social to its normative content.

In more recent writings, Honneth (2014) has attempted to critically diagnose the contradictions of capitalist modernisation by putting at the centre of his theory the concept of

social pathologies. By adopting a functionalist and organicist conception of society, and by leaving aside the notion of recognition, Honneth seeks to identify the disorders of social reproduction taking place within the contexts of socialisation, working on external nature, and the intersubjective relations of recognition.

Social pathologies affect individuals but occur at the higher level of functional societal reproduction when 'a society in its institutional arrangements fails, according to its prevailing values, at one of the tasks it takes up within the functional cycles of socialization, processing of nature and regulation of relations of recognition' (Honneth and Särkelä 2014, p.699) or when these functional spheres clash with or contradict one another. In this and other recent writings, Honneth's focus is not on recognition, but on the idea of social freedom as the condition for a democratic life; specifically, on how contemporary capitalist tendencies make it difficult for people to take advantage of the 'normative progress' of modern societies due to the anomalous development of institutions under capitalism. However, even though here recognition is not taken as the primary object of study, what the paradoxical development of capitalist modernisation threatens and what is blocked when the modern institutions of family, civil society, and state do not work properly, is in the end the satisfaction of the need for recognition in its three dimensions. At this point, the integration of a macro functional and organicist perspective into his work allows Honneth to take a more positive approach to contemporary society at the level of social theory. However, he merely displaces the normative problematic of recognition from the level of social psychology and political philosophy to this level.

Finally, when it comes to its political signification, the concept of recognition appears as a precondition for social struggles and the formation of a just political community. Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser have correctly highlighted the main political shortcomings of the notion of recognition for the development of a critical theory of society. While Honneth (2008) has recently accepted Butler's position, according to which it is not just the unequal distribution of opportunities of recognition that is at stake in contemporary conflicts and struggles, but the very criteria of recognisability (who defines what type of subjects will be authorised to receive recognition), his thought can still be considered as trapped in a 'methodological monism' based on a phenomenology of social experiences of suffering, as Fraser set out in the Honneth-Fraser debate.

According to Honneth, the struggles for recognition in any of its three spheres – which include any form of disrespect or more generally any form of denied recognition – are driven by experiences of social suffering. These social experiences of suffering are usually diffuse and do not necessarily become visible in the public sphere; yet, they constitute the motivational basis for 'social resistance and rebellion' (Honneth 1995, p.163). Honneth draws on Bourdieu's *The Weight of the World* in order to show that there is important evidence of experiences of suffering and injustices occurring beyond the political public sphere, and that 'such tendencies towards immiseration are constantly fought by the afflicted with forms of opposition extending from confrontations with the authorities, to desperate efforts to maintain the integrity of both family and psyche, to the mobilization of aid by relatives or friends' (Fraser et al. 2003, p.119). These everyday struggles, motivated always by feelings and experiences of injustices, and not the so-called 'new' or 'old' social movements, are for Honneth the salient forms of social conflict of contemporary societies. Paradoxically, though, Honneth's decision to privilege these diffuse experiences of disrespect over social movements' experiences as the 'real' forms of social conflict leads him to overlook the issue of how the fights of the 'afflicted' can eventually result in a collective effort for overcoming those conditions of immiseration. This impacts negatively the political dimension of his theory, as he cannot sustain a convincing theory of political subjectivity/agency and social change. What he can offer is an explanation of the normative preconditions for a transformative politics, but as long as his notion of the social remains attached exclusively to an intersubjective yet individualistic notion of moral injuries, the notion of recognition remains pre-political.

Now, what about the variety of contemporary social movements that fight for social and political rights? Cannot these movements be seen as struggles for recognition? Are not these movements fighting for moral principles partially institutionalised but already existing (liberty, fraternity, equality)? Experiences of moral suffering and disrespect might motivate social struggles, and insofar as they want to have a political impact, these movements may adopt a very normative *vocabulary* in the elaboration of their *demands* so as to reach many people also suffering social injustices but in a diffuse or more subtle way, as Honneth puts it. But as we will see in the second part of this thesis, the *descriptive power* of normative categories such as recognition, along with the political use that social movements make of

legal and normative vocabulary in framing their demands (the right to education, housing, healthcare, etc.), do not necessarily exhaust the modes and functioning of transformative social movements' constitution.

Beyond normativity?

The main aspects of Habermas and Honneth's ultra-normativism poses an interesting question for the field of social critique: Can social critique do without any reference to the issue of normativity? Not necessarily. As we have seen in chapter 1, normativity and moral issues are inescapable sources of critique. But the recognition of normativity as a relevant aspect of critique should lead to further analysis of alternative conceptions of normativity, morality, and ethical themes, especially in their articulation with politics. Both Habermas and Honneth have the intention to introduce a social dimension into the abstractions of moral political philosophy. However fruitful this might be for liberal political philosophy, from the point of view of social theory the final result is less positive. As I have argued, if the problem with Habermas' version of critical theory is the juridification of his own theory and his excessive attention to the institutionalised principles of liberal democracy, Honneth's step toward the less abstract realm of individuals' moral experiences leads him to a reduced notion of the social based on an individual-centred notion of intersubjectivity.

Still, the attempt to base the normative dimension of criticism on actors' internal perspective is a more sustainable option than to 'import' it from a systematic moral theory, ideology or set of ideas that does not arise from the actual social conditions. This is the case in part for political reasons: only by starting from actual experiences of resistance and fighting will normative frameworks, such as humanism, egalitarianism, and others, fuel transformative energies. This said, I do not think – as Fraser does – that the way to overcome Honneth's ultra-normativism and his recognition monism consists in replacing actors' experiences with articulated discourses of social movements; rather, I would suggest the we envisage forms in which both perspectives can be complemented. What is missing in Honneth's theory of recognition is an adequate theory of action capable of both retaining the perspectives of actors and their moral experiences without falling into the trap of an individualised phenomenology. As I will try to show later (see chapter 3), the work of the French sociologist Luc Boltanski and his emphasis on actors *in situation,* as well as their

relation to social institutions from a pragmatist point of view, provides a more fruitful approach to the issues of normativity, justice, and social criticism.

Chapter 3. Jacques Rancière and 'the critique of critique'

Among post-foundationalist thinkers, Jacques Rancière is the one who has most clearly opposed the concept of critique and the idea of critical theory as developed by neo-Marxists and the 'ultra-normativists'. To be sure, the critique of the traditional mode of critique is not just one of the most salient aspects of post-dialectical thought, but has also played a crucial role throughout critical theory's trajectory – the internal debates around the Marxist theory of ideology can be seen as indicative of these moments (Larrain 1979). Rancière's position represents a more external critique. In that sense, it aligns with other 'classic' figures of 'postmodern' thought such as Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, and Judith Butler, among others. But unlike these authors, Rancière has chosen to avoid a discussion of the ontological foundation of modern thought; rather, he has focused specifically on the procedures of traditional critical thinking in the context of a more general reflection on the *aesthetics of politics*. For Rancière, it is not that the procedures of critical theory have become obsolete and should be replaced; on the contrary, 'the concepts and procedures of the critical tradition are by no means obsolete. They still function very well, precisely in the discourse of those who proclaim their extinction. But their current usage witnesses a complete reversal of their orientation and supposed ends' (Rancière 2011, p.26). According to Rancière, instead of motivating emancipation, critical theory can be used to prohibit actual forms of emancipation and struggle in the name of the truth that theory supposedly reveals; the root of this alleged 'conservatism' of critique would not be merely limited to its use though, but would extend to its very mode of interpretation.

In what follows I will argue that some aspects of Rancière's fierce 'critique of critique' are a good opportunity for revisiting and making explicit some 'classic' dilemmas of critical theory; crucially, as we have seen in previous chapters, the necessity to connect the realm of impersonal social forces and structures with the realm of individual experiences of resistance to the powers of the 'system'. Rancière's poetics of knowledge is also instrumental for critical theory in reminding us of the potential contradictory effects of a type of critical theory that is disconnected from its emancipatory aims and the realities from which the sources of emancipation might arise. However, his 'critique of critique' also presents some serious limitations and ultimately is not immune to elitist and conservative interpretations.

Theoreticism or the politics of Althusserianism

Rancière's breakup with his master Louis Althusser marked the starting point of his polemical and singular intellectual trajectory. As Chambers (2012) and Deranty (2012) have shown, before this rupture, Rancière's work remained chiefly within the theoretical coordinates of his master. After May 1968, his work steps out of his Althusserian framework, beginning a process of self-criticism and auto-clarification which leads to the publication of *Althusser's Lessons* in 1974, which marks Rancière's first systematic attempt to deal explicitly with what, at that time, he found unsustainable in Althusserianism. Although the differences they maintained regarding the political signification of the student uprisings of 1968 were decisive in the breakup, the historical context in which Rancière's intervention arises should be located not in the political fervour of May 1968, but in the process of disenchantment that followed. According to Rancière (1992), the period following the rupture of May '68 was characterised by a twofold phenomenon: on the one hand, a strong and generalised critique of any type of left militancy by conservative forces, who basically traced a direct line between 'the crimes of Marxism' and leftist practices of any kind; on the other, the condemnation of the student uprising by the Communist Party (PCF) and traditional political forces on the left, who pointed out the petit-bourgeois character of the student movement. For Rancière, this rejection of actual emancipatory forces in the name of a 'real' emancipation is one of the most salient effects of Althusserianism, and its theoretical elaboration can be found in a form of critique of domination and exploitation based on what he calls 'the logic of inversion'.

Before considering in detail what this 'logic of inversion' consists of, let us first clarify the main aspects of Rancière's rejection of Althusserianism. In *Reply to John Lewis* (1976), the sharp answer Althusser gave to John Lewis' critical article on his work *The Case of Louis Althusser*, we find the basic elements of what is questionable in Althusser's theoretical and political project. As was usual in the field of Marxism at the time, the Lewis/Althusser debate revolves around accusations of dogmatism and theoreticism on one side, and of voluntarism and naïve humanism on the other. Althusser's defence of the charges of dogmatism begins with an acknowledgement of the main political changes that had taken place in the recent history of the workers' movement and thus with a process of self-criticism of the position that he maintained in his previous works, mainly *Reading Capital* and *For Marx*. Althusser (1976)

claims that although everyday politics was present in his project at the outset, it is true that theory took on a primordial role in those works. The primacy of theory was justified, though, for two reasons: first, theory was a privileged means of restoring the figure of Marx in a context of fierce criticism and revisionism; second, the most relevant changes in the workers' movement only took place after 1960. By the mid-1970s Althusser recognises that we should assert the irreducible relationship between philosophy and politics. But it is not only by 'talking' about issues of everyday politics that philosophy gives politics its proper place. Philosophy, Althusser notes, is political because it is, in the last instance, class struggle in the field of theory. And it is because of this that being an orthodox Marxist-Leninist is not a sin, but something necessary if we are to take class struggle seriously, i.e. not only in Marx and Lenin's theoretical terms, but also in Marx and Lenin's political terms, which, in the end, are one and the same thing (Althusser 1976).

Conceptually, Althusser's 'orthodox' opposition to John Lewis' position involves the assertion of three theses: 1) masses, not individuals, make history; 2) class struggle is the motor of history (there is no need to appeal to the idea of man transcending history); 3) one can only know what exists. Masses make history because in a class society the exploited classes are the only classes capable of directing their actions against the bourgeoisie and capitalism; man does not make history because he does not have the power to change the social structures that constrain him, and because the very idea of man is, as Marx pointed out, a fiction of liberalism (Rancière 1992). Now, the fact that 'the masses' are the ones who *make* history does not mean that separated or aisled masses are the *'subject'* of history. In a class society the existence of classes presupposes the idea of class struggle (out of the struggle, there are no 'classes' at all), so it is class struggle and not 'masses' in general that propels history forward. Finally, Althusser's third thesis is opposed to Lewis' idea drawn from Giambattista Vico, according to which men can know better what they do (history) than they can know nature. For a true Marxist-Leninist this cannot be the case, because historical materialism affirms the primacy of being – the salient characteristics of which is to be material and objective – over thought. This does not mean that thought is irrelevant, but that thought can only think what exists. One of the consequences that follows from this proposition is that for men, history is always more difficult to understand than nature because 'each ruling and

exploiting class offers them "its" explanation of history – in the form of its own dominant ideology, which serves and keep its "men" under its heel' (Althusser 1976, p.29).

The Althusser/John Lewis debate illustrates clearly why Althusserianism becomes a contradictory theoretical and political position for Rancière. First of all, here Althusser asserts both the relative autonomy of theory and its political character. If philosophy (dialectical materialism) is 'science' in the theoretical field of the class struggle, then philosophy should be necessarily autonomous. Autonomy is the only guarantee that theory has for avoiding being trapped by the ideology of the ruling class. This is also the reason why theory (if it is correct) will always be revolutionary. What Rancière finds problematic in the assertion of the 'relative autonomy of theoretical practice' is that it founds a 'technical division of labour', a particular organisation of tasks within Marxist-Leninism according to which the working masses have to deal with nature in the labour process, while the Party and philosophers deal with the more difficult task of dispelling illusions from real history (Rancière 1992). In this context, the proposition 'masses make history' points necessarily to a specific type of masses: those educated and enlightened by the revolutionary intellectuals and the Party.

Hence, Althusser's theoreticism does not dissociate theory from politics. Rather, Rancière goes on to say, in appealing to the principle of the autonomy of theory based on the primacy of class struggle, Althusser splits internally the field of politics and theory into a good (rational) and bad (empirical) politics and a 'good' and 'bad' theory. Thus, what started as a means for restoring the theory of Marx in a context where Marxism was being annihilated or loosely revised, ended up serving a new version of bourgeois philanthropy according to which the oppressed must always be 'assisted' by specialists.

Rancière and Marx

One of the main theoretical issues at stake in Rancière's rupture with Althusser is a different interpretation of the new type of materialism advanced by Marx. Instead of returning to the 'young' Marx of the *Philosophic and Economic Manuscripts of 1845* – as John Lewis or Sartre had done – Rancière's position relies on the Marx of the *Theses on Feuerbach*. Here, Marx's lesson is clear: neither masses nor man make history, but concrete men who produce and reproduce their material and intellectual lives. To the idea of man as an abstraction, a non-temporal category in the philosophy of the German ideology, Marx opposes the idea of

concrete, active, and historical *men*. The notion of praxis that Marx puts into play in the *Theses* is crucial for Rancière because it allows him to show that men do have a direct relation to history since they produce and transform the conditions upon which this production (in its relation to nature) takes place. In this context, 'To know what exists' is to know what concrete men produce and transform constantly, and not a reified material and abstract world (with no producers), as Althusser suggests. At this point Rancière's aim is not only to protect Marx against what he sees as a dogmatic appropriation by Althusserian materialism, but more importantly, to claim a new status for the type of knowledge Marx is advancing: a politics of theoretical statements (Rancière 2003). Marx's singular mode of theorisation is neither another school of philosophy nor a new branch of science, but a political intervention carried out through theory. If Marx is uncompromising when he defends scientific arguments in academic philosophical debate, Rancière says, this is only because these debates are implicated in political practices (Rancière 2012, p.12). Hence Rancière finds in Marx the arguments to combat the distinction between a 'good' and a 'bad' theory and politics, characteristic of Althusserianism.

Nonetheless, as is the case with most post-Marxist authors, Rancière's relationship with Marx's thought is problematic. Renault (2012) has convincingly shown that we can find 'many Marx*s*' throughout Rancière's trajectory, from his days as a student of Marxism under the supervision of his master, to the condemnation of Marx's social reduction of politics (an idea that Rancière names *infra-politics*). The critical stance that Rancière takes towards Marx revolves around the above-mentioned notion of praxis. Rancière resorts to the Marx of the *Theses on Feuerbach* in order to highlight the limits of Althusserian orthodoxy. However, when he evaluates philosophy more broadly, the political connotation of the notion of praxis disappears under the 'economicist' notion of production and its immutable law. The roots of this displacement must be found, Rancière notes, in the absorption of the dialectical revolutionary thesis by the materialist thesis that takes place in *The German Ideology* and *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. On the one hand, the notion of production appears in these works as the fundamental datum of human existence. German ideologues' failure in recognising that men produce and reproduce their means of subsistence and that, in so doing, reproduce their intellectual life, make of their propositions elucubrations pertaining to the ideological terrain of heaven. On the other hand, although men are the producers of their

existence, they are equally ensnared by illusions in the very process of production. This means that despite the acknowledgement that 'critical criticism creates nothing, the workers create everything' (Marx and Engels 1975, p.29), both ideologists and workers are caught by their phantasmagoria and cannot see things as 'they actually are'. What Rancière finds problematic in this formulation is that the source of these phantasmagoria in which ideologists and workers are caught is the very process of material life's production.

The displacement in the meaning of praxis is significant for Rancière since, in the end, it confirms the technical division of labour of Althusserianism. From his point of view, the problem with Marx's theory of ideology is not only that it poses the historical law of materialism as the only principle through which empirical facts can be observed simply as they really are, but that in so doing, it creates the unsustainable figure of 'good' and 'bad' history, and consequently, a concept of the 'good' and the 'bad' class. Rancière (2012) explains that the concept of *Lumpenproletariat* in Marx's work serves precisely as a myth for separating the proper classes (the bourgeoisie, the proletariat) from their anomalous, still incomplete manifestations. Marx's disdain for artisans and his condemnation of the 1830 and 1848 historical 'farces' finally lead to a scenario where the question of who can see reality as it really is can only be answered by affirming the point of view of a science that is no longer rooted in reality:

> Ideology, in other words, simply may be the fact that each does 'his own business' in a universe where fabrication and imitation, truth and *doxa,* exchange their powers. Seeing, not seeing and seeing upside down become here equivalent terms that also render equivalent the phantasmagoria of the imitator and the clairvoyance of the fabricator.
>
> (Rancière 2003, p.74)

Finally, in *Capital* we find the same logic underlying the early Marx's texts. This time the material law of production is re-elaborated in terms of the law of commodities, and the phantasmagoria in the brain of producers and ideologues are now inscribed more radically in the deep reality of the capitalist mode of production. As many commentators have noted (Echeverría and Castillo 1971; Larrain 1979), the difference between the early Marx's texts and the Marx of *Capital* is that in the latter the secret of commodity fetishism – due to which social relationships between individuals appear as material relations between persons and

social relations between things – does not rely on an external or alienated essence, but on its own form. In this context only a second inversion carried out by a scientific critique can reveal the mechanisms at work, Rancière says.

Once one has established briefly the coordinates in which Rancière wants to situate himself with regard to Marxism, we can see clearly what the 'logic of inversion' consists of. In short, the logic of inversion involves the assertion of a 'true' and a 'false' world, the latter being the exact inversion of the former. It also involves the picture of something hidden, which critical theorists have to bring to light, revealing the true essences beneath the realm of appearances. The basic elements of the logic of inversion can be summed up as follows: on the one hand, we have a necessary law (the economic law of the commodity, the material law of production) as the moment of truth of the ideological realm of appearances; on the other, we find the critical thinkers, whose task has traditionally consisted of bridging this gap in order to arm the participants in the social struggle. In order to fulfil its objectives, the science of the hidden requires the masters of the gap, the philosophers and sociologists (and more generally the intellectuals) who fill this empty place with science: true and legitimate knowledge. For Rancière, what is problematic in this form of critique is that it implies a specific distribution of intelligences, which in the end reproduces the very logic of domination it seeks to combat by putting into play a set of arbitrary differences and exclusions.

It is important to note that Rancière's critique of what he calls the 'logic of inversion' goes beyond the classic problem of the God's-eye view and the call for reflexivity as its alleged solution. For Rancière, 'objectifying objectification', as Bourdieu (1990) suggests, is not enough to undo the asymmetry between those who are able to think and those who are not. To affirm the social and political character of thinking is not a matter of taking a critical distance in order for scientists to analyse their own position, thereby avoiding the 'darkness of misrecognition' (Bourdieu 1990). On the contrary, the call for reflexivity might also serve as a means for differing *ad aeternum* the question of who has the right to think.

Indeed, Rancière targets Bourdieu's sociology since, according to him, here we find another version of the logic of inversion. This time the secret to be revealed by critical theorists is not the economic law of commodity fetishism but the sociological law of dissimulation and misrecognition. In advocating a relational philosophy of science and a dispositional philosophy of action, Bourdieu's sociological approach opens up the possibility

of grasping the practical meaning of social actions without reifying them in an external and 'scientificist' reason (Bourdieu 1998, p.iv). But in so doing, he has to affirm the denial or misrecognition of another no less objective truth than the 'substances' that he rejects; the truth of the social space and fields with allocated positions, a distribution ruled not by the economic law of capital but by the symbolic economy of powers and capitals.

According to Rancière (2009), postmodern thought has attempted to step beyond this Bourdieuian formulation according to which the hidden secret is no longer a true essence (surplus value), but a necessary logic (the logic of the social) in order to liquidate the traditional procedures and the political intentions of critical thinking. However, in doing so, 'postmodern' thinkers have simply perpetuated the logic of inversion they seek to contest. Rancière writes: 'postmodern thinking transforms the ignorance of reality or the denial of misery into ignorance of the fact that reality and misery have disappeared; the desire to ignore what makes us guilty into the desire to ignore the fact that there is nothing we need feel guilty about' (2009, p.43).

This time, the focal points of Rancière's analysis are the critical procedures present in contemporary art, and some of the postmodern elaborations of sociology in authors like Zygmunt Bauman and Michel Foucault. The first target of critique is the Baudrillardian and Debordian idea that reality is nothing but the spectacular exhibition of images and commodities. Contemporary artists like Martha Rosler[1] and Josephine Meckseper have integrated this theoretical framework into their works, showing the traces of the law of commodities in the capitalist domestic lifestyle. From this point of view, there is no need to appeal to the old dichotomy between essences and appearances, for the simple reason that the limit between surface and depth has been blurred. Marx and Che Guevara have been absorbed

[1] Rancière refers specifically to the collage 'Bringing the War Home'. This collage shows a Vietnamese man holding a dead child in his arms in a spacious modern apartment. Although the clash of the two type of images at play in the montage pretend to shake the public and make them conscious of the intolerability of reality, Rancière notes that 'there is no particular reason why it should make those who see it conscious of the reality of imperialism and desirous of opposing it' (2009:85) The contradictory character of the political montage of images thus is that they show that 'the mere fact of viewing images that denounce the reality of a system already emerges as complicity with its system' (2009:85). The political effect of this logic that goes from the intolerability in the image to the intolerability of the image is that, instead of encouraging activity, it asserts the authority of the 'lucid' voice that points to the falsehood of the public's existence, who in the end can only react with an impotent feeling of guilt.

by Coca-Cola, which means that the activists and denouncers of capitalism and its perverse effects share the same status of the reality they pretend to criticise.

This rejection of a reality divided into two separate realms might have implicated the end of the critical logic of inversion. But as Rancière notes, these works still want to tell us that there is a reality that we do not know how to see (a proof of this is the shocking effects such artists claim to cause in the public) and a reality we do not want to see (the 'naked violence' of mutilated bodies of the Vietnam War, coexisting with the domestic reality of capitalist lifestyle) (Rancière 2009). If even our desires of subversion belong to the logic of the market – it cannot be otherwise as the market produces a subjectivity whose *jouissance* is attached to the order of commodities – the political effects of this critical perspective can only be an ironic or melancholic acceptance of the social order, a sort of inverted activism.

Finally, the figure of the 'true' activist intellectual who, in order to avoid the totalising consequences of any theoretical diagnosis, gives 'speech to the masses' is no less a contradictory image for Rancière. The idea of the 'philosopher in the street' only displaces the moment of truth in the division between 'the intellectual and his people'; this time by setting out as criterion of truth her own silence. Rancière argues that if during the 70s the representative figure of this type of intellectual was famously Sartre, today Foucault is the author that serves to feed the magisterial yet subversive role of the intellectual. Despite Foucault's rejection of the principle of representation (in general and in the case of the role of philosopher in particular), his thesis on the ubiquity of power and the necessary local character of struggles and intellectual interventions turns power into a new enigma. There is a thin line between the multiplicity of sources and sites of power and the strategy of local interventions, and the ubiquity of power and a logic of general ignorance. Rancière writes:

> As in the children's game of 'Who's got the ring?' power passes to and fro without ever being anywhere. This passing of the multiple into non-being, of the knowledge of the masses into general ignorance, gives the intellectual back the mastery that the end of 'representation' was supposed to suppress.
>
> (Rancière 2012, p.65)

Thus, in postmodern thought we find the conceptual structure of the critical tradition untouched: there is a necessary historical process (postmodernity), whose main effect is the

inversion of reality (the reality of virtual reality, of a liquid and immaterial reality) into illusion (the illusion of misery, poverty; in other words, the illusion of reality). However, a crucial difference between these two approaches arises: while the critical tradition aims at a type of knowledge that can eventually lead towards a process of emancipation, postmodern thinking has disconnected the concepts of critical thought from the horizon of emancipation. Despite Rancière's critique of this nihilist inversion of the procedures of the critical tradition, he makes clear that it is the logic of inversion and not the use of it that must be rejected. According to him, the obsession of critical thinking with the 'real of reality' might have led to its postmodern version whereby 'the critique of the system is finally identified with a demonstration of the reasons why this critique lacks any impact' (Rancière 2009, p.40).

Rancière's formulation of the 'logic of inversion' echoes significantly other challenges to conceptual structures of modernist thinking. Bruno Latour and others have fiercely questioned social critique and other by-products of what he calls *Criticalland* (Latour 2004). Like Rancière, Latour believes that the critical attitude has gone too far in subjecting everything to the circular logic of critique according to which there is a seemingly objective reality which turns out to be merely the appearance of a deeper objective reality which sociologists should to disclose (Latour 2004). Furthermore, Latour equates the procedure of social critique to conspiracy theories' desire to uncover the 'hidden' truth of mysterious forces governing everything. He says: 'In both cases, you have to learn to become suspicious of everything people say because "of course we all know" that they live in the thralls of a complete illusion of their real motives. Then, after disbelief has struck and an explanation is requested for what is really going on, in both cases again it is the same appeal to powerful agents hidden in the dark acting always consistently, continuously, relentlessly' (Latour 2004, p.229). It is worth noting that, like Rancière, Latour includes in his 'critique of critique' modern and postmodern critical frameworks, from discourse analysis to constructionism. Whether to disclose the underlying causes of the phenomena to be explained or to deconstruct and reveal their false objectivity, the problem with the 'critical spirit' running through these frameworks is, Latour says, that they have been too preoccupied with matters of fact. Accordingly, Latour's proposal consists of abandoning a 'negative' 'destructive' or 'deconstructive' model of critique based on matters of fact, and moving toward a more positive and supplementary idea of critique based on the idea of 'matters of concern'. Whilst

Latour explicitly recognises that the problem with 'matters of fact' is that the very definition of what counts as a fact is contestable (and therefore political), unlike Rancière, his proposal lacks an interest in the relationships between different modes of knowledge and emancipatory politics.

Latour and Rancière's 'critique of critique' also resonates with Gilles Deleuze's ontology of sense and difference. Despite Rancière's suspicious attitude toward the political significance of Deleuze's philosophy, as we will see later, notions such as politics and the police, and crucially the idea of an aesthetics of politics anchored in the notion of a 'distribution of the sensible', are notions that are already present in Deleuze's work. However, different from Deleuze, Rancière's explicit denial of 'the social' and his reluctance to elaborate a different ontology – an ontology of sense which makes workable and consistent a new notion of the political – leaves him trapped in the very 'negativity' and reactive attitude he wants to denounce. But before commenting on how Rancière fails to provide a convincing argument against the procedures of social critique, I would like first to turn to one of Rancière's central conceptual figures: the idea of intellectual emancipation.

The idea of intellectual emancipation

As we have seen, for Rancière, the problem with critical thinking is its obsession with the 'reality of reality'. The very task of grasping the deeper level of reality implies a distribution of intelligence, which creates a division of labour according to which there are people who can think and people who cannot think because they have to deal with the material reproduction of life. As a result of this logic, emancipation could only appear as an attributed capacity to a supposed 'popular authenticity' (the activist intellectual) or as the necessary product of a process of misrecognition (the emancipation of philosophers and sociologists). Neither of these two versions is anchored in what Rancière calls intellectual emancipation, which constitutes the core of his version of emancipatory politics.

The idea of intellectual emancipation asserts equality as the condition for a new configuration of knowledge and its transmission. It is based on the experiences of Joseph Jacotot, a schoolteacher who, not knowing Dutch, taught the French language to his Dutch students without explaining or transmitting to them any of his knowledge in the language. By using a bilingual translation of Fenelon's *Telemaque* and with the help of an interpreter who

helped him to communicate with his students, Jacotot made his students learn without teaching them anything. This led him to claim a new pedagogical principle: the equality of intelligences. According to this principle all men are essentially capable of understanding what other men had done and understood with no necessity of explications. How could illiterate parents teach their children how to read? How do children learn their mother tongue from instructors who do not explain anything to them? Jacotot discovered that the 'explicator order' cannot face this question. And this is because the very idea of explanation involves an infinite regression of reasoning that can be stopped only by the *authority* of someone who judges that the explanation has come to an end.

> The revelation that came to Joseph Jacotot amounts to this: the logic of the explicative system had to be overturned. Explication is not necessary to remedy an incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world. It is the explicator who needs the incapable and not the other way around; it is he who constitutes the incapable as such.
>
> (Rancière 1991, p.7)

In principle, all humans have an equal capacity of seeing, hearing, imitating, making mistakes and correcting themselves, and all of them are able to understand and speak the language of their parents. Having students with the willingness or necessity to learn, nothing more than the willing of communication of Jacotot and his translator were needed for them to learn French. What the stultifying pedagogical logic of explanation cannot see is that understanding is given the equivalent of a text, but not its reason (Rancière 1991, p.9). In this context, the figure of the teacher is still necessary but only in order to demonstrate to the students that they are able to understand what they want if they have the will to do so. The position of mastery is thereby dissociated from the possession of knowledge, liberating intelligence from will and not subjecting the former to the later. The disentanglement of this power/knowledge knot, Rancière (1991) argues, creates a scene of equality between master and student insofar as there is no intelligence subordinated to other intelligence[2].

[2] 'The ignorant person will learn by himself what the master doesn't know if the master believes he can and obliges him to realize his capacity: a circle of *power* homologous to the circle of powerlessness that ties the student to the explicator of the old method (to be called from now on, simply, the Old Master)'. (Rancière, 1991, p.15).

But how to act under the guiding principles of intellectual emancipation when we know that while everyone has the capability to learn, not everyone has the same opportunities and the same will to exercise it? Rancière's answer is clear: taking equality as a point of departure, not as a goal; as a presupposition that can only be verified practically through actions that cannot be anticipated. Assuming equality would imply of course the rejection of Bourdieuian sociology that, in looking for the conditions of the inequality that blocks the realisation of equality, reinforces a pedagogical logic (the logic of two intelligences) whose realisation he is trying to accomplish. What results from this attitude that assumes the logic of equality (of intelligences), Rancière says, is not only a new pedagogical procedure, but the very possibility of emancipatory politics.

Rancière's denial of the social and its limits

During the 1990s, Rancière focused on the so-called 'return of politics' in philosophy. This return supposedly intended to bring politics back to the scene in a context signalled by the fall of the Soviet Union. But precisely because of this, the so-called 'return of politics' was nothing more than the assertion of the triumph of global and consensual democracy, to which this new political philosophy served as a theoretical justification.

> Cobbled for a long time by Marxism, which turned the political into the expression, or mask, of social relationships, subject to poaching by the social and the social sciences, today, with the collapse of state Marxisms and the end of utopias, political philosophy is supposed to be finding its contemplative purity in the principles and forms of a politics itself returned to its original purity thanks to the retreat of the social and its ambiguities.
>
> (Rancière 1999, p.iv)

What is relevant in this passage is that the development of this conservative and abstract political philosophy was possible only at the price of a process of purification; a process consisting of the radical separation of the political from the social, and the resulting reduction of politics to the institutional framework of Western democracies.

Rancière forcefully rejects this idea because, for him, politics involves precisely the question of the (always) arbitrary division between the political and the social, between those who can govern and those who cannot. Rancière's critical reading of Plato provides us with

the paradoxical notion of the social underlying his critique of the purification of politics. Rancière criticises Plato's anti-democratic *Republic* because it keeps every individual tied to a set of pre-fixed roles, positions, and places, the philosopher being the one whose natural position is as the governor of the city. This argument leads logically to the prohibition of the workers doing anything more than working, and consequently, it precludes the possibility of the workers ruling the city. Rancière reserves the term 'the police' for this 'order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task' (1999, p.29), a specific distribution of the sensible according to which a specific task, activity, or occupation corresponds to certain ways of seeing, feeling, and saying (Rancière 1999). Politics, on the other hand, names the disruption of this order, as it always entails a redistribution of the sensible that takes place wherever the hierarchical order of the police is undone.

By 'the distribution of the sensible' Rancière understands 'the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it' (2013, p.9). In Plato's *Republic*, for instance, although slaves speak and are able to understand orders, they do not *possess* language, so they cannot be part of the political community. Similarly, artisans cannot rule the city because they do not have *time* to do any other activity than to work. In this sense, the distribution of the sensible defines what is visible or not in a common space, who is able to speak the common language of the community, etc. In this context, politics always disrupts the established distribution of the sensible, opening up unforeseen possibilities of perception and action.

Politics manifests itself thus in both a positive and a negative way. On the one hand, politics involves a process of de-identification or 'subjectification', the dissolution of the allocated position or place (class) in the social order. This is the case of those French poet and philosopher workers of 1830, who defined themselves not by affirming their proletarian or labouring condition, but by affirming the radical capacity of being and doing other than as the tasks they were supposed to do due to that condition. On the other hand, politics implies the assertion of a universal equality by those who have no part in the distribution of parts. Politics happens when a scene of disagreement is established; when those who have no part in the distribution of parts affirm the equal capacity of anyone to speak and see. As Aristotle's

paradox of slavery shows, a slave, in order to obey his master, has to understand both the order and that he must obey (Rancière 1999), which means that he has to be equal to his master in that respect. This is why Rancière claims that disagreement is the paradoxical and conflictive assertion of two worlds in one. For, in order to sustain their claim, those who affirm the equality of anyone to everyone have to necessarily verify or demonstrate this capacity to those who are denied it. As Hallward (2005) has emphasised, equality is not a transcendental category or a universal value in Rancière's formulation, but an operator of practical verification, an assumption that triggers an always polemical process by the actions of those who assert the universal equality. By invoking the emergence of this scene of disagreement, Rancière succeeds in showing the extent to which politics is always impure, and also the necessity of subtracting politics from the institutions of the police order. In so doing, however, he displaces the platonic notion of the social without modifying his 'negative' connotation.

It is because of the 'negative' meaning of politics, its power to subvert 'the police', that Rancière rejects a social foundation of politics. A social ontology as a foundation of politics would result, for Rancière, in an antinomy. As his examples in *Proletarian Nights* show, politics takes place precisely as an attempt at not being founded by the social. But before examining in detail the implications of Rancière's denial of the social, it is worth looking at two of the few passages in which the French author directly addresses the issue of the social:

> The very field of the social, of its movements and organizations, is a space for permanent confrontation between contradictory logics. The social is, in a sense, the field in which balances among parts of the population are worked out, via the distribution and redistribution of shares that I will call, in a broader sense, the police of society. But the social has also historically referred to the fight against the police to combine a timely and well-defined demand, from such-and-such a group, that challenges the very logic of the distribution of shares and the exclusion of those discounted by the social order.
>
> (Rancière 2014, p.36)

> This primary task of politics can indeed be precisely described in modern terms as the political reduction of the social (that is to say the distribution of wealth) and the social reduction of the political (that is to say the distribution of various powers and the imaginary investments attached to them)

(Rancière 1995, p.14)

As Toscano (2011) and Fischbach (2012) have pointed out, Rancière approaches the social through the notion of homonymy. On the one hand, the social appears with a positive connotation, meaning basically 'common life', or referring to the configuration of a 'shared world'. This is the case when, in recalling the older project of the sociology of Durkheim and Mauss, Rancière emphasises that at one time sociology had to do with the 'art of common life'. As opposed to economics, Mauss's logic of the gift, and Durkheim's particular vision of education, founded a sociology where the social was still conceived as a project based on the social virtues of civility, generosity, and commonality. And this is also the connotation the social acquires wherein it refers to the fight against the police. On the other hand, along with this 'positive' meaning of the social, there is another, 'negative' sense that Rancière puts into play in his works. This time the social is equated with the idea of 'social order', with the established order of things (Rancière 1999; Rancière 2009) or simply with the 'distribution of wealth'. As in Bourdieu's social space, the social is for Rancière the social body, an order of parties whose functions, roles, and positions are perfectly allocated. Consequently, there seems to be two 'socials' for Rancière – the one of equality and the one of inequality, the social of the police, and the social of politics (Toscano 2011). Yet it is possible to find a third meaning of the social: the social as a backdrop against which politics takes place, a space for permanent confrontation between the contradictory logics of the police and politics. In this context, the social is not that to which politics is opposed, or what founds politics, but the terrain on which the logic of the police meets polemically the logic of politics.

