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Where does 'politics' emerge from, in an elite Chilean business school?

an ethnographic inquiry using Jacques Rancière's philosophy

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Where does ‘politics’ emerge from, in an
elite Chilean business school?
An ethnographic inquiry using Jacques
Rancière’s philosophy

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Abstract

In 1976, while Chilean people endured an atrocious dictatorship, a group of economists saw the opportunity to test their ideas. With the congress in ruins and political opposition persecuted, the Chicago Boys led by Milton Friedman started a radical intervention of the whole economy (Harvey, 2005; Fuentes, 2021). Reforms not only included the privatisation of natural resources and key industries, but also the intervention of every educational space. Business schools were, consequently, a main focus of interest (Errázuriz Tagle, 2017). Thirty years after the recovery of democracy in 1990, many of them keep a staunch commitment with the ideological guidelines implemented back then. In the last decade, however, new generations have come to question this consensus.

This ethnography explores the contemporary political quarrels of an elite business school in Chile. Rancière's philosophy is used as an experimental methodology that allow to bring marginalised voices to the front. By carrying on a "reconstruction of practices" of those who stand against the school's *police order*, the school is revealed as a highly politicised space.

Findings are divided into three chapters. The first one narrates the successful feminist action of May 2018, where a group of students occupied upper management's offices demanding a sexual harassment protocol. The second chapter offers an overview of the school's policing mechanisms. The obsessive promotion of "excellence", the leitmotiv of the school, results in a disjointed social fabric where isolation and mental health issues arise. The third chapter profiles the school's *consensus* on meritocracy and economic mobility. Facing this *consensus* around the role of the individual, dissident students and academics undertake the mission of finding creative ways to put their knowledge at the service of the people's needs.

Dedication and Acknowledgments

This project would not have successfully concluded without the tireless support of my advisers, Patricia Gaya and Keri Facer, who read numerous revisions, offered hundreds of comments, and always treated me with respect and compassion. Thank you for always believe in me and never gave up, even when I wanted to.

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It is also necessary to acknowledge the financial sponsor granted by CONICYT/ANID to conduct this research. I sincerely hope the final product reflects the many challenges the Chilean business schools have to help to overcome our harmful levels of inequality.

I cannot forget to thank my fellow PhD, pub buddies, and friends. You were my rock during difficult times and made me feel at home while being 7000 miles away. Cheers.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and partner, Thiare. Only you and I know how hard this was. Thank you for your support, patience, and everyday demonstrations of love. We made it.

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: JUAN PABLO SUBIABRE GONZÁLEZ DATE: 05/01/2022

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Introduction

I grew up in a small city of Chile located more than one thousand kilometres to the south of Santiago. Either because I grew up amid a homogeneous and nurturing environment, or because I enjoyed the naivety of childhood, I never really understood the extent of inequality in my country until I got into the School of Economics and Business of the oldest and one of the most prestigious universities of the country. During my years in the business school I learnt about the grotesque inequality that exists in a country where unionised workers are less than 20.9% (Toro P. , 2018); collective bargain and right to strike are not effective, incurring in which are violations of ILO conventions N87 and N98 (Durán & Kremerman, 2015; Cox Edwards, 2017); household debt is around 70% of the average family monthly income (Central, 2018); 70% of workers earn less than £576.9 monthly and 50% less than £403.9 (INE, 2017); gender pay gap is 31,7% (Durán & Kremerman, 2017); and only 300 families possess 10% of the GDP (López, Figueroa B., & Gutiérrez C., 2013).

Many of these 300 families are present in this business school, either as students or as benefactors who embellish with their family names the plaques located outside every classroom. Plenty of my worldviews and assumptions were challenged by the everyday symbolisms of opulence present here. A sense of distinction and refinement that was as omniscient in the business school as strange to a middle-class southerner; luxurious cars parked at the premises, people telling anecdotes of their holidays in Europe, and the transcendental importance given to sports that I had never heard were practiced in Chile before. At the same time, discussions in classes were incomprehensible to me because they did not seem to fit the kinder and humbler world I had lived for 18 years in. I still remember one of my former classmates vehemently vociferating that a minimum wage of £226¹ (Hacienda, 2007) was excessive and harmful to the economy insofar it would limit the range of action of the people who make the economy works -businesspeople.

Throughout the years spent at the business school I became increasingly critical of the education I was receiving, and particularly, I got interested in how inequality was normalised as an unavoidable reality. Inequality was portrayed by most of my teachers as the price to pay for freedom. The world -was said- already has had that discussion; real socialisms were proven failed and the liberal values' have become the final hegemony. An end-of-history's argument that I wish I have had the knowledge to contest back then. Only many years after my undergraduate education concluded, I

¹ Chilean minimum wage of 2007 (\$144000) adjusted to 2021 (\$226364) and converted into GBP (£226.36).

would access other views that expanded my vision, such as Atkinson (2015), Stiglitz (2013; 2016), or Piketty (2014). Nevertheless, something still bothered me. All these authors were more concerned with inequality as a macro-economic and technical issue. After I obtained my master's degree in 2015, where I explored workers' narratives on labour precarity (Subiabre, 2015), I still was interested in inequality from a perspective that did not resonate with the one my colleagues had. My question was not how we have become unequal or how unequal we are. My question was why we were unequal. That 'why' was not a concern about the mechanisms and dynamics of accumulation, exploitation, and dispossession, but about the philosophical stances and values that underpin an unequal society. I realised I had always been interested in inequality from a moral perspective where human experience itself was more relevant than our ability to measure it.

The idea of business schools entwined with economics schools to the extent they merge both degrees into just one might see unintelligible to global-north readers, but it is a reality in Chile. The bachelor's degree of "Commercial Engineer" is conceived as an indissoluble mix of economics and business with a minimum length of ten semestral terms (five years). By half the programme the student must take the decision of either graduate with an economics or business major. When that decision came, I was confused but one of my teachers encouraged me to take economics by recommending me one of her articles. The article showed how the surname's origin was correlated to unequal levels of access to top positions in Chilean companies, favouring a short list of surnames that are popularly pointed out as upper-class surnames (Núñez & Pérez, 2007). The article also referred to a previous one written by her supervisor, in which is stated that "meritocracy [in Chile] is modest, as the effect of socioeconomic background on earnings outweighs that of academic performance at university" (Núñez & Gutiérrez, 2004). The article showed a class wage-gap of 25 to 35 percent after controlling by gender, ethnicity, second-language proficiency, and physical appearance. The most shocking part of it; data had been collected from previous cohorts of my own school. The summit of the social ladder was revealed as an unachievable goal no matter how hard I tried. A confirmation of these unwritten rules would come years later, when I had access to the work of Zimmerman (2016), showing that the possibilities of becoming part of the richest 0.01% in Chile are mainly determined by the level of access from early age to one of the eight most exclusive schools in the country. This reality contrasts with research that shows that most Chileans believe that meritocracy is related to social mobility and that improvements in economic conditions are achieved through hard work (Landerretche & Lillo, 2011; Araujo, 2009; Araujo & Martuccelli, 2012). Although the intention of my former teacher was to encourage me to partake in the economics

major, her advice had the opposite effect. My concern was not related to understand the underlying structures that only describe inequality in the Chilean society², but to explain *how* was morally sustained (Sandel, 2012). Only after years since that decisive moment, I would connect my concern on inequality with the role educational settings play in it (Greibe Kohn, 2011; Madrid, 2016).

I choose to major in business. After graduating I worked at the private sector and did some projects with NGOs for a while. I landed back at Academia as a way to payback for the master's scholarship I was granted. I went back to my former school now as a teacher. Insofar I taught new generations of management practitioners, I started to expand my understanding of inequality, linking it to dimensions different from the economic ones. For the first time, I included socialisation processes (Ehrensals, 2001; Walker, 1992) in my analysis. By seeing how my students learnt to relate to others, I understood I had to keep investigating if I wanted to answer the questions on how inequality was -willingly or not- embraced. Teaching management students ignited the flame of my curiosity and made me read every critical management article and critical management education book I had the chance to put my hands on. I was encouraged then to pursue a doctoral programme, I was told "it is the only chance to being paid for reading". I innocently took the advice without knowing how much it was going to change me.

Once doing the PhD, I got into how inequality had been previously addressed by Durkheim (1925 [1961]) with his notion of education as a reproductive process, by Althusser (1971) and his notion of schools as ideological apparatuses of the state, and finally by Bourdieu (1973; 1984) and his notions of habitus, distinction, and social and cultural capital (Sullivan, 2002). Although these works allowed me to understand the mechanisms and dynamics by which inequality gets socialised, reproduced, and perpetuated through educational systems (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982; Collins, 2009; Power, 2003; Parsons, 1959), they also portray it as an inescapable phenomenon. Or at least, one revocable only by a radical social transformation.

Faced to the hopelessness of these explanations, I turned to authors who had already criticised structural explanations (Pelletier, 2009). There I found Rancière's philosophy (1999) and his ideas around equality, ideas that -I thought- might illuminate my inquiry on inequality and the seemingly unavoidable role educational settings such as business schools play in its reproduction. I became fascinated by his philosophy and start reading him from his very beginning. Jacques Rancière's

² For a deeper discussion on this, see for example (Olave, 2003)

distancing from Althusser -and more broadly from the Marxist tradition- was publicly spread as a book (1974 [2011]) characterized by a rejection of the very idea of the philosopher as an authority. From that moment on, he has developed a whole philosophy to understand equality (Rancière, 1995; 1999; 2004a; 2010). By turning upside down the logic used to analyse the problem of inequality, Rancière's philosophy does not approach equality as a goal to be achieved, but as an axiomatic reality to be verified. Challenging every form of hierarchy by rejecting the distance posed by expert knowledge between people and the positions of authority this distinction entails, Rancière proposes principles of radical equality, equality of intelligence, and ungovernability as the core of democratic politics. His notion of 'politics' totally transformed my understanding of inequality. Rancière did not consider equality as a goal to be achieved or inequality as a problem to be eased, as most of my colleagues in the business school did. On the contrary, for Rancière, equality was an axiomatic reality that needed to be asserted by individuals. Consequently, politics was not about parties or elections, but a constant struggle that places sensory dimensions at the centre: namely, how inequality is resisted and fought, or alternatively, supported and justified, is not only an issue of power structures and class identification, but it also is part of what Rancière calls an aesthetic confrontation between the 'demos' and the 'police order'.

Reading Rancière's work led me connect this new definition of equality with management education and business schools. I came back to review literature from the critical management studies and critical management education fields (Alvesson & Willmott, 2003; Alvesson, Bridgman, & Willmott, 2009). I noticed that, in spite of their prolific study of the managerial theory and practice done for more than three decades, even up to the date there is surprisingly limited material linking any of Rancière's thinking with business schools (Kogut, Sørensen Thaning, & Birksted, 2020). Moreover, Rancière wrote on politics from the end of the 70s to the mid-90s, but only recently his contributions have been progressively acknowledged by critical management scholars. Applications of his theories to the field of education have inspired new developments (Biesta, 2010; Bingham & Biesta, 2010). Even though his pedagogy has captivated those who see education as an emancipatory project, the application of his ideas into the field of management education are regrettably scarce (Huault & Perret, 2011).

I started my PhD by holding the idea that the way business schools comprehend in/equality matters to the rest of the society (Locke & Spender, 2011). While writing my progression document I started listing the reasons I had to scrutinise business schools in my own country: a) Literature on Chilean

business schools written in English and published on international journals is partial and limited (Mandiola & Ascorra, 2010; Koljatic & Silva, 2015); b) It has been claimed that there is a generalized crisis among business schools (Phillips, Hsieh, Ingene, & Golden, 2016; Worrall, 2010) and prominent scholars have made calls for reinventing them (Steyaert, Beyes, & Parker, 2016; Parker, 2018); c) business schools graduates have significant opportunities to influence society (Deresiewicz, 2015). Most CEOs, CFOs, and board members of the largest companies in Chile were educated in business schools; d) This influence also pervades policy makers and governmental agencies, as most former presidents of the Central Bank and members of the Monetary Policy Group in Chile were educated in elite business schools. During Sebastián Piñera's first period in office (2010-2014), his initial cabinet had 48% of people with business degrees (11 out of 23 ministers)³. Lastly, ethnographies of business schools are also scarce (Anteby, 2013; Delves Broughton, 2010). An absence that is greatly explained due to the access barriers these educational spaces have, but also due to the time and resources a study of this extent entails. Consequently, I knew I could contribute to current literature by researching a Chilean business school using Rancière's lens, but the focus of the research questions was still blurred. If I wanted to understand how business schools related to equality and inequality, I needed to pose a question on the 'politics' -in a Rancierian sense- of the business school. Understanding where does 'politics' emerge from in a business school means an attempt to understand who has voice to talk about in/equality, what do those voices say, and what the messages of the excluded voices are. I thought this confrontation of authorised and excluded voices could shed some light on the persistence of inequality in Chile, the most unequal OECD (2015) member, and the role our elite business schools play in it.