It is important to note that Rancière associates these different meanings of the social with different types of knowledge (or disciplines). On the one hand, the social of the community and commonality is for Rancière the social of political philosophy, a form of thinking that, in identifying politics with the idea of the good life or the good order, ends up exorcising its disruptive and polemical character. On the other hand, the social of the 'social body' is arguably the social of sociology. Sociology in Rancière's work is not primarily identified with a specific discipline but with an intellectual attitude involving mainly two ideas: first, the localisation of the 'truth' of politics in social interests, social structures or social issues; second, an approach to the social through cartographies, maps, and similar analytical devices that allow sociologists to clearly define and count the parts of the social

body. Whether in the archi-politics of the philosophers who equate politics with the projection of a fully realised community or in the infra-politics of sociologists to whom politics will always be an epiphenomenon of the social, in both cases we find an identification of the social with the logic of the police, and therefore a negation of politics.

Toscano (2011) has correctly argued that the question of modality of the social is absent in Rancière's thought. Indeed, Rancière seems to connect too easily the idea of a non-natural order for hierarchies with the idea of a contingent social order. From this point of view, any account of the social that does not recognise its contingent character, the fact that the ultimate 'secret of any social order is the pure and simple equality of anyone and everyone, so there is no natural principle of domination' (Rancière 1999, p.79), will be an accomplice of the logic it pretends to denounce. As such, this idea is in alliance with many contemporary attempts to emphasise the political and historical character of the social. Rancière's theoretical project seeks to destabilise the policy order of government and sociology that tends to forget the violence underlying the social order. However, by considering the social as an epiphenomenon of the modes of power and domination, and reducing it to the logic of the police, Rancière condemns any sort of sociological inquiry from the outset to the failures of the 'logic of inversion'.

Rancière's 'critique of critique' thus mirrors his negative notion of the social as he chooses to render invisible other elaborations of the social that are more complex than the image he conjures of sociologist's 'infra-politics'. In the context of critical theory, explanatory knowledge – a type of knowledge admittedly limited and reductionist in respect of the plurality of the realm of individual experience and the world – has precisely the political function of making visible what is not; a symptomatic reading of the many aspects, levels, and dimensions of society does not necessarily equate to the vision of individuals as trapped in ideological delusions; what we cannot see from the particular standpoint of our individual experiences is not necessarily something hidden or beneath the social surface, but rather that which exceeds the limits of our individual existence. In other words, if social emancipation is simultaneously aesthetic emancipation, as Rancière rightly underscores, that surely means that aesthetic emancipation is simultaneously social emancipation. Yet Rancière's version of the social is the one that, according to him, sociology cannot bear: a disrupted social which entails 'the disordering of classes and identities that the sociological view of the world has

always rejected, against which it was itself constructed in the nineteenth century' (Rancière 2009, p.35). But do not the 'disordering of classes and identities' imply a subsequent re-ordering of classes and identities, which in turn will be disturbed and re-ordered? And has not sociology since its very foundations discussed and displaced the tensions arising from a modern social dynamic which includes the disordering and ordering of the social? Of course, Rancière is very aware of this, but for him, as we have seen, those moments of ordering should be seen as pertaining to the logic of the police and not that of the political.

This is where Rancière's 'positive' critique turns into its opposite: the annihilation of the possibility of thinking the social as (internally) different. Although I do think, with Hal Foster (2012), that the anti-critique rhetoric can be easily turned against Rancière himself – Rancière in the role of a sort of left-melancholic of pre-modern times transforming the 'masters of demystification' into naïve believers of the radical powers of critique, when in reality they are contributing to the policial order – I also think that the problem with Rancière and his notion of the social is related to his reluctance to engage in a debate with the possibility of an ontology of sense.

Indeed, Deleuze's transcendental empiricism and the ontological primacy he gives to difference seems to be better equipped than Rancière's poetics of knowledge to account for an aesthetics of politics which involves a multiplicity not tied to the One, or to the dialectic between the one and the multiple. For what is at stake in Rancière's impure notion of politics is not the disruptions of radical heterogeneities, but the eternal blending of politics and the police order. Although at first glance paradoxical, Deleuze and Guattarri's analysis of the axiomatic of capital and their explicit recognition of an ontology of sense capable of accounting for the molecular, the becoming, and the events, lead them to a recognition of a certain relationship between the 'macro' and 'micro' political dimensions of it. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they write: 'Molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments, their binary distributions of sexes, classes and parties. The issue is that the molar and the molecular are distinguishable not by scale, size or dimension, but by the nature of the system of reference envisioned' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p.239). It is telling in this passage that Deleuze and Guattari want to highlight the limitations of a macro-political standpoint in order to account for what is invisible or uncounted by the 'overcoding machine' – or the policial order, to use

Rancière's term: that is, the imperceptible flow that escapes the prevalent distribution of the sensible. Yet, they affirm simultaneously that there is a relationship between both logics (as the molecular escapes return to the molar organisations) and that both logics are ultimately incommensurable. The macro and the micro are thus related but they both point to a different system of reference.

Given that no such specifications are present in Rancière's formulation of the 'distribution of the sensible' and his notion of the politics and the police, Rancière finally becomes caught in an excessively reactive or 'negative' 'critique of critique'. His radical 'critique of critique' and of what he calls 'the logic of inversion' presupposes a previous inversion against which his own version of demystification takes place. On a more political level, the consequence of Rancière's 'critique of critique' risks in the end policing those attempts to enact the traditional procedures of social critique by social movements and activists that, along with 'micro-political' sources – essential to practices of resistance and autonomy – also rely strategically on a demystifying logic of the predominant mode of exploitation and domination. Paradoxically, these efforts at grasping the dynamics of capitalism cannot be visiblised within Rancière's poetics of knowledge, as they merely reproduce the logic of the police.

In this section I have argued that Rancière's 'critique of critique' can be seen as an illustrative case of what is at stake in the challenges to the idea and procedures of social critique. Rancière's emphasis on the aesthetics of politics might provide a valuable resource for thinking about and describing those fragile moments in which a redistribution of the sensible is achieved, making visible what was always there, unnoticed. As we will see in part 2, Rancière's poetics of knowledge captures well those moments in which social movements obtain a degree of momentum and are able to create and give viable new meanings to uncounted words. However, this does not necessarily invalidate the procedures of critical theory, despite what Rancière and Latour contend. As we have seen, Rancière's depiction of the critical tradition focuses mainly on a mechanism – what he calls the 'logic of inversion' – whose merits hardly can be reduced to the dogmatism and elitism that he identifies. Certainly, some versions of critical theory might be accused of dogmatic and elitist tendencies; however, Rancière's unmediated deduction of elitist tendencies from an

analytical framework are inadequate and ultimately can be seen to turn against his own argument.

Had Rancière not equated the social with the logic of the police, he could at least have left open the possibility of a renewal of social critique in which the aesthetics of politics can be seen as a moment in a process which includes the economic, the ideological, the normative, etc. However, his denial of the social and his obsessive preoccupation with the 'logic of inversion' (which can eventually be applied to almost any mode of enquiry) leads to the paradoxical denial of concrete individuals' critical practices, for they also use and mobilise the procedures of critical theory when they resist and act toward emancipatory aims.

Chapter 4. Between singularity and totality: the sociology of critical capacity and the renewal of critical sociology

The pragmatic sociology of critique

The theoretical project of Luc Boltanski represents a different position within what I have called here the 'normative intervention'. Similar to Habermas, Boltanski wants to highlight the normative aspects of social life, and especially the relevance of this normative dimension for understanding social order. The question of how reality 'hangs together' is at the centre of Boltanski's intentions as much as the question of consensus and understanding is at the core of Habermas' enterprise. In a way, Boltanski represents a deflated version of Habermas' ambitions, a practical philosopher speaking of the inescapable normative dimension of the social fabric in the low voice of pragmatist sociology. For whereas Habermas and Honneth's critical theories stressed the universal structures of rationality and normativity, and the institutional conditions for their practical realisation, Boltanski places much more attention on how social actors implicitly (but consciously) create, recreate, maintain, and question the social order.

With the publication of *On Critique* (2011) it can be said that Boltanski's theoretical project is the reconstruction of critical sociology on the basis of the sociology of critical capacity, a pragmatic sociology of critique. Drawing on a pragmatist perspective (mainly on the development of Austin's pragmatic linguistics and Dewey's experimentalism (Bogusz 2014), Boltanski unfolds the connections between the tradition of critical sociology and the sociology of critique, illuminating the possibilities of political change and emancipation. The initial departure from the sociological canon set out in *On Justification* (2006) and at some points also in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005) now takes the form of a reconciliation between a macro-sociological perspective that denies the critical capacity of ordinary actors while examining their constraints and declaring the necessity of their liberation, and a sociology based on the moral sense of ordinary actors. As Nancy Fraser notes on the back cover of *On Justification*: 'having moved from Bourdieusian critical sociology to pragmatic sociology of critique, Boltanski now seeks to develop a third approach, overcoming the

weakness of both' (2011). As such, not only does Boltanski represent a different style of theoretical critique, but his work can also be seen as a useful and provisional synthetic point of view of the different styles of critique explored until now.

The point of departure of Boltanski's project is the critique of critical sociology – especially Bourdieuian sociology – and the deployment of the sociology of critical capacity. The diagnostic underpinning Boltanski's position toward critical sociology can be summarised as follows: critical sociologists have hitherto examined exhaustively the underlying causes and mechanisms behind different forms of oppression, inequality, and injustice; in doing so, however, 1) they have not made explicit the principle of justice that guides their critique, and 2) they have portrayed social actors as alienated people who have completely internalised the rules of the ideological game such that it seems impossible to rely on them to modify significantly the denounced oppressive order. It is not difficult to find in each one of these points echoes of both Honneth's accusation of normative deficit in recent sociology and Rancière's anti-scientism and theoreticism. Boltanski's way out of the dilemma of critical sociology, though, is neither the development of a normative social theory nor the rejection of theory and scientific forms of knowledge.

The sociology of critical capacity is based on the acknowledgement of the moral sense and cognitive capacities of ordinary actors, who offer critiques and provide justifications in a wide range of everyday contexts. According to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), contemporary societies are *societies of critique*, in which all people have access – albeit to different degrees – to critical resources. In coordinating their courses of action, social actors have the capacity to criticise and justify their actions. Social actors do not construct the social order unconsciously, as Boltanski and Thévenot (1999) go on to say, and therefore sociologists must recognise their capacity of judgement. Although people are not usually forced to make explicit these justifications, they implicitly appeal to different regimes of justification when dealing with situations in which they are asked to do so, or when things go wrong. Following Habermas very closely on this point, for Boltanski to justify actions means to provide *good* reasons or to unpack the moral sense of the actions occurring in a wide variety of social activities, whether in everyday life activities or public manifestations. However, Boltanski's main focus is not the different types of discourses of argumentation to which people can resort in order to achieve an agreement, but rather the very process of dispute that is activated when

things go wrong or when actors differ in relation to the criterion used to evaluate a given situation. One of the most important features of this scene of dispute is that whether in justifying critique in a dispute or in reaching agreement and returning to the normal course of action, the imperative of justification must follow rules of acceptability. In this context, it is important to note that for Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) the validity of these reasons is grounded not on the rational structure of the human species, as is the case for Habermas, but rather on the moral and cognitive capacities that people have to refer to a general principle of equivalence. On this matter they write:

> If they want to escape violence they must be able to eliminate most of these motives of discontent as 'private' and to converge towards a common definition of the relevant objects in the situations – such as highway codes, state of tires, etc. But in order to converge in sorting out relevant and irrelevant items they must share a common capacity to see what fits the situation and under which relation. They need, hence, a *common definition of the form of generality* which allows to connect this situation with other ones identified as similar.
>
> (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, p.361)

This principle of equivalence is the main feature of a regime of justice, which is the regime to which people appeal when they enter into a process of dispute. Although the regime of justice is *one* among many other regimes of actions, and therefore does not exhaust the spectrum of possible experiences in social life, it is the main object of concern in Boltanski and Thévenot's *On Justification*. Here they describe in detail the functioning of this regime and the implications that this has for the sociology of critique. According to the authors, the possibility of establishing a general principle of equivalence is related to the differential attribution of worth to the beings participating in the situation of dispute. In order for a dispute to occur without appealing to violence, there must be a principle of common humanity that defines the group of those able to agree or disagree around the matter in dispute. The members of a community who share a common humanity, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) say, face different tests designed to attribute worth to people and to place them in at least two states: upper and lower. This presupposes a scale of values for the goods attached to the states, and consequently, an order of worth that enables the assessment of the relative value of the beings taking part in the dispute. But how can an unequal distribution of people in lower and upper states be sustained without contradicting the principle of common humanity? In order to

tackle this question, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) introduce three elements to the model: the *investment formula*, according to which people in lower states can in principle reach the higher states if they make a sacrifice or invest in it, and more crucially, the principles of *common good* and *common dignity*. The principle of common good states that the movement toward the higher states is good for all members of the polity, while the principle of common dignity refers to the 'equal capacity to act in terms of the common good' (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, p.76). Based on political philosophies that have dealt with the problem of the establishment of a legitimate social order by creating a higher principle, the authors sketch six worlds. As we have said, in any world people have to cope with the constraints of equality (which asserts that all members are part of the same species or common humanity) and of order (which points to the mechanism through which members can establish equivalences among them considering the multiplicity of attributes that make them different and yet allow them to purse a common good). Following these constraints, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) go on to describe six different worlds in terms of their higher common principle and their state of worthiness (tests): the market world, the industrial world, the domestic world, the civic world, the inspired world, and the fame world.

Common worlds	Market	Industrial	Domestic	Civic	Inspired	Fame
Mode of evaluation	**Price, cost**	**Technical efficiency**	**Esteem, reputation**	**Collective Welfare**	**Grace, inspiration singularity**	**Renown**
Test	**Market Competitiveness**	**Competence, reliability, planning**	**Trustworthiness**	**Equality and solidarity**	**Passion, enthusiasm**	**Popularity, audience, recognition**
Form of relevant proof	**Monetary**	**Measurable, criteria, statistics**	**Oral, exemplary, personally warranted**	**Formal, official**	**Emotional involvement and expression**	**Semiotic**
Qualified objects	**Freely circulating market good or service**	**Infrastructure, project, technical object, method, plan**	**Patrimony, locale, heritage**	**Rules and regulations, fundamental rights, welfare policies**	**Emotionally invested body or item: the sublime**	**Sign, media**
Qualified human beings	**Costumer, costumer merchant, seller**	**Engineer, professional, expert**	**Authority**	**Equal citizens, solidarity unions**	**Creative being**	**Celebrity**

Source: (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006)

In a situation of dispute, people can thus appeal to any of these worlds, pointing out either the invalidity of the test or the inadequacy of the beings that make up the situation with respect to the established test. It is worth quoting one of Boltanski and Thévenot's examples

in order to illustrate how the logic of justification and the six worlds unfolds in a concrete situation involving both objects and subjects:

> The family photograph on the boss's desk is not relevant in the scene in which he is confronting an employee he is about to fire. The photo may remain in contingency; it need not intervene in the negotiation that is under way in an attempt to determine, for example, whether or not the employee is guilty of professional misconduct. But the photo can also be imbued with value in a way that brings a different world to the surface, along with a principle of domestic justice that might attenuate the rigor of the veridic if it were taken into account. 'Ah, you have children? So do I'
>
> (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, p.217)

Conflicts and critiques arise when the beings (persons and objects) in a situation pertain simultaneously to different worlds. The possibility of reaching an agreement when there is a multiplicity of principles of agreement is related to the capacity of actors to establish temporal compromises between the worlds, so that some aspects of the tests of one world can be translated into the terms of the other. For example, critiques from the 'inspired world' addressed to the 'market world' would point to the enslavement of desires and freedom to money; yet, 'the instability of the two worths, market and inspired, can help to reconcile singular instances of uncertainty, moments marked by insecurity and worry, with opportunities of which one can take advantage when one knows how to seize the moment by transforming fate into luck' (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, p.302). Therefore, the establishment of a plurality of orders of worth allows Boltanski and Thévenot to account for the complex dynamics of conflict, critique, and agreement, and also to provide a general framework to evaluate the possibility of establishing compromises between different worlds. It should be pointed out that this general framework can be extended to include other emergent cities and worlds, as Boltanski and Chiapello demonstrated in the *New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005) by describing the emergence of a 'projective city', or as Thévenot and others have shown elsewhere (Lafaye and Thévenot 2017) with the emergence of an 'ecological city'.

Having summarised the main aspects of the polity model in the context of the development of the sociology of critique, I would like to stress two key aspects:

1) The sociology of critical capacity is interested mainly in the way in which the members of a polity *are able* to deal with the constraints established by the polity. People are able to identify a situation to which they have to adapt, and they have the capacity to judge justly by invoking the already mentioned principle of the common good. This means that, for Boltanski, people's reflexivity has to do with a capacity for making generalisations that enable them to go from a particular and private point of view to the principle of the common good. In order to pass or criticise as unjust what Boltanski and Thévenot call 'reality tests', people have to be metaphysicians, for the ability to provide a proof presupposes the capacity of integrating the principle of common humanity and the principle of common good, and consequently, the capacity to make generalisations and identify which forces do not pertain to the kind of polity in which the test in inscribed (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006).
2) The sociology of critical capacity is a *pragmatic* sociology of critique because its basic units of analysis are primarily situations and not people. There is a principle of coherence embedded not only in people's minds but also in situations, which for Boltanski involves different beings such as objects and pre-established institutional arrangements. The moral sense of people therefore is foremost a *practical* issue. Thus, normativity *per se* is not primarily an issue of concern for Boltanski, as is the case for Honneth, for example; rather, it is an interest derived from the seemingly simple recognition that 'in order to behave with naturalness, everyone has to be able to recognise these situations and to adjust to them' (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). Now, the study of the durability and regularity of the coherence embedded in situations, as well as the institutionalisation of 'reality tests', is not fully developed within the framework developed in *On Critique* and represents a step further in Boltanski's intention of re-elaborating the project of critical sociology based on the pragmatic sociology of critique.

Hermeneutic contradictions, institutions, and the fragility of social life

The critiques to which *On Justification* has been subjected (Callinicos 2006; Wagner 1999) prompted Boltanski to rethink the limits of the sociology of critical capacity. If in *On Justification* the authors (2006) stressed the capacities and competences of justice of ordinary

actors from a micro perspective, leaving aside the question of the constraints that institutionalised arrangements represent for people in situations of dispute, in *On Critique* Boltanski (2011) tackles this and others problems derived from the relative absence of a more structural or macro perspective in his work. In *The New Spirit of Capitalism* Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) had already employed a macro and diachronic perspective for analysing capitalism's ability to integrate its critiques in order to displace its inherent contradictions, and consequently, the capacity to offer people the motivations and moral justifications for engaging them actively in the a-moral dynamic of an endless process of accumulation of capital. The main aim of that book was to make sense of the decline of social critique and to show the role played by different types of critique in the changing nature of capitalism. The robustness of capitalism might be better understood in its relationship to its 'enemy', Boltanski and Chiapello argued. Yet the tendency of the decline of critique during the 80s and 90s was counterbalanced by a revival of critique by the end of the 90s. *On Critique* takes the critical spirit of this new period seriously and provides a new framework in which the sociological micro-descriptions of critical practices performed by ordinary people are connected to the more traditional tasks of critical sociology, that is, the unmasking of contradictions of social life and their perverse effects on and within people's lives.

One of the paradigmatic criticisms of *On Justification* is that proffered by Axel Honneth in his article 'Dissolutions of the Social'. Honneth (2010) examines in detail the project of the pragmatic sociology of critique, celebrating its radical novelty but also highlighting some important flaws. The main criticism, synthesised in the title of the article, is that Boltanski and Thévenot do not account for the systemic and structural aspects of social life, and that, as a result, the social is limited only to its normative aspects, as if people's lives and experiences can be reduced merely to normative experiences of justification and/or critique.

> The pragmatic aspect of social existence is reduced to the dimension of the normative justification of the social order: it is not instrumental interests, not the need to control the environment or the intention of negotiating our existence, in whose horizon the world acquires meaning for us, but solely the deep-seated desire for a proof of the legitimacy of our societal institutions.
>
> (Honneth 2010, p.382)

Honneth's critique is particularly significant because, as I argued in the previous section, there is also a normative reduction of the social – via a juridification of the normative – at the heart of Honneth's own work. Boltanski's response includes a clarification of the limited character of *On Justification*, which deals only with one regime of coordinating actions (regimes of justice), but more crucially, his response also includes an attempt to bring a macro-perspective into play in his work. What is interesting in this move is that the difference between a normative model of critique such as the one developed by Honneth and a pragmatic model of critique with normative implications is more clearly delineated. Yet the more significant deficiencies of the sociology of critical capacity are those identified by Boltanski himself when he evaluates the possibilities that the sociology of critique opens up for the development of an alternative critical sociology.

On Critique (2011) must not be seen as a return to Bourdieu, Boltanski says, but rather as a 'pacification' of the intentions of Bourdieu's sociology (Browne 2014). One of the conclusions of Boltanski's self-examination is that, paradoxically, the sociology of critique risked losing its critical edge. As long as the only task of the sociology of critique was to describe and register the critical operations carried out by social actors in everyday contexts, this type of sociology was denying itself the possibility of casting a normative glance at the social world. The 'politics of phenomenology' based on the capacity of the recognition of people hence overlooked the (usually) realist character of people's critiques, making of sociology an objective science capable only of confirming the predominant state of affairs of reality.

Boltanski (2011) argues that the pragmatic sociology of critique should lead to the development of a critical sociology that, without losing reference to actors' moral sense, is able to obtain broader degrees of generality. Sociology should not limit itself to the registration and descriptions of the critical operations carried out by people in everyday contexts; instead, it must also be able to show the breach between what is and what should be, as based on those operations. By adopting the point of view of ordinary actors, theoretical critique can be seen as a second-order metacritical position whose normativity will come neither from the sociologist's own moral criteria nor from an external substantive normative principle. In order to illuminate the plausibility of this connection, the set of tasks of critical sociology must now include an analysis of the regularities of institutionalised reality tests,

which are criticised by social actors because of the unjust situations they produce, the sense of normality embedded in these tests, and finally, the operations of confirmation through which institutions create an ordered reality, protecting themselves from the destabilising force of critique (Boltanski 2011).

To begin with, Boltanski examines the physiognomy and functioning of institutions and the contradictory character of their power. According to him, the existence of institutions reveals the fragility and ambiguous character of social life. Institutions – defined as bodiless bodies – define the *whatness* of what is, and in that sense they provide people with semantic security; they distribute qualifications and perform tests, and to that extent they construct the official truth of common sense. Institutions, therefore, are foremost instances of confirmation. Yet, at the same time, Boltanski points out, institutions are abusive and exert symbolic violence, for the metapragmatic register of confirmation will always clash with the pragmatic dimension of social life, which involves different contexts, situations, points of view, and interpretations. In other words, institutions are necessary for the establishment of any social order as they provide people with semantic security and a sense of normality without which 'the social' would dissolve. At the same time, though, they have an abusive character, insofar as the closure of reality that they operate will necessarily exclude the wide spectrum of social experiences occurring at a pragmatic level.

In order to grasp the ambiguous character of institutions and social life, Boltanski (2014) introduces a conceptual distinction which will alos be the focus of one of his last works, *Mysteries and Conspiracies* (2014): the world and reality. Perhaps one of the most significant innovations of Boltanski in the last period with respect to his previous works is the explicit affirmation of the radical uncertainty of the world. 'In my view, the world is a mess, a complete mess – fortunately', Boltanski says in an interview with Craig Browne (Browne and Boltanski 2014, p.551). In this context, the world is everything that happens or may happen and that cannot be fully mastered or known, while reality is the arbitrary organisation and mastering of the world through institutions and pre-established formats (Boltanski 2014). Reality for Boltanski is the stabilisation of the flux of the world, a process reached by means of the establishment of a network of causal relations to which people appeal in order to '*give meaning* to the *events* that are produced by identifying the *entities* to which these events must be *attributed'* (Boltanski 2014, p.4) and whose unproblematic character is

assured by institutions. Once the meaning of this relevant conceptual pair is established, it is worth looking at the dynamic between the forces of confirmation and forces of critique that institutions put into play.

The existence of institutions presupposes a relationship between symbolic forms and states of affairs. But given the arbitrary and fragile character of reality, institutions have to assure a state in which this relationship favours the invisibility of what Boltanski (2011) calls 'hermeneutical contradictions'. 'Hermeneutical contradictions' derive from the ambiguous character of institutions (positive insofar as they provide semantic security, and negative insofar as they exert symbolic violence), from their social and artificial character, but they also point to a more specific condition of social life. Boltanski identifies two hermeneutic contradictions. The first stems from the fact that institutions are bodiless bodies requiring a spokesperson to speak on their behalf. As spokespersons are at the same time embodied institutions and human beings (with desires, intentions, values, etc.) it is difficult to wholly trust them. Yet, at the same time, institutions have the advantage of transcending particular points of view and preventing these different perspectives and interpretations from being interchangeable *ad infinitum*. The second hermeneutic contradiction points to the opposition between the semantic and the pragmatic dimension of institutions. As institutions realise themselves in situations and contexts, or as Boltanski puts it, in the 'worlds of bodies' (2011), their semantic function cannot cover the multiplicity of points of view and experiences available in the social world. Yet the only realm in which institutions can exist if they want to be effective is in this world of bodies. This means that the functioning of institutions requires a gap between reality and the world, such that the pre-established relationship between symbolic forms and states of affair (which includes established formats, qualifications, a certain distribution of worth, validity, and an official common sense) can actualise itself and exert its confirmatory power. On the other hand, however, critique exploits precisely this gap between reality and the world in order to contest the prevalent order of reality.

But what is the real power of critique when facing the power of institutions? In *On Justification* Boltanksi and Thévenot (2006) describe the way in which people face and dispute 'reality tests'. Tests implie challenges to how worth has been distributed in a situation, because either the beings considered or the rules governing the situation pertain to a different

world. When there is an agreement over the distribution of states of worth among persons or when the test involves forces of the same kind (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p.31), we can describe that situation as just. On the contrary, when there is a disagreement over the results or implementation of the test, a sense of injustice arises. In this context, critique targets the result and/or the correct implementation of the test, and it aims to improve the justice of the test. In *On Critique*, Boltanski (2011) develops in more detail what he calls 'existential tests' and introduces a new type of test employed not by critical forces but by institutions. In order to confirm the established relationship between symbolic forms and states of affairs, institutions deploys *truth tests*. Truth tests seek to control the context of action in which social actors interact by repeating the current forms of codifications and formats and by making visible and explicit the relationship between the prevalent symbolic forms and states of affairs. Boltanski refers to these tests as truth tests because 'by covering with the same semantic fabric all the states of affairs whose representation is dramatized, this deployment creates an effect of coherence and closure – of necessity – which satisfies expectations of *truth* and even saturates them' (2011, p.105). Opposed to truth tests, and different from reality tests, existential tests challenge the principles guiding the established tests. By criticising the results or application of the test, reality tests reinforce the validity of the test thus acknowledging 'the reality of reality'. Unlike these tests, existential tests are not subject to a process of institutionalisation. But while this radical exteriority of existential tests can be seen as an advantage in terms of their critical force, the fact that they are 'out of reality' or literally 'out of place' could make of them isolated expressions incapable of being generalised. The only way in which these tests can be useful hence is to confer on them a collective character by making of the individual character of the injustice or experience of humiliation a shared experience. Again, tools of generalisation and totalisation such as comparison with others' experiences and links of causality imputing the established chain of events as presented by the official truth are vital in overcoming the individual character of this type of critique. Distinct from reality tests, which can only lead to a reformist critique of the already established tests, critiques based on existential tests bear the radicalness that the former lack.

> Precisely because they are situated on the margins of reality as it is 'constructed' in a certain social order – these existential tests open up a path to the world. Hence they are one of the sources from which a form of critique can emerge that might be called radical, in order to distinguish it from reformist critiques intended to improve existing reality tests.

(Boltanski 2011, p.108)

It is necessary to make clear that the distinction between reality and world has no metaphysical connotations, and that both notions require a realist understanding. Boltanski wants to underscore the tension between 'the social' and critique, the fact that in order to criticise reality, we cannot do without describing and analysing the multiplicities of ordering and institutions, and that, ultimately, the experiences coming from the world are in part also anchored in reality (Boltanski 2012). The world, conceived as 'all that can unpredictably appear within the experience of social actors and that can call *reality* into question' (Boltanski 2012), has the power to call reality into question precisely because our experiences do not match the expectations we have formed as anchored in formats of reality. This is also the reason why tools of generalisation and the adoption of a point of view of totality are crucial for radical critique (existential tests), for they need to embed individual experiences from the world with a collective sense in order to truly challenge the guiding principles of the established tests. In that sense, the distinction between reality and the world provides critical theorists with a key reference point that allows them to cast a critical view on reality, and consequently, to overcome the limitations of the micro pragmatic sociology of critique.

Functional normativism: between singularity and totality

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, Boltanski represents both a distinctive style of critical social theory, and a moment of synthesis of many aspects already present in the previous interventions. To conclude, I would like to make explicit the reasons behind this twofold significance of Boltanski's work.

The distinctiveness of Boltanski's style of critique relies on both 1) the combination of the singularity of an actor's experiences (sociology of critique) with the totalities of social macro-structures (critical sociology), and 2) the development of a functional perspective on the issue of normativity. As noted by Callinicos (2006), there is in Boltanski's works a fusion between the normative and the explanatory dimensions of critique. According to Callinicos, this leads Boltanski and Chiapello to have a condescending position toward the role of capitalism and critique. Indeed, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* can be read as an analysis of the *function* that critique and the spirit of capitalism play in order to assure capitalism's displacement and reproduction through change, more than a normatively motivated reflection

of the fate of capitalism and the experiences of resistance to it. It is this privilege of functionality over normativity which, according to Callinicos (2006), lead Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) to remain inside the limits of the reformist or corrective critique, as they show that critique would force capitalism to provide better standards of justice and thus help it to survive.

In *On Critique*, functional normativity is carried to its extreme, taking the form of a disclosure of the (hermeneutic) contradictions of social life. This time Boltanski explicitly rejects the necessity of a normative foundation for critique, and decidedly returns to one of the classic tasks of critical sociology, namely, that of unmasking contradictions.

> I'm looking for an immanent contradiction that allows to find a foundation for critique that is compatible with a pragmatic and interpretive framework. That is the reason I speak of a hermeneutic contradiction: an immanent contradiction between the necessity of institutions and their limits, that is, an immanent contradiction of social reality. Of course this type of critique will have moral implications, but it is not funded necessarily in morality.
>
> (Boltanski et al. 2014, p.584)

It is important to note that whereas in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* functional normativism had a reformist character in terms of the role assigned to critique, this time critique can play the more radical role of making social contradictions visible, opening the door for the *world* to enter into *reality*. In this context, one of the tasks of critical sociology would consist of reinforcing the role of critique by increasing the strength of those who are its bearers against the negative power of institutions, and to motivate a more or less radical transformation in the relationship between the forces of confirmation and the critical forces in favour of the latter (Boltanski 2011). Boltanski's conviction is that critique can wrest experiences and objects from the world in order to inscribe them in the fabric of the social world, pointing always to its fragility and arbitrary character. Emancipation in this context does not mean the abolition of institutions (that would be impossible for Boltanski, as he recognises the importance of institutions in social life), but rather entails a reconfiguration of the relationship between the collective and institutions so that institutions can recognise that they would lose contact with the real world (pragmatic register) without reformist critiques and they would lose contact with the world without radical critique (Boltanski 2011). At the same time, however, Boltanski's theoretical framework provides precious resources with

which to analyse the power of institutions, the affirmative power of confirmation, and the complexity of legitimation and, accordingly, to illuminate the main challenges that radical critique has to confront.

As for the role Boltanski plays within the constellation of critical theory, the provisional 'synthesis' he provides of the previous styles of critique develops out of his articulation of aspects that in the previous interventions appeared as incompatible. Boltanski's initial critique of critical sociology resembles Rancière's critique of Marx, Althusser, and Bourdieu. However, while in Rancière this critique implies a radical rejection of what he calls 'the logic of inversion', Boltanski affirms the powers of sociology to unmask the contradiction of social life. Similarly, contrary to Rancière's anti-scientism, Boltanski (2012) defends the 'laboratory' work of sociology and social sciences, and accepts the difference between scientific knowledge and the knowledge of ordinary actors without falling into the trap of 'epistemic asymmetry'.

The topic of 'epistemic asymmetry' – understood here broadly as the assertion of an unbreakable gap between internal or contextualist criticism made by ordinary people and external, context-transcending critique carried out by critical theorists – has notably pervaded the terrain of social thought with accusations of intellectualism, theoreticism, and dogmatism on one side, and relativism, subjectivism, and sociological 'populism' on the other (Susen 2012). Boltanski's own sociology of critical capacity sought to highlight actors' cognitive and normative capacities against the Bourdieuian epistemic division between knowledge arising from people's experiences and the scientific knowledge provided by sociologists. But whilst Boltanski stressed people's reflexivity and their capacity to critique in his 'middle period', he also underscores the 'realist' types of critiques that actors usually perform and, though not negating actors' reflexivity (as a capacity) he accommodates the degrees of reflexivity that actors can achieve in situations, pointing toward its unequal distribution. Accordingly, he goes on to distinguish between practical and metapragmatic *moments*; the former are seen as having high levels of reflexivity, while the latter display low levels of reflexivity (Boltanski 2011). In this context, critique (either scientific or non-scientific) entails a situation in which 'expectations and energies are diverted from what is to be done to confront the emergencies of reality, and are directed towards the question – self-referential, if you like – of knowing *exactly* what one is doing and how it would be necessary to act so

that what one is doing is done *in very truth*' (Boltanski 2011, pp.67–68). Quéré and Terzi (2014) accuse Boltanski of intellectualism, as metapragmatic moments would involve a 'disconnection from the situation and an artificial suspension of acting which favour a judgement on the appropriateness of the *characterisation* of what is happening' (Boltanski 2011, p.67). Although I do not completely follow Quéré and Terzi in their interpretation of the shifts between practical and metapragmatic moments as a moment of 'disconnection' – as Boltanski is very aware that these metapragmatic moments imply a 'thought experiment' – I do think that they draw attention to a particular aspect that is insufficiently theorised by Boltanski.

Quéré and Terzi (2014) argue that practical and metapragmatic moments involve a change of attitude and not a change of levels of reflexivity. They also stress that an 'increase of reflexivity could also be associated with a change in the form of inquiry' (Quéré and Terzi 2014, p.100). Instead of a moment of 'disconnection' then, I think it is productive to see the shift between practical and metapragmatic registers as a matter of distance, purpose, and a distinctive form of inquiry. As McLennan (2006) has pointed out, Simmel was the first to tackle the never-ending dilemma of structure and agency or individual and society methodologically in terms of a distinction of distance. Simmel's lucid formulation is well encapsulated in the following quote:

> Cognition must be conceived on the basis of an entirely different structural principle. This principle is the abstraction, from a given complex of phenomena, of a number of heterogeneous objects of cognition that are nevertheless recognized as equally definitive and consistent. The principle may be expressed by the symbol of different distances between such a complex of phenomena and the human mind. We obtain different pictures of an object when we see it at a distance of two, or of five, or of ten yards. At each distance, however, the picture is 'correct' in its particular way and only in this way. And the different distance also provides different margins for error.
>
> (Simmel 1950, p.7)

Simmel's methodological solution to the individual/society dilemma, based on the position we take as observants and participants of actions, can be supplemented with the methodological framework developed by Garry Runciman (1983), who crucially distinguishes between description and explanation as two different but complementary forms of inquiry. Whilst descriptions seek to capture the experiences of participants in social life, explanations aim at establishing casual relations (McLennan 2006, p.46).