As I will discuss extensively in the methodological section, using Rancière's philosophy as methodological lens entail a series of dilemmas; How can I conduct a research based on a philosophy that starts by rejecting any position of authority of the researcher? Facing the challenge of operationalising Rancière's meant I needed to use it as an experimental methodology, learning its boundaries, the do's and do not's. Rancière's rejection of any kind of mastery led me to conceive the research as an ethnographic inquiry focused on a search for disagreement. If I wanted to understand the relation of the school with inequality, I needed to understand first its sources of 'politics', and consequently, I needed to focus on its silent conflicts and dissensus. To do that, I needed to be an observer, a researcher able to dissect the internal functioning of the educational

³ https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anexo:Gabinetes_ministeriales_del_primer_gobierno_de_Sebastián_Piñera

institution through its key moments, anecdotes, artefacts, and contradictions. Also, I needed to focus the narrative on marginalised voices and their day-to-day struggles, otherwise I would not be focusing on 'politics' but on the 'police order'. Lastly, it was also necessary to consider the many forms and magnitudes disagreement might take, as well as the many angles it could be seen from, that is to say, disagreement among and between students, academics, and workers. A titanic task. Conceiving the research as an ethnography would offer me then a rare opportunity, to observe the daily life of an elite Chilean business school during the considerable span of six months.

But conceiving the research as an ethnography was a double-edged sword. It gave me boundaries to conduct the fieldwork, but also limited the capacity to use the philosophy. I needed to be faithful to emergent data, but at the same time, being able to analyse it through the Rancierian lens. I finally crafted a research question that was open enough to allow the emergence of data, but also narrow enough to make research operationalizable: "Where does 'politics' emerge from, in an elite Chilean business school?". This question was later divided into sub-questions that mirrored the main philosophical concepts of Rancière, namely: the *demos* and the possibility of *interruption* (chapter 1), policing mechanisms and the *police order* (chapter 2), and consensus and dissensus (chapter 3).

In the following document, I will present the main findings from an ethnographic study conducted at an elite public school of economics and business between September 2018 and March 2019 in Santiago, Chile. Data collected comprises over a hundred hours of recorded interviews, four hundred pictures, and two notebooks of pure data. Analysing this data through the Rancierian method or "reconstruction of practices", allowed me to answer the research questions aforementioned. The final ethnographic product is divided into three chapters:

The first one presents the feminist political action that took place in 2018, where a group of around fifty students occupied the offices of the upper management demanding a sexual harassment protocol. The occupation is narrated through memories of protagonists, supporters, and spectators. Detractors too. Polyphony includes the conflicts, fears, and jokes that surrounded the whole process. It also provides a written registry of a successful collective action of a student-led movement that concluded with school's upper management accepting all students' demands. The occupation as political action -*interruption*- emerges from the Women's Assembly, a space where individual unrest is shared with others, where emotional wounds of others are felt as one's own, and where even privileged students realised that sexist violence also affects them and many others. As a consequence of the occupation, a series of *aesthetic* changes took place in the school's *partage*;

the most significant one is the creation of an Office of Gender and Discrimination Issues (OGDIS) with full-time qualified professionals and a physical space to receive victims. Lastly, it is shown how the feminist occupation is quickly recuperated by institutional forces, making it part of the official accounts while erasing all traces of 'politics'

The second chapter takes a step back and offers an overview of the school's internal dynamics. The promotion of "excellence", the leitmotiv of the business school, is explored through the questions and thoughts of the researcher. This conflictive category constantly appears in interviews with both students and teachers, and it also is omnisciently present through artefacts, symbols, and all sorts of internal and external advertising. In spite of the all-encompassing presence of the idea of "excellence", definitions or specifications about it are not ever made. This highly interpretable notion of "excellence" does, however, work as a regulatory principle that influences members of the school by introducing competitive logics based mainly on academic performance, but that also might include the extent of achievement in competitive sports and involvement in institutional activities. The multiple meanings of "excellence" and its normative forces produce tremendous effects in the *partage*. The result is a disjointed social fabric where isolation and mental health issues arise as natural responses among members.

The third chapter profiles the school's consensus on progress, meritocracy, and the role of individual upward economic mobility. Findings reveal an internal quarrel over the very purpose of education in economics and business, where two stances dispute the institutional leadership. One is focused on the supremacy of technical qualification and the access to public policy making positions, the other centres in the importance of practical knowledge and business networks to achieve social mobility. The 'police order' *consensus* is reified in the School of Talents; a propaedeutic programme in which every year 50 underprivileged high school students are selected and trained for the universities admission test. Facing the institutional consensus on "excellence", dissident voices of students and academics are brought to the front. From individual efforts to collective initiatives, some members of the school defy this consensus by articulating new forms of relating that do not hold "excellence" as main goal. Words such as "purpose", "happiness", and "justice" displace the cold logics of the isolated individual. Dissensus is characterised as a transformative approach that demands an education that places people as the very core of economics and business teaching and learning. However, the demand for this reconfiguration is diluted and scattered all across the institution, thus leaving critics atomised and unaware of others. Those who try to pursue a change

pay an emotional toll that almost always leads to exhaustion and disaffection. It is precisely in these spaces, however, where policing mechanisms leave an opening for the *risky* human connection that allow the emergence of 'politics'.

Rancière's Philosophy Key Concepts

As unorthodox it might seem for a doctoral thesis, this research begins by presenting some of Rancière's key concepts and ideas instead of a literature review of the state of the art. As discussed in the introduction, there are limited pieces of research that link Rancière's philosophy and either management education or business schools. However, in order to understand what the contribution might be of bringing these fields together, it is necessary to understand the deep philosophical turn that Rancière's poses on western thinking.

Equality, and not inequality, is the *leitmotiv* of Rancière's work. Even though this might appear a banal distinction, the focus on equality rather than inequality posits deep ontological differences (Deranty, 2010, p. 183). Rancière claims that political philosophy has historically been focused on inequality, and by doing this, presupposing it as a starting point that ends up confirming it as an inescapable vicious circle (Rancière, 2004b). By taking inequality as a starting point, intellectuals have directed their efforts to sketch underlying structures that explain how inequality is socially shaped -by class, gender, ethnicity, and so on. Once there, the focus has been to understand how this inequality is maintained, reproduced, and perpetuated (Bourdieu, 1973). Portraying equality as a goal to be achieved forces political philosophy to admit inequality as an ontological reality. Moreover, by giving philosophers -and intellectuals in general- the task of elucidate how these structures work (Rancière, 1974 [2011]), inequality is asserted by the validation of a hierarchy among intellects (Rancière, 1991). In contrast, Rancière claims, equality should be taken as an axiomatic reality, as a starting point that needs to be verified through our political practices. In fact, the way Rancière sees 'politics' implies that any action to be considered political has to be driven by the assertion of equality.

Politics

Rancière's philosophy sees 'politics' as something that does not always happen (May, 2008, p. 40; Rancière, 1999, p. 17). He sees politics as something unusual and not related to classic definitions of politics meaning differences between the left and the right or voting in an electoral process to support or be against a coalition. 'Politics' is conceptualised by Rancière as a fleeting moment, as something that is always precarious and about to disappear or to be 'reclassified' into existent

categories. In this context, 'politics' is the result of an action that is far from activities such as writing to our elected representatives, be a member of a traditional party, or to present ourselves as candidates for a position in the parliament. Politics -in a Rancierian sense- only occurs when a disruption of the current *partage du sensible* takes place. The *partage* or 'distribution' of the *sensible*:

"[...] should be understood in the double sense of the word: on the one hand, as that which separates and excludes; on the other, as that which allows participation. A partition of the sensible refers to the manner in which a relation between a shared common (*un commun partage*) and the distribution of exclusive parts is determined in sensory experience. This latter form of distribution, which, by its sensory self-evidence, anticipates the distribution of part and shares (*parties*), itself presupposes a distribution of what is visible and what not, of what can be heard and what cannot." (Rancière, 2010, p. 36)⁴

In simpler words, and for the rest of this document, when the word *sensible* is used it refers to what we recognise as part of our sensory range; what we can notice, hear, or see. The word *sensible* will be used in italics as a way to remind the reader of its sensory connotation. Rancière's definition of 'politics' refers to a disagreement in which one party does not even consider there is a disagreement, precisely because they do not *sense* the other party, they simply ignore it. To Rancière, 'politics' is unlikely to occur as it entails a redistribution of what is *sensible* (i.e., Sensory), meaning that people who are excluded, unseen, and unheard, claim to share a common *-partage*. Dissensus or Rancierian disagreement, therefore, is the moment in which those who are marginalised defy their condition and claim to be part of the common (i.e., Being equal).

This aesthetical movement of people that disrupts the current *partage* is considered the very heart of democracy (Rancière, 1995; 2010); the assertion of equality by 'those who do not have a part' - the *demos*. Understanding 'politics' in this sense implies that any action or plan which is not destined to rearticulate the distribution of what is sensible, and therefore it does not aim to subvert some

⁴ The lack of fixed definitions has been addressed as one of the main problems of working with Rancière's philosophy: "The specificity of any one concept in Jacques Rancière's oeuvre is difficult to grasp and impossible to localize [...] this is especially true of Rancière's conceptual innovation of a *partage du sensible* (variously translated as "partition" or "distribution" of the sensible)" (Panagia, 2010, p.95). For complementary definitions, see Rancière (2004, p.12), May (2008, p.47-48), and an extensive discussion by Panagia (Chapter 7 in Deranty, 2010).

part of the 'police order', cannot be called politics. To Rancière (1999; 2010), talk about politics is talk about *dissensus*.

Although the label may be misleading, the 'police order' should not be read as something exclusively related to police forces or the army. Certainly, these institutions are a significant part of the 'police order', but they do not constitute all of it. The 'police order' is a wider notion that encapsulates all the representations of those who oversee protecting the status-quo and safeguard the taken-for-granted ways of doing things. The term refers to the frame that we experience on daily basis, encompassing not only the formal or official laws, but also the unwritten rules and implicit guidelines we all are subject to. Rancière's philosophy is a way of understanding 'politics' in which we need to ask ourselves "Whose voice is heard?", and the answer to that question will give us an idea of the 'police order'. In the same way, by paying attention to the silences, to the people who are left out of the table, to the marginalized people who are omitted from the current *partage*, we will have an idea of where 'politics' resides.

As Rancière's definition of 'politics' radically differs from what we usually understand by politics, not surprisingly the same is true for his definition of democracy (Rancière, 1999; 2004b, p. 5; 2010, pp. 31-32). Keeping distance from Marxists and their vision of the working-class as the political subject, to Rancière the subject of democracy is the excluded, the marginalised, the neglected, the helpless -the *demos*.

"They can be women, gays, African Americans, *sans papiers*, students, *mestizos*, Tibetans, workers, etc. The people are those who have no claim to contribute to the public discussion and debate, those who are, from the perspective of the police order – or some aspect of that order – invisible." (May, 2008, p. 50)

Understanding the *demos* as the political subject should not be read as a denial of the proletariat under-privileged conditions nor as rejection of the historical and material authenticity of class struggles, but as a philosophical attempt to analyse who the *demos* in each situation are (Rancière, 1999, p. 90). Rancière takes the etymological origin of the word *demos* (Rancière, 2004b, p. 6) which does not mean "all the people" or "all the working-class people", but "the part that has no part". The *demos* are the people excluded from discussions, those who do not have a seat on the table, those who have been marginalised, and are not considered, heard or seen. The *demos* are the missing part of any *partage*, reason why it is also referred as the 'supplementary' part:

"The police is a 'partition of the sensible' [le partage du sensible] whose principle is the absence of a void or a supplement [...] If a police order is characterized by a partition of the sensible that renders invisible the part that has no part, then a democratic politics is, as Rancière tells us, "the manifestation of a distance of the sensible from itself.'" (May, 2008, pp. 47-48)

This is the reason why Rancière says that 'politics' only occur when the 'police order' is defied and a transformation of what is *sensible* (i.e., Sensory) takes place. The aesthetic movement conducted by those who were excluded and now assert their equality, creates a disturbance in how things are experienced by those who "had a part" on beforehand. For those who were part of the *partage*, the appearance of these new entrants represents an affront to the 'police order' that protects them from undesired elements. Those who are marginalised from partaking assert their equality by transgressing this current distribution. The irremediable tension between both groups is summarised in the concept of *dissensus*, which is the very goal of democracy -the exercise of power by those who have no part. Consensus is rejected by Rancière as "it reflects the idea of objectivity and the univocity of sensitive information" (Huault & Perret, 2016, p. 164). On the other hand, by disturbing the 'police order' through *dissensus*, those who were not previously seen, heard or taken into account are now visible, heard, and considered. This political act of *dissensus* embodies the principle of equality, materialising democracy.