Therefore, we can reformulate the issue of reflexivity, the difference between practical and metapragmatic moments and Boltanski's supposedly 'intellectualism' as a difference between distance (close, far), purpose (practical, analytical), and form of inquiry (description and explanations). Whilst a practical moment would typically involve a short distance from reality, a practical orientation (end-oriented actions) and descriptions in order to know '*exactly* what one is doing and how it would be necessary to act so that what one is doing is done *in very truth*' (Boltanski 2011, p.68), a metapragmatic register would involve a higher degree of distance, a more analytical purpose, and the elaboration of explanations.

Now, a crucial point that Boltanski leaves aside is that the difference between practical and metapragmatic moments – following the 'distance, purpose and form of inquiry' schema – can also be applied at different levels or in a continuum. For example, as we will see, critiques carried out by social movements occur at a metapragmatic register, compared to the same critique voiced by individuals in everyday contexts (as Boltanski has clearly shown). But, at the same time, as social movements' practices of social critique always have a strategic and tactical sense and are not primarily concerned with the issue of producing critical knowledge, they can be seen as happening on a more 'practical register' compared to critical theory. The distinction between practical and metapragmatic moments thus is a mobile, not a rigid, distinction.

Chapter 5. Conclusion: critical social theory and the aesthetic of cognitive mapping

Criticism is a matter of correct distancing

Walter Benjamin

Having sketched the main tensions underlying the field of contemporary critical theory in its four versions, I would like now to turn to the issue of articulation. How can the different styles of critique previously explored be articulated? In what follows, and by way of conclusion of part I of the thesis, I will suggest that a plausible mode of articulation between the different styles of critique reviewed until now would consider them to be part of what Jameson has called an 'aesthetic of cognitive mapping'. I think it is fruitful to extend Jameson's concept, originally elaborated in the context of arts and art criticism, to the terrain of critical social theory, as it helps to make explicit and reflect on the main differences and commonalities between the four styles of critique. Until now I have favoured a narrative that traces a 'dialectic of critique' with different moments: a path that goes from neo-Marxists and their affirmation of the traditional mode of critique to Rancière's critique of critique, to Boltanski's moment of "synthesis". These moments show the persistence of a totalising type of thought in critical social theory and the tensions that arise when it is confronted with the unavoidable task of accommodating normativity and utopian aspirations, as well as avoiding elitist theorisation. What Jameson offers is a conceptual grid in which these moments can be seen as different and particular yet related ways of approaching contemporary capitalist society, from a point of view that emphasises the political and ideological connotations of theory and the 'possibility of social critique' at this level.

Cognitive mapping and transcoding

Since the publication of *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson has been calling for the elaboration of what he calls an 'ontology of the present', a way to register the forces of the past and the future within the present, and also to figure out why these forces have been apparently occluded today (Jameson 2002a). Jameson

encapsulates this 'present' under the banner of postmodernity or globalisation, a new historical period characterised by the extension of capitalism, the disappearance of the Soviet Union, and overall the debilitation and questioning of the social and political foundations of the project of Western modernisation – industry and the welfare state. In this context, Jameson's main concerns revolve around the issue of how we can insert ourselves as individuals 'into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities, whose frames range from the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable decentring of global capital itself' (Jameson and Grossberg 1988, p.351). Jameson argues that postmodernity and the commodification of areas previously protected produces fragmentation and atomisation, meaning that the crucial political question is how to restore the collective and social character to our individual experiences in order to gain some control over the seemingly uncontrolled forces of capital.

At a theoretical level, the backlash of postmodern thought includes, as we have seen in chapter 4, a dismissal of totalising thinking and, on more general level, of the logic of the social. During the 80s, Jameson coined the term 'cognitive mapping' in order to advance an aesthetic capable of dealing with the fragmentary logic of postmodernity, and to rehabilitate the necessity of a workable notion of social totality (Mason 2002; Tally 2014; Eddy 2016). Broadly speaking, cognitive mapping is a mental map 'of the social and global totality we all carry around in our heads in variously garbled forms' (Jameson and Grossberg 1988, p.353). After his first book *Marxism and Form* (1971), Jameson became increasingly interested in the spatialisation of capitalism, i.e. the way in which capitalism creates specific spaces and affects how we experience temporality and historicity. In this context, Jameson extrapolates Kevin Lynch's idea of urban alienation, as the incapacity to map the city, to the terrain of cultural criticism. In commenting on how, in Lynch's analysis of Jersey, Boston, and Los Angeles, the 'city' is for their inhabitants both a concrete experience with specific referents (monuments, streets, etc.) and also an imagined totality, Jameson argues that 'Lynch's conception of city experience – the dialectic between the here and now of immediate perception and the imaginative or imaginary sense of the city as an absent totality – presents something like a spatial analogue of Althusser's great formulation of ideology itself, as "the imaginary representation of subjects' relationship with its real conditions of existence"' (1991, p.51). In Jameson's version, thus, cognitive mapping can be defined as a 'situational

representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unpresentable totality which is the assemble of society's structures as a whole' (Jameson 1991, p.51).

As we have seen in the first chapter, what Jameson finds valuable in Althusser's concept of ideology is, on the one hand, his insistence on the gap between the always local and limited individual representation of the social totality that transcends her – as we will always have to hand only *our* streets and *our* monuments, to continue with the spatial analogy – and her real conditions of existence; on the other hand, it is also the 'truth' about those conditions, which ideology indirectly tries to represent or map. Indeed, the task of cognitively mapping the social totality is precisely that of attempting to represent the many tendencies, levels, and layers through which this 'enormous and uncontrollable' machinery of global capitalism works. Jameson offers his own version of the Althusserian notion of mode of production to clarify what totality means and how this totality can be mapped out.

First of all, Jameson's concept of totality is not a productionist one, as it involves a variety orders of abstraction and mediations. Just like Althusser's, Jameson's mode of production articulates many levels or instances of structures and practices. The task of cognitive mapping is to go from those seemingly empirical individual fragments of social reality in contemporary capitalism through these different instances in order to trace its historical conditions of existence. In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson (2002b) crucially identifies the levels of the psychological, historical, the ideological, and the socio-economic, all of which should be considered as separate but related realms when it comes to exploring and explaining singular phenomena in the 'system'. As pointed out by Homer (2013), Jameson resorts to a number of concepts in order to articulate this non-mechanistic and non-reductive concept of mode of production, such as 'Althusserian notions of overdetermination and relative-autonomy, Raymond Williams's distinction between dominant, emergent and residual aspects of culture, Bloch's notion of non-synchronicity and Mandel's theory of combined and uneven development' (Homer 2013, p.165). Here, the notion of mediation emerges as a necessary complement to cognitive mapping, as it allows us to make 'connections among the seemingly disparate phenomena of social life generally'. Jameson offers another term for this classical Hegelian and Marxist figure of mediation: transcoding. Jameson defines the operation of transcoding as:

> the invention of a set of terms, the strategic choice of a particular code or language, such that the same terminology can be used to analyse and articulate two quite distinct types of objects or 'texts,' or two very different structural levels of reality. Mediations are thus a device of the analyst, whereby the fragmentation and autonomation, the compartmentalization and specialization of the various regions of social life (the separation, in other words, of the ideological from the political, the religious from the economic, the gap between daily life and the practice of the academic disciplines) is at least locally overcome, on the occasion of a particular analysis.
>
> (Jameson 2002b, p.25.)

Related to the possibility of locally overcoming social fragmentation, another important point to be emphasised is that for Jameson totality does not equate with 'total system', for it 'includes a variety of counterforces and new tendencies within itself, of "residual" as well as "emergent" forces' (Jameson 1991, p.406). Contrary to a caricaturised vision of the social totality as a closed rigid system, Jameson rejects the conflation between 'identity' and 'reconciliation' and advances a dialectic that does not seek an ultimate synthesis. From Jameson's point of view, in the end we have to assume that totality can only be approached 'on the occasion of a particular analysis' and that there is no individual consciousness able to encompass in all its dimensions and at once the dynamics of global capitalism. In this regard, Jameson lucidly states: 'The conception of capital is admittedly a totalizing or systemic concept: no one has ever seen or met the thing itself; it is either the result of scientific reduction (and it should be obvious that scientific thinking always reduces the multiplicity of the real to a small-scale model) or the mark of an imaginary and ideological vision' (1988, p.354). And it is for this very reason that 'the appeal to some ultimate underlying unity of the various "levels" is therefore a merely formal and empty one, except insofar as it supplies the rationale and the philosophical justification for that more concrete and local practice of mediations' (Jameson 2002b, p.25). For Jameson, these practices of mediations are conceptual inventions for the interpretation of literary texts, but I think we can transcode Jameson's transcoding and extend his cognitive mapping and the notion of totality it entails to the realm of critical social theory. However, before doing so, I would like to make clear the difference between a notion of social totality like the one advanced by Jameson and other modalities that the notion of totality can take.

Totalisations

As we have seen, Jameson's Althusserian vision of ideology precludes any authoritarian reading of the concept of totality, as totality will always appear as a partial model of the presupposed historically vast social totality. But it has to be noted that even though the notion of social totality works as a sort of 'regulative ideal', its heuristic potential relies on its capacity for discovering structures and practices with *real* effects in our world. In the context of critical social theory, as we have seen, these *real* effects that capitalism produces usually preclude changes in any transformative direction and cause either irrationality, harm, or injustice, while also covering (reifying) the social character of our individual experiences.

Now, how does this concept of social totality as a model of incommensurable reality differ from other attempts as contextualising individual phenomena, or as a horizon to which we always tend but never reach because otherwise the movement of history would stop, as in Laclau and Mouffe's formulation? Here I would like to introduce the notion of totalisation as the necessary reverse side of the concept of totality.

If totality is the whole of global capitalist socio-economic structures and its contradictions, then totalisation is the attempt to see it whole. The point of view of totalisation is, Jameson goes on to say, the individual or the biological human subject and, because of that, this project is destined to fail. As I already pointed out, this failure is due to the inevitably partial vision we as individuals, analysts or artists can have of a global reality that is produced and reproduced beyond our scope; hence the very necessity of a cognitive map. Jameson says that this problem of the 'figuration' or 'representation' of this complicated historical totality becomes more acute with the development of capitalism itself. Indeed, the increasing commodification of the world here takes the form of a split between the authenticity of an individual experience and the 'true' in which the social and economic conditions of that experience are created. The 'essence' of that experience and its 'appearance' then enter into contradiction. It is worth quoting Jameson to better illustrate how the problem of figuration arises in monopoly capital:

> The phenomenological experience of the individual subject becomes limited to a tiny corner of the social world, a fixed-camera view of a certain section of London or the countryside or whatever. But it takes place. The truth of that limited daily experience of London lies, rather, in India or Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound up with the whole colonial system of the British Empire

> that determines the very quality no longer accessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people. (…) There comes into being, then, a situation in which we can say that if individual experience is authentic, then it cannot be true; and that if a scientific or cognitive model of the same content is true, then it escapes individual experience.
>
> (Jameson 1991, p.348)

Drawing this time on Sartre's critique of dialectical reason, Jameson defines totalisation as the effort to make connections between seemingly disparate fragments and unifying them on a more general level so as to gain some control over its content. The control will always be fragile and partial, Jameson says, but at least it helps in making the world dependent on the subject's power. At the same time, if totalization is 'a contextualizing act which situates seemingly isolated phenomena within their larger relational context' (Jameson 1991, p.342), totality is the broader horizon (history, the social totality) which 'contains' the different acts of totalisations (O'Kane 1998). I think the best way of illustrating the difference and relationship between totality and totalisation is to turn to the terrain of real politics, which is finally the realm in which the elaboration of cognitive mapping primordially arises.

At the political level, the crisis of totality is related to the crisis of socialist internationalism and the difficulties in coordinating local struggles with national and/or international ones (Jameson and Grossberg 1988). In reviewing *Detroit*: a history of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, Jameson describes the successful operation of totalisation made by the League, as they were able to connect the realities of their workplace with the ones of other social actors – such as the students of the city – and achieve the political power of the city (one of their members was elected mayor). As Jameson (1988) notes, this was 'a remarkable political achievement, characterized by an exceedingly sophisticated sense of the need for a multilevel strategy for revolution that involved initiatives on the distinct social levels of the labour process, the media and culture, the juridical apparatus, and electoral politics' (Jameson and Grossberg 1988, p.352). From the point of view of the analyst, a notion of social *totality* is needed in order to map these different social levels; from the point of view of the activists, they engaged in practices of *totalisation* when connecting the micro-local issues of the workplace to that of the entire city and beyond. Now, the fact that the League could not keep its social base – partly because of an attempt to expand and internationalise

their struggle – and the tensions between the local and global became ultimately untenable, does not invalidate these efforts at totalisation as efforts at making visible the different mediations through which society – conceived as a whole – functions.

The explosion of a diversity of local struggles on issues such as race, gender, environment, etc. also involves a type of totalising act, but this contextualising practice differs from Jameson's precisely inasmuch as they lack a notion of social totality. Therefore, what distances this notion of totality from the poststructuralist notion of totality (for instance, such as that put forward by Laclau and Mouffe) is the inscription of practices of totalisation *within* the totality of capitalist society, and not as an impossible unachievable horizon. For while in Laclau's poststructuralist version the idea of the antagonistic/constitutive outside of a (non-sutured) totality and the radical contingency that this entails is a precondition for thinking of the process of hegemonic structuration (Laclau and Mouffe 1989; Laclau 2007), Jameson's totality implies the assimilation of contingency and the retrospective affirmation-recognition of the historical necessity of certain social relationships (Best 1997; Jameson 2009). Like Laclau and Mouffe, Jameson seeks to show the social and historical character behind a reified order, but unlike them, he does not believe that this 'constitutive outside' can or should be left outside the historical dynamic of capital itself.

To sum up, Jameson's notion of totalisation implies the coordination of different totalising practices within the social totality, and not an infinite play of sameness in difference in an always reversible horizontal plane. If 'history is what hurts', this is because history is not merely a text; or as Jameson argues when clarifying the canonical reading of Althusser: 'What Althusser's own insistence on history as an absent cause makes clear, but what is missing from the formula as it is canonically worded, is that he does not at all draw the fashionable conclusion that because history is a text, the "referent" does not exist' (Jameson 2002b, p.20). The presupposition of a referent, which encompasses the relationships between different levels of structures and practices, is what ties the practices of totalisation to an unavoidable idea of totality.

Mediating movements: transcoding and estranging

Now we can tackle more directly the problem of articulation of the different styles of critique reviewed so far. Against the backdrop of Jameson's aesthetic of cognitive mapping, the

trajectory of social critique we have traced in the previous chapters reveals three crucial aspects: 1) the necessity of a notion of the social totality; 2) the dilemma of how to better represent or know the series of interrelationships in a globalised and complex society; and 3) the fact that the tensions within each style of critique are also replicated at a more broader level when considering the field of critical theory as a whole. These aspects can be grasped if we think of them as three 'mediating' movements: transcoding, ordering, and estranging.

First of all, it should be noted that, following Jameson, it is neither possible nor desirable to subsume the different theories explored in this thesis under a single and unitary theory. If we want to rigorously make sense of some aspect(s) of the social totality, we should admit that the very work of analysis entails separation and reduction. Accordingly, each type of critique constructs in a local and particular way the social totality, and crucially addresses a central contradiction within it. As we have seen, neo-Marxist theorists focus especially on the socio-economic dynamics of capitalism, the 'normativists' emphasise capitalism's moral constitution, Rancière focuses on the aesthetic dimension of politics, and Boltanski underscores the pragmatic moments of justification and critique. However, what renders Jameson's notion of a multilevel totality intellectually productive is that despite this autonomy, each style of critique thematises and hierarchically organises these themes within its own framework. In other words, every style of critique uses its own master interpretative code to tell the story of this totality: a socio-economic, a moral-normative, an aesthetic, and a pragmatic one. And to rewrite the story of this totality from a particular code necessarily involves the rewriting of the other codes within the same model of social totality. Thus, Rancière's poetics of knowledge entails a rewriting of the other codes – socio-economic and normative ones – in terms of 'police'. At the same time, Honneth rewrites politics in normative terms, highlighting moral experiences of disrespect over issues of collective action and/or organisation. Harvey's master code is the one of capitalism and its uneven development itself; here the rest of the codes are functionally located in terms of their relevance for the functioning of capitalism or their modes of resistance – i.e. his theorising on human rights and utopia in general. Bearing in mind Jameson's concept of transcoding as a mediating movement, we can thus say that each style of critique *transcodes* the others.

As I have shown, all styles of critique face unsolved tensions when trying to integrate or thematise dimensions which are master codes in the other theories. Neo-Marxists find

difficulties in accommodating normativity for, on the one hand, a moral understanding of capitalism does not sufficiently account for the socio-economic mechanisms underlying the contemporary realities of exploitation and domination; on the other hand, the utopian aspirations that resistance or opposition to capitalism require can only motivate concrete actors and struggles if these are somewhat translated into a moral-normative language. Unsatisfactory treatment of this tension leads neo-Marxist theorists to become either naïve realists (like E.O. Wright), or advocates for an unbalanced version of ethical socialism (like Callinicos). Normativity and ethical issues are, on the contrary, paramount aspects in Habermas and Honneth's versions of critical social theory. Socio-economic elements are here transcoded as moral ones, but at the price of underestimating crucial political questions that might help to overcome the injustices that capitalism produces. The 'radical' character of Rancière's emancipatory project has, in this respect, what Honneth and Habermas' lack: namely, an explicitly egalitarian programme where politics is not confined to an institutionalised sphere of society. However, Rancière's emancipatory claims and his equation of the logic of the social with the logic of the police leave no room for theorising concrete egalitarian practices carried out by 'those who have no part'. Here, the radical egalitarian dimension absent in Habermas and Honneth's theorisations transmutes into the brevity of an aesthetic experience.

It is not difficult to see how these tensions are homologous to the more general tension identified by Jameson as the very reason underlying the 'aesthetic of cognitive mapping': the gap between the individual phenomenological experience of our social reality in late capitalism and the many levels and dimensions in which this social reality unfolds.

Style of critique	**Master code**	**Tension between**		**Central contradiction**
		Phenomenological experience	**Social totality**	
Neo-Marxists	Socio-economic	Utopianism, normative issues	Dialectic of capital	Uneven development of capitalism

Normativists	Normative	Everyday experiences of disrespect	Capitalism as a normative order with communicative rationality and three spheres of recognition	Lifeworld and system/Individual recognition and human ethical realisation
Critique of critique	Aesthetic-political	Disagreement, practices of self-emancipation	The police	Politics and police
Critical sociology	Pragmatist	Everyday practices of social criticism and justification	'Cities', social orderings	Hermeneutic contradictions of institutions (institutions as source of both semantic security and symbolic violence)

Source: Author's own elaboration

Moreover, we encounter this tension not only in all styles of critique, but also in the narrative of critical social theory considered as a whole, with Rancière representing the pole of vivid description and motivating experiences of self-mastery self-education in egalitarian moments, and neo-Marxists the pole of theory and a desire to 'see it whole'. However, these different but related approaches to the social totality of contemporary capitalist society also constitute competing understandings of it, as they all project the illusion that their analyses are at some point complete.

Once we have acknowledged the operations of transcoding between the different styles of critique, we can ask whether we can place them within a hierarchy in terms of the knowledge they generate about the dynamics of domination and exploitation of contemporary society. As we have seen throughout the thesis, the versions of critical social theory advanced by Harvey and Boltanski better explain the contradictions of contemporary capitalism at both the socio-economic and the normative levels than their 'rivals' within (and outside) the same style of critique. Moreover, both are well aware of the tension between the levels of individual experience, collective life, and larger social structures, and both use this tension productively – Harvey by introducing a discussion of dialectical utopianism and Boltanski by re-elaborating a critical sociology based on a sociology of critique. Armed with the theories of both Harvey and Boltanski, we can see not only how the socio-economic structures of capital interact with normative and political structures, which at the same time are reproduced and

contested, but also that there is a constant shift between context and text as well as between the level of the individuals and the level of the system. Rancière's disruptive moment of 'pure politics' can be absorbed into Boltanski's notion of 'existential tests', and the issues of morality and normativity theorised by Habermas and Honneth are also better contextualised by Harvey's idea of dialectical utopianism. Finally, Harvey and Jameson are helpful in emphasising that the limits to capital and its contradictions go beyond practices of justification and critique in the context of liberal democracies, as stated by Boltanski.

Now, what is the position of Jameson in this attempt to see critical social theory as a singular narrative? As noted previously, Jameson's notion of an aesthetic of cognitive mapping is elaborated in the context of interpretations of cultural and literary texts. Part of this is due to Jameson's diagnosis according to which it is in the realm of culture where the process of capitalist reification is most clearly expressed today. But Jameson is also suspicious of the discourse of social science. According to him, social science does not have the power to affect people's individual psychological lives. Unlike science, 'aesthetics is something that addresses individual experience rather than something that conceptualizes the real in a more abstract way', Jameson (1991) says. However, his concern with the motivating or ideological aspects of theory does not lead him to focus on issues of articulation between individual experiences and the construction of groups capable of resisting and/or fighting against capitalism out of those experiences. However, as Toscano (2012) has observed, there are clear affinities between Jameson's aesthetic of cognitive mapping and social theory. In fact, in underscoring the contemporary relevance of cartography and cartographic representations of capitalist society, Toscano (2012) has shown the potential of totalizing styles of thought in both the arts and the social sciences. In this context, he argues that C.W. Mills' very idea of the 'sociological imagination', and its calls for an articulation between individual biography, social structures, and history, is a good example of how this desire to see it whole has been a central part of sociological attitudes. As we have insisted, the desire to see it whole cannot be reduced to a favourable position toward a 'macro' over a 'micro' perspective; it is rather the relationship between totality and totalizations, and both the translation of diffused anxiety into objects of critique and a better understanding of the different levels of abstraction within this social totality that can be provided by a critical social science infused with the spirit of Mills' sociological imagination.

Jameson's scepticism with regard to the possibilities of a truly radical or revolutionary change in times of global capitalism and totalising reification might be another reason for his distrust of sociological reasoning. Jameson elaborated the concept of cognitive mapping during a highly anti-political moment, marked precisely by the 'wars on totality' and against Marxism within the social sciences during the 1980s. Here, the sociological backlash of 'micro' theories that addressed individual experiences meant a clear rejection of any type of totalizing thinking, yet without the desire to coordinate this individual experience with a broader totality. Indeed, following the patterns of privatization and reification prompted by late capitalism, the social sciences and humanities fell under a hyper-specialization of disciplines – a phenomenon replicated within the field of critical social theory. However, despite the fact that this scenario has not radically changed since that time, it is Jameson himself who has explicitly emphasised both the negative and positive sides of the process of rationalisation/reification. For Jameson, the autonomy of the Weberian 'sphere of values' is a symptom of a process of privatisation and reification of the human experience anchored in the development of capitalism; yet, at the same time, it is also a form of compensation, a little window onto the utopian dimension of art and thought.

Jameson turns to Brecht's method in order to show how resistance can be worked out despite this totalising reification, hyper-automatisation of disciplines and privatisation of social life (Jameson 1998). Among the different techniques that Brecht uses in his plays, Jameson is particularly interested in the 'distancing effect' (*Verfremdungseffekt*). The V-effect or estrangement is used in theatre to keep the audience at a distance from the narrative of the play. The idea is that the play does not absorb the audience into its narrative, so the audience can critically reflect on the narrative and their position within it. Brecht accomplishes this via different strategies – such as showing the audience that the character is an actor performing a role, or quoting aloud the lines, or more generally performing the artificiality of the play as such. For Jameson, with the distancing effect, 'the familiar or habitual is reidentified as the "natural", and its estrangement unveils that appearance, which suggest the changeless and the eternal as well, and shows the object to be instead "historical", to which may be added as a political corollary, made or constructed by human beings, and thus able to be changed by them as well, or replaced altogether' (1998, p.51). This is a good

example of the extent to which the automatisation of art can be put at the service of a totalising practice.

It is by praising the dialectical sense of the Brechtian V-effect or estrangement that Jameson gives us a clue as to how we can work upon the (lack of) motivational and ideological aspects of critical social theories. As we have already seen, the modern tension between subjective experience and broader social structures becomes more acute with the development of global capitalism – which, according to Jameson, introduces spatial discontinuities and consequently shrinks the sense of historicity and temporality. Jameson turns to cultural texts in order to find the possibility of cognitively mapping the social totality, for he considers the field of social sciences to be another realm caught up in the dynamics of reification and ultra-specialisation. However, there is another realm in which we can find the vitality and motivating forces that Jameson seeks in literature and cinema: the more prosaic terrain of collective resistance and action carried out by social movements. If critical theory performs an estrangement from the taken-for-granted realities of contemporary capitalism, we can also estrange the estrangement effect and confront it with the realities of social criticism performed by social actors. So far, we, and critical theories in general, have taken up the position of the 'object'. At this point, we can only reach a more or less satisfactory 'dialectic balancing of concepts', as Marx says (Carver 1975). In order to grasp more positively the relations between the socio-economic, the normative, the aesthetic-political, and the pragmatic moments, we should distance ourselves from critical social theories' own distancing operations, and, as Jameson suggests, to look 'intently for those instants in which the theoretical content of our everyday moments suddenly intrudes upon us and our fellow "actors"; in which, as Gramsci liked to put it, ordinary people are also revealed to be intellectuals, or theorists, in their own right' (1998, p.104).

Chapter 6. Boxes and arrows: on the relationship between social movement studies and critical theory

The notion of critique sketched in the previous chapter, based on a combination of Boltanski's critical sociology and Jameson's proposal of an aesthetic of cognitive mapping, allows us to move towards a more conciliatory stance in the critical theory debate. This 'synthetic' approach demonstrates that it is possible to take seriously the attacks inflicted on the traditional mode of critique and yet retain its core aspects. Crucially, the principle of 'epistemic asymmetry', according to which there is a fundamental gap between the privileged knowledge of the expert and the hoodwinked masses, is removed from Boltanski's theoretical project. At the same time, the 'efforts at totalization' in which theorists, activists, and ordinary people engage during processes of critique and contestation, and the different practices of mapping the social in a confusing global context, illustrate the productivity (both theoretically and politically) of the notion of the social totality. Boltanski and Jameson's works establish that 'totality' – even when conceived of as an 'impossible', complex, and mediated unity – when accompanied by a rejection of the principle of epistemic asymmetry, is not totalitarianism. Critical distance does not necessarily equate with a God's-eye view; on the contrary, the point of view of exteriority has proved to be extremely useful for overcoming fragmentation in contexts where individualised, privatised senses of injustices prevail. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that, especially in the context of critical theories, the ultimately conservative character of systemic theories can only be downplayed if its 'empirical derivations' (social movements and actors in general) are taken into account. Furthermore, it was the recognition that ordinary people also look for structures and macro-references which led Boltanski to synthesise the particularist and the universalist moments of critique.

The divorce between social movement studies and critical theory is symptomatic of the critical animus towards the traditional mode of critique (Hetland and Goodwin 2013). Usually presented as a 'backlash' of the micro- and meso-approaches after the dominance of grand paradigms – whose functionalist and long-term orientation is unable to give an accurate

account of the reality in which identities and political motivations actually occur – American social movement theories have drawn attention to the inability of macro-approaches to deal with the complexity and richness of the reality in which a wide variety of collective actions take place (Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Tarrow 2011). To the macro-structuralism of sociological theories stressing the historical and social conditions for the development of transformative collective action, they have opposed the micro-structuralism of political and organisational opportunities that are better placed to explain how collective action takes place *in its own terms*, that is, without reducing it to an epiphenomenon of broader structures. However, eminent social movement scholars have recently pointed to the necessity of reintegrating some of the macro-approaches to social movement studies. In light of the development of anti-austerity movements after the 2008 financial crisis, for example, Donatella Della Porta (2015) has recently claimed that we need to bring capitalism back to the study of social movements. And in *Marxism and Social Movements* (2013), Barker, Cox, and others have made a more explicit case for the reintroduction of capitalism as a key factor shaping social movements from a perspective that combines both the 'academic' and the 'activist' viewpoint.

In what follows, I will explore the extent to which this development in social movement studies can be sustained. My assumption is that, armed with a notion of critique based on Boltanski and Jameson's works, it is possible to identify some areas of convergence between critical theory and social movement studies. First, I will highlight the kind of problems that arise when attempting to solve the tension between macro- and meso- or micro-approaches within social movement studies, focusing especially on the Political Process model, an approach that has been dominant since the 1980s. Second, I will address the 'culturalist' turn of the most representative authors of the New Social Movement theories, emphasising the social diagnosis underpinning their notion of social movements. Third, I will examine the relationship between the 'framing perspective' and the more classical concept of ideology, as I find it illustrative of what is at stake in the exclusion/integration of more 'classic' themes. And finally, I will evaluate the possibility of developing a more conciliatory stance between fields and discourses that have remained largely disparate.

The common agenda: Mobilisations, resources, and politics

As we have learnt from the necessity of developing 'cognitive maps', one of the more salient weaknesses of systematic approaches, such as Marxism, is the difficulty in passing from a macro-explanatory dimension to the concrete terrain of identities and political motivation. As McLennan has put it: 'Even where – especially where – epochal categorization (capitalism) and class analysis (bourgeois/proletariat) can be shown to possess a legitimate "objective" quality, the expectation that people will experience and act on their situation in "structural" terms carries enormous explanatory risks' (1991, p.261). Sydney Tarrow's *Power in Motion* (2011), one of the paradigmatic books of the American social movements school, aims precisely at overcoming a view that, according to him, wrongly assumes the passage from 'structural conditions' to concrete action. This distrusting attitude towards deep but too abstract structural explanation is the point of encounter between different and complementary theories forming the so-called 'political process' model, a synthetic model which brings together the main branches of American social movement studies, i.e. resourse mobilisation, political opportunity, and cultural framing. According to Tilly, McAdam, Doug and Tarrow, 'by the 1980s most North American students of social movements had adopted a common social movement agenda, and differed chiefly in their relative emphasis on different components of that agenda' (2001, p.16). The common agenda differed from both the 'collective behaviour' perspective, which conceptualised collective action as the abnormal and anomic disruption of individuals in the system, and Olson's individualistic and market-like account of collective action. By contrast, the common agenda sought to reveal the economic, political, and cultural mechanisms and processes underlying different episodes of collective agency. McAdams, Tarrow and Tilly's position is that if we want to reach an explanation of how 'concrete action' occurs and has occurred over time, we should look at aspects such as social networks, a political system's conditions, solidarities, trust, and the creation and recreation of both individual and collective identities.

As Morris (2000) has emphasised, by focusing on the vehicles (resources and opportunities) that people mobilise when acting collectively, the political process model can offer an accurate account of the pre-existent conditions in which people act, including

institutional and organisational conditions. On this view, collective action does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, people usually rely on informal networks and act upon specific political and cultural conditions, which might serve as incentives and/or constrains which determine the prospects of success or failure of a given action. Among the variety of aspects that social movement scholars examine, three stand out: 1) the relevance of informal social networks, available repertories of action, and face-to-face interactions in building up collective identities and organisations; 2) the relevance of the state and more generally the opportunities that the political system opens up for action, including actors' relationship with elites; and 3) the shared meanings that motivate people's action.

How does collective action happen? How is it that individuals come together to make claims to a third party either in a single event or in a more systematic way? Why do people who are not interested in politics come to form part of a social movement? These are the type of questions that the common agenda seeks to address. The starting point of this perspective is that we cannot be content to merely consider the broader social structures and their contradiction, and wait for the answers. Nor can we say, as the relative deprivation approach suggests, that behind social movements there is an unbearable social, cultural, and/or economic malaise, which accumulates until it reaches a boiling point. The point is precisely to know why and how that 'disruption' takes place (if it does) at one period of time and not another, engaging some people and not others, in specific places, and so on.

The basic premise of the resource mobilisation theory is that social movements need resources to form, act, and effect change (Oberschall 1973). These resources can be material (jobs, incomes, material goods) or symbolic (charisma, trust, commitment). They can also be internal or external to the groups, that is, these resources can be formed and mobilised within the group or imported from other groups. Other types of resources – such as organisations, social networks, solidarities – are also crucial for mobilisation. On the 'political' side, it should be noted that collective action and social movements develop in specific political contexts, and their claims are usually directed towards political authorities or institutions. These features create 'a structure of political opportunities' for mobilisation, as they result in facilitators and constraints for social actors' mobilisation (Tarrow 2011). Collective actions have different outcomes and opportunities to evolve, and the extent to which they can effect change and reproduce themselves depends on whether they act within an open or closed

political system, democratic or non-democratic political regimes, and whether they interact with responsive or non-responsive governments. At the same time, these opportunities must be perceived as such by actors if they mean to have any effect in the direction or form that action takes. But neither resources nor political opportunities alone could provide all the answers to the 'how' of collective action. What these two strands of social movement studies overlook is the fact that social movements produce meaning, dispute dominant ideas, and participate actively in the 'politics of signification' (Hall, cited in Benford and Snow 2000). The scope, modes, and functioning of this politics of signification have been encapsulated within the common agenda in the term 'collective cultural frames'. Collective 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). These frames mediate between resources and political opportunities, and provide helpful guidance for localising adversaries and allies, and elaborating contentious issues. In the final section, I will explore collective frames in more detail. Suffice it to say here that these three aspects are the fundamental axes of the common agenda, and that each one can mediate the field of social structures and 'concrete action', thereby providing key insights into the questions of how collective action takes place.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to assess the vast literature of empirical research in the areas involved in the common agenda. Rather, my intention is to point to some tensions that arise within the field of social movement studies when we focus on one of its recent trends: a more positive attitude toward general and macro-structural perspectives. In fact, after decades of theorisation and empirical research, social movement scholars have also tried to reach a moment of synthesis. The consensus around the common agenda is already a sign of that unifying spirit. But the unification does not occur solely at the thematic level. What is at stake in this integrating effort is not only a matter of successfully combining variables. At a theoretical level, what scholars like Della Porta and Tilly have tried to achieve is a version of an accommodation of the classic 'structure and agency' sociological dualism. By advancing a relational and interactionist model, which considers different levels of analysis (from description to explanation) and different levels of abstraction (from structures to episodes through mechanism), Tilly and others have tried to encompass a wide range of episodes in history, from the French Revolution of 1789 to the Chinese student movement of

1989. They coined the term ‘contentious politics’ instead of ‘social movements’ precisely to include a wide range of claim-making experiences, which typically involve governments as a third party or reference point, but which do not necessarily have the systematicity or the array of public performances we usually find in social movements (Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

Looking back at their own contributions to the field of social movement studies (what they called the traditional agenda), Tilly and others deem it insufficient to point to ‘loose connections’ between political opportunities, identities, and cultural frames, especially if they focus on a single actor. According to them, the problem with this type of approach is that connections between different dimensions or areas cannot be transformed into causal sequences. Accordingly, a more dynamic, relational, and interactionist approach must be developed and applied to the issues of mobilisation, actors’ formation, and trajectories. For Tilly and others (2001), neither a culturalist, structuralist, nor a ‘rational approach’ do justice to the complexity of relations in which contentious politics occurs. In this context, the aim is to ‘broaden our explanatory scope by shifting the search away from general models that purport to summarize whole categories of contention and toward the analysis of smaller-scale causal mechanisms that recur in different combinations with different aggregate consequences in varying historical settings’ (McAdam et al. 2001, p.74). For Tilly, there is no point in using different vocabularies for grasping very similar phenomena. Since there are significant parallels between a wide range of contentious politics, the whole field would benefit from a more explanatory approach. In other words, while the focal points of the common agenda were mainly ‘boxes’ – labelled political opportunities, repertories of actions, framing processes, etc. – this more explanatory approach concentrates on the arrows connecting those boxes (McAdam et al. 2001, p.189).

What is there inside these arrows, and how do they integrate the subjective and structuralist dimensions? In the first place, it is important to note that Tilly and others are not proposing a general theory of the functioning of contentious politics. Rather, the idea is to identify recurrent mechanisms present within different episodes of contentious politics, but whose combination have different outcomes and consequences in different situations. Different causal mechanisms have similar effects, but the combination of these mechanisms is different in each episode. Drawing on Merton, Hedstrom and Swedberg, Tilly and others consider mechanisms as ‘delimited sorts of events that change relations among specified sets

of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations' (McAdam et al. 2001, p.25). These mechanisms can be environmental (mechanisms affecting general conditions of social life), cognitive (involving the changes in perceptions of individuals), and relational (affecting the relationships between individuals and/or groups). Analytically, students of social movements should select an episode of contentious politics (the Nicaraguan revolution, for example) and explore how these three mechanisms combine to produce the episode to be explained. When a concatenation of mechanisms works similarly in different settings, this results in processes, which can include broad macro-processes (such as revolutions or processes of democratisation) and narrow micro-processes (such as political identity formation). Tilly and others show, for example, the extent to which the intersection of cognitive with relational mechanisms can explain the shift in the trajectory of different sustained and enduring actions. Mechanisms such as cross-class coalition formation, certification, identity shifts and polarisation, for example, explain both the rise of Sandinista opposition and the 1954 Hindu-Muslim confrontation (McAdam et al. 2001, p.36).