The etymological origin of *disagreement* or political *dissensus* might be understood in two different yet complementary ways. The original term used by Rancière in his works comes from the French word *mésentente* (Rancière, 2004b, p. 5) which has not a univocal meaning but a dual one. The notion could be translated into English as a "quarrel, [or] disagreement" upon something, but also as "the fact of not hearing, of not understanding". The first translation represents the encounter of two dissimilar positions, of two opposing stances, upon the same problem. The second translation refers to a different kind of encounter, one in which there is a substantial difference between what is considered the 'common', meaning that there is a dissimilarity on what is considered the subject of the quarrel. In other words, the second translation of disagreement refers to an encounter in which one of the sides does not understand nor recognise the other's position as valid, and therefore, it does not recognise the other as an equal:

"[P]olitical dissensus is not simply a conflict of interests, opinions, or values. It is a conflict over the common itself. It is not a quarrel over which solutions to apply to

a situation but a dispute over the situation itself, a dispute over what is visible as an element of a situation, over which visible elements belong to what is common, over the capacity of subjects to designate this common and argue for it.” (Rancière, 2004b, p. 6)

Dissensus should not be understood only as a disagreement with the other, but also as the rejection of the logics that sustain hierarchical divisions between those who disagree, and that regulate whose voice matters. Democracy is the suspension of all those logics, either coming from wealth or birth as they were conceptualised by Plato⁵. That is the reason why *dissensus* is considered a process of ‘declassification’ (Rancière, 2010, p. 205), a process by which subjects reject the presupposed categories and roles given by the ‘police order’, a process “of abandoning the identity one has been given” (May, 2008, p. 50). The assertion of equality by the *demos* implies a liberation from the classifications that give unquestionable right to rule to those who have part, meaning an assertion of equality despite all differences. Being equal does not imply that we are the same (Huault & Perret, 2011, pp. 299-300), but that even though we are different, those differences cannot sustain forms of domination. Rancière’s syllogism implies that, even in the presence of domination, we still are equal:

"There is order in society because some people command and others obey, but in order to obey an order at least two things are required: you must understand the order and you must understand that you must obey it. And to do that, you must already be the equal of the person who is ordering you [...]" (Rancière, 1999, p. 16)

Pedagogy

Rancière’s philosophy starts from an axiomatic assumption of equality. The ‘equality syllogism’ is characterised by an affirming stance on equality of intelligence (Rancière, 1991), meaning that even though our interests might diverge, we are all equally capable of learning when confronted to an exercise of intellectual emancipation that reveals our own intelligence. Equality of intelligence is used as an “act as if” principle; it is not important if we can empirically prove or not that we all are equally intelligent, but what do we do once we have asserted this political principle as truth

⁵ To go further in the whole discussion on ‘archipolitics’ see May (2008, Chapter 1)

(Rancière, 1991, p. 46)⁶. As May puts it, “Is Rancière arguing here that people are equally intelligent? He is not. Rancière offers equality of intelligence not as a conclusion to an argument, but rather as a starting point for ‘politics’ (May, 2008, p. 60). Above all, equality of intelligence means that we all are capable of ‘language’ (Hallward, 2008, p. 26). In this context, language not only means the capacity to learn a new dialect or to communicate using words, but it also means the symbolic capacity to hear and be heard. Rancière understands equality as the communication between two speaking beings (1999, pp. 45-57), meaning that to be considered equal, the subject has to have a voice that is heard and recognised as a valid one.

The equality of intelligence was originally promoted by Jean-Joseph Jacotot through his method of ‘intellectual emancipation’, and it is extensively developed by Rancière (1991). The equality principle challenges how we see the role of expert knowledge and the distance that posits between people. According to Rancière, the role of the master/teacher is neither transfer contents to students nor to explicate them what those contents mean, but to hold a belief in the students’ capacities to learn by themselves. In this sense, the schoolmaster is ignorant of presuppositions and of the roles imposed by the ‘police order’ -it is ignorant *of inequality*. This is further discussed by (Biesta, 2017), calling attention to the dangers of misreading Rancière, as people who portray the ‘ignorant teacher’ as someone who has nothing to teach. On the contrary, Biesta argues how important is the teacher for the educational process, as in this context ‘ignorance’ is understood as something derived from the impositions of the ‘police order’. The role of the master/teacher is not to demonstrate total or superior understanding of concepts and ideas to their students, but to show them how capable they are to educate themselves, to show them that is possible to learn without explanation:

“The ignorant person will learn by himself what the master doesn't know if the master believes he can and obliges him to realise his capacity” (Rancière, 1991, p. 15)

Rancière uses Jacotot’s experience to challenge the “myth of pedagogy”, the taken-for-granted temporal mode of learning characterised by a *linear*⁷ relation from ignorance to mastery, and where the role of students as passive agents is normalised (Rancière, 1991, pp. 5-7). Rancière challenges

⁶ For a deeper discussion on the objections to the equality of intelligence principle, see (May, 2008, pp. 57-65)

⁷ For a deeper discussion on the rejection of this idea of linearity, also referred as the reversal explanatory order or anti-explanatory model, see for example Citton (Chapter 2 in Deranty, 2010, pp.25-37)

these presuppositions assigning students the role of equally intelligent agents capable of producing valuable knowledge. Rancière's pedagogy points to dissolve the 'explicative order' (Lambert, 2012, p. 214) of the pedagogical myth, namely the artificial distance between the teacher and the student that gives the former the dual capacity to decree the ignorance of the latter and to appoint himself to the task of help them to overcome it. Rancière goes even further with this idea, claiming that the underlying logic that sustain this myth goes beyond the classroom and it is extended to the rest of the social instances: "Explication is not only the stultifying weapon of pedagogues but the very bond of the social order" (Rancière, 1991, p. 117). Consequently, the task of emancipation always rests in a few enlightened minds instead of the masses (Rancière, 1974 [2011]). Moreover, it suggests questions of what and whose knowledge is considered valuable, because subordination of one intelligence to another is what creates the base for inequality (Lambert, 2012, p. 214). In other words, "a logic where the transmission of knowledge is simultaneously the transmission of an order" (Huault & Perret, 2011, p. 294). Insofar we hold the political principle that some people are more intelligent than other, we are asserting inequality and excluding some people from the *partage*.

Lastly, it is important to see the pedagogical side of Rancière's work as complementary to the political side previously explained. As May puts it, "if dissensus and declassification form the negative core of a politics of active equality, then the equality of intelligence forms its positive core." (2008, p. 61)

Emancipation

Rancière rejects the idea of the working-class as the only subject of democracy and replaces it with a wider, non-fixed definition of *demos* (May, 2008, p. 50). Consequently, to analyse any specific setting we need to include the particular conditions of contextuality and temporality (Rancière, 2009, p. 114), because those who are the excluded within certain setting not necessarily are the excluded in a different scenario and time. The works of Rancière "are not 'theories of', they are 'interventions on'" (Rancière, 2009, p. 116) specific situations. It is worth to highlight that, words such as "theory" or "framework" were purposely avoided in this document. Rancière's philosophy places practices and context as the one and only core of interventions.