Despite Tilly and others' reluctance to build a general model, there is undoubtedly a shift toward a more explanatory attitude in this proposal. However, it is not clear that this agenda has more explanatory power than the old common agenda. This is more evident when it comes to assessing the merits of the proposal in the accommodation of agency and structure. Some commentators (Buechler 1995; Platt 2004) have drawn attention to the failure of Tilly and others to satisfactorily grasp the agency aspects of contentious politics. Platt, for example, argues that 'by insisting that activists' consciousness and decision-making occur within determining networks the authors reassert structure's explanatory priority, thereby diminishing activists' agency' (2004, p.211). On the other hand, the abstract and sometimes confusing character of the mechanisms identified by the authors renders them difficult to connect to the field of 'concrete action', for similar reasons that beset other explanatory approaches: the explanan can only refer to the explanandum in a way that agents do not necessarily grasp or identify with. In the end, even with small-scale models, we seem to find the same kind of problem that marked the departure of social movement studies from grand theories. Therefore, it is not clear whether the task of providing a more accommodating picture of the 'agency and structure' dualism has actually been achieved.

New social movement theories: social totality and culture

The 'common agenda' is mainly an American intellectual product. The commonalities between the different approaches relate mainly to the need to understand specific American movements and other forms of contentious politics not reducible to the categories originating primarily from European contexts. The European counterpart to the political process model is what has been referred to as 'new social movement theories'. Unlike its American version, new social movement theories (henceforth NSMt) are not meant to represent a unitary school. Certainly, the theories of authors such as Habermas, Touraine, Melucci, and Castells have many points of contact. Yet, their main object of concern is not to reach a synthesis between the various theories. In some senses, these theories arose out of a context that also criticised functionalism and structuralism, especially in its Marxist versions, but nevertheless they never abandoned the pretention for systematicity and the elaboration of societal diagnoses. Habermas' theory of social movements, for example, cannot be properly understood without reference to his theory of communicative action. For Habermas, the new social movements of the 1960s should be understood as resistances to the system's colonisation of the lifeworld; as such, he conceptualises social movements mainly as groups fighting for authentic *forms of life*. Like Habermas, the foremost exponents of the new social movement 'school' have developed a theory of society in order to explain the development of social movements, which, according to them, did not follow the patterns (in terms of actions, objectives, and identity formation) of the classic labour movement. Whether under the rubric of the 'programmed society', 'information society', 'technocratic society', 'complex society' or 'post-industrial society', Touraine, Melucci, and Castells propose a reading of the main societal changes occurring during the 1960s, and locate the development of social movements within this frame. Social movements are part and ciphers of these changes, but they also might contribute to define its future development.

The nature of the system

New social movements theorists share a common diagnosis: the traditional model of modernity, in its Marxian or Weberian versions, is undergoing important modifications (Melucci 1989). Something has changed. And as the modern condition is tightly related to

change (as posited by Marshall Berman in *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*), the very nature of change should be the object of attention. Although the three main authors of the NSM approach have developed works that encompass 40 years of significant changes, which have prompted some thematic variations over its development, there are three topics that can help to describe the major trends in the transformation of industrial modern society. First, the global character of a world that has become a world-system. Second, the key role that information plays as the main resource in this interconnected world. And third, the process of individualisation and the relevance of the self in the new societal dynamics.

According to Castells (1996), contemporary society should be characterised as a 'network' society. The interconnectedness of the relations between different groups and individuals across the world, at different scales (locals, national, and global), is the defining feature of contemporary society for the Spanish author. These 'global networks of instrumental exchanges' have their origins in the acceleration of the processes of internationalisation of economy, and the dominance of the financial system over a system that has become increasingly interdependent. This process, as Touraine (1971; 2007) has also emphasised, has a political character and crucial cultural implications. Globalisation is political because it relies on an ideology according to which the economy cannot be regulated by national or other traditional authorities precisely because of its global character. As Touraine says: 'the very idea of globalization in effect contained the desire to construct an extreme capitalism, released from any external influence, exercising power over the whole of society' (2007, p.22). The predominant position that the United States and other industrialising countries such as China, India, and Brazil have in this global economy, as well as the political role that institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization play in the control over the rest of the world, demonstrate the extent to which this ideology has become a reality that is hard to contest. However, this is a system of 'variable geometry', as Castells puts it, with many 'black holes' of misery, the awareness of which has impelled the emergence of alter-globalisation and global justice movements since the beginning of the 1990s.

Following a similar trajectory to Castells and Touraine, Melucci asserts the global character of contemporary society, emphasising the planetary dimension of both its connections and its limits. He argues that 'we live on a planet that has become a global

society, a society totally interconnected by its capacity of intervening on its environment and on social life itself, and yet still dependent on its natural home, the planet Earth' (Melucci 1996, p.2). The interconnectedness of this network and the awareness of individuals of the globalised world become possible only because of the technological revolution and especially the revolution of information and communications. The changes in information technologies allow the network to work as such, disrupting the classic space-time axes, allowing more fluidity in the processes of communication and causing a constant explosion of codes, images, and symbols. Melucci, Touraine, and Castells stress how central this technological revolution has been for the development of a more flexible and adaptable capitalism, able to erode the traditional bases of labour in order to extract more efficiently and at low costs the surplus generated in the network. However, because of its very nature, the information age is not just an economic fact; it is also a social and cultural one. Information spreads all over the world, changing the patterns in which individual and collective identities form. To be sure, modern revolutions were also dependent to some extent on information and knowledge. But as Castells writes: 'What characterizes the current technological revolution is not the centrality of knowledge and information, but the application of such knowledge and information to knowledge generation and information processing/communication devices, in a cumulative feedback loop between innovation and the uses of innovation' (1996, p.31). Information thus changes the entire forms of representation of social life, at the level of the system and that of the lifeworld. Thus, while it is a key resource for the new flexible capitalist economy, it can also be used as a tool for their very contestation.

Finally, one of the key aspects of contemporary, post-industrial societies is the role that 'the self' plays in the constitution of society. Because of the changes already mentioned at the level of economy, technology, organisation of labour, and culture, the sources of individuation are also heavily disrupted. According to Touraine, society can no longer provide the sources of individual identity and self-realisation. The network produces new and confusing patterns of social interactions and, in so doing, it undermines the certainties and securities that traditional institutions gave to individuals. In this context, 'The self is no longer firmly pinned to a stable identity; it wavers, staggers, and may crumble' (Melucci 1996, p.3). Likewise, Castells (2012) calls attention to the paradox of a bipolar society structured around the net and the self. On the one hand, the net provides unlimited possibilities of

communication, in terms of both form and content. On the other, the same net traps the individual amid a vortex of information that makes it difficult to grasp and make meaning out of it. The process of individuation thus becomes problematic. A new communitarianism tied to the primitive form of collective identities (closed and exclusionary) and the competitive form of individualistic entrepreneurism based on self-interest and indifference to society illustrate the extent to which this process can go wrong or fail. Nevertheless, even in a context of impersonal forces, flows, and networks, the individual subject can also be considered as a space of resistance.

For Touraine, the radical changes in the traditional mode of modernity leads to the decline of the very idea of society as the organisational principle of social life. Non-social foundations of the social, Touraine says, and the emergence of the individual subject as a site of resistance to the social powers are proof of this. The point is not to celebrate the 'end of society' and glorify the a-social character of new forms of identities, but rather to think of the individual subject as a source of meaning and liberation. Touraine summarises this position as follows: 'The destruction of the idea of society can only save us from a catastrophe if it leads to the construction of the idea of the subject, to the pursuit of an activity that seeks neither profit, nor power, nor glory, but which affirms the dignity of all human beings and the respect they deserve' (2007, p.85). In a context where the power of impersonal forces becomes global and totalising, the individual subject can be seen not only as a source of resistance, but also as a place from which the social can be reconstructed.

From politics to culture: The 'novelty' of 'new' social movements

NSM theorists' emphasis on the transformation of modern society led them to suggest the decline of the very idea of society as the organisational principle of social life. In spite of this, NSMt retain the classical sociological attitude consisting of describing and explaining the characteristic of this new societal totality. Social movements arise out of these conditions; they are ciphers or signs of this 'new era'. If the self-production and self-apprehension of society was, at the beginning of modernity, mainly political, and then social, today societies produce themselves in cultural terms, Touraine insists. Culture, then, becomes a new way of naming 'the social', and, accordingly, the 'new social movements' must be considered chiefly as cultural movements.

This *culturalisation* of the social takes place via an explicit 'depoliticisation' of the social. Indeed, perhaps the most stiking aspect of NSM accounts is the disentagling of social movements and collective action from their political dimension. From this point of view, the *autonomy* of *social* movements can only be asserted if we consider conflicts as social and not political, and if we pay close attention to how social movements form themselves beyond or behind the political system. In order to support this change of approach, Melucci resorts to his societal dianosis: 'contemporary social movements, more than others in the past, have shifted towards a non-political terrain: the need for self-realization in everyday life' (1989, p.23). It is not that the 'old days' of the reign of economic forces have disappeared, but precisely the contrary: the new form of capitalism integrates, as factors of production, all domains of social life (Touraine 1971, p.4). In other words, if the new social movements are more 'culturalist' than the classic labour movement, this is not primarly because of the content of their grievances and demands, but a result of the very nature of the system and its conflicts.

Touraine's analysis of the May 68 movement helps to clarify this operation by means of which the autonomy of the social is asserted against politics through the aknowledgement of the centralirty of the cultural dimension of social life. In analysing the complexities of the movements, Touraine says: 'The cultural revolution was the very foundation of a class struggle which concentrated not on economic relations, but on the whole society, because the new social power spread its control everywhere' (1971, p.62). For Touraine, the May movement was a reaction to a social crisis signalled by the disintegration of the industrial society. It was the expression of not only a class conflict, but also populism. The old and the new were combined not because of the backgrounds of its leaders or because of the united action of workers and students, but because society itself was in crisis and transition. The new aspect of this society thus can explain the novelty of the movement. In this sense, Touraine goes on to say, the May movement was in part an anti-society movement. They fought against a conservative university and a centralised state; they appealed not so much to rationality and strategy as to spontaneity, pleasure, and fantasy. Touraine says: 'The May Movement, like most populist movements, launched an appeal that was more emotional than rational. Its appeal to overthrow the supposedly real, mechanistic world was directed to popular energy,

to life; and it sounded more like Bergsonian vitalism than the Marxist rationalism the movement claimed as its doctrine' (1971, p.47).

In a similar vein, Melucci names four new characteristics of contemporary social movements: 1) the major concern with immaterial or post-material issues (crucially information) over the classic preoccupation with the distribution of resources and material goods; 2) the non-instrumental character of the movement's actions and the concomitant valorisation of the experience of being part of the movement in itself, alongside the recognition of organisations as primary sources of identity and meaning in the present, not merely as vehicles for the realisation of grand visions in the future; 3) the complementarity of private and public dimensions of life – 'living different and changing society' are seen as two complementary activities; and finally, the consciousness of living in an interdependent planetary world, which prompts the networks of solidarities between members of movements and movements themselves with different grievances in different parts of the world to go beyond the internationalism of the classic labour movement.

NSM theorists have insisted that the identification of novel characteristics in social movements does not entail a complete erasure of classic themes, forms of organisation, and demands. Rather, they focus on these trends precisely because they point towards emergent features of a social structure undergoing a process of radical mutation. The elements of 'old' traditions of collective actions are observable in contemporary movements, but they are constantly interrogated, translated or critically appropriated by the members of the movements. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that this appropriation leads NSM theorists not only to the obvious displacement of classic Marxist aspects such as class politics, but also to a displacement of 'the political' in general. In the NSMt view, contemporary social movements do not direct their claims primarily or even at all to the state or any other institution of the political system. Moreover, grand ideologies, political projects and organisations are explicitly rejected by these movements. Their central tasks and significance rely on the creation of new meanings and messages to be delivered to (civil) society, so that the latter can learn about its own contradictions by initiating new controversies. It is in that sense that we can speak of contemporary social movements as being *pre-political* (they form themselves in the terrain of everyday life) and *meta-political* (their actions go beyond the political system, usually avoid confrontation with the state, and try to reach the entire society).

A last portrait of contemporary movements as anti-political and anti-societal expressions of the network society is offered by Castells in *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2012). In analysing the waves of protests that emerged in different parts of the world in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Castells argues that 'in all cases the movements ignored political parties, distrusted the media, did not recognize any leadership and rejected all formal organization, relying on the Internet and local assemblies for collective debate and decision-making' (2012, p.4). In terms of the themes that bring together these different movements around the world, Castells underlines outrage and feelings of indignation; rather than protesting against poverty, inequality, and the devious democratic character of the political regime, today people are coming together in order to rebel against the cynicism of politicians and other representatives of political, cultural, and economic power. They rebel against power, and although their actions also imply the use of some kind of power, this is creatively appropriated and circulated through alternative – non-hegemonic – channels of social communication. The internet, therefore, has become, for Castells, a major resource for these movements.

Questions of method

Through a characterisation of some of the main aspects of NSM theories, I have tried to call attention to the link that NSM theorists establish between a societal diagnosis on the one hand, and the emergence and major characteristics of contemporary social movements on the other. If these movements are 'new', this is only insofar as they express an epochal change. Contrary to American social movement studies, NSM theorists maintain a dialogue (albeit a critical one) with Marxian theory, or at least with some of its defining aspects. At some point, it is the *content* of the Marxist diagnosis and its political derivations that NSM theorists reject, but not the form of the analysis in itself. Take Melucci, for example, who explicitly acknowledges that: 'Macro-structure analyses of the Marxian type are unavoidable (…) I therefore accept as a strong working hypothesis the Marxian point that we live within a system with a definite logic and definite limits – even if these limits are presently obscure and difficult to specify' (1989, p.186). Of course, as was discussed in the previous chapter, the category of totality can have different meanings. The 'totality' of cybernetics is different from Hegelian and Marxist uses of the term. Yet, if social movements engage in 'efforts of totalisation' in their practice, it is because they have, in principle, cognitive and organisational

resources at their disposal, and because they look to map out broader social and organisational structures in order to overcome fragmentation. Moreover, the crucial lesson from NSM theorists is that the existence of these resources and their availability are determined by society as a whole (in its economic, cultural, and political dimensions); hence their insistence in the *new* type of society. In other words, only in considering the paramount role of information and social communication in contemporary society can the new features of social movements be fully appreciated.

Among the NSM authors, Alberto Melucci is the one who has elaborated this argument in the greatest detail. For Melucci, social movements represent a precarious stabilisation of a system of action; they are neither subject(s) nor people. Furthermore, it is best to think of them not as a given empirical reality, but as an analytic construction. Indeed, social movements must be construed in both practice and theory. This construction presuposses crucially a social movement's capacity to mobilise meanings, information, and knowledges, as well as recognising the constraints of the environment. This 'constructivist' view of social movements allows us to move beyond the dualistic objective-subjective thinking, Melucci argues, dissolving the false unity in which the term 'social movement' is usually encased. The basic model of collective action in which social movements are constructed includes the identification of goals, ends, and the opportunities and constraints of the environment, as well as the elaboration of solidarity among different individuals, engagement in conflict, and the capacity to push the limits of the system beyond its previously established boundaries. Melucci's point is that the pre-existing social problem that prompts solidarity, the sense of shared interests that emerges among its members, and the course of action itself are not 'objective', but rather issues to be constructed both by the students of social movements and by the participants. He summarises his position as follows: '"Objective problems" don't exist in themselves. They come to exist as problems because people are capable of perceiving and defining them as such within processes of interaction' (Melucci 1989, p.193).

However, when the question shifts from *how* social movements form themselves (or are formed as an analytical device by social movements students) to one of *why* concrete individuals participate in collective action, Melucci explicitly affirms as a necessary condition the 'objective' character' of belonging to a specific location in the social structure that exposes these particular individuals (and not others) to systemic contradictions. He writes:

‘individuals participate in collective action because they belong to a specific social sector which is exposed to the contradictory requirements of complex systems’ (Melucci 1989, p.126). Beyond the fact that, for Melucci, this is a necessary but not sufficient condition for explaining why individuals engage in collective action, he implicitly introduces a duality between an internal and external perspective. From the point of view of interiority, that is, from within social movements, problems should be problematic for *them*, otherwise we would enter the terrain of abstractions that do not reach the terrain of experience, and therefore do not make sense (for acting). From the external point of view, though, we should identify locations in a structure and contradictions in systems. Melucci elaborates on the methodological requirements for the study of social movements in the following terms:

> Analysis requires the distance that permits us to assume the point of view of the relationship itself and to metacommunicate about the limits and the possibilities by which action is delimited. Only by keeping this distance and at the same time being close to the action can one observe that intense, plural, and sometimes contradictory system of meanings that constitute the collective identity of a social movement.
>
> (Melucci 1996, p.59)

Until now, this methodological issue has been largely ignored by social movement studies. Either because social movement scholars adopt, from the outset, an insider perspective, or because they held an a priori ethical attitude against any ‘objectifying perspective’, they tend to assume that a third-person perspective is impossible to reach within a social movement. Participants can show us ‘how’ their actions form and evolve over time, but they can say little about the ‘why’ of their actions (apart from individuals’ motivations). To be sure, this is not because of a denial of actors’ cognitive and normative capacities – as I have shown, the recognition of actors’ capabilities is one of the core elements of social movement studies – but because they correctly assume that people cannot act and analyse their action *at the same time*. In any case, Melucci’s call to consider the methodological issue of how to ‘keep distance and at the same time be close to action’ is significant for two reasons: First, because, as I have shown in the previous chapter, participants in collective actions usually engage in serious debates not only concerning the how of their actions, but also crucially as to the ‘why’ of their actions. What is more, this does not occur exclusively at the level of tactics and strategy, but also includes the level of the macro-structures that may

constrain them and the positions from which the action is asserted. Therefore, the 'why' questions are not just prerogatives of the analyst (although the degrees of generalisation, the modes of justification, and the criteria of validation or truth differ). Second, because it leads to a distinction between theoretical and methodological concerns, which can help to better elucidate possible zones of convergence between the different approaches within social movement studies, and between the latter and contemporary critical theory.

Framing process and ideology

One of the most privileged sites to observe the tensions and possible connections between social movement studies and critical theory is in the discussion of framing processes and their relation to the topic of ideology. As mentioned above, until the mid-1980s the common agenda lacked a dimension that could account for the 'politics of signification' of social movements. Indeed, the creation, re-creation, and mobilisation of meanings and ideas were of no major concern to scholars of social movements. In order to fill this gap, some writers began to deploy the term 'frame' to refer to the meaning-construction work in which social movements engage when acting collectively. The concept 'frame' 'denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction' (Benford and Snow 2000, p.614). By selecting, condensing, and simplifying aspects of reality, collective frames help actors make reality meaningful in a process of interaction in which meanings and ideas are constantly negotiated. For this reason, frames are foremost strategic tools which enable a social movement's participants to render their demands clearer, to effectively communicate their grievances, and to secure public support.

According to Snow and Benford (1988), the process of framing involves crucially three tasks: 1) movements identify and critically elaborate a diagnosis of some problematic aspect of social life, attributing causality to events or blame to specific groups and adversaries ('diagnostic framing'); 2) following on from the causal and/or blame attribution, they also usually propose a solution to the problem ('prognosis framing'), which includes the identification of targets, tactics, and strategies; and finally 3) since 'agreement about the causes and solution to a particular problem does not automatically produce corrective action' (Snow and Benford 1988, p.202), they call for engaging in a transformative action, invoking rationales for participating in the mobilisation ('motivational framing'). As such, diagnosis,

prognosis, and motivation are key to the success of any process of mobilisation. At the same time, insofar as these frames are discursively contested and negotiated within the movements, they are also the main cause of conflict between different factions within it. Participants might agree with the causes of the problem, but disagree over the solutions or motivations that should be put forward to incite action. According to Snow and Benford (1988; 2000), the very success of a mobilisation depends on the extent to which the three framing tasks are integrated.

The success of mobilisation is also closely related to one of the core characteristics of the framing process: namely, its resonance. If activists want to appeal to people in order to gain support or adherents, frames should be credible. This means that they should be articulated by credible articulators, that the empirical references used in the diagnosis should be believable to the adherents, and they should be consistent. Consistency implies both a non-contradictory relationship between beliefs and claims, and a non-contradictory relationship between what participants in the movement do and what they say they do. But how can movements guarantee the consistency and credibility of their frames? According to Hart (1996), a close exploration of how frames are elaborated by actors reveals that there are two crucial discursive processes at the heart of the framing process: frame articulation and frame amplification. The process of articulation involves the aligning of experiences and/or events, and thus a specific form of assembling 'reality'. For Snow and Benford, it is the way in which different bits of reality are assembled and not its ideational content that make a frame effective. Likewise, the process of amplification implies the punctuation of some events, issues or beliefs so that a movement's demands and grievances are clearly communicated. In respect of the process of punctuation, it is important to note that the selection of problems does not preclude the possibility of framing a variety of problems within a singular frame. Far from being an obstacle for the effectiveness of movements' mobilisation, the 'parsimony' reached by a singular frame can lead to greater degrees of support. As stated by Gerhard and Rutch, 'the larger the range of problems covered by a frame, the larger the range of social groups that can be addressed with the frame and the greater the mobilization capacity of the frame' (cited in Johnston and Noakes 2005, p.34). Thus, there are frames which can become 'master frames', as is the case with the 'injustice frame' or the 'equal rights' frame. Unlike context-specific frames, these 'master frames' are 'elastic, flexible, and inclusive enough so

that any number of other social movements can successfully adopt and deploy it in their campaigns' (Benford 2013, p.1).

The existence of master frames and their relative endurability points to an ambiguity within the framing perspective. Frames can sometimes be treated as fixed and relatively stable cultural frameworks, while at other times they can be viewed as emergent and changeable. Although both ways of seeing frameworks are present in the discussion of framing processes, the latter view predominates. As emphasised by Oliver and Johnston (2000), framing processes are usually depicted as face-to-face processes through which participants can infer 'what is going on' in an always revisable process determined by the courses of action of the same movements and/or other actors. In that sense, 'rather than providing a few fixed cognitive maps to be unrolled and referenced to make sense of situations, [a frame] gives people a set of principles for mapmaking and navigation, resulting in a whole chart case of rough, improvised, continually revised sketch maps' (Frake, cited in Oliver and Johnston 2000, p.3). As maps are fluid and changeable, the focus of attention must be on the application of those maps to actions, rather than on the maps themselves.

At this stage, the much older notion of ideology emerges. In *What a Good Idea! Frames and Ideologies in Social Movement Research,* Oliver and Johnston have clearly shown the extent to which the concept of ideology is usually ignored or conflated with that of the cultural frame, obliterating their differences. Sometimes, in order to distinguish between the fixed and fluid aspects of the ideational field (or, more broadly, culture), framing scholars invoke the notion of ideology as a synonym for more endurable frames. However, ideologies and frames are not the same. For while ideology 'links a theory about society with a cluster of values about what is right and wrong as well as norms about what to do' (Oliver and Johnston 2000, p.7), frames, as conceptualised by framing process scholars, usually lack this ideational component. People within and outside movements do not only react to frames and propaganda; they also think, Oliver and Johnston go on to say. Thinking involves not only the elaboration of marketing-like strategies, but also usually a lengthy process of judging, evaluation, and re-creation of knowledge. Put simply: unlike frames, ideology points to the process of movements' education and self-education. Oliver and Johnston elaborate the difference between framing processes and ideology as follows:

> Framing processes are the ways actors invoke one frame or set of meanings rather than another when they communicate a message, thereby indicating how the message is to be understood. (…) The concept of ideology focuses attention on the content of whole systems of beliefs, on the multiple dimensions of these belief systems, and on the ways the ideas are related to each other.
>
> (Oliver and Johnston 2000, p.8)

Oliver and Johnston's formulation might lead us to the erroneous conclusion that the difference between frames and ideologies is merely one between form (or process) and content. Yet the difference resides more specifically in the role played by ideas, and the people creating, discussing, and learning those ideas, in the whole process of movement formation. Certainly, framing processes are crucial for succeeding in public campaigns, but at this level of analysis, ideas are mainly taken for granted. When the 'latent' activities of collective action enter the picture (as stressed especially by Melucci), it is the image of 'people as thinkers' that prevails. Here both the form and content of ideas, and usually the conflict around them, are at the centre of movements' activities.

The distinction between frames and ideologies brings us back to the issue of Jameson's aesthetic of cognitive mapping. In some way, we can frame ideologies as 'cognitive maps'. By doing so, we can restore Goffman's original formulation of frames as schemata of interpretation 'that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large' (Benford and Snow 2000, p.614). As in the case of Melucci's constructivist approach to social movements, a crucial question arises: what is the relevance that social movement students should give to the 'the world at large'? The notion of ideology, for example, insofar as it includes a social theory, points necessarily to an exploration of the social structure. This is not necessarily the case with framing processes, whose focus is more on the effectiveness of the 'message' than on the consistency of ideas underpinning that message. Thus, ideologies and frames can be complementary insofar as the two terms are not conflated and to the extent that framing analysis acknowledges both the contestable nature of the production of ideas and the relationship of those debates to the 'long-term rhythms of social change' (Tarrow 2011, p.7).

Back to 'the past'?

The tensions within social movement studies echo those that we found in the critical theory debate. Theoretically, social movement studies are in tune with the main elements of the critique of the traditional mode of critique. This rejection is crucially reflected in the search for *autonomy,* the attempts to explain social movements by social movements' own dynamics, and the consequent neglect of grand, systemic theorisations. The 'spirit' of social movement studies' withdrawal from grand theories is similar to what we identified as the key issue in critical social theory's current situation: namely, the political necessity to register concrete social struggles. But although this move toward a more activist stance might seem salutatory at first glance, it poses some problems in respect of realising its very aims. Significantly, discarding critical social theory's resources risks rendering the descriptions of social movement students obsolete. It is not that critical social theory provides or should provide a 'sense of anticipation'; rather, it offers a horizon or interpretative framework in which long-term and short-term descriptions can be articulated. Equally, critical social theory can offer invaluable coordinates for orientation, if they register concrete social struggles where the critique of the system is practically made.

However, we have seen that over the course of the last few years, there has been a move toward a more positive attitude toward theorisations at the level of the 'system'. The dimension of the critique of the 'system' was always part of NSMt; paradoxically, however, the societal diagnoses upon which these authors built their theories of social movements led them to abandon most of the elements of theoretical social critique.

While the common agenda's emphasis on the strong aspects of continuity between new and old forms of contentious politics led them to overlook grand societal dynamics, NSM's stress on the radical rupture of the traditional model of modernity left aside crucial aspects of continuity between 'classic' and 'new' movements (the class dimension of conflict, the relevance of the state, the new forms of political parties, among others). In order to avoid a loose sense of what the 'macro structures' might mean, some scholars have further specified the reference to large-scale transformations or macro-structures, pointing to the necessity of integrating an old process into social movement studies – namely, capitalism.

Donatella Della Porta has explicitly articulated this demand in *Social Movements in Times of Austerity: Bringing Capitalism Back into Protest Analysis* (2015). Della Porta commences her study with a diagnosis of the contemporary time. She says: 'In order to understand today's movements in times of socioeconomic challenges, we clearly need to bring capitalism back into the analysis' (Della Porta 2015). Of course, the return of capitalism need not take necessarily a 'theoretical' form. But would not social movements' scholars benefit from a neo-Marxist utopianism as the one developed by David Harvey? For the reasons we have sketched out in this and previous chapters, Harvey's theory of the uneven development of capital does not enter into a dialogue with Della Porta's work or that of other social movement scholars.

But rather than advancing a proposal for a possible dialogue between both realms – something that can take multiple forms – in this chapter I have stressed the similar type of tensions that critical social theorists and social movements face when they analyse the 'conditions of the present', from either a meta-theoretical or an analytical level. In any case, the *interdependence* of overarching theories and concrete practices of social criticism, as noted by Boltanski, seems paramount if the integration of capitalism is meant to be more than the integration of a momentary variable (capitalism) in the study of social movements.

Importantly, as we have seen throughout the chapter, Melucci's 'soft' constructivist approach offers the possibility of taking a vantage point, or third-person perspective, which does not necessarily equate with a 'neutral' or God's-eye view. This does not necessarily lead one to downplay the complexity of the practices of social movements' participants; indeed, quite the opposite: we have seen in the discussion on the difference between frames and ideology the extent to which ideas and thoughts are significant for social movements. Concepts (debated, re-created, and negotiated within social movements and between social movements and the dominant institutions) and the way in which these concepts are discussed and 'performed' are both part of a circuit of social critique through which movements become transformative agents. In this context, the recognition of social movements as instances of 'critique in movement(s)' – in its social, political-aesthetic, and normative dimensions – might help to further clarify the terms in which a more mutually beneficial relation between both fields can be initiated.

In the next two chapters, I will examine how two Chilean social movements – the *pobladores'* movement and the student movement – practically critique neoliberal Chilean society. I will show that we can use some analytical tools developed by social movement scholars – the tasks of the framing process – to produce an 'image' of what these movements do when they act collectively, which includes a dialectical move from individual's experiences to the 'system', passing through different ideological, organisational, and political mediations. As mentioned in the introduction, this intends to be more of a theoretically informed observational exercise in relation to the realm from which critical social theory can draw its descriptions and critical resources than an exhaustive and fine-grained analysis of the two movements in all their complexities and multi-dimensionality.

PART II: CRITIQUE IN MOVEMENTS

From 'laboratory' to 'paradise': 40 years of neoliberalism in post-transitional Chile

As mentioned in the introduction, the context in which a new wave of protests and mobilisations emerged in Chile during 2011 is that of a wider crisis of neoliberalism. For the first time since the restoration of democracy, the contradictions of the 'Chilean model' have led students, pobladores, workers, feminists, mapuches, environmentalists, and other social movements to challenge its very foundations. The Concertación – the centre-left coalition that succeeded Pinochet's regime – sought explicitly to reform some aspects of the socio-economic model imposed during the dictatorship, by increasing social spending and widening access to many people previously excluded from the benefits of Chilean modernisation. In so doing, though, the pervasiveness of market logic deepened. As a consequence, social rights were commodified, inequality was reproduced, and new forms of social exclusions and normalised violence arose. In 2011, social movements engaged in a systemic critique of the Chilean socio-economic order, mobilising against the injustices and suffering it produces. Before analysing how two social movements critiqued Chilean society, I will first present a brief overview of the historical background against which a critique of Chilean society has been occurring since 2006.

Dependant capitalism: crisis and neoliberal adjustments

Like other Latin American countries, Chile's integration into the global dynamics of capitalism has been determined since its birth by its peripheral position in the world market. By the end of the eighteenth century, the colonies' aspirations to negotiate directly with Great Britain without the intervention of Spain led to the rupture of the 'colonial pact' and consequently to the political independence of Latin American countries. During the nineteenth century, the development of agriculture and the export of minerals oriented toward

the British market were the economic basis for the formation of an incipient national bourgeoisie and labour force in the new nation states. As stated in *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Cardoso and Faletto 1979), an emblematic contribution to 'dependency theory' written in Chile during the 1960s, the dependent character of Latin American economies greatly affected the model of development and the physiognomy of the young independent republics. In Chile, the 1920s economic crisis prompted the beginnings of a diversified industry, reshaping the export of agriculture products and minerals (especially nitrate), upon which the Chilean economy was built. The emergence of an embryonic proletariat proved crucial for the future development of the Chilean state, as the struggles for incorporating the 'new masses', to a large extent, shaped the subsequent political polity. As Taylor has pointed out: 'In place of the old compromise between landed elites and the new bourgeoisie a pressing requirement to incorporate the emerging social classes into the political system emerged diffusing class conflict while maintaining the condition for capitalist accumulation' (Taylor 2006, p.14) .

National-developmentalism was the form that the state took in order to deal with the ongoing transformation of Chilean society. Politically, national-developmentalism sought, on the one hand, to incorporate labour legislations demanded by working-class organisations, and, on the other, to recreate the old compromise between the national bourgeoisie and oligarchies with the central powers of global capitalism. Economically, national-developmentalism was based upon an import substitution industrialisation model, which aimed at the promotion of national industry through the creation of governmental institutions such as the CORFO (Chilean Economic Development Agency). This form of state capitalism led to increasing conflict between divergent class interests over the services and products provided by the state, i.e. education, housing, healthcare. By the beginning of the 1960s, the Chilean economy's dependency on capitalist accumulation's central powers, alongside the fluctuation of the international market, created a political scenario whereby organised groups – such as the state and military bureaucracies, urban popular sectors, and middle classes – could no longer maintain the national 'compromise'. The Popular Unity government – a coalition including left-wing organisations such as the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Left Movement, the Socialist Party – led by the socialist Salvador Allende sought to widen the limits of the state by allowing and actively fomenting the participation of workers,

peasants, and the urban poor in the struggle over the model of development and the state. The Allende government challenged property rights, nationalised key industries, expanded social programmes significantly, and oversaw a significant improvement in the living conditions of the working class. The implementation of these measures led to inflation and a government spending deficit. The Chilean bourgeoisie fiercely opposed the programme of the Popular Unity government, as they saw it as diametrically opposed to their interests. Consequently, with the backing of the US government, the Chilean bourgeoisie intensified the economic crisis by boycotting production and cutting off investments. In September 1973, a group of anti-Allende military carried out a *coup d'état* aiming at 'restoring order', bombing the palace of the government, and starting a period of state terrorism unprecedented in Chile's history (Salazar 2012).

The neoliberal turn in the midst of terror

The 1973 *coup d'état* dramatically changed the republican character of the Chilean state and had a huge impact on the lives of Chileans. The incapacity of the Popular Unity government to truly modify social relations by deepening Allende's reforms and especially by allowing for more direct participation of workers, peasants, and Chilean people into the management of the economy and the state, resulted in an uncontrollable crisis and the subsequent bourgeoisie reaction. This also spelt the end of the national developmentalist project. While dependency proved to be productive during the transition between the rupture of the colonial pact and the national developmentalist strategy, by the end of 1960s it had revealed itself to be inherently limited. As Cardoso and Faletto put it: 'in the face of these unresolved conflicts, the economic transformations in the new scheme of power, continue to be developmentalist, without necessarily excluding control of the economy by foreign monopolies' (1979, p.169). As others have noted (Vergara et al. 1999; Taylor 2006; Silva 2009), at the core of the Popular Unity government lay the contradiction of a socialist political agenda based around an interventionist state, which depended on the global process of capital accumulation for the implementation of those socialist reforms.

The Chilean elites saw that the conditions for capitalist accumulation were threatened by the Allende government and acted in order to restore them. The Military Junta and afterwards Pinochet sought to re-establish the social order and purged Chile of its state of

permanent conflict and crisis. In order to accomplish its objectives, the authoritarian regime carried out a brutal policy of repression, the prohibition of political parties, the torturing, killing, and disappearing of Popular Unity supporters, working-class people, and the urban poor. Pinochet invoked the internal security doctrine and the war against international Marxism-Leninism as justification of his policy of terror. However, as pointed out by several scholars, Pinochet did not have a clear idea of how to replace the old model of development. The bourgeoisie and the military were divided between those who wanted to maintain a protectionist model and those who advocated a more radical liberalisation and state austerity. In the end, the second group prevailed. A group of Chilean economists trained at the University of Chicago – the 'Chicago Boys' – took the lead in the implementation of a number of reforms, in the absence of repressed political opposition or democratic control, transforming Chile into the first 'laboratory' of a neoliberal state.

Economically, neoliberal reforms would stabilise the Chilean economy, providing better conditions for capital accumulation through market liberalisation, the promotion of exports, and the privatisation of previously nationalised industries and new industries linked to social services and programmes (Atria 2010). Politically, neoliberalism could accomplish the task of de-politicising society by promoting the primacy of the market as the prevalent mechanism for social actions' coordination and by turning the state into an actively technocratic apparatus oriented mainly towards the correct functioning of the market. Ideologically, neoliberalism was able to 'pacify' Chilean society by promoting ideas, values, and beliefs such as individualism and competitiveness over collective organisation and class solidarity. Among the most important structural neoliberal reforms carried out during the dictatorship we find: 1) an increasing and aggressive privatisation agenda, which not only privatised previously state-owned companies, but also state companies created before the Allende government; 2) the transfer of social services – such as electricity and communications – from public to private entities; 3) the privatisation of public services – such as higher education, social security, and the health system; and 4) the creation of the Plan Laboral (labour market plan), which aimed at liberalising the labour market through measures such as 'the elimination of hiring norms, the regulation of labour conflicts, the creation of new norms for the designation of worker representatives in trade unions on the basis of seniority, new legal procedures for the termination of labour contracts, special courts

for the resolution of labour conflicts, new procedures to terminate contracts by the unilateral will of one party, and the limitation of indemnities' (Atria 2010, p.14). All these measures were part of what Milton Friedman dubbed 'the Chilean miracle'. According to Friedman, who visited Chile in 1975, the neoliberal reforms would bring liberty to Chilean people, regardless of the fact that a prerequisite for their application was a severe restriction of civil and political liberties. Today, it is a well-established fact that the so-called 'Chilean miracle', whose most salient aspect was an unprecedented rate of economic growth, was based upon a limited period of economic outward expansion, with no consideration of the subsequent period of economic crisis and its social effects. Hence, rather than a miracle, the application of neoliberal reforms in Chile should be seen in terms of an experiment in which the state had absolute power to control and modify the course of the economy and politics without any significant opposition.

The legacies of Pinochet and the post-Pinochet era

In 1988, after years of social mobilisation and resistance by women, students, and urban dwellers, Chileans went on to vote in a Plebiscite to replace Pinochet with a democratic political regime. Pinochet lost the Plebiscite (the Yes side for continuity received 44% of the vote), and, accordingly, in 1989 free elections were called. The leader of the democratic opposition, Patricio Aylwin, won the first democratic elections in 17 years and took office in 1990, beginning a 20-year period of centre-left governments. The main objective of the Concertación was to lead a process of democratisation in the country. However, despite a relatively successful transition from an authoritarian to a democratic political regime, the Concertación continued deepening the neoliberal reforms, legitimising them with a liberal democratic framework – neoliberalism with 'human face'.

It its worth noting that despite losing the Plebiscite, Pinochet remained the Commander-in-Chief of the army until 1998. Furthermore, months after leaving the presidency and with the democratic coalition taking office, Pinochet approved a number of laws in key social areas such as education and social security in order to secure the durability of the reforms applied during the dictatorship. Pinochet's main legacies within Chilean society under a democratic political regime can be summarised as follows: politically, authoritarian enclaves, especially the 1980 constitution; economically, a subsidy-based state,

which provides social services such as housing, education, and healthcare at low cost to the state, as the state focuses its spending only on the poorest population and the rest is covered by private institutions, a privatised system of social security based on privately managed individual accounts, and a labour system in which workers have little power of negotiation. The Concertación modified political aspects of the authoritarian regime, tackling some of the authoritarian enclaves. Once in office, for example, political liberties were re-established, and some aspects of the 1980 constitution were reviewed (Garretón 2004). At the same time, while the first democratic government emphasised the need to modernise the state, during the governments of Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet, the Concertación advanced an agenda based on the motto 'Growth with Equity', which included the creation of a social protection system and the encouragement of citizen participation. Notwithstanding the pursuit of democratisation and the intention to provide a sound social basis for Chilean modernisation, rather than substantially changing the socio-economic model applied by Pinochet and the Chicago Boys, the Concertación provided an ideological and political institutional framework for the flourishing of new markets and the reproduction of capital at the expense of the majority of Chileans' living conditions.

Indeed, one of the most important legacies of Pinochet's dictatorship was the acute concentration of wealth and productive property, along with the accompanying high rates of income inequality in Chile (Solimano 2014). As the Concertación did not substantially modify any of the fundamental economic pillars of the authoritarian regime, continuing policies of flexibilisation of the labour market, hence diminishing the power of workers to negotiate collectively with companies and the state, inequality persisted. Currently, Chile is one of the most unequal countries not just in Latin America, but in the world. While overall GDP increased during the Concertación government, inequality continued. By 2009, the poorest 20% of the population captured only 3.9% of overall income. Conversely, the wealthiest 10% of the population captured 40%. Many Chileans can access technology, social and public services, but most of them are in debt and are extremely vulnerable to economic crisis, accidents or natural disasters. People of the so-called 'middle class' in Chile are at constant risk of falling to poverty. On the other hand, the Chilean economy is still hugely dependent on the exports of natural resources (mainly copper), the productive matrix is rudimentary,

and the Chilean bourgeoisie is often involved in cases of collusion and corruption (Gammage et al. 2014).

The Concertación governments ended in 2010 with the victory of Sebastián Piñera, a right-wing billionaire and member of the Coalición por el cambio (Coalition for change). Arguably, Piñera did not challenge any of the structural features of the Chilean model. However, he did reduce social spending and changed the liberal democratic rhetoric of economic worth with equity and participation for a new one equating economic worth with competitiveness, individual entrepreneurship, and domestic security. The Chilean laboratory became thus a neoliberal paradise, as Piñera spoke explicitly of creating favourable conditions for foreign investment, the flexibilisation of labour, economic deregulation, and a privatisation agenda that would modernise the provision of public services.

Social movements contesting neoliberalism

In 2006, during the first government of Michelle Bachelet, Chilean society was shaken by a significant secondary student uprising. The mobilisation, which lasted for four months, included strikes, marches, and occupations. Students' demands included short-term and 'structural' demands. Among the former, students demanded improvements in the national university admission test, and food and student scholarships. The structural demands included the de-municipalisation of schools and a radical restructuring of the LOCE (Organic Constitutional Law of Education). Although the Bachelet government successfully demobilised the student movement by creating a governmental Commission which addressed only the short-term demands, the 2006 student protests were symptomatic of the wave of protests to come. For the first time since the return of civil government, the short-term demands were connected to structural demands aiming at radically changing the school system in Chile. Whilst the diagnosis of the sociology of transition emphasised the low degree of social mobilisation in democratic Chile, the inability of different groups to express the discontent produced by the processes of modernisation, and the apathy of a citizenship 'consumed by consumerism', secondary students showed that the neoliberal violence normalised during democratic governments could be disrupted. If the 1990s were a time of forgetting, social apathy and de-politicisation (Moulian 1997), the end of the 2000s saw the

reorganisation of ‘old’ key social actors after 40 years of the imposition of neoliberal reforms. Four years after the secondary students’ protests, in 2011, a number of social movements developed across Chile, denouncing injustices, exclusion, and inequality, and demanding spaces for greater autonomy and power. The initial ‘awakening’ of social movements in Chile during 2011 has been followed by a critical evaluation of the limits and the possibilities of social critique in Chile. Even though some of the 2011 social movements were able to influence the political agenda, the wave of protests did not lead to a major transformation of the Chilean social structure and social relations. A new period of ‘tranquillity’ has followed the initial period of ‘effervescence’. However, as I will show in the next two sections, the elaboration of the crisis of the neoliberal model and the systemic critique of neoliberalism has the potential to foster new forms of resistance and solidarities within and among social movements. These moments could become important resources for social movements when it comes to discussing matters of strategy and tactics.

Chapter 7. Mapping the neoliberal city: *pobladores* resisting fragmentation in Chile

Who are *pobladores*?

On the distinction between pobladores and the pobladores movement

During the past 20 years, alongside the consolidation of urban neoliberal policies in Latin American cities, there has been a significant rise in academic interest in urban social movements and mobilisations for housing (Holston 2008; Murphy 2015). In Chile, this renewed interest in settlers' struggles for housing and the 'right to the city' mimics, to some extent, the rearticulation of *pobladores* as a relevant social actor in the first decade of the 2000s. '*Pobladores* are back' (MPL 2011), as one of their main organisations states. But how should this return be understood if we want to make sense of a demand – the right to the city – which, as Harvey (2008) observes, has become an empty signifier? The 'return' of *pobladores* has a very specific meaning in the Chilean context: the recovery of the 'spirit' of the old urban poor movement of the 1970s – *the pobladores movement* – and the invention of new organisational and political forms on a social terrain characterised by social fragmentation and new forms of exclusion. This chapter will examine the *pobladores* and their practices of social critique as a way to explore how they perform what Boltanksi (2011) calls an imaginary exit from the 'viscosity of the real' of institutions and domination.

If we look at the history of the intellectual production of the subject, *pobladores* have usually been approached via binary oppositions such as integrated/marginalised, social/political, utilitarian/revolutionary, among others (Castells 1983; Touraine 1987; Garcés 2002). During the 1950s, *pobladores* were seen mainly through the lens of marginality theories, emphasising their position outside the currents of modernisation. The theorisation of the 'lumpen' resulted in a twofold political attitude: integration through social control – a position held mainly by the state, the church, and the Christian democratic party – or a negative evaluation of their political potential for a transformative agenda, due to their marginal place within the structure of production. This paternalistic view of *pobladores* was

challenged during the 1960s by the CIDU (*Team of poblacional studies*), a group of researchers based in Chile who saw *pobladores* as playing a leading role in the processes of radical transformation going on the country at that time. By the 1970s, as Cortes (2013) has noted, there were three competing theoretical-political interpretations of *pobladores* and its actions: 'To the right wing, the *campamentos* were a lumpen safe house; to the communist left, they were the primary way the masses could push to obtain housing; and to the revolutionary left, they were the first step toward taking power ("take this land, then take power"' (Cortés Morales 2013, p.175)

Although this view of *pobladores* correctly emphasised their political potential, it is also true that some social movement scholars (Castells 1983) tended to romanticise the movement in a context of political and social effervescence. They created the sociological image of *pobladores* as unified actors with revolutionary potential, downplaying the diversity and complexity of *pobladores*' conditions of life in *poblaciones*. Romanticisation was then followed by disillusion. Many of the scholars who had previously described *pobladores* as a leading force in the revolutionary picture of the 1970s reconsidered their significance in light of the scant power of mobilisation that *pobladores* showed during the first years of the military dictatorship. In 1987, Touraine wrote: 'contrary to what was thought to be the case in the 1960s, there were no urban movements of hyperradicalized *pobladores*; this reserve army of revolution did not in fact mobilize in Brazil in 1964, in Argentina in 1966 or 1976, or in Uruguay or Chile' (1987, p.215).

The varied use of the very term '*pobladores*' sheds some light on the polysemic character of the reality out of which they arise. First, *pobladores* is a socio-economic and spatial category that refers to the urban poor living in *poblaciones*; second, *pobladores* is a cultural-identity category referring to a community of people with shared values and solidarities in a context of social exclusion; and finally, the term '*pobladores*' can also be used as a mark of political subjectification. In fact, any accurate picture of the 'reality' of the urban poor living in *poblaciones* today should include a combination of these three meanings, as well as a consideration of delinquents, drug traffickers, and gangs, who also live in *poblaciones*. The 'poblacional world' (Massolo 1988) thus should be analytically separated from those attempts to counter-balance poor living conditions from within: hence the distinction between urban poor living in *poblaciones* – *pobladores* – and the *pobladores*

movement. In the literature on *pobladores*, this 'classic' distinction has usually been depicted as a gap between 'the social' and 'the political', with the social constituting the space of fragmentation – again, mainly due to the marginal location of *pobladores* in the social structure – with the political seen as the terrain of articulation and integration of the urban poor to the social system. As we will see, this analytical distinction presents a practical problem to the *pobladores* movement itself, whose members have to accomplish the twofold task of surviving in *poblaciones* and engaging in practices that allow them to overcome the housing crisis and mobilise themselves and their neighbours.

Edward Murphy's (2015) study on *pobladores*' urban struggles in Chile shows the 'success' of neoliberal policies introduced during the 1970s – which were based on the individualisation and privatisation of homeownership demands – to demobilise the urban poor, and the effect that these policies have on their struggles for the 'right to the city' today. According to Murphy, the main contradiction of *pobladores*' struggles is that, in demanding homeownership, they reinforce the principle of private property, making the collective character of the demand difficult to articulate. This process of demobilisation, underpinned by the *Concertación*[3] during the 1990s, also had subjective effects on *pobladores* who, due to these policies, became homeowners. On the one hand, some *pobladores* have a nostalgic view of a communitarian past of work and land-takeovers, and their lives in camps; on the other, many *pobladores* have internalised meritocratic and individualistic values and discourses. Moreover, unlike in the 1980s when most urban poor living in *poblaciones* identified themselves as *pobladores*, today the signifier *pobladores* has lost its social traction, giving way to other signifiers such as 'middle class' or 'lower middle class'. Yet, the social conditions in which *pobladores* live, even when they have become homeowners through subsidies, are not different from other peripheries in Latin America, which means that they have to deal with drug trafficking, violence, and disintegration on a daily basis (Salcedo 2010). This is the reason why, during the 1990s and early 2000s, *pobladores* did not figure as prominent actors in social struggles.

However, things have started to change. For sure, most of the urban poor do not fight or publicly demand the improvement of housing conditions and, among those who do so,

[3] The Concertación is the coalition of centre-left political parties that came to power after Pinochet's dictatorship.

many enact a meritocratic and individualistic logic. Moreover, the clientelist logic through which the Christian democratic party tried to integrate *pobladores* to the social order during the 1960s is ongoing. However, there are also working-class families and individuals who, in identifying themselves as '*pobladores*', have become an important critical force resisting and questioning neoliberalism. In 2006, *pobladores* opposing exclusionary housing policies in the district of Peñalolén created the *pobladores movement in struggle* and, in 2010, more than thirty housing committees (between 4,000 and 5,000 families) created the *National Federation of Pobladores* (FENAPO). Resorting to a wide repertory of actions – including protests, pickets, camp sites, and street performances – these organisations have been trying to recover the memory of the *pobladores* movement of the 1970s, this time by fighting back against the housing crisis – the solution to which, according to them, can only be reached if the entire subsidised system is radically transformed. But the fact that contemporary *pobladores* situate themselves within the broader context of the history of the *pobladores*' movement does not mean that the ways in which they mobilise and become *pobladores* have remained the same. On the new character of these *pobladores*, it is worth quoting *Becoming Political Subjects in the City's Peripheries: Pobladores and Housing Struggles in Santiago* (2016), a recent ethnographic study by Miguel Pérez on *pobladores* in Santiago:

> Current poor families longing for homeownership no longer work themselves in the building of their neighborhoods nor the social movement they have engendered back a socialist government like that of Salvador Allende. They neither autoconstruct highly politicized *campamentos* nor openly challenge the right to property by massively occupying empty plots in the richest neighborhoods. 'House or death' is no longer their battle flag and politicians do not recognize them as the most active element of the working classes anymore. They, rather, enrol in state-regulated *comités de allegados*, participate in housing programs, apply for housing subsidies, and generate ethical discourses through which they legitimize themselves as worthy of rights, dignity, and social recognition. They look forward to becoming homeowners (…) Even so, poor residents in need of housing are still able to recreate their political agencies as pobladores and, furthermore, carry out political performances that turn out to be profoundly transformative.
>
> (Pérez 2016)

Bearing in mind the distinction between the socially and ideologically plural space of the '*poblacional* world' – poor residents in need of housing – and the '*pobladores* movement', my approach draws on the vision that recognises *pobladores*' transformative

capacity. In particular, I try to avoid the two extremes that, to some extent, echo the main positions of intellectuals during the 1970s and 1980s: on the one hand, the somewhat orthodox Marxist vision that states that the *pobladores* movement is not transformative enough, and that, precisely because of their position in the social structure, they must be considered as potentially reactionary and obstructive to radical change; and, on the other, the view of *pobladores* as bearers of an unavoidable revolutionary force anchored in the very changes of contemporary capitalism that has made the city a privileged terrain of capitalist speculation and therefore of political dispute. A possible way out of this dichotomy, which either over- or underestimates *pobladores'* political capabilities, is to consider *pobladores* in the wider context of the contemporary forms of resistance to the dynamics of neoliberal capitalism. The *pobladores* movement is one among many other critical forces currently resisting neoliberal fragmentation, and their critical discourse and transformative practices must not be viewed in isolation from other anti-neoliberal struggles. In fact, this is the way in which *pobladores* see themselves today, that is, not as a privileged or solitary actor, but as a critical force resisting with other actors the fragmentation drive of neoliberalism. The singularity of *pobladores* thus relies not on their imputed revolutionary capacity or incapacity, but rather on the significance of their own history, the new social conditions from which the movement arises, and the new difficulties and contradictions that they have to face.

In one of the most influential works on Chilean *pobladores* during the 1980s, F. Dubet, V. Espinoza and E. Valenzuela (2016) identify four types of *pobladores*: the petitionists, the populists, the communitarians, and the revolutionaries. Although these types are combined in *pobladores* discourses, each type relies predominantly on a particular logic of action: trade unionist petitionism, populist participation, communitarian defence, and revolutionary rupture. By the end of the 1980s, Dubet et al. concluded that these logics were not articulated, and that, consequently, *pobladores* did not form a coherent, unitary, social movement. Specifically, they found that the strong *social* language used by the 'petitionists' and the 'communitarians' was disconnected from the equally strong *political* one evoked by 'populists' and 'revolutionaries'. As we will see, one of the characteristics of the current *pobladores* movement is precisely the attempt to connect the social communitarian logic and the political revolutionary one. As I have already emphasised, this does not mean that most urban poor in Chile participate or mobilise according to one of these logics. The *pobladores*

movement is not a mass movement. However, the 'novelty' of the contemporary movement of *pobladores* lies precisely in the attempt to successfully combine a defensive communitarian attitude with a revolutionary or anti-capitalist discourse in the context of exclusion, clientelism, and frustrated meritocratic dreams. Unlike the 1980s and closer to the movement of the 1970s, 'communitarians' and 'revolutionaries' do not see the combination of these logics as an obstacle, but rather as the very condition of possibility for the existence of the movement. The consolidation of neoliberal housing policies, the development of civil rights after 30 years of civic-democratic governments, and the existence of other social movements resisting neoliberalism in Chile and around the world constitute a new scenario where the articulation of 'the social' and 'the political' has become thinkable for *pobladores* themselves.

Among the studies highlighting the political potential of the *pobladores* movement, the tendency has been either to focus on the micro-practices and performative power that *pobladores* enact in their everyday lives as 'producers of habitat', or to highlight the role that moral discourses on dignity, sacrifice, and effort play in *pobladores'* constitution as political subjects. I would like to complement these analyses by showing how each one of the dimensions sketched out by the different styles of critique play a role in the construction of *pobladores* as a critical force of contemporary neoliberalism. *Pobladores'* practices of social critique involve a performative or pragmatic version of the Jamesonian aesthetic of cognitive mapping. Considering the *pobladores* movement as a 'critique in movement' allows us to go beyond the extended Laclausian analysis – whose unit of analysis is the *demands* of social movements – (Laclau 2005) and focus instead on the process of critique underpinning their demands. This approach is productive insofar as it allows us to see the ways in which the *pobladores* movement relies on different logics of action and resorts to different semantic tools when engaging in practices of social critique.

From *poblaciones callampas*[4] to *allegados*[5]: A brief history of the pobladores movement

The emergence of the *pobladores movement* can be traced back to the 'social question' in the first decades of the twentieth century in Chile (Salman 1994; Garcés 2002). As in other Latin American countries, which followed the modernisation patterns of Western countries after colonisation, the process of urbanisation led to new forms of poverty, with one of the most important manifestations being the housing crisis. At that time, although not dramatically different from today, the Chilean economy depended almost exclusively on exports, making it difficult to absorb the population moving from the countryside to the city. *Conventillos* and other precarious city-slum tenements became the common housing for the urban poor who, due to precarious living conditions, started to demand state legislation on 'housing conditions'. Indeed, between 1900 and 1930, the urban poor, in connection with socialists, communists, and anarchists, created organisations that triggered important housing laws. Among these laws, the *Ley de habitaciones baratas* ('Law of affordable housing') was especially important, as it stipulated for the first time the creation of cooperatives, which enabled the construction of buildings specifically for workers (called '*poblaciones*'). But by the end of the 1930s, housing speculation was already part of the modernisation process in Santiago. Consequently, the housing crisis expanded and took another form: the displacement of *poblaciones* out of the centre of Santiago, and subsequently the creation of 'mushroom towns' (*poblaciones callampas*) in the outskirts.

By 1965, more than half a million people lived in Santiago. At that time, the first illegal occupations of state-plots (or land seizures) had already occurred, and the *pobladores* movement was already an important social actor. The government of Eduardo Frei Montalva carried out a reformist agenda, which included the Agrarian reform, a programme of social promotion and, crucially, the *Operación sitio*. *Operación sitio* was a housing programme that aimed to build more than 300,000 urbanised homes for *pobladores* and people living either in *campamentos* or shantytowns. However, the delays in construction and Frei's reluctance to change the foundation of the model of development – based on exports in alliance with

[4] The expression '*poblaciones callampas*' can be translated as 'mushroom town' and refers to the speed in which squatters' informal settlements sprung up between the 1960s and the 1980s, literally overnight (Pérez 2017).
[5] Families who cannot afford housing on their own and who go to live with their closest relatives in the same house in overcrowded conditions (Murphy 2015).

national and international capitals – resulted in the worsening of living conditions for *pobladores* and the intensification of illegal occupations of empty plots. The radicalisation of *pobladores'* actions was not only quantitative though; the *pobladores* movement played an active role in Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular government that took power after Frei's, changing the very nature of the ideology underpinning the movement. As Pérez has argued: 'Unlike what occurred in the previous years, land seizures were no longer performed as a means to make the demands of poor families who did not own their home visible but, rather, as a way to both challenge the right to property and generate innovative experiences of popular power' (2017, p.30). The increase in the number of land seizures during Allende's period – from 35 in 1969 to 570 in 1971 (Garcés 2002) – speaks not only of his programmatic and ideological alignment with the cause of working-class people in need of homes, but also of the intellectual and technical capacity of a movement that, through land seizures and the autonomous production of space in *campamentos* (which included a variety of experiences of self-government and self-management), for the first time viewed itself reflexively as an agent in the construction of the city.

This is one of the reasons why during the *coup d'état* and Pinochet's dictatorship, *pobladores* suffered massively from political repression, which finally resulted in relative demobilisation. Yet, as some authors have pointed out (Valdés 1987; Oxhorn 1994; Salman 1994), the communitarian base established during the Unidad Popular years served the purpose of resisting the evictions and repressive measurements of Pinochet's dictatorship, and allowed for the reshaping of the *pobladores*' struggle after a period of apparent withdrawal. Indeed, during the mid-1980s *pobladores* became one of the most active actors in the struggles for democratisation (Valdés 1987; Garretón 1988). Along with political parties and organisations from the left and centre-left, *pobladores*' grassroots organisations – which increased in number during the 1980s, especially as a survival strategy – fought Pinochet's dictatorship fiercely, opposing neoliberal policies that threatened their living conditions and changed the very nature of urban poverty and, more broadly, of the city. Pinochet's dictatorship applied a subsidy-based housing policy, framing housing as a commodity to which those poor families with demonstrated capacity for responsibly saving money could access with the help of the state. Moreover, Pinochet's government launched a programme of massive evictions of *campamentos*, forcing those people living in high-rent

terrains to move to the 'new' outskirts of the city, expanding and consolidating urban segregation. In the context of systematic repression and neoliberal polices, the number of illegal occupations decreased and the number of families forced to live in overcrowded conditions in relatives' houses – *allegados* – dramatically increased, setting up the predominant form that the housing crisis has taken from the 1980s to the present day.

With the arrival of a democratic regime in 1990 led by the *Concertación* – a coalition of centre-left political parties – the *pobladores* movement entered a new stage. Political democracy served the purpose of legitimising and deepening neoliberalism through the assurance of basic civil rights and the re-establishment of forbidden political parties. Meanwhile, Pinochet continued to hold a position of power in the army and, apart from some minor modifications, his Constitution continues to rule the country. However, the 'price' of Chilean transition and the consequent 'economic miracle' – poverty was drastically reduced during the *Concertación* governments – was the demobilisation of key social actors. The possibility of regaining a strong and vibrant public sphere and the reactivation of social actors were sacrificed in the name of political stability. In this context, popular sectors were understood and treated mainly as objects of policy programmes and not as political subjects, individualising the 'problems' to be solved by the state and atomising the people participating collectively in formal or informal organisations and in larger social movements. In terms of housing policies, fearing the revolts and land seizures of *pobladores*, the *Concertación* carried out an extensive housing programme, which provided 'housing solutions' – subsidised state-built homes – to more than 200,000 *allegados* over a ten-year period. The mechanism implemented by the state was the creation of state-regulated housing assemblies, in which people apply individually or as a family for subsidies to become homeowners, introducing the principle of competence and individual responsibility as the main foundation of the policy. It is within this context that, since the 2000s, the *pobladores* have actively participated in state-regulated housing assemblies for the right to stay put in their *comuna*[6] of origin and live with dignity.

[6] The smallest administrative subdivision in Chile.

The *pobladores* movement in this thesis: on the difference between grassroots activists ('militants') and supporters and sympathisers

Except for one organisation – UKAMAU[7] – all *pobladores* on which this research is based – pobladores movement in struggle (MPL), housing movement for dignity, and Don Bosco housing committee – are affiliated to the National Federation of Pobladores (FENAPO). There are many other *pobladores* organisations, but these are publicly recognised as the most significant ones, either because they are the oldest, the biggest, or the most successful in resisting housing policies over the past 15 years.

The data for this research consist of interviews with grassroots activists (or 'militants') and public documents and interventions of the *pobladores* organisations in three different contexts: a) commemorative acts; b) reaction to changes in or applications of governments' housing policies; and c) public activities with supporters, sympathisers or neighbours in general. The distinction between interviews and public documents is not significant in terms of content, but is in terms of the performative effect that the public documents (mainly statements) were intended to have by the organisations that produced them. I consider these documents as part of a practice of social critique and as bearers of a critical public discourse. With regard to the interviews, despite the activists' discourse not dramatically diverging from the public discourse expressed in the documents (especially since interviewees speak under the name of the organisation they represent), they provide deeper insights into some aspects of discourse on which they comment reflexively. Furthermore, face-to-face interactions with interviewees helped me to better understand the meanings they attach to their practices and public interventions.

Finally, a few words should be said on the relationship between the discourses articulated by grassroots activists and those articulated publicly by the organisations and supporters and sympathisers. As we have seen, the '*poblacional* world' is plural and heterogeneous. *Poblaciones* are often affected by street violence, robberies, and drug trafficking. Activists participating in either one of the housing committees affiliated to FENAPO or in any other *pobladores* organisations are, just as their supporters and neighbours, part of *poblaciones*. They have lived in these *poblaciones* for many generations;

[7] UKAMAU stands for the expression "This is what we are" in Aymara language.

in this sense, they are not 'external agents' like members of political parties or the Church in the 1980s. But while there is no significant 'social distance' between grassroots activists and ordinary members, they do differ in three crucial aspects: 1) the regularity and intensity of their participation in meetings; 2) the clarity and density of the ideological elements underpinning *pobladores'* demands; and 3) formal or informal educational resources. On this matter we can endorse the view that Dubet et al. held in the 1980s, namely, that '[i]t is clear that (ordinary members) grassroots are less engaged than activists, as they are subjected to the daily worries of surviving. But it is in those worries and in their normative orientations that grassroots activists (militants) find the materials that they clarify, make more robust and consistent… [A]ctivists are not a strange body in *poblaciones*' (Dubet et al. 2016).

The critical diagnosis of *pobladores'* political capacity in the 1980s emphasised that the 'revolutionaries' discourse was without strategy – a 'political' discourse disconnected from any form of politics (even a revolutionary one). In what follows, I will demonstrate that the discourse of contemporary *pobladores* is, on the contrary, a discourse that articulates (although not without tensions) a critical diagnosis of neoliberal housing policies in particular, and of neoliberalism and capitalism in general (part I), with specific political strategies and practices (part II), usually framed around a moral code in which the *poblacion*, the community, and the city become the basis for a utopian anti-neoliberal project (part III). Following the 'collective framework analysis' grid – diagnosis, prognosis, and motivations – I will show how, in becoming political subjects, *pobladores* map Chilean society, resorting to and combining the three logics of action identified in the first part of the thesis: a) a sociological-explanatory logic; b) an aesthetic-political logic; and c) a moral logic.

Pobladores mapping the neoliberal city

Diagnosis: gentrification, segregation, and the Concertaciónist drive for fragmentation

In all the official documents produced by the *pobladores* movement, there is an effort to locate the actual (contemporary) struggle in a wider historical context. History appears as an invaluable tool when it comes to both the diagnosis of the housing crisis and the history of the movement. The reality of the housing system at present is put into an historical perspective, which allows them to identify the main characteristics of the housing system by tracing the differences and similarities with previous developments of housing policies in

Chile. In so doing, they resort to semantic and cognitive tools of generalisation such as statistics, historical data, and other 'sociological' resources. But it is not only the development of the housing system and its crisis that is revealed by reference to history; along with the origin of the system and its crisis, the very origin of *poblaciones* is recounted with reference to history.

> In terms of housing, the reality of the *comuna* was not very different to the rest of the country. In 1952, 30% of Chileans lacked a dignified housing, an average that increased in Santiago to 36.2%, 447,026 precarious homes and 85,745 single-family homes in poor condition (Garcés, 2004: 7). In those days, Peñalolén presented a critical situation, the result of the concentration of people migrating from the country to the city: Peñalolén received more than twenty thousand people who arrived annually to Santiago (Mattelart, 1963). In response to this increase in population, since the fifties a series of 'irregular subdivisions' began to register in the *comuna*. It was the sale of undeveloped lands in that context that gave rise to the first *poblaciones* in the *comuna*: San Luis de Macul, San Judas Tadeo, Nueva Palena, Las Brisas, and others.
>
> Pobladores Movement in Struggle (MPL), Public statement of Presentation

The historicisation of the process through which the neoliberal city was formed led to the identification of the main contradictions of the contemporary housing system. Here the emphasis is on the negative effects of a policy which, though effective in terms of its coverage and in the reduction of poverty, at the same time worsened the quality of life of many *pobladores* in Santiago. Gentrification, segregation, and the ghettoisation of the city are among the main aspects that define the neoliberal city according to *pobladores*.

> Nevertheless, the impacts of neoliberalisation generate invisible impacts on the state and public policy makers: the percentage of marginal neighbourhoods in the country between 1990 and 2005 doubled (CEPAL, 2008); there are four hundred thousand housing debtors of which twenty-six percent are delinquent (SBIF, 2008); the qualitative housing requirements increased by 16 percent in the 2003-2006 period (CASEN, 2006); and spatial segregation patterns, although they decreased at the macro level, increased locally due to suburbanization and the formation of ghettos. Indeed, the evidence shows that the neoliberalisation of urban space is the cause of new miseries in cities.
>
> Pobladores Movement in Struggle (MPL), Notes on *poblacional* thinking N° I

The dispossession from lands by the market due to the valorisation of the areas originally occupied by *pobladores* has forced many families to live as *allegados* far away from their original settlements. The effect of this new form of eviction, in which *pobladores* are expelled to the outskirts of the city, is their exclusion from social services, social networks, friends, and community. Segregation thus becomes an allegory of social fragmentation.

> The characteristics of Santiago's growth have led it to become an increasingly unequal urban space. The lands of Peñalolén, for example, have been highly valorised and consequently they are sought by the estate agencies. This has led to the successive expulsion of the poorest families who have so far lived there. Such is the case of *allegados*. It is no longer an eviction by force, like the eradication in the dictatorship, but an eviction through the market.
>
> Pobladores Movement in Struggle (MPL), Public statement of presentation

> Actually, they have desisted from the attempt to build an including city and this has given way to a direct expulsion of *allegados* from their *comunas* of origin to the outskirts of the city. It is not acceptable that *allegados'* children – children of families that gave rise to these *poblaciones* – today must leave their place of origin because they do not have the necessary money to buy land. They are moved away from their social networks, basic services and work sources, bringing with them new problems (lack of public transports, educational and health infrastructure) in the *comunas* that receive the new inhabitants. In addition, family life is strongly affected (travel costs increase, travel times are lengthened taking time away from rest and family time) and a socially segregated and spatially fragmented city are fostered.

National Federation of Pobladores (FENAPO). Political proposal for Housing and the City

The dispute over the right to the city includes not only the identification of the main causes and consequences of the housing crisis, and the contradictions of the housing policies carried out by the *Concertación*, but also a mapping of the main adversaries in the struggle. First of all, *pobladores* attribute the main responsibility in the creation of a segregated and exclusionary city, in which the poor are produced as subjects following the spatial design of prisons, to the *Concertación* and their militants. As Guillermo says:

> Many of these *poblaciones* were built by the Concertación. You look around and it has the same shape as a prison patio. What type of subject they're creating if they're already reproducing the prison in the *pobla* where these guys live in?

Guillermo-MPL

> They could stop this, but what do they do instead? No, let's keep the business, let's keep enlarging the map of the city, making the agricultural area into urban areas so that the business keeps growing, so that they continue to be enriched. And, unfortunately, those that are linked to that business and the worsening of housing in this country is the Christian Democracy political party, that is, from Perez Zujovic to the present day, first by killing *pobladores*, then by COPEVA's houses, Ravinet, all of them.

Doris-UKAMAU

> In every *comuna* where the MPL has presence, there is a fight against the duopoly of the *Concertación* and the Conservatives. For example, here, in Peñalolén, we had this fight against the Christian-democrat major Orrego. We were able to stop the zoning plan that he wanted to apply, we forced a plebiscite to happen, he had to say yes, and finally we won. That was a historic victory. It's been the only plebiscite on the zoning plan in this country.

Natalia-MPL

Now, when going deeper into the analysis of the causes of the housing crisis, *pobladores* locate the adversary in the broader terrain of the social structure. According to them, there is a small group that owns the political and economic power, and this group is to blame for the vulnerable conditions in which the poor and *pobladores* live.

> There's a small sector of this society, which we define as the owners of power and wealth, who move all the political threads, in the field of decisions that are made in this country and they really have the power. They are responsible for all this suffering that is generated in our society, that is, the rates of stress, alcoholism, drug addiction, those things that are not casual but there's a reason behind them, they're a burden and that's a burden they've put on us (…) They are responsible: the Matte, the Angelini, the Luksic. Well, and a lot of other people, and they are also the ones who now dominate the political space because they are the ones who finance the campaigns, those who have made of politics one of their business.

Doris-UKAMAU

By identifying this 'small' group, *pobladores* sketch a dichotomous view of Chilean society: a society divided along the lines of rich and poor, or between the rich and the popular class. In this context, the 'middle class' appears as a myth, a false figure of social

reconciliation or, at most, a social category whose fragile existence is always threatened by capital's cycles.

> We don't believe that there is a middle class in Chile, we believe that there are poor and rich people, it doesn't matter whether in Peñalolén or in Ñuñoa, or they live as they do. In other words, understanding that a 10% are wealthy in Chile, the other 90% are the poor.
>
> Natalia-MPL

> People of the so-called middle class compare to other people, similar to them, and then define themselves as upper-middle class, or lower-middle class, but in their relation to capital, the so-called middle class has the same relationship that the lower class has with capital. Even when a manager can earn two millions of pesos per month, if there is a crisis and she is fired, she will be in an even more vulnerable condition than the lower class, you know? Because she has no tools. The lower class generates surviving tools, you know. Then those moving up and down processes are generated within the same social class, but in short, it's the same class. We could talk about proletarian or the working class, but there are subjects who are not within the working class, but they are subjects of change.
>
> Atilio-Housing movement for dignity

> I studied here, in the Salesianos, and I was the poorest guy, for commemoration of the national day (the 18th of September) they were all on holidays and then when we get back to school and we were asked 'What did you do for holidays?' And I said 'I went to work with my parents because they work in the *feria persa* [street market]', and that thing made me feel a contradiction in those times. Now I know they're poor people just like me.
>
> Alan-UKAMAU

Although this dichotomous view of class prevails in the *pobladores*' map, there is also the recognition of class as not only including socio-economic aspects – i.e. groups defined by their relationship to either capital, the productive structure or their participation in struggle against neoliberalism – but also having an important moral dimension. In the moral register, *pobladores* invoke the humanity of social relations between class members as a criterion for assessing their membership to the popular class or the proletariat.