This emphasis on the *demos* as a dynamic category instead of a fixed group of underprivileged is what makes counterproductive any attempt to identify an underlying structure for the reproduction

of inequality. Deranty (2003) develops this claim by analysing in detail the political ontology of Rancière, arguing that political philosophy is a contradiction in itself. As philosophy attempts a rational approach to understand the science of the polis, it creates two effects (a) denies that the polis is just the product of citizens' activities, therefore, suggesting that there is a regulating principle, and (b) appoints itself to the task of finding these normative principles that should articulate the functioning of the polis:

“The presupposition of an *arkhe*, an underlying principle, of the political community implies that there are reasons behind the linking of individuals to certain political functions. In other words, philosophy poses principles of the community by articulating the political to the social.” (Deranty, 2003, p. digital)

This is precisely the core of the critique that Rancière poses against the Bourdieusian reproduction of inequality (Pelletier, 2009). According to Rancière, any attempt to unveil the hidden forces that propel the production and reproduction of inequality would only consider those who are included in the current *partage*, omitting those who are marginalised of it -the *demos*. Moreover, this kind of analysis presumes that “subjects are simply reducible to their structural positions” (Huault, Perret, & Spicer, 2014, p. 30), disregarding the role of agency and subjects' capacity to contest and subvert structural dispositions. The omission of the *demos* perpetuates inequality by not considering marginalized subjects.

Differences between Rancière's philosophy and the Bourdieusian approach go deeper than dissimilar starting points to analyse inequality derived from contradictory ontologies, they also represent two different views on emancipation (Huault & Perret, 2011, p. 293). Whilst the Bourdieusian stream -and more generally, Marxist and Critical approaches- hold the idea of emancipation as something that comes “from the outside”, Rancière's philosophy posits the idea of emancipation “from the inside”. This discussion goes back to notions such as “alienation” and “false consciousness” by which the subject of democracy is oppressed by unintelligible forces, needing the help of intellectuals to unveil the ‘truth’ and an avant-garde to lead the way. This notion of emancipation as a process of ‘demystification’⁸ entails a contradiction with the principle of equal intelligence.

⁸ These dichotomic views on emancipation are extensively developed in (Pelletier, 2009). Furthermore, the relation of Rancière with critical pedagogies is covered in (Biesta, 2010)

Emancipation “from the inside” is the process of becoming a subject, the process of *subjectification* (May, 2008, p. 70). In Rancière’s words:

“By *subjectification* I mean the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience.” (Rancière, 1999, p. 35)

Thus, emancipation “from the inside” means to carry on a process by which equality is asserted by subverting the ‘police order’ (i.e., dissensus) and rejecting the logics of domination (i.e., declassification). It is a process that takes place in the subject’s mind. A process in which someone who is part of a minority rejects their condition of minority, and instead, reclaims a part in the *partage*. In other words, they assert to be part of the *common* (i.e., being equal). This process entails a reconfiguration of the field of experience, meaning an aesthetic reconfiguration. The reconfiguration is considered aesthetic because it produces a change on what is sensory. During ‘politics’, the ‘police order’s categories of domination are momentarily suspended, allowing us to glance a different *partage*, meaning a different distribution of roles and parts.

Aesthetics

Rancière explains his understanding of *dissensus* as an aesthetic phenomenon in several of his major works through examples such as the ‘Secession of the Plebs’ (1991, p. 87; 1999, p. 23; 2004b, p. 5) in the ancient Rome, the self-education movements post French revolution (1981[2012]), and Rosa Parks’ refusal to give her seat up on a bus during the segregation times in the USA (2006, p. 61). The common core of these examples, that I will develop further in the methodological section, is that *dissensus* entails a sensory reconfiguration by which the *demos* asserts its equality defying the aesthetical order imposed by the ‘police’. As the ‘police’ mission is to preserve the status-quo, those fleeting moments that Rancière identify as ‘politics’ necessarily must lead to redistributions of who are seen, heard and considered. In later examples, Rancière’s philosophy has been used to analyse the Occupy Movement in USA (Bassett, 2014; Lorey, 2014) by portraying it as an aesthetic protest where people occupied a space they were not allowed to be. The *demos* made itself visible by appearing on spaces reserved to those who do ‘have a part’ (i.e., Wall Street executives).

When the *demos* pursues a process of 'subjectification', they transgress the 'police order'; making their voices being heard, showing their faces, and claiming that they deserve to be considered. The assertion of equality means to challenge the imposed status-quo and to claim that they have the same right than any other and every other to partake, to be considered part of the *partage*:

"The declassification of democratic politics is an aesthetic phenomenon; it makes something appear that had been there before. To engage in a democratic politics is not to discover a subject of politics; it is to create one. Equality is not received. It is made." (May, 2008, p. 71)

This irruption of people necessarily entails an aesthetical change because it makes something appear that was not considered before, but at the same time, that always has been there. The redistribution of the space, either as a metaphorical or physical space, can be conceptualised as an aesthetic phenomenon because allows the emergence of a political subject -the constitution of the *demos*.

In this context, the term 'police order' coined by Rancière refers to a logic of understanding the common from the standing point of those who are already seen, heard, and considered. The 'police order' is a "principle of distribution and completeness that leaves no space for a supplement" (Rancière, 2004b, p. 6). And the opposition to this 'police order', namely 'politics', represents a different principle of distribution, one in which completeness is not assumed, and therefore, there is always space for a supplement. The clash between these two principles leads to an aesthetic reconfiguration by which the current distribution is altered, meaning that those who have no part assert their equality by calling into question the division between public and private (Rancière, 2004c). A quarrel over what is common -the current *partage*- is an aesthetic conflict because it reveals what it is and what is not part of each party's sensory experience.

The disagreement between two subjects on what is considered common lies on the fact that one side considers its distribution as a complete one, meaning that the other part has no space to exist, rise its voice, or question what the common is (May, 2008, pp. 47-48). The 'police order' does not *understand* the quarrel because the counterpart does not even exist on its eyes. It is not that it is deliberately *ignoring* the other's voice, it is that it *cannot* hear it. On the other hand, the *demos* try to assert its equality by interrupting (Ruby, 2009) the current *partage*, risking that this transgression would likely be repressed by the 'police order'.

The conflict upon what is common is unintelligible by the 'police order', implying that, to look for 'politics' in a given space, a focus on the *demos*-side must be held. This caveat entails huge challenges for any researcher using Rancière's philosophy, whom will must refrain from reducing the search to what is already visible and audible -the current *partage*. I will address these challenges in the methodology section.

Summary

In this section I have introduced the main Rancierian concepts that guided the ethnography and that will help to analyse data obtained through the fieldwork. In spite of the philosophical density of Rancière's philosophy, all his definitions always return to the same syllogism: radical equality. The *demos*, for instance, is conceptualised as the subject that emerges from the desire of being considered equal. The police order, on the other hand, is the set of norms and rules that prevent the *demos* from fulfilling that desire. 'Politics', subjectification, interruption, dissensus, and the disagreement as a duality (*mésentente*), all are developments of this main claim for equality. Self-education, democracy, and emancipation are, consequently, conceptualised as the aesthetics that radical equality might adopt.

As it will be discussed in the methodological section, for the purpose of this ethnography, the role of the researcher is to look for those *who have no part* in the business school and their attempts to circumvent this position. Using the key concepts explained before, the proposed research is focused on 'politics' in the business school, meaning a search for the moments when those who are excluded and marginalised -the *demos*- assert their equality by transgressing the 'police order' and reconfiguring the aesthetic space.

In the next section I will show how Rancière's philosophy has been used so far in organisation studies, and more specifically, in management education.

Literature Review

In the following section I will review the literature that links Rancierian philosophy and both management education and business schools. This literature review was carried on searching for literature gaps between both fields, and purposely left aside two extensive bodies of literature that have value on themselves but that did not help me to focus on the novelty this philosophy provides. The first body of literature left aside is related to the extensive developments done by critical management studies and critical management education that are not based on Rancière's philosophy. The second body of literature left aside is related to all educational developments using Rancière that are not related to either organisation studies, management education, or business schools. It is worth to mention, however, that even though these bodies of literature are not explicitly developed here, they were tremendously useful to inform my research process and to shape this project. One of the main contributions of this ethnography, I hope, it is precisely to open up an intersection that has not been explored yet.

Rancière's philosophy has been developed in the field of organisation studies mainly from two points of view. The first one is the development pursued by Timon Beyes. This development of Rancière is concerned with organisations in the wider sense, assessing how his philosophy and perception of aesthetics as a political notion allow us to question what is possible and impossible, and therefore, to open spaces to challenge our current understanding of organisations. For example, he has discussed artistic interventions' potential to produce changes by transforming the urban space (Beyes, 2010). In Rancierian terms, and as it was discussed in the previous section, a reconfiguration of the space also means a redistribution of what is considered sensible, therefore, a reconfiguration of the people who are seen and heard. However, this stream of research is not directly related to management education or business schools, as this piece of research aims.

The second development of Rancière in organisation studies is the one introduced in Huault & Perret (2011) and further developed in Huault et al. (2014). This stream is in fact concerned with management, and particularly, the last piece of research available from Huault and Perret (2016) is explicitly related to management education. Throughout this section I will review in depth two

debates addressed by these authors, namely the *impasse* between radical and pragmatic positions⁹, and the dichotomy between macro and micro emancipation stances.

Before continuing, it is relevant to at least mention some of the literature review done in business ethics (Aasland, 2007; 2005; Abend, 2014; 2013; Bevan & Corvellec, 2007; Rhodes, 2012; 2014; Byers & Rhodes, 2007), sustainably business (Dyllick, 2015; 2016; Beusch, 2014; Godemann, Herzig, Moon, & Powell, 2011), liberal management (Estad, Harney, & Thomas, 2014; Harney & Thomas, 2013), principles for responsible management education (Louw, 2015; Lilley, Barker, & Harris, 2014), critical management (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Antonacopoulou, 2010; French & Grey, 1996; Fotaki & Prasad, 2014; 2015; Fournier & Grey, 2000; Ghoshal, 2005; Grey, 2002; Grey, 2004; Mingers, 2000; Pfeffer, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Roberts, 1996; Roca, 2008; Toubiana, 2014; Willmott, 1993), and many other stimulating readings that have influenced this project (Khurana, 2007; Carroll & Peat, 2010; Baden & Higgs, 2015; Bennis & O’Toole, 2005; Gabriel, 1998; Ghoshal, 2005; Starkey & Tempest, 2008; Harney, 2007). As said before, I will not be using these developments, but they profoundly informed the final outcome of this research.

Macro-Emancipation and Micro-Emancipation

Huault, et al. (2014) is focused in one of the main tensions in Critical Management Education, namely the debate among scholars who ascribe to either macro-emancipatory or micro-emancipatory paradigms. The macro-emancipation stance is characterised by the belief that emancipation, meaning the “process through which individuals and groups become freed from repressive social and ideological conditions” (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992, p. 432), only can be achieved through a radical and large-scale social transformation. The macro-emancipatory stance aims to develop knowledge and tools that allow agents to build up a project of change that involves an alteration of the current social order, an alteration usually embodied through an enhanced political awareness. This positions rests in the assumption that, to promote the required reflexivity and critical thinking capabilities, agents need to be led by an avant-garde of intellectuals. On the other hand, and as a contestation to the difficulties to achieve a grandiose and once-for-all social transformation, some scholars have turned to a narrower focus on micro-emancipation. This stream

⁹ Some authors refer to it as the relevance-rigor debate, see for example (Gulati, 2007; Kieser, Nicolai, & Seidl, 2015; Hodgkinson & Starkey, 2011)

looks for brief moments by which agents momentarily escape from domination through everyday practices such as joking, feet-dragging, sabotaging, daydreaming, sleeping, or having sex in the workplace (Brown & Strega, 2005). Micro-emancipatory activities are seen by their defenders both as actions of resistance to domination and also as daily-basis efforts to subvert the managerial order without endangering those who practice them.

Huault, et al. (2014) discuss how the macro-emancipatory project carries the assumption that oppressed people -at least, unconsciously- contribute to their own domination. This position departs from Engel's notion of false consciousness¹⁰ by which is claimed that agents are not conscious of the influence of the social structures that create the domination that oppress them, therefore needing the help of intellectuals to understand these structures (Rancière, 1974 [2011]). The presupposition is that, enhancing agent's capabilities for reflexivity and critical thinking, a new political subject will emerge to finally liberate itself from the dynamics that perpetuate its domination. Sustaining this stance of an emancipation "from the outside" is the assumption that the political subject¹¹ lacks a proper language to express its discontent (Pelletier, 2009). The assumption of an undeveloped language means that the political subject needs a translator, someone who can interpret the message that comes from the social structures and simplify it to make it attainable to those who are alienated. This process of 'demystification' is rejected by Rancière for considering it part of the 'myth of education', the 'explanatory system', or the "endless process of mediation" (Huault, Perret, & Spicer, 2014, p. 30) by which intellectuals see themselves as the enlightened avant-garde that will show the oppressed their own oppression. Besides 'intellectualism', two other critiques to the macro-emancipation stance are labelled by Alvesson and Willmott (1992) as 'totalization' and 'negativism', also discussed by Huault, et al. (2014, p. 26). Totalization refers to thinking of the social structure that people try to escape from as a highly coherent and integrated one, ignoring many of its tensions and contradictions. Thinking of this social structure -patriarchy, capitalism- as something indissoluble portrays change as impossible. 'Negativism' refers to the problem of an overly negative view that carries cynicism rather than hopefulness, implying an undervaluation of small advancements achieved so far. Moreover, it

¹⁰ Further developed by Marx in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (1932) through his alienation theory.