> We understand that there are middle sectors of society that, although they are not defined by the Marxist perspective, they will tend to be on the bourgeoisie

> side. These guys are part of the class, according to the Marxist definition, but those guys live as bourgeois anyway. These guys may not live under the exploitation of the other, but they exploit in some way the popular sectors. Those guys have a nanny, a nanny! In their house, you know? And where does the nanny live? Here, in the *poblacion*. In that sense, the topic of the class has also to do with the respect for the other, on how you are able to see a person, not as an object, but as a subject. These guys, who are all professionals, they have gardeners, and they can be despotic. They behave like a bourgeois although they are working class according to the Marxist definition. Now, you can also find despotic people it in the *pobla*, that's also true.
>
> Guillermo-MPL

Guillermo's moral definition of class cuts across both the 'populist' definition of the rich and the poor, the 90% and the 10%, and the Marxist definition. To be a *poblador* for Guillermo is related to a particular experience of suffering and a moral code that includes the 'human' treatment of other people. As we will see in part III, *pobladores*' morality is key in their construction as a political subject, as it works as a repository of strength and a source of solidarity. But what is interesting in Guillermo's discourse is that he does not have a 'purist' vision of *pobladores*, as if all *pobladores* simply by virtue of living in *poblaciones* were better people than the 'despotic' middle-class professionals. This moral anchor is omnipresent in *pobladores*' critical practices and constitutes one of their most salient features. It is interesting that, despite the relativisation that a moral register introduces into the *pobladores*' discourse on the dichotomous character of the Chilean social structure, when it comes to defining the ultimate and 'true' adversary or enemy, *pobladores* tend to agree that it is capital and capitalism that finally determine, at a more abstract level, the physiognomy of both the social structure and the struggle. This is clear when they compare the state and governments with capitalism.

> We do not see the state as the enemy because we understand that the state is a tool of those seven families. It is not what maintains capitalism, but these seven families use the state and its factual powers. In that sense we agree with the thesis that when the dominant classes are so sure of having control they delegate the control of society in subaltern classes, you know. Although they [politicians] are not part of the seven families, they do respond to those seven families, and they manage the state in the interests of those seven families, and that... well, it's very easy to explain all these corruption scandals: they pay to a subaltern class to manage the state.

Ignacio-MPL

The recognition of capitalism as the main source of the housing crisis leads *pobladores* to extend their critique of the housing crisis to other forms of social inequality and also to other geographical regions. To hold a vision of capitalism as the main adversary in the struggle for the right to the city and a dignified life allows *pobladores* to include in their struggle other issues besides the housing crisis – such as gender inequalities, environmental conflicts, among others – and also to acquire a perspective that transcends national boundaries.

> We are very clear that these are mere puppets. In fact, it is precisely because of that that ours is an anti-capitalist struggle, we understand that the great and ultimate enemy is capital, and that capital has international forms, but also there is a national bourgeoisie. Following that, we also are very aware that it is not something that can be solved by just one country. One country has no future, as MPL we are very clear about that.

Ignacio-MPL

> The capitalist and patriarchal system make us angry, and they are the ones to blame for the current situation in all areas: housing, education, work, and of course patriarchy.

Natalia-MPL

> In the north, for example, the fight is against the mining company. The guys say, if they do not take the mining company out, we are fucked up, they are leaving us without water. And I have to leave here. The fight for housing has to do with fighting against mining, and others say, these are struggles of bourgeois sector, eh... hippies. And, shit, they criticise these mates, you know. But the mates are really lucid and you're gonna understanding the importance of that and that makes sense.

Guillermo-MPL

But was it not this same level of clarity and consistency of an anti-capitalist discourse voiced by the 'old' revolutionaries of the 1980s that made Dubet suspicious of the possibility of turning this revolutionary 'ideology' into political practice? Contrary to the 'revolutionary' *pobladores* of the 1980s, contemporary *pobladores* start from a very particular and concrete diagnosis of the housing crisis in Chile, and then connect the crisis to a more global dimension

of capital and capitalism. This time, the anti-capitalist discourse, anchored in a critique of the housing crisis, is not developed apart from or against a communitarian logic. On the contrary, *pobladores* find in the idea of community a resource with which to flesh out this anti-capitalist discourse, creating a 'popular' politics.

Prognosis: *pobladores* against the state, within the state, without the state

The state and the party

If the crisis of the housing system has its roots in the functioning of capitalism itself, what is to be done? Based upon the diagnosis of the crisis of the housing system, the inequalities and suffering that Chilean society produces through neoliberal policies, and the adversaries of a struggle to radically change those policies and structures, in 2010 *pobladores* went on to form *Igualdad*, *herramienta de los pueblos* (Equality, tool of the peoples), a political party whose main goal is to fight back against neoliberal policies, as well as renew the sense and meaning of politics in Chile.

In the first public statement of *Igualdad* we read:

> We deplore the inhuman and predatory character of capitalism through which the great capitalists – national and foreign – exercise their power over the economy, the government, the media, and in doing so exploit the working class, deny the identity of indigenous people, plunder the mother earth, leaving us only crumbs, and establishing their system of death over life. The political Constitution and the laws of the rich along with their corrupt governments are the framework with which they give legitimacy to this culture of death that is sustained in this order of inequality and injustice.
>
> Igualdad*, public statement N°1*

By creating this 'people's political vehicle', we verify a passage from a diagnostic based on *pobladores*' experiences as *allegados* and a critical diagnosis of the housing crisis and neoliberal policies in Chilean society, to an institutional realm from which this particular struggle can be extended to encompass other sectors and actors affected by capitalism. Through distinctions such as street/institutional politics; resistance/institutional struggle, and armed struggle/institutional struggle, *pobladores* illustrate in their discourse the role that institutional politics has for them.

> In the network of the movement and, on the other hand, we understand that the anti-capitalist struggle must be fought along with the political struggle... and there we made the decision to join the *Igualdad* party to do precisely that political struggle and don't stay just in the resistance, you know, but to take a step forward to the fight.
>
> Atilio-Housing movement for dignity

> We understand that the struggle is done with the strength of the workers, of the women-workers in the street, let's say, but that is not enough, and today there are two historical ways, first, you provoke the thing, or the electoral thing. In Chile today there are not the conditions given for an armed struggle. Who thinks something different, well, doesn't understand the same as us. Then necessarily you have to dispute something at the level of political institutions.
>
> Alan-UKAMAU

However, it would be a mistake to take such distinctions as rigid binaries. Institutional politics is, above all, an instrument of struggle for *pobladores*. The meaning of politics is widened from the classic figure of the party to more informal instances of deliberation, local assemblies, and even to the more seemingly 'private' realm of the household and house management. An instrumental view of politics such as this – in which politics is the expression of *pobladores*' interests and also of a way of living together in *poblaciones* – is the only way in which the reification of politics can be avoided, according to them.

> When one says 'politics', people think only of traditional parties, but when we say 'politics' we say that we get together, we make decisions, we deliberate, etc. But I think that one of the most important steps to demonstrate that an assembly, for example, has great levels of consciousness, is that one recognises oneself as part of a social class, that one recognises oneself as poor. And that also speaks of important levels of politicisation. So, for us the party is only a tool, it is not something that you could alienate from your own power. So we say to our neighbours that politics is not only the party, politics is when you manage your house, when we get together, when we make decisions, and I think that the most difficult thing was to take that idea that politics is rubbish out of neighbours' mind, convince them that when you take it, you can make it your own and you show them that it does work and that it is the only way… that's why we have a saying 'those who fight, win', not because it sounds mainstream, or because it is nice to say it, but because indeed who makes politics with his/her neighbour, it is a neighbour that wins. What do we win? A dignified life.

Natalia-MPL

In analysing the main problems in making room for this 'new' form of politics in their territories (*poblaciones*), *pobladores* reiterate the critique of *Concertación* and other external political forces within *poblaciones* – including groups of the radical left – this time at a lower, more concrete level. The trajectory of *pobladores*' critique takes a dialectical form: from a critique of capitalism, through the identification of its main contradictions in neoliberal policies, to the recognition of the necessity of activating concrete struggles which contest the instrumentalisation of classic centre-left parties' leaders, and their clientelist practices to which *pobladores* are heavily opposed.

> We started to have conflict with the people that came from outside, because their attention was to recruit activists for a small ultra-radical group, and therefore, the proper demand of the *pobladores* was being put aside.
>
> Atilio-Housing movement for dignity

> The *pobladores* movement has always been a niche of construction of lower groups of political servants, with little political influence in their parties. Then you have co-opted leaders based on super miserable logics, they give presents to people, they offer them cakes, cinema tickets, etc. And as they think of the demand for housing only with electoral ends, one city councillor of the *poblacion* can for example suddenly raise five housing committees, so they build the promise of building housing. If their mayor is not elected, the committee is finished. If their mayor is elected, they go to work, and that makes complex the creation of alliances within *pobladores* because there are many contradictory interests and external influences.
>
> Alonso-*Nueva la Habana* housing committee

Derived from their diagnosis of the current state of politics in Chile, and their consequent notion of politics, *pobladores*' discourse locates the state as an object of dispute in the neoliberal struggle – an instrument of domination by the rich, but also a potential source of power for them.

> But also, the job must be done by the state, by the administration of fiscal funds. When we take out a project, we are also saying that it is part of that struggle, from the state, basically, because we fight for the popular axis that we have because there was a budget cut eh... as I said in some way, that affects the plans, that does affect, in the buying of land, in the projects. The refunding

> will be a council discussion, the housing meeting. Because the council is a small state, you know. And the state and the council will always be eh... that affects from the policies that are applied by the central state, you know.
>
> Guillermo-MPL

As we have seen, concrete achievements in the struggle for the right to the city are vital for *pobladores*, and the first terrain on which they attain power is the local government and its policies. The *municipalidad* (city council) is seen as the miniature version of the state, and as such, it is conceived of as a basic goal to attain. To conquer the power of the state allows *pobladores* to do two things: first, to obtain 'small victories', which are of vital importance for the movement and their participants, who see the extent to which their everyday living conditions are and can be improved through engagement in the movement; second, through their influence over the state *pobladores* can create more autonomous communities for themselves:

> Our movement is there because every organisation has its own candidates. That's why we say *'que el pueblo mande'* (let the people rule). And I think one of those basic principles to break away from that delegate democracy, is to occupy that space, to transgress it, to come in with a spear to break the chains and open the doors so all our people can finally enter, to govern not only the territory, but the state as well. And we think that we must start from the state's legs, which are the local governments, to create free and autonomous communities.
>
> Henry-MPL

At the same time, the state is for *pobladores* the institution that must guarantee people's basic social rights and services. As the Chilean state has subscribed to international treaties in economic and social matters as part of their neoliberal agenda, *pobladores* can carry out a 'reality test', showing that the state does not act in accordance with its officially proclaimed principles.

> If there is a neighbour who is poorly and bad, if there is someone who cannot pay the bills of electricity and water, the state has the obligation to pay her, because the state has signed international agreements. And this is the biggest contradiction: Chile wants to be a country without poverty and it has people who cannot afford the water bill. So you have to collect money on your own, have private fundraisers, and all that.

Guillermo-MPL

> The State, independent of its internal conflicts, must be the guarantor of social rights, you know. The social right of housing, for example. My relationship with the state is not that I have an ally in one service or another; I only do this to impose on them my demand and the state has to solve it, within our affirmative role too with the professionals and everything. Now that is what allows FENAPO to stay afloat, certainly to escape, and what allows it to grow a lot in regions, when they stay away from the *caudillistas* logics and they manage to establish the demand, where the dialectic is finally only one: state, citizenship, social movements, *pobladores*. And it is not another thing. The dichotomy is not another. And that is what more or less allows to resolve the shit, and what allows the FENAPO committees to move forward.

Alonso-*Nueva la Habana* housing committee

The dichotomy between private and public (provisions of services and resources) also appears to be linked to one of the key pillars of *pobladores'* emancipatory power: the capacity to create autonomy through the experiences of self-education and self-management. We will address this issue in more detail in the next section. For now, suffice it to say that from the point of view of the material survival and capacity of reproduction of *pobladores*' organisations, the resources of the state are vital.

> We have the experience, for example, of the *Frente Popular's (Popular Front)* Darío Santillan in Argentina, who massively called for an appropriation of the state's resources through cooperatives. When we were in Argentina they told us 'you have to use the resources of the state, they are ours, of our people', so we went thinking 'yes, that's doable, we can do that and keep our self-management experiences in the territories'. We are not a state apparatus; our autonomy is maintained of course. But we have to realise that although we can have a public dinner party to collect funds, that doesn't give you enough resources to remain stable as an organisation.

Alan-UKAMAU

Without the state: autonomy, self-management, and popular education

The *pobladores*' struggle is not confined to the instrumental use and appropriation of the state's instances of political representation and resources at the local level. In their discourse, they characterise their struggle against the neoliberal state as simultaneously within and without the state. A struggle without the state appears not as a novel strategy, but as a

historical condition of possibility of the popular classes and a historical tendency of movements that go beyond petitionist logics and seek to build new forms of production of the city from and in the territories.

> We raise demands and claim rights. We raise self-managed alternatives and build with facts the protection that governments elaborate with words. We are both: idea and action. We are rebellion and proposal. We control factories and service companies, towns and villages, secondary and university student unions, coves and ports, fields and cities. We have been able to self-govern for two hundred years, and today we have to apply our governance to the whole society.
>
> MPL, *Notes of poblacional thinking N°2*

The discursive enunciation of the principle of autonomy from the state can be read at two levels. At a more general level, autonomy and self-management mean that *pobladores* see themselves as active producers of the city. The spatial production of the city is foremost a social production of the city, 'from below', where a new type of social relations (based on honesty, respect, and solidarity) can be visualised and practiced. At a more concrete level, the principle of autonomy implies the creation of different instances of self-organisation and self-production (of spaces, houses, services) wherein the state is not present. There are two emblematic projects that illustrate the extent to which self-management practices have been effective in recovering 'wasted state lands' for *pobladores*, taking them away from the market and estate agencies. The neighbours of *El Sauzal* – families of *allegados* and housing debtors in Peñalolén – came together in one of the branches of the *Pobladores in struggle movement* (MPL), the MPL6, to reclaim government lands for the construction of council housing for these families. After more than 10 years of mobilisations, meetings, assemblies, and negotiations with the council, they finally obtained permission from the council and 200 houses will be built next year.

It is worth noting that, in 2007, MPL has already created the EGIS[8], *Entidad de Autogestión Inmobiliaria* (self-management housing entity), an institution that has allowed

[8] The origin and definition of this entity is clearly described by one of the *Pobladores*: The New Housing Policy launched in July 2006 proposes a mediator between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (Minvu), the Housing and Urbanism Service (Serviu) and the beneficiaries of the housing subsidy, a role assumed by a private organisation, the Entity of Social Real Estate Management (EGIS). The EGIS are natural or legal persons, profit-oriented or not, that have been authorised by the respective

pobladores to socially manage housing projects and recover lands in their *comunas* of origin for the building of council houses. The creation of EGIS is key in the self-management and self-production of habitat, as under this model, the barrier that usually separates the institution that provides subsides from those who receive the benefits is blurred, and power is not alienated from the people who actually live in the neighbourhoods and socially produce the city. In commenting on the achievements of this institution, Natalia, one of the most prominent leaders of the *pobladores*, highlights the role that MPL has played in snatching economic resources from the market and estate agencies and directing them towards a public good.

> We have to pay ten thousand million pesos for the land of Sauzal – by the way, those who are in the patio area now are the neighbours from the Sauzal. Well, this is an historical fight. I calculate that we have saved at least five thousand million pesos in the 14 houses that they recovered. Actually, one day we should calculate how much money we have recovered for the state, and through its popular use, for us; how much we have taken from the real estate.
>
> Natalia-MPL

Another recent and significant self-managed housing project is the *Maestranza* project, an experience of self-management carried out by neighbours of *Estación Central* (a district in Santiago) and politically conducted by the *pobladores*' organisation UKAMAU. As with *El Sauzal*, here practices of self-management and autonomy serve the purpose of resisting *allegados'* displacement of their *comunas* of origin to impoverished areas on the outskirts of Santiago. After five years of occupations, pickets, collective work with professional urbanists and members of the council, 400 families will live on formerly empty, state-owned land, in the same *comuna* and the same area of their families of origin. *Pobladores* participated in the design and planning, and many of them will work as actual constructors on the building site.

Seremi (Regional Ministerial Secretary) to 'advise families in all the necessary aspects (technical and social) that allow them to access and apply a housing subsidy. The main tasks of the EGIS are to provide advice and take the necessary actions so that the families to whom they provide technical assistance can access and apply a housing subsidy. The EGIS must sign agreements with the respective Seremi de Vivienda y Urbanismo to submit projects to the Solidarity Fund for Housing and Urban Development, and receive a fee paid for these tasks.

This project is unique in that they obtained the approval to build larger flats than the minimum standard for council housing.

The successful experiences of self-management and active participation in new housing projects is also seen by *pobladores* as a way of facing, from within, the contradictions of the subsidy-based system which, as we have seen, is in crisis. On the other hand, as many of these housing solutions are destined to *allegados* and families that otherwise would be expelled from the city to its margins, these experiences materially embody the *pobladores*' resistance and struggle against neoliberal fragmentation. Neoliberal urban fragmentation therefore becomes a cipher of social fragmentation that *pobladores* seek to struggle against. It is at this point of the *pobladores*' discourse that concepts such as *vida buena* (good life) and *vida digna* (dignified life) arise, as the ever-present horizon of their struggle. At this level, the struggle for a dignified life means the possibility of producing (their own) physical spaces, (their own) social bonds, (their own) familiar dynamics, and building (their own) collective dreams; this allows *pobladores* to experience concretely, and within a neoliberal society, a new form of life: socialism. Here we see the enacting of a political-aesthetic logic of the Rancièrian type, insofar as the delimitation of the production of the city from below and the official neoliberal construction from below appear as the 'affirmation of two worlds in one', as an irreducible space of disagreement about the repartitions of social roles and places between an actual space of equality (an ideal in the present time) and its negation; and space where *pobladores* are not the object of public policies, but rather active subjects in the construction of a future and a city. As we will see in the next section, this is the reason why *pobladores* present their demands as being 'larger than a house'.

> The project of a dignified life, although it is a horizon of struggle, does not correspond to a distant stage that will be conquered after the overcoming of stages. It is an ideal in present time that is lived in the construction of popular power through the self-managed production of the urban habitat of the populations. Precisely the idea of a dignified life, is the conquest that materialises in the popular administration of the territory in which we live, to build *our* spaces, *our* bonds, *our* families, *our* dreams. It is materialised in the power to do and make, in giving options to our people to build a socialist life project. This motivates the movement to develop from below options for our people that push us to think about concrete alternatives to produce our way of living and that allow us to go on conquering this project.
>
> Movement of *pobladores* in struggle, *4+7: The return of Pobladores*

Self-formation and popular education

Just as *pobladores*' discourse radically changes the meaning of what it is to be part of the urban poor, by signifying *pobladores* as producers of the city, the traditional meaning of education is modified in *pobladores*' view. First, for *pobladores*, the practices of self-management and autonomy from the state are already a form of self-education. By coming together in the production of the city, by resisting fragmentation and fighting neoliberalism in the territories that capital seeks to shape, *pobladores* learn how to trust their neighbours, how to go beyond an individualistic view of social rights, and also how to frame their experiences of resistance and struggle. They also learn about the very practices of self-management and the culture they involve. As Ignacio and Roberto point out, this 'informal' dimension of *pobladores*' pedagogy is the foundation of other formal instances of self-education.

> The first space, informal, is the centre or foundation from which the other two were historically founded, and consists in conceiving the process of social production of habitat, starting with housing, as a permanent education process, which occurs around both to the technical requirements as to the civic-assembly, which is typical of the work of the social production of the housing, as well as of political struggles that with the same aim have to liberate form oppression; this implies all the time to get involved in the struggles of other sister organisations, creating networks of support and joint construction, whether housing or not, but always popular and anti-capitalist.
>
> Movement of *pobladores* in struggle, *4+7: The return of Pobladores*

This informal dimension also touches upon other relevant processes such as women's empowerment. *Pobladores*' assemblies become, in this context, true schools for many women participating in the movement.

> I met many women who were quite shy at first, who said nothing in the assemblies, they never spoke. Some of them had very macho husbands, they were bossy, very bossy, I do not know what kind of psychological violence could have been going on there, but after two or three years, the same women are able to face the cops, they argue face-to-face with the mayor; now husbands have to think twice before saying something to them; so there is a change of mind, culture, a re-education of the soul, everything.
>
> Natalia-MPL

In 2008, MPL founded the educational association *Poblar*, a technical and juridical tool which has undertaken different projects of formal self-education and self-formation: from the creation of the first Diploma in Social Movements and Communitarian Self-management, through popular nurseries run by *pobladores* to look after their children and their neighbours' children, to the development of training courses in different areas such as construction, editing, and other skills and knowledge. *Poblar*'s missing is stated as follows:

> *Poblar* is a pedagogical, scientific and labour tool at the service of *pobladoras* and *pobladores* and their popular organisations. It has an assembly-like character that is constituted from organised communities and seeks to satisfy the need of self-education, collectively build scientific-humanist knowledge and self-management, cooperative and self-help work development.
>
> Movement of *pobladores* in struggle, *4+7: The return of Pobladores*

> The work of *Poblar* has as a long-term mission to generate through a learning-doing approach, a reconversion of educational, cognitive, and cultural conditions in the urban environment of Peñalolén. In this line, *Poblar* has developed three instruments of political action: secondary education for adults that is already in its third cycle, political education for its leaders and activists (*Escuela del Nuevo Poblador*), and literacy education for our sons and daughters. To this is added another series of micro-ventures such as popular urbanism workshops, literacy, screen printing workshops, residents' congresses, urban gardens, the Pablo Neruda popular library, courses in children's journalism, Christmas parties, urban colonies, among others.
>
> Movement of *pobladores* in struggle, *4+7: The return of Pobladores*

Another meaning that the practices of self-education acquires in *pobladores*' discourse is that of political self-formation. Self-formation is seen mainly as a recovery of different types of knowledge: popular knowledge, theoretical knowledge, and political knowledge necessary for the reproduction of popular leaders and, consequently, for the survival of the very practices of self-management. In this context, the figure of the self-taught enlightened proletarian appears. The 'enlightened proletarian' is the one who, thanks to the self-education in *poblaciones* (pre-university training courses taught by other *pobladores*), could attend universities, and who, after obtaining a degree and a job, stayed in the *poblacion* to live there and to help her community.

> We recovered and took seriously the issue of studying, we had these pre-university training courses, and from those pre-university training courses were born what today we call the enlightened proletarians. We were enlightened here, in this house, in this *poblacion*, by people like us; thanks to them we managed to get to the University, so we studied there and we are still here. That is, in a moment we had to start reading the books we had not read, because someone always used to interpret them to us; they used to tell us what the book said, but we had to learn by ourselves, we had to learn to write more than two pages.
>
> Alan-UKAMAU

Formal instances of self-education – such as pre-university training courses, or schools for adults – provide not only formal education but also the experience of being taught by people who, like them, were educated under popular education initiatives. This creates a virtuous circle in which leaders who are educated in *poblaciones* become teachers in these instances, and as such they can politically form other *pobladores*.

> This is the fourth year since this school for adult started to work. I do not have the exact figure here, but it is close to 150 people who have been and are studying with us, you know. And the valuable thing that we take from this experience is that the same leaders that we formed at some point some years ago are the ones who are leading the process that benefits them; at the beginning they did not have secondary studies, and by coming here and studying with us they were able to recognise that popular organisations can solve problems where the state is not present; and now they are the ones that teach that this can be possible, because it has been possible.
>
> Atilio-Housing movement for dignity

But this process is far from being encapsulated in specific individuals within *poblaciones* – for example, either the relatives of or people close to historical leaders. Rather, formal cases of self-education necessarily entail entering into a dialogue with other sectors of society, such as lecturers and professors working in academia. Self-education is, therefore, another name for the conjunction between emancipatory praxis and a theory which is not alienated from its transformative dimension.

> By combining the learning from the praxis, mentioned above, and the creation of a popular social science, at the service of the processes of transformation and social emancipation, we can dialectically 'politicise the theory and theorise the struggle'.

> Today, we are in need of popular leaders, we need a lot more and more of popular leaders, and if the movement does not come out, if the movement does not articulate with others and make connections with others, it will not be capable of forming popular leaders. That is the bet that we are making: for training our people, through the creation of the diploma on social movements, for example, you know, the idea is to recruit young people, bringing people from academia, participate ourselves with our experiences as leaders, but we need other people, ourselves cannot do it with others that are fighting this just like us. We need to take and learn from the strength of all the sectors that are in struggle and that believe in another world or another and us.
>
> Guillermo-MPL

Self-education also serves the purpose of an ideology critique from and within the territories; it is a critique both at the level of practice – insofar as the very creation of formal instances of education in *poblaciones* are a sign of resistance to the logic of the commodified educational system – and at the level of the reflective knowledge that *pobladores* create from and on that practice, and the social context in which they are produced.

> Popular education is the first step, because if we do not change the mentality, the neoliberal mind-set will not change, this managerial idea of individual success will not change; so the idea is to engage *pobladores* in the struggle, so they can see the non-competitive and communitarian aspect of it.
>
> Ignacio-MPL

> So, the key was training and formation, that is, not underestimating our people and believing that they will never understand. Some people say to me, 'mate, these old women are not going to understand', I have seen, young leftists from universities saying things like: 'they are all fascists, why bother?' Yes, they are fascists, they still love Pinochet, but how do we persuade them? They are workers, they are working-class people, they are wise people, there is a huge power there that we have to think how to release. Dumbo had this magic feather so he can fly, right? and one day when he was flying the magic feather dropped, but in his desperation he realised that he could fly, so our role is to be that feather in Dumbo's trunk, because our people can fly, the only thing is that they do not know that they can do it.
>
> Alan-UKAMAU

Is Alan here not offering a possible way out of the Rancièrian position according to which the 'equality of intelligences' and the logic of the social are incompatible? Is the distance between grassroots activists and their neighbours another version of the logic of the 'explanatory master' – the master being this time a member of the movement itself? In *pobladores*' discourse, self-education and self-formation appear more as an awareness of people's own capacities, a moment of people's realisation of their cognitive and transformative capacity than the reassertion of the figure of the Marxist dogmatic leader. In the context of a generalised privatisation of social rights, self-education is a powerful social tool for change, not only for those *pobladores* educated by an educational system in crisis, but also for *pobladores*' leaders. Furthermore, self-formation allows *pobladores*' leaders to reflexively tackle their own potentials and contradictions; it is not that leaders bring from outside the feather to this sleeping Dumbo, but rather that they try to preserve the magic feather in order not to reify the potential knowledge and actions that its use can unveil.

Atilio's view of the challenges of the *pobladores*' fight against individualistic beliefs that are taken for granted, even for people within the *pobladores* movement, illustrates this well:

> Through these instances we try to ask ourselves things, we try to consider other visions. We, as a movement, try to define ourselves as an anti-capitalist movement, however, in a way we are fighting for private property, and that logic is many times reproduced in the assembly: we want our house, I want my house, and just that, I want it for me, my private property, you see? It is a flawed logic. Or also 'I want to have a house to leave it to my son', inheritance! We should try to abolish that, so we are very critical of ourselves, and we should constantly question ourselves. If we are not able to take advanced steps towards other descriptions of the problems, which is not easy within a movement of so many people, what we are going to do in the end is to strengthen a demand for welfare state, rather than a popular anti-capitalist struggle, but these are all complex things that we ask ourselves, things that are not resolved, and we must try to tackle them.
>
> Atilio-Housing movement for dignity

Therefore, the prefiguration of a utopian moment in the present on the one hand, and the self-awareness of capacities, limits, and contradictions of the *pobladores'* struggle on the other, lead finally to a reformulation of the axiomatic equality advanced by Rancière: the analysis of the logic of capital, domination, and of the *pobladores* movement's own limits as

an anti-capitalist movement are paramount in *pobladores'* politics, not only because through these instances *pobladores* can create a solid ideological foundation around which they can reunite, but also because in acting out these 'emancipatory moments', *pobladores* create the motivational and cognitive tools that point toward a broader social transformation.

What makes *pobladores* move?

Either positively or negatively assessed, there is an agreement that a communitarian ethos, usually evoked through a 'moral grammar', is one of the most salient aspects of the *pobladores* movement (Sabatini and Wormald 2004; Bruey 2012; Angelcos and Pérez 2017). As Honneth (2007) has pointed out, feelings of indignation and injustice form the core of *pobladores'* political motivation. Indeed, *pobladores* mobilise because they feel that certain rights are being negated and their lives are threatened. They fight for housing but, in so doing, they explore the systemic causes of the social harms they suffer, and consequently are able to situate their 'instrumental' demands within a broader frame: 'our dream is larger than a house', as Doris says.

So far, we have considered the uses of cognitive tools of generalisation for the creation of a critical diagnosis of Chilean society and the development of *pobladores*' sociological imagination. *Pobladores* mobilise data, statistics, and theories in order to explore the causes and consequences of a crisis that goes beyond a housing problem. Based on this diagnosis, they engage in practices of self-management and self-education, challenging the official 'truths' of prevalent institutions (both political and educational). But these tools do not just serve the purpose of mapping out Chilean society; they crucially allow *pobladores* to compare themselves with other people and, following a sense of social justice, highlight the similar conditions that affect other individuals, thereby distancing themselves from the rich. If *pobladores* are critics of neoliberal capitalism, their actions necessarily presuppose an orientation toward generality, a notion of common good from which their actions can be justified. What is the model of justice underpinning *pobladores'* practices of social critique? Are the 'communitarian' and the 'revolutionary' logics at some point compatible?

In what follows, I will argue that *pobladores* try to reach a compromise (albeit a fragile one) between what Boltanski calls a domestic and a civic world. Thanks to this compromise, *pobladores'* communitarianism can connect with a utopian 'programme' in which the idea of

community transcends its particularist limits by raising demands of a 'dignified life' and a 'good life'. These demands, vocalised in a moral register and anchored in experiences of suffering in *poblaciones*, should not be seen as separate from the diagnosis and prognosis of *pobladores* though; rather, they have to be seen as the expression of a utopian desire socially mediated by *pobladores*' 'concrete' lives in *poblaciones*.

The characteristics of the domestic world captures well the sociological aspects of what other authors have called the 'defensive communitarian' logic of action of the *pobladores*. The sense of justice is built around personal relationships and attributes. Sacrifice, effort, and the will to help other people are particularly highly valued by *pobladores*. In this regard, Jorge says:

> In asking for help I came across very young mates, because Lautaro, Henry and Rhony are really young; well, I thought: they are not asking for help, on the contrary, they are offering help. And I am an old person that came to ask for help; but my hands and my mind are in good condition and I'm strong enough to struggle, so I thought: Why do I not become a leader myself and help other people?
>
> Jorge-MPL

> Maybe I'm not going to get my house by participating in MPL, the wait may be long, but even if I don't get my house, I'm going to stay here and help other people, I'm going to keep fighting. We should get housing and all our stuff but fighting, we don't have to expect the government to give us a house, we all must work and fight for it.
>
> Patricia-MPL

In the civic world, worthy beings (people) are those who are trustworthy, honest, and faithful, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) says. In *pobladores*' discourse, the 'experience' of being a *poblador* and suffering in the flesh the consequences of capitalism serve as a mark of 'superiority' when compared with the rich, the middle class, and even the 'revolutionary' students, as we have seen in the previous section.

> We do not speak from theory or elaborate our proposals from the intellectuality from above. Our projects in the areas of housing, health, education, work and security spring from overcrowding, disease, misinformation, precarious employment and the violence that this system generates for our people.

Rafael-Don Bosco housing committee

> We are the party of freedom, of culture, social justice and equality. We are the party of the good and the brave, we are the party of the human beings that guided by love will create the new society of the good living. We are the party of the new Constitution. We are the political instrument of those who fight, a necessary tool to conquer our dreams.

Egalitarian Minutes

In the domestic world, tradition and hierarchy are the higher principles. The oldest families of *pobladores* and especially those families who were part of old *campamentos* and who founded *poblaciones* are especially valued; families and communities are thus the base of the movement.

> Today most of the organisations are composed of large family groups, cousins, brothers, uncles. Families sustain communities, communities sustain groups and groups hold federations. That is the reason why today we believe that the fundamental work is a territorial work. (…) And I don't buy that thing of the new *poblador*. Because if you look at *poblaciones*, children are equal to their parents, and there is a *poblador* spirit that is eternal. Nowadays it is not the new or the old *poblador*, it is the *poblador*, and *pobladores* today are honest with themselves.

Rafael-Don Bosco housing committee

The critiques that people direct toward the market world from the domestic world also follow the *pobladores'* rationale at this point. Capitalism is presented as an immoral and dehumanised social order. To the inhumanity of capitalism, *pobladores* oppose the humanity of close and familiar relations in *poblaciones*; to the neoliberal will of fragmentation, they oppose resistance and solidarity. For, in the end, the market cannot buy dignity, effort, work, or indeed struggle.

This is clearly a 'defensive' and particularistic moment within the *pobladores* movement, as the similarities that they established thanks to the sociological tools of generalisation are, to some extent, cancelled, and now only a reduced number of people (*pobladores* families) become the legitimate subjects of change. Nevertheless, unlike *pobladores* in the 1980s, this must be seen only as a (necessary) moment within their actions. For it is precisely when addressing the issue of communities and the imperative to defend the

corruption of ‘life’ against capitalism that the elements of the civic world arise. The notions of dignity, a dignified life, and a good life thus imply a leap from the domestic to the civic community, and what was an inward movement toward *poblaciones* and familiar bonds is now directed towards generality.

Indeed, when it comes to understanding the relevance of the community in the construction of another world, the discourse shifts to a planetary level. ‘Community’ then becomes a point of reference for speaking about the planet, actual proof that ‘another world’ is possible. The twofold dimension of utopian thought underlines *pobladores’* discourse, as a struggle for a ‘good life’ and/or a ‘dignified life’ appears as both a (future) horizon of struggle and an (actual) communitarian form of life.

> Of course, the dream is much bigger than a house. That’s why in our project we talk about the good life, and when we talk about the good life we talk about alternative social relationships – what we do in our assemblies, for example. A different way of building society, different from the way we learn from capitalism and its neoliberal expression, which privatises everything, denies everything, sells everything.
>
> Doris-UKAMAU

> We asked ourselves in those months what we wanted, and we said that we really wanted to fight for housing, but we also wanted socialism, but at that moment our assembly was not going to fight for socialism. So, we thought ‘well, we want our home, but we also want a dignified life’. Then we said ‘well, then for us’, translated in super basic language, ‘for us, as *pobladores*, socialism is a dignified life’. And that is how we started to use the concept of a dignified life.
>
> Natalia-MPL

It is interesting to observe that in defining their identity in relationship to their status as working-class people, *pobladores* end up defining themselves as ‘producers of the city’, and that by using this definition they give priority to the collective person over the familiar one. When the point of reference is the ‘city’ and not the *poblacion*, they conceive of themselves as ‘popular citizens’ who actively participate in the production of the city; hence, they reclaim the right to govern it.

> There is this idea that has emerged over time, the idea of the social production of habitat, so nowadays, we also understand ourselves as social producers of the habitat. So, the rationale goes something like this: What is a producer? A worker. And what is a worker? It is a social producer of the habitat.
>
> Natalia-MPL

> It is all about the social producers of the habitat freely associating and everything that comes with that: work, education, health. And again, the same, this is precisely a feature of an anti-capitalist project, the awareness that, at this stage, after everything that happened in the 20th century, there is no way to transform this system, but there is, just that it is neither the socialism of a single country nor the socialism of just one neighbourhood. Sometimes they say, in my view from a very naive opinion, we are making socialism in one neighbourhood, no, I don't think so. But they do make super important things. For us the small things are super important… In the *poblacion* we have this *temascal*, we have the community based library, the assemblies and the territorial work. But if you detach this from a larger construction, from popular power struggle, it's over. (…) The question, in the end, is: how is it possible that those who socially produce the habitat are not the ones who govern it?
>
> Ignacio-MPL

This production of the city involves social and economic activities, but not in the 'classic' sense. This is the reason why we can also find a position in which trade unions remain the central agent of change within *pobladores*' discourse.

> The subject of change, revolutionary, as we want to call it, we characterise him/her as a popular subject, you know, in general terms. And the popular subject has variation within itself, and within that popular subject there will be more advanced subjects. We believe that the trade union sector is the one that has to be more advanced in the struggle. The *pobladores* are an important sector … to the extent that they can be complementary with a union tactic of … of greater importance.
>
> Atilio-Housing movement for dignity

Therefore, the demands for a dignified and good life allow *pobladores* to open their struggle to a civic-public dimension and emphasise what is shared in common (with the 90%) rather than what is particular to them. Likewise, when they rely on the logic of the civic world, there are also attempts to retrieve the more traditional aspirations of the *industrial world* –

i.e. trade unionist demands. This tension between the *poblador* as the producer of the city and the *poblador* as a worker, although less important than that between the domestic and the civic world, also constitutes an important feature of the contemporary *pobladores* movement.

So, how is the compromise between the domestic and the civic world finally achieved in *pobladores*' discourse? How can there be compatibility between two worlds whose worth, and consequently the principles of justice on which they are built, are defined by opposing operations – one by affirming particularity, the other by rejecting it? According to Boltanski, a compromise between the two worlds can be established if one works in preventing the other from reaching an extreme in which the very principle of justice could be violated: On the one hand, the prevalence of the domestic world and its sociability based on personal and familiar bonds could lead to the creation of a rigid hierarchy within the political structure of *pobladores*: 'right from the start, it is important to avoid any gaps among the militants in terms of the level of information and consciousness on the part of each member. Otherwise, there is a great risk that a hierarchy will develop among the militants and that a limited core group will be created, one that will not be able to exploit existing opportunities' (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, p.253). The impersonality of the civic world, the establishment of formal procedures based on membership and not on personal behaviour, could prevent this from happening. On the other hand, the domestic world can prevent the reification of rules, norms, and laws established in the civic world, and bring back the 'common sense' that inspired their instauration. The logic of the domestic world can be used to keep alive the 'sense of humanity' behind the 'collective will'.

Finally, we cannot ignore the context in which this compromise can be practically achieved. The rationale for *pobladores'* communitarian logic is twofold: On the one hand, communities are counter-hegemonic spaces of resistance to neoliberal and capitalist logics of production and ways of living. Communities have been the only available space for *pobladores* to deal with their pauperised conditions of life. It is thanks to a communitarian logic that *pobladores* survived during the dictatorship, and have been able to undertake many activities that for the middle class are resolved by the market or the bourgeois family. They are important because they work under principles of solidarity and trust. However, *pobladores*' discourse on communities emphasises that this communitarian logic cannot be

trapped into another bourgeois logic with a similar function. It is worth quoting Guillermo's analysis of the idea of communities at length here:

> We propose the communitarian *comuna* and, also, a life experience, I'm telling you ... if it wasn't for the community I wouldn't be where I'm today, you know, I come ... I come from a super poor background. My dad abandoned us when I was a child, my mom did everything alone and, despite that, I went to the university, I finished my career. And during the dictatorship, especially in the *ollas comunes* [communitarian pots], that... that was raised by the community too. If my mom could go to work it is because there was a neighbour who took care of us when my mom worked, who sent us to school, or who gave us a plate of food, and that thing, so, from my point of view, without that communitarian philosophy we'd be fucked up. Because community is not a philosophy, but a way of life. In the end, the idea of speaking and forming a community is to break the capitalist ideology, a true individualist logic, you could have a community with your peers, with your colleagues that make you feel good. Now, obviously it is not a matter of making a sect, that is why we also propose the large-scale fight within, without, and against the state.
>
> Guillermo-MPL

Thus, the idea of community appears as the necessary mediation between the concrete and the abstract in a struggle that arises from the territories. Communities are in this sense the place from which a struggle against capital can be announced. Just like Marx's workers, *pobladores* have nothing to lose but their chains. However, the place in which they can realise and experience that possibility are the communities. Consequently, they fight to stay put in the *comunas* of origin, to stay together; they defend their territories and resist being displaced and separated: in parallel to the unifying force of capital, *pobladores* resist, defending what makes them one – their houses, their neighbours, and their communities. As Alonso clearly puts it:

> Why is the community so important? The theme of the community? Because we were born here, here is where we grew up, and here we are going to stay. That is the slogan that encompasses all this abstract shit. All the abstraction of socialism and the destruction of capitalism is included in this very simple thing: we belong here, this is ours, we are this. And that is what we propose in all the assemblies. Why is it not good for our neighbours to go to a housing committee 60 kilometres away? for example, why it is not good that you accept the easy housing solution, a really nice house, but in nowhere, with no connectivity, schools, public transport? Because they usually send you to

rural sectors, which are just beginning to urbanise. No, we are going to stay here, and we are going to fight from here.

Alonso-*Nueva la Habana* housing committee

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to show the *pobladores* movement's own version of cognitive mapping. In resisting a politically and socially adverse scenario, *pobladores* have been able to elaborate a critique of neoliberal housing policies and develop their own sociological imagination, utilising semantic tools and practical devices of generalisation. This orientation toward generality allows them to acquire a sense of totality and overcome a meritocratic view in which the neighbour is an enemy rather than an ally. Additionally, *pobladores* inaugurate a new type of citizenship, which goes beyond the classical liberal conception, – it is a form of 'popular citizenship' based on the motto: against, within, and without the state. It is interesting to note that here we identify a Rancièrian emancipatory moment, in which the very meaning of politics and education are subverted, and where a new 'distribution of the sensible' is attempted. However, for *pobladores* this does not mean a withdrawal from the state, or indeed from party politics. Finally, a moral dimension is present at two levels in *pobladores'* discourse. At one level, feelings of injustice and moral disrespect derived from the experience of social exclusion constitute the main motivation for *pobladores* to participate in the movement. At another level, a moral language that stresses the immoral and predatory character of capitalism, and the 'virtues' of a communitarian ethos where a dignified and good life are possible, is evoked by *pobladores* in order to support their demands. These three logics – socio-economic, political-aesthetic, and moral – can be seen then as three dimensions of *pobladores'* social critique, each playing a specific role – the transformation of a 'private issue' into a collective one, the 'redistribution of the sensible', and the envisioning of a utopian imagination based on the idea of community.

Chapter 8. The 2011 Chilean student movement

> When students in Latin America break into international headlines, it is usually as the result of some mass demonstration or riot. The image the public forms is that of hordes of wild-eyed and threadbare fanatics who alternate fitful class attendance with assaults on the palaces of dictators, insults to visiting dignitaries, and the practice of arson on municipal transport. Even in Latin America the press is likely to give student activities only passing notice except in periods of unusual agitation. The student is painted alternately as hero, criminal, petulant malcontent, or the docile tool of subversives – often depending entirely on the political viewpoint of the newspaper.
>
> (Bonilla 1960)

As many scholars (Della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Zamponi and Fernández González 2017) have noted, 2011 was a year marked by the irruption of a significant wave of protests and mobilisations around the world. In this context, the Chilean student movement received international attention because of the massive support they obtained from the Chilean people, the radicalness of its demands – given Chile's social and economic stability – and the scope and creativity of its repertories of action (Lustig et al. 2012). Camila Vallejo, the president of the *FECH* (Students Federation of University of Chile) was named 'person of the year' by *The Guardian*, since, according to the newspaper, she epitomised the figure of the 'protester'. Although this and other student movements around the world have recently attracted public attention, students have been playing a key role in challenging the legitimacy of political regimes and voicing social discontent since the emergence of modernity (Rootes and Nulman 2015). What is interesting about this 'new' wave of student protests and mobilisations is that they reflect both a process of renewal and maturation of student movements as such (not simply as the 'youth' fraction of other movements), and the capability of the students to mobilise and publicly legitimate an anti-neoliberal discourse that questions not only the educational system but society as a whole (Larrabure and Torchia 2015).

As with the *pobladores* movement, the intellectual production around student movements has usually downplayed its transformative potential. Due to its social composition (middle-class people), their close relationship with political elites, and the transitory character

of their social base (young people aged 17–25), during the 1950s student movements were seen through the lens of youth psychology. Accordingly, they were conceptualised mainly as generational struggles, or more specifically, as an expression of the Oedipus complex at a social level. The paradigmatic work in this line was published later, in 1969, by the ex-Marxist Lewis Feuer (1969). In *The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements*, Feuer argued that student movements should be understood as the breaking of a generational equilibrium by the youth, who decide to become active in public life when they consider that the older generation has become morally corrupt. In this context, students present themselves, Feuer says, as a morally idealistic and pure elite. Following the same line of reasoning, Feuer stresses students' failed populism. Students want to align with 'the people' – the poor, the working class, the peasantry – but they are usually rejected by them on account of their privileged social and cultural conditions. The reactionary character of student movements understood in this way becomes unavoidable then, as their fate can be no other than 'growing old', replacing the failures of the older generation, or repeating their socially privileged condition.

But alongside these readings, during the 1960s students started to be seen as an active force within the political and social transformations taking place in many countries. Given the role students were playing in challenging authoritarian regimes in Latin America and Asia, subsequent studies approached students' actions not in terms of 'youth psychology', but in terms of political behaviour and influence. The relationship between students and politics thus became a focal point for sociologists and political scientists, who recognised the power and transformative agenda of student activists. Students' politicisation, political attitudes, and the motives underlying the actions of the 'radical students' were some of the topics favoured by the literature. The May 68 movement in France was crucial in the recognition of student movements as an actor capable of addressing society as a whole. Since May 68, the scholarly debates have largely revolved around issues of strategies, repertories of action, scope, relationships with other political and social actors, and capabilities to bring about truly transformative or reformist changes to societies. Although even today we can find infantilising analyses of the past, these are mainly the preserve of a specific part of the mainstream media and conservative commentators.

The academic study of the Chilean student movement followed a similar pattern to that described above. Like other Latin American student movements and earlier than other student movements in Europe and the US, by the beginning of the 1960s, the role of the Chilean student movement in the country's political life was already noticed. In 1960, Frank Bonilla (1960) published *The Student Federation of Chile: 50 Years of Political Action.* Significantly, here Bonilla underscored the huge influence that emerging political parties – significantly, the groups of anarchists, socialists, and communists – had in the political formation of many of the student leaders during the 1930s and 1940s, and the relationship that students established almost since the very creation of the *Student Federation of Chile* with working-class people, peasantries, and political parties, either through the creation of literacy programmes or technical training courses for ordinary people. But perhaps even more important than this is that Bonilla situates the development of the Chilean student movement in the context of the Chilean pattern of modernisation, highlighting the twofold character of the students as both a symptom of its main contradictions, and as one of their most serious critics. If, in the beginning, the Chilean student movement was mainly to be found occupying spaces within the university – a process which will find its definitive expression in the Cordoba movement in Argentina – the transformation of Chilean society and of its universities led students to actively engage with social problems beyond the university (Bonilla 1960). Therefore, the university started to express within itself the complexities of Chilean political life. Accordingly, opposed to the 'party'-related students, a right-wing of guildsmen emerged within universities, advancing a student politics confined only to the university realm.

During the 1960s, the struggle for a University Reform, which pushed for a democratisation of universities and more active student participation on university boards, mainly reflected the political climate within universities. As pointed out by some scholars (Garretón and Martínez 1985), the Democratic party was the leading figure of this process, and the tensions and conflicts between the moderate left, the radical left, and the Christian democrats were at the heart of national and university life. By the end of the 1960s, the radical left, and especially the MIR – The Revolutionary Left Movement – had gained a huge influence among students, who actively supported Allende's campaign. It is no coincidence

that Allende's victory speech after his election took place in the *FECH*, as he was formed as a socialist leader during his time as a medical student.

Considering the deep entrenchment between universities, students, and the broader Chilean social and political context, it is not surprising that universities and student activists were one of the main targets of Pinochet's dictatorship (Garretón and Martínez 1985). As with other social movements, the military dictatorship finished the student movement. The first years were marked by the repression of activists, leaders, and lecturers, many of whom were later exonerated. The military government created 'official federations' within universities and replaced the historical *FECH* with a right-wing federation. Despite this, students managed to resist the dictatorship mainly through cultural activities and newspapers edited by members of political parties (which were proscribed by Pinochet). The year of 1983 saw the first student protest against the military regime and, following the election of members of the student opposition to the military regime in Antofagasta and Valparaiso, the *FECH* was reinstated in 1984.

With the return to a democratic political regime in 1990, the Chilean student movement entered a period of crisis and demobilisation (Thielemann 2014). The *Concertación* successfully co-opted many of former student leaders, and by controlling most universities' unions and obtaining direct funding from the coalition, they pushed university politics into internal academic matters. It should be noted that, although democratically elected, universities' unions distanced themselves from contentious and broader issues, such as internal democratisation and financing. This created a gap between leaders and students, which became less interested in an increasingly bureaucratised politics (Thielemann 2014). But the institutional crisis of public universities, triggered by a 47% reduction in state expenditure since 1981, started to directly affect thousands of students. The market-based Chilean educational system expanded access to students by way of loans and scholarships, while at the same time it substantially increased the fees. Given the lack of state finance, universities – public state universities included – went to the market in order to seek resources, and the students, who had been away from party politics for a significant period of time, rearticulated themselves, criticising and resisting the process of privatisation that unfolded year on year.

Brief description of the Chilean higher educational system

In recent decades, Chile has experienced a significant increase in its levels of higher education enrolment (Torres and Zenteno 2011; Gambi and González 2013; Kremerman and Paez 2016). The effects of the neoliberal reforms implemented since the 1980s by the Pinochet dictatorship produced a dramatic change in the Chilean educational system, moving from a public-oriented model to a privatised one (OECD 2012). By the beginning of the 1980s, the higher education system had eight universities – two public and six private – with national coverage through six regional offices. However, the educational reform of 1981 changed the Chilean education system and forged the creation of new private universities and other Higher Education Institutions, such as Professional Institutes, and Technical Training Centres, moving 'to a system characterized by privatization and deregulated expansion' (Torres and Zenteno 2011).

At present, the university system consists of two types of institutions: traditional universities, which acquired such status in 1980 and are grouped in the Council of Rectors of Chilean universities (CRUCH), and private institutions, which were created after 1981 and bring together non-profit and for-profit institutions. Within the first group, we find state universities – such as the University of Chile – and other state-subsidised universities – such as the Catholic University – which receives direct public funding. As for other Higher Education Institutions, the Professional Institutes (IPs) are private, self-financed, and can be non-profit or for-profit organisations. They offer mainly professional and technical degrees, while the Technical Training Centres (CFTs) are private non-profit institutions that provide 2 or 2.5 year technical programmes (OECD 2012). These institutions – professionals and technicians – usually enrol young people from the three poorest quintiles (Gambi and González 2013). By 2011 (the year of the mobilisations), after 21 years of post-dictatorial governments, Chilean higher education was structured as follows: 25 Universities of the Council of Rectors (16 of them state-owned and 9 state-subsidised private universities), 34 new private universities which did not belong to CRUCH, 44 Professional Institutes, and 69 Technical Training Centres (CNED 2011).

According to the OECD (2012), between 2006 and 2011, all higher education institutions increased their gross enrolment ratio: CRUCH universities' enrolment grew by 18%, while private universities experienced an average increase of 63%; CFTs doubled their enrolment rate and IPs increased theirs by around 137% in this period. The increase in student participation in all the higher education institutions is concentrated in private institutions, especially those students from the poorest quintiles (Kremerman and Paez 2016). This increase in enrolment is closely related to the current student financial support system (based on grants and loans), as private institutions are those with the highest levels of participation of students with access to credit.

Finally, the public system of financing for students is mainly based on grants and loans (OECD 2012). While the first includes a series of scholarships, which are mainly awarded to students of CRUCH universities, the latter can be of two types: the university credit solidarity fund, which is given only students enrolled in CRUCH universities, and the state-guaranteed loan system (CAE) to which students from non-CRUCH institutions have access. The latter was introduced in 2006 and it is a credit granted by banks but where the state acts as guarantor in the case of default (Bellei et al. 2014). As we will see, the functioning and effects of this education system were at the centre of the students' mobilisation in 2011.

The 2011 Chilean student movement

In 2004, four secondary students from the emblematic public school Arturo Alessandri, located in the city centre of Santiago, were expelled due to their participation in a simulated occupation of the school. This simulation – which was supposed to be an artistic activity included within the school's normal activities – recreated the action of Alessandri's former students, who fought Pinochet's dictatorship during the 1980s and made claims for democratisation within the school. Though worried about their future, the students smiled as they said to the press: 'the director thought the occupation was real, but it was only a simulacrum, it was all fake!' This anecdote illustrates well the gulf at that time between the reality of the simulacrum and the real it embedded among Chilean secondary students. For these students, an occupation of masked students demanding justice and truth was thinkable only as an event of the past, in a different temporality. This is precisely what radically

changed two years later. Demanding in the first instance economic resources for public schools, which had deteriorated in terms of infrastructure and pedagogical resources, and in general calling for more attention from the state, they went on to call for a de-municipalisation of the secondary educational system, free education at the secondary school level, and constitutional and tax reform.

The first protest began at the so-called ‘aquatic school’. The students demanded economic resources after the roof of their school had collapsed on account of constant leaks during the winter season. But over the course of the following two months, through school assemblies, sit-ins, occupations, and massive marches, specific demands would be escalated to the point at which Bachelet’s government could no longer ignore them. Secondary school students demanded both the de-municipalisation of schools and gratuity for the transport school pass, substantive improvement in the *PSU* (national university admission test), food, and student scholarships. A broader demand including all these aspects and a mechanism for their political resolution was also made: namely, a constituent assembly to restructure *LOCE* (Organic Constitutional Law of Education), and a tax reform. At the beginning of June, after months of mobilisations, President Bachelet addressed the nation and, along with a set of palliative measures addressing the students’ short-term demands, she announced the creation of an Advisory Commission on the Quality of Education in order to discuss the *LOCE* and its prospects of reform. The students were invited by the president to join the commission – also composed of experts and civil society actors related to education – and confused, tired after weeks of mobilisation, and divided as to how to respond to the government’s offer, the movement started to decline. The result of what finally turned out to be a highly de-legitimised commission was the modification of the *LOCE* and the creation of the *LGE* (General Law of Education), a new educational law that failed to address any of the students’ structural demands.

One cannot fully understand the 2011 Chilean student movement without acknowledging the context created in the previous five years by the secondary school students. This new wave of mobilisations was not an isolated event. Many of the secondary students’ structural demands were voiced by the university students, and crucially, the latter shared with the former the critical diagnosis of a largely fissured educational system. When Sebastian Piñera, a right-wing millionaire businessman of the *Alianza por Chile* (Alliance for

Chile), took office in 2010, the students knew that a sharper privatisation agenda was coming, so they prepared, and waited. A massive 8.8 Richter scale earthquake struck Chile on the 27th of February. This event delayed the planned meetings between students and members of the educational commission at the national congress but resumed in January 2011. The students wanted to convey to the government that they rejected the *Quality and Equality in Education law* proposed by Piñera, as this deepened the privatisation agenda and did not take into account the 'historic' students' demands.

On the 4th of April, students from the private Central University – a small university controlled by a group of academics – in Santiago opposed the acquisition of the 50% of shares by a well-known investment firm and went to occupy the university (Figueroa 2013). On the 28th of April, the first march called by the *CONFECH* (Federation of Chilean Students) took place, gathering more than 7,000 students demanding the 'recovery and strengthening of Public Education'. On the 12th of May, one week before Piñera gave his 'state-of-the nation' message in Valparaiso, more than 15,000 students took to the streets across Chile. As the government did not satisfactorily address the students' demands – the students kept mobilising, unfolding a wide repertory of actions, including various occupations, sit-ins, teach-outs, street art, and flash mobs, among others. By the end of June, where a massive march of 250,000 students took over the streets, most universities and several secondary schools were on strike and/or occupied. The constant and fierce repression by armed police against the students, and the feeling that they were demanding a structural change that would improve the quality of life of many workers and families, led citizens to support the students. Even the Chilean media, aligned mainly with the government since the beginning of the mobilisations, started to recognise students' capacities.

On the 5th of July, the government presented *GANE* (Broad National Agreement on Education), a proposal which, according to the students, did not substantially modify the principles of Chile's market-based education. One month later, and after allocating a new minister of education, Piñera's government presented a new document entitled *Policies and action proposal for Chilean education*. The main innovation, when compared to the previous proposal, was a reduction of 4% in the student loans' interest rate (from 6% to 2%), but the rest of the demands (free education, effective prohibition of for-profit education, substantive increase in funding, among others) were not conceded. Once again, according to the students,

the government did not seem to understand either the content or the scope of what was going on in the country's streets, schools, and universities. Accordingly, the students intensified the mobilisations. As the mobilisation continued to develop, the level of police repression escalated. On the 4th of August, two unauthorised marches took place, which led to serious and violent incidents not only in the city centre, but also at the outskirts of Santiago. In response to the police repression, the students called for a '*cacerolazo*' – the beating of pots and pans – a massive form of popular protest not seen since the 1980s. Hundreds of people took to the streets of Santiago and the rest of the regions, and 150,000 gathered at Parque O'Higgins for a day of music and reflection. On the 21st of August, the *CUT* (Workers' United Centre) joined the students and called for two days of national strikes (Pousadela 2013).

In October, the government failed once again to meet the students' demands. After seven months of mobilisation, the movement showed clear sings of exhaustion. Gradually, the students started to return to their classes. However, they agreed to continue the mobilisation and prepare for the next year. Michelle Bachelet – former president from the *Concertación* – took the students' demands as a key part of her 2013 presidential campaign. She included students' demands for free and quality education and a tax reform. Some of the communist student leaders joined Bachelet in her campaign and contributed to her massive electoral win (she obtained 73% of the vote). Despite this popular backing, Bachelet's government could not satisfactorily enact the educational reform. Crucially, she did not push for a Constitutional Assembly which would have allowed for a more radical change to the Chilean educational system. Consequently, in 2018, Sebastián Piñera returned to office, and students have sporadically returned to the streets.

A range of perspectives have been deployed in analysing the 2011 student movement: a social movement perspective (Guzman-Concha 2012; Salazar 2012; Tricot 2012); an educational perspective (Bellei and Cabalin 2013); and a more 'sociological' perspective (Fleet 2011; Ruiz Encina and Sáez 2011). In what follows, I take on some of these aspects, but only insofar as they are mobilised as a critique of Chilean society as a whole by students. I will argue that these aspects can be considered as forming part of the process of critique (or 'move of critique'), which is at the core of students' 'critique in movement'.

Students mapping the neoliberal education system in Chile

Diagnosis: Inequality, debt, and the myth of meritocracy

The student movement is composed of a heterogeneous social and political 'base'. There are more than 30 universities across the country, each of which gathers thousands of students in different faculties and schools. Notwithstanding the variety of interests and realities, students collectively constructed a diagnosis of the crisis of the educational system, emphasising unequal access to universities, its segregated nature, and the burden of debt that education places on students and families. This diagnosis was at the core of students' demands, which significantly evolved during the mobilisation. Across seven months of mobilisations, students wrote several documents in which they wrote down the provisional conclusions of an internal process of deliberation in schools, faculties, and universities. I will focus on the first document produced by students after two months of discussions, *Higher Education reform: students' demands* (CONFECH 2011), as this document encompasses the diagnosis and the overall message that students were sending to the public after the first two months of mobilisations.

The starting point of this diagnosis is unequal access to university. Students in previous mobilisations had tackled the issue of access, but unlike previous mobilisations, in 2011 students used this topic to highlight not only a deficit of equity in the educational system, but, more importantly, a contradiction in the very principles guiding that policy. In the section on 'Access', students note that during the last 20 years there has been a significant 'drop in the participation of public municipal schools and of the lower quintiles in top quality universities' (*CONFECH*, June 2011). Therefore, according to students, universities reproduce inequality and do not deliver on one of their most salient 'promises': namely, social mobility.

It is telling that during the first months of the mobilisations, students spoke the 'language of the enemy'. Accordingly, they emphasised the failures and 'false promises' of the Chilean educational system, deploying the same 'meritocratic' rhetoric on which the system was built. In the above quoted document, we read: 'Is higher education a real trigger for development and equal opportunities?' (*CONFECH*, June 2011). At this stage, students

were pointing to a failure of the 'educational' test and not rejecting the validity of the test as such, to use Boltanski's formulation. Students also criticise the low percentage of government expenditure on tertiary education. They argue that 'the expenditure on tertiary education is 2.2% of GDP, of which only 0.4 is from public sources and 1.8 from private sources' (*CONFECH*, June 2011). They compare Chile's expenditure on higher education with other OECD members:

> Chile currently invests an equivalent of 2.0% of GDP in tertiary institutions of 6.2% total that is invested in education and of this 2% only 0.3% of GDP is invested by the state in the universities belonging to the CRUCH, and the remaining 1.7% remains the responsibility of families. (…) However, in tertiary education the proportion of private funding varies widely, from less than 5% in Denmark, Finland and Norway to more than 40% in Australia, Canada, the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom and the associated countries Russian Federation and Israel, and above 75% in Chile and Korea.
>
> Higher Education reform: students' demands, CONFECH 2011

Likewise, state expenditure on scholarships covers only the first two quintiles, and loans up to the fourth quintile, with a significant difference between traditional universities and private ones. In this context, students ask:

> Where do we put the incentives?
>
> Do we push institutions to comply with this 'public role'?
>
> OR
>
> Do we just deliver the information and the subsidy and we minimise the State's oversight?
>
> Higher Education reform: students' demands, CONFECH 2011

Following the line of argument of the document, and recalling the reasons behind 2011's mobilisations, Camila Vallejo, former student leader and current MP says:

> The 2011's mobilisation started because there were many students endeudados (in debt), it started as something very related to the pocket, there was a discontent that involved not only the student, it was not just a student demand, but a family one, because it had to do with indebtedness, cost of a degree. That was the reason why we took the JUNAEB, but still there was a

> demand union, very particular. But at the same time, that was the starting point of a greater questioning of the student financing policy and the problem of indebtedness.
>
> Camila Vallejo, former president of FECH

JUNAEB is the *National Board of School Assistance and Scholarships*, and was one of the first buildings to be occupied by the students. Students denounced administrative failures and a delay in the delivery of maintenance and food scholarships. This type of failure was not new in Chile's educational system; during previous mobilisations in 2001 and 2006, the scholarship system was also targeted by students. However, this time scholarships were simultaneously complementing student loans and pushing students further into new debt in a vicious circle. As Constanza says: 'There were many people also *urgida* (worried). Due to the lack of these scholarships, your only option is indebtedness. The indebtedness had overwhelmed many families'.

The students' discourse on the failure of the educational system is similar to that of the *pobladores* movement on the housing system. Once again, the effectiveness of educational policies in terms of coverage does not translate into better education (in terms of access, quality, and outcomes). Daniela, one of the leaders of the Universidad Central – the first private university to be occupied in order to avoid the university being transformed into a for-profit university – spells out in detail the reasons behind the leap from a seemingly 'classic' and specific demand to the beginning of the student revolt:

> In 2011, the first state-guaranteed loan began to be collected, so those overwhelmed students joined al tiro (immediately) the mobilisation. They felt very distressed because they did not have money to pay those loans: students were graduate unemployed persons and the ones lucky enough to be employed earned much less than the loan they had to pay for, so they ended up spending at least half of their salary only in the loan. Thus, the promise of the model of development is broken, so you wonder at what cost there has been a greater access to higher education? Who finally benefits from that?
>
> Daniela Lopez, former student activist

The centrality of indebtedness for the 2011 student movement has been rightly acknowledged by other scholars (Guzman-Concha 2012; Fleet and Guzmán-Concha 2016). It has been usually assumed, though, that a mobilisation of indebted students points toward a

frustrated demand for integration into society and not a critique of its underlying neoliberal logic. However, the student debt crisis was precipitated, first, by the desperate disappointment of education as an instrument to ensure a better future (individually), and, second, by the practical demonstration that the promise of social mobility, decent employment, and a stable future proved to be false. If during the 1980s the main exclusionary policy was a lack of access for the majority of young people, in 2011 young people and their families saw how the 'virtues' of the system turned into the very corruption of its meritocratic principles.

> What do your parents say when you are a child? 'I just hope you're better than your parents, better than us'. That single motto makes a whole family mobilise around the education of a person. That happened a lot in the middle classes.
>
> Daniela Lopez, former student activist

> So, the fact that the students got into debt to study was something that made sense to everyone, because everybody was in debt for something. So in the end the student debt crisis was the demonstration that the promise of social mobility behind the idea of going to university, did not make any sense anymore. Going to uni was not going to help you at all. Because you were going to get out in debt, you will have to pay an amount of money that an average professional cannot pay with the current degrees of precariousness of work, so you start to link one thing to another.
>
> Felipe Ramirez, former student activist

> In 2011 we had this situation in which many students thought: why do I have to get into debt at this level, why are there people who were seizing the house for not paying the university. It is very difficult to find work once we leave the university and be able to pay the university loans.
>
> Recaredo Galvez, former president of FEC

Finally, the fall of the myth of meritocracy is correlative with the fall of the myth of the traditional 'middle class'. As I have shown in the previous chapter on the *pobladores* movement, the unmasking of the myth of the middle class is one of the most salient aspects of social movements' critiques of neoliberal policies. Indeed, if there was no awareness of the 'fall of the myth', we could not affirm their 'anti-neoliberal' character. However, the 'structural' condition of '*endeudados*' (debtors) and the elaboration of the crisis of the

educational system as a whole, meant that the initial individualist and meritocratic claim for a good education in terms of a consumer claiming an effective and quality service did not prevail within the movement. Francisco Figueroa, one of the leaders of the 2011 mobilisations, links this 'fall' of the meritocratic and traditional middle class myth with the emergence of a new middle class based on the expansion of the service economy:

> Traditional middle-class people have in their minds the value of public education, the value of democracy. But due to the neoliberal transformations these sectors have not continued to reproduce themselves in Chilean social structures. Now another sector emerges: people who begin to study in private universities and technical institutes. It is a sector that has been growing with the growth of the service sector in the economy and which, therefore, has a much more autonomous relationship with politics, it is not very anchored in the political traditions of the 20th century. I think that the student movement precisely manages to combine these two sectors.
>
> Francisco Figueroa, former vice president of FECH

> The hegemonic discourse built up by the dictatorship and that developed in the 90s is that in Chile we have a gigantic middle class, which is a class that goes up, where each generation will have greater opportunities than the previous one, and so on. So the basis of the model says: if you go to uni you will have a good economic situation. So supposedly there is a huge difference between higher middle class, the middle class, and the poor, but in the end we're all in the same boat, in the banks' eyes we are all equals, we are all equally in debt.
>
> Felipe Ramirez, former student activist

Students' elaboration of the crisis of the educational system led them to locate the 'roots' behind administrative problems, unequal access, precarious infrastructure, and unbearable debt. As Felipe says, at a certain point the student debt becomes the debt of any person and of many families in Chile, and in that sense, it becomes a unifying factor behind the social fragmentation it created, both between universities (public and private) and between universities and the rest of society. It is thus by digging into the causes of the crisis of the educational system that students' demands start to escalate. Educational issues were seen then primarily as social issues, and education started to be seen as an allegory of the commodification of previously un-commodified aspects of social life: the very reflection of a structural inequality.

> We began to understand that the success of neoliberalism in Chile was due to the state, that neoliberalism needs the state a lot. In the Chilean case, there is a subsidiary state that allows profit from things that should be considered as rights. There is an absolute commodification of life. And that made the analysis of educational demand more complex.
>
> Daniela Lopez, former student activist

> The current system of higher education has been established under self-financing policies, which have promoted the obtaining of resources from the payment of fees and registration fees by students, encouraging the indebtedness of Chilean families and the bankruptcy of many public universities. In short, education in Chile has been a reflection and product of the serious situation of structural inequality in which our society finds itself.
>
> Higher Education reform: students' demands, CONFECH 2011

Prognosis: Free and quality education

Based upon the diagnosis of an exclusionary and unjust educational system, and taking into account students' experiences of indignation and humiliation produced by the burden of student debt, Chilean students set up the core of their demands: free and quality education, with a Constitutional Assembly and a tax reform as its main instruments of realisation. These demands included the effective prohibition of private universities to profit from education, and consequently a claim for greater regulation, as well as a rehabilitation of the public sense of universities in general. It is important to note that the idea of free education was not originally part of the demands.[9] By the end of 2010, the students' proposal was a financial system based on students' incomes (*arancel diferenciado*). The reason behind this initial reticence to demand free education was twofold. On the one hand, the political 'realism' and students' experiences of previous mobilisations had taught them to be cautious and not to aim too high, particularly given that they were facing a right-wing government. On the other hand, some students thought that a free education policy in the Chilean social context would not necessarily solve the problem of inequality, but, on the contrary, could end up providing a sort of subsidy to the elite.

[9] It is equally important to underscore that the idea of free education was not new either, as the secondary students advanced this demand in 2006. By 2006 though the demand did not gain massive support as was the case in 2011.

There were two positions in the 'free education' debate: there was the moderate position, represented by the leader of the Catholic University, who said that it was completely unrealistic and demonstrated poor strategic vision to demand something which the government would never concede, since this could demoralise the grassroots and the wider movement; then there was the other, more radical position, voiced mainly by the leader of the Technological Metropolitan University, who said that it was precisely the grassroots members who were determined to fight and maintain the mobilisation for free education and the de-commodification of universities. Though for both leaders the demand for free education was a long-term one, the cautious tone of the moderate position was interpreted as 'weak commitment to the cause' by the other position.

> Gratuity must be seen in the long term, and our leaders must be responsible with the expectations created among our social bases. It is necessary to define the short- and long-term work to fulfil the expectations of our social bases, to avoid promising gratuity during a right-wing government term. Today, we need to speak to those who don't believe us.
>
> Catholic University's spokesperson, CONFECH minutes, June 2011

> There is unrest about the calls made for being responsible about what is announced to the people. It is necessary to understand that this is a process of historical readjustment and regulation, therefore it is not irresponsible to put forward the issue of free education. To present it as a long-term agenda is to postpone an important demand, and, at the same time, every year we mobilise for short-term demands and we fail to establish core goals. And that is our responsibility to our people, to be attuned to processes already happening in Latin America where natural resources are being recovered, to put forward demands that aim to the core.
>
> Technological Metropolitan University's spokesperson, CONFECH minutes, June 2011

As time went on, and the first massive marches took place, the idea of free education associated with the one of education as a social right gained momentum. By mid-June, an 1,800 hour marathon around the presidential palace in which a group of students waving a flag with the motto 'free education now' had already began. The 1,800 hours symbolised the 1,800 dollars necessary to finance a free educational system, and students were already discussing and working on a technical proposal of a tax reform from which the money would

be taken. Yet, while the demand for free education was agreed to by the majority of students, the conflict around the different meanings of free education remained. The conservative reading of the movement, for example, argued that the demand for free education did not challenge neoliberalism, but merely pointed toward corrective measures (Durán 2012). Following Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006) model, the demand for free education pertained thus to the 'market city', in which consumers (students) demand a market compensation given the bad quality of the provided service (education). Arguably, 'lower-middle class people', who still believed in the 'meritocratic' dream, were the ones who most opposed a free education policy, as they could make the effort to pay for their children's education if they can make a difference (or distinction) among other poor children.

> We were afraid of that, yes, because it is also true that an important part of those who mobilised wanted gratuity to have more money to consume, taking gratuity as something less to put in their monthly bill, and extra cash to spend in the mall. I think it had a lot about that, a superficial 'I don't want to pay' approach, rather than being a 'I want to build a country where everyone has this and that'. No, it was more a 'I don't want to pay' attitude.
>
> Giorgio Jackson, former president of FEUC

> 'Education is not a privilege, is for all,' generated a lot of resistance from middle and lower segments of society, who were paying between $5,000 and $10,000, and didn't want their children's schools to be free because that would mean that children from municipal (public) education would come to their schools and worsen the quality of their children's education. There was a lot of that. It was then that we realised that this cleavage emerged, but we also thought it was necessary to maintain it, to foster and deepen the cultural debate. Because one thing is to say 'I'm for gratuity' and another is to defend a privilege, even if it is a small one, such as paying $10,000 or $15,000 to differentiate my children from the rest. It was that notion of the collective that generated resistance when we tried to apply it.
>
> Camila Vallejo, former president of FECH

But finally, the worth of the 'civic city' – with its equality and solidarity test – prevailed in 2011. The crisis of the educational system as a symbol of the crisis of a societal model, the shared ground of indebtedness and, as we will see, the brutal repression from Piñera's government, foregrounded the 'social justice' meaning of free education in the students' demand. The 'framework' of social rights proved to be key in this process of 'generalisation',

as students were able to connect with the rest of the people and provide the movement with broad social legitimisation and support. At the same time, however, the idea of education as a social right and free education as a type of financing was felt to be problematic for some Leftist students. Indeed, the tensions around the notion of free education escalated. It was clear that education was a social right, but it was not clear if this entailed a radical rejection of the neoliberal principles of the entire educational system. As Recaredo says, once the social right to public and free education had been defined as one of the central demands, there was a constant dispute over the meaning of 'the public'. Still, students finally made explicit their demands for a universal public and free education and their rejection of the neoliberal principles of focalisation and subsidies on poorest students.

> When universal gratuity becomes a demand, there can be different interpretations. One sees it as a class strategy, others as part of a reformist strategy, and another as very close to the liberal project. When liberals talk about gratuity they are also thinking about focalisation. Therefore, it is very important to give gratuity a last name (specifying what kind of gratuity). But what happens in 2011 is all about gratuity, the idea of it, and the ensuing debate has been about what last name we'll use.
>
> Recaredo Galvez, former president of FEC

> But what stands in opposition, the most advanced notion I think there is, is the idea of the universality of a right, against focalisation. And I think that the idea of education, and other social rights, as universal social rights is quite advanced, leaving the principle of focalisation towards the poorer sectors of society, and with it the idea of social fragmentation, as against the universality of a right.
>
> Francisco Figueroa, former vice president of FECH

Now, as underscored by several commentators (Grez 2011; Salazar 2012), the student movement was considered as a genuine event in Chile, a disruption of public energy and solidarity not seen since the anti-Pinochet protests during the 1980s. Just like the *pobladores* movement, university students emphasised that this 'event' was the result of a large process of accumulation and memory, so it was not an 'event' in the sense of an unexpected eruption. Rather, the 'disruptive' character of the 2011 mobilisation is related to what Rancière calls 'a distribution of the sensible' accomplished by the movement. Indeed, once the conflict around its meaning in the context of the mobilisation had been provisionally settled, the demand for

free education was understood by the students as a radical demand. And considering the large tradition of forced or ideologically induced stability, they did 'perform on a stage that was not made for their performance' (Honneth and Rancière 2016, p.213), and put to work the Rancièrian 'method of equality'. Five years prior to the protests of 2011, not even the most 'radical' of the university students would have imagined that the demand for free education could have achieved widespread acceptance. There were two ways in which students created new symbolic 'universes' or 'communities', to follow Rancière. First, the idea of social right provided a principle of generality capable of including all families and individuals in a context in which a meritocratic understanding of both education and social life was dominant. The universality of the students' demands was performed and mediated by several actions, through which students created a 'civic' sense of justice and solidarity. As Daniela says:

> I think that, in the end, this movement is making evident that there are things that belong to us all. Therefore, the social right of education that we are pushing for starts revealing that there are some dimensions of the world in which we all participate, to which we all have a right, and that is very powerful because it can apply to everything, to all social rights.
>
> Daniela Lopez, former student activist

Secondly, students took over the streets of Chile, occupied the universities and other buildings, and successfully combined local, deliberative, and direct democracy in assemblies, with more traditional structures (national universities' federations). I will now describe how this aesthetic-political moment unfolded in 2011, following the development of these two key symbolic interventions.

Constructing legitimacy: social base, resources, and solidarity

As we saw in chapter 6, social movement scholars have underscored the vital role of resources in the formation and functioning of social movements and other forms of collective actions. The 2011 Chilean student movement was no exception. Indeed, students used a wide range of economic, media, educational, and organisational resources to keep the mobilisation going for more than six months. But scholars tend to overlook the social conditions or 'social opportunities' in which these resources became valuable and effective. In the Chilean case, the dramatic rise in the participation of lower middle class students in tertiary education (Orellana 2011) over the last 30 years (from 35% to 53%) transformed the previously public

university system into a market-based system dominated by private universities. Traditionally, students from private universities did not actively participate in student actions. But in 2011 they played a relevant role, not only because the student debt which many of them incurred was seen as an allegory of the commodification of education, but also because they extended to their families the disappointment of something that they started to see as a false promise. In 2013 the *Universidad del mar* – a for-profit university oriented to lower class students – was seriously questioned by the ministry of education after administrative failures and financial irregularities (money laundering). By the end of the same year, the university had closed most of its faculties, leaving hundreds of students without a degree. This was the context in which the mobilisation unfolded in 2011. In evaluating the impact of the movement and the massive support it obtained from the majority of people in Chile, Felipe and Daniela highlight the role played by private universities.

> It was a very massive mobilisation. I recall that even students from the private institutions, such as Inacap, DUOC, were there in great numbers. They felt they were the most screwed ones by the system, the ones with higher debts, the ones receiving the worst quality education in the private higher education structure. They were not coming from U. Los Andes, nor Adolfo Ibáñez, but from Las Américas, or Andrés Bello, giant universities that are openly businesses, or the Universidad del Mar before it went bankrupt.
>
> Felipe Ramirez, former student activist

> (…) I think the massiveness generated in the 2011 mobilisations has to do with the fact that it appealed to the ones who weren't usually part of mobilisations. And that is something you don't realize straight away, in fact you only get it when you start to dig in about problems in education. You get that a lot in private universities, technical institutes and so on. And then you start sharing experiences and even in your family and neighbours you realise that there are different types of students. And little by little the movement developed the creativity to break the mould of normal mobilisations, gaining in size which in turn helped in consolidating it.
>
> Daniela Lopez, former student activist

But the movement was not only large in number. Students created a stage on which they could voice as legitimate 'forbidden' words such as 'free education'. In so doing, they had to be creative, as there was a high risk of being depicted by the media and the government as 'radicals'. Apart from traditional actions such as occupations, sit-ins, and strikes, students

ran a two-month-long marathon around the presidential palace, performed the debtors' thriller for education, also in front of the presidential palace, they performed the '*besaton*', a mass kissing marathon aiming at showing that students wanted peace and love and not only barricades, along with several flash mobs and YouTube videos. Occupations and strikes were crucial for this re-ordering of spaces and times, as well as the taking over of public spaces with actions that subverted the normal course of cities.

> There were days in which we had reflexive strikes, and thanks to that, we could bring over professors, and go out to give away flyers. There were also the 1,800 hours for education, the education thriller and a bunch of stuff which allowed us to have space for mobilising, and making our demands visible, even to show our fellow students that this was an issue we all shared, that we had to mobilise. And that made the movement bigger and bigger, and ended being the most massive movement because even people from private universities that had never in their lives mobilised before began to participate.
>
> Marjorie Cuello, former student activist

The use of technology facilitated the coordination of this type of action, so that students from different universities and usually distant from each other could share information about upcoming actions, as well as prepare and propose new interventions. Protests and marches were usually called through Facebook or Twitter. According to Daniela, the existence of this type of technology helped to forge both creativity and coordination.

> One of the things that helped in expanding the movement was that you could be more… creative. And I think that was one of the more interesting things about 2011, having a lot of creative capacity. Then new initiatives slowly began to emerge, which were relatively easy to do with the new technologies at hand, that weren't present in former mobilisations. For example, if one made a call for a thriller, you could do it through Facebook, then people would get to rehearsals and learn the choreography.
>
> Daniela Lopez, former student activist

Another important channel that students used to construct legitimacy was the official media. Students established an ambiguous relationship with the official Chilean media (owned mainly by the right-wing). Whilst the latter showed some sympathy for students' 'fair cause' when the movement became broad and went beyond the educational terrain, and criminalised protests and students at the beginning and the end of the mobilisations, students'

appearances on TV programmes were seen by some students as a necessary strategy and by others as a personalisation and instrumentalisation of the movement by some of its leaders (*CONFECH* 2011). Overall, students' communicational strategy developed along two fronts: the well prepared and organised appearance in the media of leaders and federations' representatives, and spontaneous public activities performed by groups of students with autonomy from the federations.

> We prepared, nothing too left to chance. I mean, we started preparing at the end of 2010 to generate a communicational strategy for the reform issue. We defined main topics, target audiences, what was it that we wanted. It was like an advertisement campaign, semi-professional, but I would say it was a good one, with a website, video, and a thousand other things. But afterwards, everything was more inorganic, everything was more anarchical so to speak. Despite having a structure, all began to flow. I don't know, the *Genkidama* for education wasn't us, the thriller for education wasn't us either, it just happened spontaneously. Everything was inorganic and despite us trying to coordinate our public engagement, it all went according to the moment, it wasn't as strategic as one might think, it was quite amateur.
>
> Giorgio Jackson, former president of FEUC

But the 'Rancièrian' moment of the Chilean student movement did not just involve the creative occupation of the public space. Along with the above-mentioned activities, students in their neighbourhoods used the time of student strikes and occupations to create popular education experiences, collaborative workshops with trade-union members, popular nurseries, among others. As we will see, this can be seen as an effort at organisational totalisation, that is, an effort to establish connections with other organised groups fighting against neoliberal policies (including *pobladores*), which was a crucial aspect of the student movement in going from particularistic demands to becoming a 'social movement' (*FECH* 2011). At a more descriptive level, the students created momentary spaces of socialisation disrupting the official approved relations between places and words. Marjorie goes on to describe this moment as follows:

> When we had a lot of food, because there were times when we had a lot of food we collected for the mobilisations, we invited homeless people to have lunch with us, spent time with them and that kind of thing allowed us to go against… Because you generate social spaces with people who are not part of the university, a fraternal space to chat, to talk about how indebtedness is unfair for this and that.

Marjorie Cuello, former student activist

4th August: Repression, popular backing, and solidarity

On the 4th of August 2011, students went on a national strike in response to the proposal of Piñera's government, which offered only 'cosmetic' changes – an increase in student scholarships and better institutional conditions for students' participation within universities – to the educational system and did not address the structural demands (Interview with Simon Ramirez, former student activist). Secondary students marched in the morning and university students in the evening. The demonstrations were not authorised by Santiago city council, and consequently, police forces pushed protesters back using water cannon and tear gas. More than 200 students were arrested by the police during the day. As a reaction to the brutality of the police's actions, in the evening students formed massive barricades in the city centre and on the outskirts, whilst families and people performed '*cacerolazos*' in different districts of Santiago. As if Chilean students were synchronised with other protesters in the UK and other cities, on the 4th of August they channelled their disappointment with the government, and their rage against the police, into riots. Unlike previous protests, though, this time the riots were popular, as many people who had never participated in protest actions, including students' families, joined them in the streets.

> August 4th is the date for left-wingers to go out and defend ourselves. We tried to march pacifically in the morning but got our arses kicked. We carried on through the night making a mess because we had to state that we weren't going home despite being beaten. It's something very different from the 'capuchas' phenomenon (hooded protesters) in university campuses. It was a marginal and minor phenomenon with average students.

Felipe Ramirez, former student activist

The brutality of police repression brought back memories of the dictatorship. It was significant in this regard that sympathisers of the movement – mainly students' families, relatives, and neighbours – who in previous years would have attributed violence mainly to students, energetically opposed the government's repressive agenda. According to an opinion poll, Piñera's approval rating slumped to 23%, whilst student support was above 80% (Interview with Camila Vallejo, former president of FECH; ADIMARK GfK 2011).

> On August 4th, there were grandparents banging pots and pans with us, or even helping us block some streets and doing barricades because they hadn't seen this much repression or so many people willing to protest since the dictatorship… For instance we wanted to hold a plebiscite, a group of us wanted to, and people told us like 'we want to participate', 'we want to be part of your group', 'we are very happy for what you are doing', you know? They were willing to participate and now that is settling much more, as a new reference, having the student movement as fostering other fights too, you know?
>
> Constanza Martinez, former president of Law's student union

> Because of the strikes and university occupations, we were occupying universities for a long time, but in terms of size the protest on August 4th was crucial… I think the level of repression that the student movement received, also in a Latin American level and even more when compared to North American protests, surprised us all… We experienced that so closely that one realises it, but from the outside it looked so… My grandpa told me it was like when they broadcasted images during the dictatorship… It was brutal; I even think Hinzpeter didn't hesitate to give the order to kick our arses. So I think that at an international level these protests were thematised, both because of the repression and because of Human Rights. And both elements, for better or for worse, made us known at an international level.
>
> Marjorie Cuello, former student activist

Performing radical democracy

Finally, the Chilean students constructed themselves as an egalitarian community internally, within their spaces (universities across the country, secondary schools, and cultural centres) and through practices which students saw as lessons of a collective and cumulative learning from previous mobilisations. We have seen how a move toward autonomy has been characteristic of social movements since the 1950s. Rancière and NSM scholars (such as Melucci, Touraine, and Castells). Similar to the *pobladores* movement, autonomy for students meant a withdrawal not from the state per se, but from political parties and their influences over student politics. This did not entail a complete rejection of party politics, though, as some of the student movement's most prominent figures are part of the Chilean Communist Party. But beyond individual militancy in official national parties, students created their own form of democratic organisation, combining historical organisational structures – such as university federations – with deliberative and direct democracy in

assemblies at all university levels (degrees, schools, faculties, and universities). Due to this 'dual' structure – simultaneously vertical and horizontal – tensions arose between pro-assembly students who constantly questioned the legitimacy and the strategic value of having 'representatives', and those who thought the movement could make no real gains if some level of political representation was attained. The political dilemma for students was that the more support and legitimacy they forged externally, the greater were the tensions and internal conflicts. But again, the difference between the 2011 student movement and its previous versions was that students managed to stay united until the end of the mobilisation. How did they do this? First, remaining autonomous from political parties and displaying 'accountability' mechanisms so the grassroots have ultimate control over the spokespersons and representatives at the different university federations, and at the *CONFECH* (Federation of Chilean Students). And secondly, by creating bonds with organisations of a broader spectrum, all of which were resisting and/or fighting neoliberalism. The connection with different organisations provides the movement with a solid and broad 'back', as they say, a broad vision in which most students can converge if the general aim, demands, and diagnosis upon which the demands were built are respected by spokespersons and leaders.

It is important to note that the democratic practices of students followed a back and forth movement, a bottom-up and top-down flow. Most of the leaders and spokespersons participated in an informal political organisation (*colectivos*). These students were usually the ones who systematised discussions in assemblies and problematised aspects of strategy and tactics, of diagnosis, contexts, and political opportunities. Although there were students suspicious of these 'political' students and their 'hidden' particularistic interest, the massive participation of students allowed assemblies to democratically regulate these spaces, at least most of the time. The interdependence between formal leaders and massive grassroots allowed most of the students to internalise the demands of the movement and participate actively throughout the mobilisation. Was this relationship between 'political' or politically formed students of informal organisations on the one hand and the grassroots on the other an arbitrary partition of tasks and places, as Rancière would put it? Did this form of organisation imply a cancellation of the aesthetic-political moment? Most students did not experience their participation in the movement in this way, although tensions between fractions, between

grassroots and leaders, and between male and female students were present in the movement at that time.

> 'Let's mobilise for them to receive scholarships', and then you start having assemblies and gatherings. In the department and school assemblies you start discussing this, but realise that there is something deeper going on… And a lot of different organisations start adding content to the student movement, to this process. At the same time, different sub groups or commissions start to be created, especially once the mobilisations had started, such as the advertising commission, the research commission, etc. We belonged to the law school, so there were some people who started to use this knowledge. This makes the discussion more complex. It became an upwards and downwards process, it was not always a direct one.
>
> Constanza Martinez, former president of Law's student union

> The other thing is that the organisational processes were different, and that allowed for more democracy and I think that also more links between the bases and their movements, you know? Like, many times Camila said something and people wouldn't necessarily agree, or Giorgio said a, b, c or d, and all the people who belonged to the movement were able to understand what they were saying to each other and to say 'uh, not this', you know? Like 'not this, they are saying too much'. There was also a lot of control, which allowed the organisation to be greatly dynamic, you know? Where people had a sense of belonging, they were doing what they said they would, they could ask for things not to be done, and they knew all this would have a correlate effect.
>
> Marjorie Cuello, former student activist

The *CONFECH* managed to confer a provisional moment of 'unification' or 'synthesis' of different perspectives and a plurality of students and universities. That is, it provided a space for discussion and dispute over the meaning of the mobilisation and the tactics and strategies to follow. There were differences between regional universities and traditional universities in Santiago, between students coming from organisations with significant political traditions and students with no previous experience or participation in politics, and finally between different ideological and political backgrounds among those more 'politicised' students.

> The thing is that at the end of the day, the 2011 CONFECH, in its organisation, manages to be a synthesis space for these disparate tendencies that eroded the political transition of student leadership to the Concertación

> bureaucracy of the 90s. And those spaces remained there on account of a de-politicisation of this sector.
>
> Recaredo Galvez, former president of FEC

Notwithstanding the capacities of *CONFECH* for integrating a plurality of students across Chile, including regional universities from the north and the south of Chile, this traditional students' 'institution' was still reproducing oppressive trends, such as that of gender inequality. However, it is precisely the radical democratic character of students' politics, based on discussion of assemblies and work in different committees, that allows the student movement to learn and to modify the 'traditional' aspects of an oppressive politics without modifying its basic structure. Six years after the 2011 mobilisations, Daniela comments on this process of political maturation.

> But that has to do with maturity and currently, the student movement has been walking in the correct direction. In 2011 you couldn't talk about non-sexist education, for example. There was an established and strong left-winged conservatism or traditionalism; women were leaders, but mainly represented as exceptional women, or recognising that women also experienced, as a collective subject, different degrees of inequality within the public dispute and even more in politics. I mean, there were two women leaders to every 15 men in the CONFECH, you know, it was a radical question.
>
> Daniela Lopez, former student activist

What made Chilean students move?

We have seen that on the individual psychological level, students took to the streets motivated by a deep discontent. Such discontent had a specific source and a specific target: student debt and a neoliberal educational system in crisis. Students were not only abstractly disappointed with the precarious prospects that the Chilean educational system offered them; they also felt rage and anguish in respect of the broken meritocratic promise. As one student says, 'people were not protesting against capitalism directly, they were fighting because they felt overwhelmed, because they had to choose which one of their children would go to uni' (Interview with Daniela, student movement participant). So, students moved in the first place because they felt they had nothing to lose, considering they would be bound to debt and the banks for more than 20 years. They took these feelings of disrespect as an object of common

reflexion and went to share them with other students, elaborating a diagnosis which underscored the fissures of Pinochet's neoliberal education system. In this context, an orientation toward generality was crucial for the students, as this 'vantage point' allowed them to incorporate students from private universities, and overall to understand that behind problems of infrastructure and of the scholarship system lay a systemic failure.

Whilst the main tension and articulatory challenge for the *pobladores'* movement was the accommodation of the logics of what Boltanski and Thévenot call the 'domestic' and the 'civic' polities (cities), students had to manage to sustain the tension between aspects of the 'civic' and the 'market' city. The 'social rights' framework proved to be useful and effective in this regard. But the 'civic' orientation toward generality was less a matter of abstract formulation than a practical issue. Significantly, students made connections with organisations beyond the realm of education and activated political alliances. After the 4th of August riots, students gathered one million people in what they called a 'family demonstration for the right to education'. In that massive public activity, the workers' united centre called for a two-day national strike and for a united resistance to Piñera's government and its pro-privatisation agenda not only of the right to education, but also the right to work, housing, environment, and pensions, among others. They situated themselves within a broader context and a singular scenario for the Chilean context, in an effort at 'totalisation'.

> Three weeks before we began to move simultaneously in our first marches, were those gigantic marches because of Hidroaysen, and before the mobilisations in Punta Arenas. Then there were mobilisations in Aysén again, because of the fishing issue, and so there were other simultaneous struggles. And I think that all this shapes the same scenario, that is, all those conflict situations have to do with the same phenomenon, the exhaustion or the crisis of a model implemented by the *Concertación.*
>
> Felipe Ramirez, former student activist

> This has not come from nowhere, it happens at a time when a large mobilisation of subcontractors in 2007 showed that the resources generated by copper were not for everyone, but that there was much precariousness. These mobilised people were the ones that made the copper wealth possible. The mobilisations in regions were super important. Then 2011 all this began. There are mobilisations in Punta Arenas against different types of political arbitrariness. Then, in 2011, many sectors felt represented by the rebellion of the student movement. Then there is an accumulation of strength and

> discomfort because, of course, it connects with other forms of discontent and sectors for which the ways of doing things, politics, is no longer legitimate.
>
> Francisco Figueroa, former vice president of FECH

> In 2006–2007 there were large mobilisations of the relevant sectors for the economy that have to do with the extractive sector, we also have workers killed at that time. Recently a worker died in a protest for copper. So the mobilisations not only consider the students, but also the other levels of popular organisation.
>
> Recaredo Galvez, former president of FEC

These are not merely descriptions of an effervescent moment and a 'favourable' scenario for mobilisations of any kind. Students' totalisations entail the recognition of being part of a whole 'in movement'; and they see this not as a limitation but as a potential possibility to construct a subject that is not restricted to the educational system and, as such, is able to dispute neoliberalism in all those areas in which neoliberal policies are applied. It is precisely the dimension of the 'subject' that appears as a possibility in these totalisations, which can be seen thus as brief moments of anticipation. As Camilo recalls:

> We started demanding what now seems tiny things, a reduction in the student transport pass for example, full maintenance scholarships, a 0.3% increase in food grants, those kind of things, and we ended up talking about tax reform, a constitutional assembly. We then did not even talk about education anymore. Many students had the conviction that this had to be a social movement, not just a student movement.
>
> Camilo Ballesteros, former president of FEUSACH

When students 'transcend' their identity, they construct a new 'subject' in both a passive and an active way; either they define themselves as responsible citizens of the already established Chilean republic, or they affirm the capacity of students, along with other social movements and organisations, to construct a new subject capable of fighting back against neoliberalism:

> In short, the root of the problems in education is in the Political Constitution. There can be no real progress if we do not understand our position as citizens in the State.

CONFECH minutes, 2nd July 2011

> Students are not the protagonists of the movement, since we incorporate the demand for the change of the Constitution, this movement is a citizen one.

UMCE, spokesperson, CONFECH minutes July

> To be capable of making an 'inner reflection' allows us to go beyond ourselves to citizenship in general and to join other organisations and groups.

Central University, spokesperson, 10th December 2011

> Going back to classes does not mean the end of the mobilisation, we have to project this movement. We have to demonstrate that we need more time to build a truly popular movement and also other important groups must join with greater strength to this movement.

FEC-UDEC minutes

The last two interventions can be considered as the outline of what we could call, following the quote, a 'politics of de-creation'. Students say that it is only by an 'inner reflection' that they can go beyond the limits of its specific demands and become not just students, but citizens. Ironically, it is only by going to the roots of what prevents university students from satisfactorily studying a degree – namely, student debt – that they can criticise society as a whole. This movement between the 'particular' and the 'universal' is precisely the movement that the arms and tools of critique enable. Of course, the utopian horizon that makes students move is not clearly defined by them, although we can glimpse in the 'spirit' of the movement the desire to reinvent neoliberal citizenship and use this as a basis for the future construction of popular power. Constanza clearly synthesises this position:

> We should think of and imagine a subject that necessarily disputes the totality, and that will not be possible in this system. The political system is not able to represent what we built in the movement. And I think the only way to do this is by getting some power. I do not mean to win an election but to build popular power. We put the question into circulation, and some proposals, and people started questioning: how do we change this country? But not only education. This is not about separate sectoral struggles, but we are all in the same boat, this has to do with how we make a different and better society that works for all.

Constanza Martinez, former president of Law's student union

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how Chilean students elaborated and mobilised a critical discourse against neoliberalism in 2011. Individuals' feelings of indignation were taken as an object of collective reflexion and connected to a diagnosis of the socio-economic dynamics behind a system which increased access but created a mass of debtors in the process. This socio-economic condition and its disastrous effects on an unequal and low-quality education system was the foundation on which students created a massive social movement. In more than seven months of mobilisation, the students were able to make connections with students who had not been involved in previous mobilisations – crucially, students from private universities. This provided the movement with a broad base of support and legitimacy, given that families identified with the burden of debts and education was seen as a major vehicle for social mobility. Students unmasked the 'false' promises of meritocracy, identified the main contradiction of the educational system, and accordingly demanded a free and quality education. They also proposed a Constitutional Assembly and a tax reform to accomplish these demands. In so doing, they 'redistributed the sensible', and performed radical and direct democracy by way of assemblies, occupations, and public spaces, and coordinated on a national scale through the Federation of Chilean Students (*CONFECH*). The students' critique of Chilean society, which underpinned their demands, led them finally to go beyond their identity as students and to participate in the broader construction of a new type of citizenship, which could form the basis for the construction of a post-neoliberal society.

CONCLUSION

The possibility of social critique: between critical social theory and social movements

So how can we account for the possibility of social critique? In this thesis, I have suggested that one way to accomplish this task is by considering the affinities between both academic and activist critiques. That is, to recognise that some contemporary social movements perform an activist critique of contemporary society as a whole, and that this critique is structurally similar to the one made by critical theorists, but toward different ends and at a different distance from their object (capitalist society). This act of recognition necessarily requires to show that the idea of social movements criticising contemporary capitalist society has some purchase, or at least that it is analytically productive to consider them in that way.

As I argued in chapter 5, critical social theory should take distance from the distancing effect of its abstractions and return to the realm of individuals' vivid experiences if critical theory wants to rehabilitate its political dimension. Tensions arise across different styles of critique from the increasing incapacity to make sense of concrete individuals' experiences. Unlike Jameson, who turned to the realm of art and art criticism in order to obtain an 'aesthetic', concrete sense of individuals' experiences and their (im)possible task of cognitively mapping the global and complicated reality of global capitalism, I have proposed that we examine social movements' practices of social criticism. Once we look 'closer' at the level of social movement criticism, we also found that critique serves the purpose of distancing. Therefore, distancing is a mechanism that operates both *between* theoretical academic critique and activist critique, and *within* both realms.

Indeed, as I have shown in chapters 7 and 8, an orientation toward generality and a notion of social totality as a 'regulative ideal' are crucial for social movements when they go beyond specific demands and start to elaborate a collective 'case' out of individual experiences of indignation. The practices of 'totalisation' in which social movements engage allow them to make connections between different issues and crucially with people and

organisations beyond the initial scope of their demands. As illustrated by the *pobladores'* movement, this does not amount to a negation of a movement's identity; on the contrary, it entails the very possibility of elaborating their utopian aims and retaining a non-sectarian notion of community. The back and forth movement between 'the particular' and 'the universal' is also expressed at the level of the subject: 'we are not only students but much more than that'; 'our dream is bigger than a house'. The presupposition of a social totality, then, is central to the students' and *pobladores'* self-making as a form of collective agency.

At the same time, there are obvious differences in terms of style and diction between social critique at both levels, and they are, at some point, parallel critiques to 'society as a whole'. On the one hand, social movements' criticisms are political from the outset; when they go from the particular (housing, student debt) to the general (communitarian socialism, tax reforms, and Constituent Assembly), they are able to bring together individuals from fragmented social and political contexts. As shown by the different interventions of *pobladores* and students, they have been able to 'redistribute the sensible' either by putting into circulation forbidden words (such as free education, for example), or by giving new meaning to the living conditions of the urban poor. On the other hand, critical social theory aims primarily at explaining the (socio-economic, normative, and hermeneutic) contradictions of capitalist society. As distinct from social theory, whose criticality is 'scientific' rather than political, critical social theory aims at gaining knowledge for the progressive or radical transformation of society and its 'pathologies' or 'harms', rejecting the distinction between facts and values. Yet, its primary aim is still the gaining of systematic knowledge. As such, they are different in respect of the main purpose that guides their critical activity. Following Boltanski, thus, we can talk in terms of a pragmatic or performative register of critique, and a meta-pragmatic register.

But there is still one more respect in which both critiques significantly differ. Both academic social critique and activist critique have a mediated approach to the social totality. Between a specific problem (lack of funding, for example), and the social totality they try to map out, social movements and activists have to deal with political, ideological, normative, and institutional mediations. Yet, unlike critical theorists, social movements do this in practical terms, and in so doing, they encounter 'classic' political dilemmas, like the relationship between leaders and grassroots members (an ongoing tension in both the

pobladores and student movements), or the radicalness of their demands (as illustrated with the discussion around the issue of 'free education for all' in the case of the student movement).

In the previous two chapters, I have explored how leaders and activists 'synthesise' and provide a framework in which individual criticisms arising from contexts of economic and social deprivation can be collectively expressed. As we have seen, it is precisely the comparison with others who are not visible in everyday contexts (the 1%, the capitalists, the politicians, etc.), facilitated by the use of totalising semantic tools (such as statistics, theories, and, crucially, collective memory), that allows social movements to provisionally 'distance' themselves from their immediate situation and locate their specific 'problems' within a broader context; going thus from a meritocratic view – in which the neighbour or the classmate are seen as rivals – to a more solidary notion of justice. Yet, whilst a common critique of the 'system' has a unifying power, the more 'positive' step of defining how a post-neoliberal or post-capitalist society would come about, or what it would look like, is far trickier. This is where a workable notion of theoretical 'mediations' can be of great utility.

Critical social theorists address capitalist society favouring one 'master code' – socio-economic, normative, political-aesthetic, and pragmatic – each of which can be seen as a mediation in the overall intention of critical social theory to understand and explain the dynamics of capitalist society. In a more performative register, social movements approach capitalist society mediated as housing and educational neoliberal policies in the first instance, and then as neoliberal society. At this level, the theoretical discussion of what neoliberalism is, for example, is less relevant than a discussion of which policies have been implemented in the field of education and housing during the last 30 years, how those policies affect students and *pobladores*, and what might be the potential solution in ameliorating those effects.

In chapter 7, we have seen that the *pobladores* movement articulated a 'revolutionary' discourse, inheritor of the old *pobladores* movement from the 1970s, with a communitarian ethos, combining a particularistic affirmation of the *poblacion* as a social and political base of resistance to capitalism and the utopian imaginary of its 'overcoming' (communitarian socialism). Their critique is not merely rhetorical but is performed and reinforced in everyday activities and practices of self-education and self-management. As I have argued, for *pobladores*, politics is both a space in which their interests can be represented (by themselves)

and a way of living together in *poblaciones*. The student movement does not define itself as an anti-capitalist movement, but rather as an anti-neoliberal movement making claims for social rights. In so doing, it relies not on a communitarian logic, but rather on a radical version of a democratic discourse.

There is an obvious temptation here to follow Simmel's model of 'distances and perspective' and situate the *pobladores'* movement 10 yards away from the social capitalist totality whilst locating the student movement closer. This would explain why the enunciation of an anti-capitalist discourse is not without tensions or contradictions for *pobladores*, who explicitly reject a vanguard politics and seek to construct a 'popular subject' based on a majoritarian politics. Students do not have this problem, but they have to contend with the question of how to make the 'civic' and not the 'market' interpretation of their demands prevail. I think the most productive way to approach both movements is by locating them in the broader context of other social struggles and mobilisations happening in Chile since 2011. Considering them in this way we can use social critique as a background against which different movements approach the social totality at different distances and with different purposes in order to rebel against them. As we have seen, both movements attempt organisational totalisations, and though their main shared objective remains a 'negative' one (namely, the critique of the existing system), more positive convergences can be achieved on this basis. In particular, one should attend to the different mediations between each particular position and the social totality if an articulatory moment is to be achieved.

As we have seen, the political and ideological mediations at this level are paramount for moving from what Boltanski calls a reformist critique to a radical one. At the theoretical level, we can all be radicals, to some extent; but the practical utility of a broader integrative horizon depends on the possibility of effectively elaborating cognitive maps, as Jameson argues, which can help in the task of orientation. In this thesis, which has been theoretically oriented, I have advanced the idea that these theoretical maps cannot do without the small-scale maps created by social movements, and that the distinction between map and territory is also replicated at the pragmatic level. At the same time, an escape from theory would deprive social movements, activists, and ordinary people of important semantic tools and resources, which are second-order elaborations of their maps. Furthermore, it is not an 'escape' from critique per se but rather from *social* critique that ultimately could be

detrimental to social movements' intention to forge utopian and realist hopes. Neo-Marxists authors, such as David Harvey, but also other critical social theories provide a good sense of the extent to which socio-economic and normative structures constrain individuals; social movements show the extent to which individuals resist and rebel against these structures. Social critique, which consists of the elaboration of a crisis, the identification of contradictions, and the always tense and contradictory posing of a utopian horizon, can be seen as the intersection at which theoretical and activist critiques meet. But above all, social critique works as a sort of ordering for the purpose of sense-making and political orientation.

To sum up the argument, throughout this thesis I have demonstrated that the tensions arising in both realms have some similarities. In critiquing capitalist society (object of critique) at different distances or degrees of proximity (pragmatic and meta-pragmatic registers), critical social theory and social movements seek to grasp capitalist society as a 'system'. In both cases, there is a 'rise toward generality', and they both find tensions in their attempts to manage the 'correct' degree of distancing. Critical social theorists can find themselves trapped in the iron cage of theoretical reification if they go too far in the abstract theorisation of social contradictions without including the descriptions and explanations arising from the lived experience of individuals and collective agents. Social movements in their turn might trap themselves in particularism and isolation if they do not transcend their specific claims. At both levels, however, it is the back and forth movement, the articulatory process, or the 'game of distances' that count; not the 'big' or 'small' picture.

Contributions

In what follows, I will briefly highlight what I think comprise the main contributions and limitations of the thesis.

Methodologically, this thesis might contribute to a repositioning of the relationship between critical social theory and social movements. Critical social theorists not only need to register concrete social struggles if they want to remain 'critical' – including, of course, the critique of movements when/if necessary; crucially, they can learn from social movements how to combine or forge compromises between logics that are apparently incompatible at the theoretical level. We can obtain different readings of a single phenomenon using any of the critical theorists reviewed in this thesis; when we look into processes of pragmatic critique,

however, we can see how the different styles of critique work together and mediate each other, even though or precisely because they have different purposes and operate at different distances from their object of critique. To be sure, there are many ways in which this can be concretely achieved. I have privileged the theoretical moment of critique, given that the question of the renewal of the political sense of social critique (the possibility of social critique) is key for the purposes of political orientation and evaluation of the current situation, i.e. the various post-2008 protests and mobilisations.

Theoretically, I think the thesis can prompt the use of social critique not only as an analytical tool, but also as a mediation or link between individuals' experiences and the social totality. With Rancière (and against Honneth) we can say that there is no direct relationship between individuals' suffering and politics; however, against Rancière, we can affirm that suffering does count in the construction of collective agency; social movements take that suffering as an object in the elaboration of the crisis either of the educational or the housing system. The affirmation of different universes or 'communities of equals' cannot be related directly to the status of individuals' psychological experience, but crucially they cannot do without a reference to the social totality. Students and *pobladores* defined themselves negatively as debtors and '*allegados*', and then they went on to 'transcend' these identities to become students, *pobladores*, and then popular citizens or popular subjects. Again, aspects of the theorisations on capitalism and dialectical utopianism might help to account for these structural conditions.

Empirically, the thesis suggests a number of issues that demand further exploration regarding the nature, functioning, and formation of contemporary social movements, especially in Latin America. In chapters 7 and 8, I have integrated some of the analytical resources afforded by social movement studies, not only in an additive way (as the authors of the 'common agenda' have done), but also in showing how resources, opportunities, and frames are part of a process of critique, with different moments and functions. Importantly, the thesis shows that the relationship between frames and ideologies, for example, is more fluid than what is commonly taken to be the case. But overall, perhaps the main contribution of the thesis at this level is to show that the division between 'new' and 'old' social movements, with 'material' and 'post-material' has become obsolete. This is certainly true in the case of Latin American movements.

Limitations

This thesis has various limitations. First, the selection of cases as 'representatives' of the field of critical social theory has been necessarily partial. I have dealt mainly with European and North American authors, as the discussions around the nature and fate of critique have taken place mainly within the field of what has been broadly understood as critical social theory, which is largely a North American and European tradition of thought. I have privileged the confrontation of this tradition with the 'critique in movements' of social movements in particular settings rather than a purely theoretical confrontation between different critical traditions, because one of the main assumptions of this work has been that social movements' critiques also elaborate their own 'critical theories'. Instead of a theoretical discussion of the concept of *Buen vivir* or *Vida buena*, for example, I have preferred to show how the idea of *Buen vivir* and *Vida buena* is appropriated and reinvented by *pobladores* when they seek to map the realities of neoliberalism in Chile.

The theoretical orientation of the thesis also risks limiting the treatment of social movements. There are obviously several points to make in order to correctly contextualise the emergence and development of social movements in Latin America in general, and in Chile in particular. There is a multiplicity of Latin American social movements resisting and fighting back against the structures of neoliberal power at different scales, in different regions, and by different subjects. One important omission here and an interesting case of a decolonising challenge to the state and capital is contemporary *Mapuches*' struggles. Another field in which the 'critique in movement(s) has been unfolded and explored in Chile and Latin America is the feminist critiques of patriarchy and capitalism. The inclusion of this type of radical critiques would add more complexity to the issue of critique and of its fate and nature.

Furthermore, a more detailed approach to the cases would have provided enough material for an exploration of the relationship between critical social theory and social movements from 'below'. Although I have not favoured such an approach in this work, the contention of the thesis has been that both academic and activist critiques could benefit from an articulatory moment.

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