¹¹ The 'workers' in traditional accounts, or the 'precarious' in more recent developments (Hardt & Negri, 2004)

makes more difficult to reach wider audiences outside the academia due to the pessimism involved¹².

On the other hand, the micro-emancipatory stance represents a local and temporary attempt of emancipation “from the inside”. Reorienting efforts from grandiloquent projects of social transformation to everyday practices, this research stream focuses on people’s inner worlds and their lived experiences. Huault, et al. identify three main critiques (2014, pp. 26-28) to the micro-emancipatory stance. The first and more explicit one is related to the problem of banality. Detractors of micro-emancipation studies allege that it leads researchers to look for radical meaning in often minor and insignificant details. The second problem is the assertion that small and continuous adjustments to the current system only would give time and space to allow the adaptability of the current social structures of domination, meaning that even though their aim is to subvert the current domination, it will have the opposite effect by letting the ‘steam’ be freed. Another potential side-effect discussed by Huault, et al. (2014) is that micro-emancipation gestures are a useful source of data for domination projects, showing in advance how resistance in the future might look like, and therefore, it is seen as an ‘innovation lab’ for new methods of control. This is exemplified through a review of how the social movements in France during the ’60s were used to create and refine new mechanisms of control in the workplace. Demands on flexibility led to the development of new forms of work in which people were in more precarious positions than before while believing they were freer. Lastly, the third critique and the most relevant to this research, is that it creates a false sense of division between micro and macro efforts:

“[P]arsing modes of emancipation into ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ effectively ignores most of the important forms which actually existing somewhere between the two.”
(Huault, Perret, & Spicer, 2014, p. 28)

This last idea is crucial to use Rancière’s philosophy to scrutinise business schools. Instead of thinking of resistance as fragmented and discontinued efforts (Scott, 1987) to assert equality - emancipation- we should build bridges between different struggles. Emphasizing similarities between micro and macro-emancipation leads us to conceive them as different yet complementary parts of the universal claim for equality (Deranty, 2010, p. 76).

¹² Intellectualism, totalization, and negativism are further developed in more detail by Spicer et al. (2009)

Huault, et al. understand emancipation as “an attempt to actualize equality through creating a dissensus which interrupts the order of the sensible” (2014, p.23). They reject the dichotomy between an exclusive focus on either micro-emancipation small narratives or macro-emancipation grand narratives. Instead, they direct attention to all actions, both individual and collective, that look to assert equality by reconfiguring the *partage*:

“Instead of focusing on creation of new states of freedom (as studies of macro-emancipation do) or attempts to seize fleeting forms of freedom (as studies of micro-emancipation do), Rancière’s work allows us to see how emancipation involves the transformation of what is considered to be sensible” (Huault, et al., 2014, p.24)

Rancière’s philosophy is a way to bridge this Critical Management Studies/Critical Management Education debate and see that both approaches share an intention of verifying equality through political practices. This is relevant to the way this research will be framed in the methods section; whereas the ethnographic approach will look for micro-emancipatory actions in the business school, the historical approach will bring some context to these actions, implying that both are circumscribed to a wider claim for equality. Rancière’s philosophy bridges both stances by directing our attention to moments of ‘politics’.

Radical Position and Pragmatic Position

According to the analysis of CMS literature done by Huault & Perret (2011)¹³, currently there is a dilemma in the field that faces two conflicting positions. On the one hand, CME educators aim to reveal to students the underlying structures and dynamics that allow oppression by denaturalising and exposing the ideological foundations of managerial theories and practices. On the other, it is promoted a pedagogical stance where these ideas must be practiced, meaning a desire to reduce the distance between teachers and students and encouraging collaboration. Both positions create a tension:

“CME basically oscillates between two positions: the radical position of the teacher whose duty it is to expose domination, and a pragmatic conception

¹³ An extensive literature review of CMS debates from a Bourdieusian perspective can be found in (Vaara & Faj, 2012)

based on active participation and cooperation with the publics addressed”
(Huault & Perret, 2011, p.283)

The radical position supports the idea that management education should not be subordinated to practice, meaning that precisely their duty is to question and challenge what is done by practitioners, and therefore, refusing the idea that CME must be centred in providing practical advice to managers. The radical position also has limitations, as discussed by Huault & Perret, particularly the resistance of students and managers to incorporate “the esoteric language and abstract preoccupations” (2011, p.289) that make critical theory difficult to understand. Another limitation is the tendency to marginalisation of CME educators, meaning that scholars anticipate that their critiques will be disregarded as irrelevant, unreal, and impractical, and therefore, their work will lead them to social isolation, feelings of deception, and hostility from colleagues (Reynolds, 1999). The irony of the tension is, while CME aims to promote emancipation, at the same time, it dictates what is important to learn a how the world should be perceived. Consequently, Huault & Perret argue, it changes one educational agenda for a different one, “establishing a new form of hegemony rather than interrupting an earlier one” (2011, p.290)

The pragmatic position, on the other hand, supports the idea that critical scholars should embody their ideas by promoting radical forms of equality, meaning to abolish the intellectual distance between educator and students and to promote collaboration between both. This is the same contradiction pointed out by Rancière (1974 [2011]; 1991). The limits of the pragmatic orientation, according to Huault and Perret (2011), are assimilation and appropriation. The authors refer to the danger that institutionalisation entails, and how critiques might be ‘watered-down’ and incorporated into the dominant paradigm. Even though the pragmatic approach accepts this criticism, it also rejects the allegedly authoritarian stance of purely analytical CME, portraying it as something that goes against the aim of acknowledging the Other’s equality:

“The underlying theory is that without productive commitment to action, analysis is empty and circular; but without reflexive and critical analysis, actions would be reduced to unambitious activism devoid of emancipatory attitudes”
(Huault & Perret, 2011, p.291)

Even though this ‘principle of complementarity’ is widely recognised, bringing both positions together is still an unsolved dilemma in CME. According to Huault & Perret (2011), Rancière’s philosophy rejects both the authority and ‘explanatory order’ (Deranty, 2010, p. 26) of the radical

stance, and the view of equality 'as a goal' (Deranty, 2010, p. 32) of the pragmatic stance. Instead, Rancière's philosophy positions two issues at the heart of CME:

"Firstly, while equality might be asserted, this does not make it synonymous with identity. Secondly, equality is not attached to the search for consensus, as only dissensus can express equality and emancipation" (Huault & Perret, 2011, p.299)

The first issue, namely that equality is not identity, means that equality does not imply that people must be the same or occupy the same positions. Equality, and the role of the educator in asserting it, is related to a 'dis-identification' process. To dis-adapt, dis-identify, or declassify means that the imposed categories are discarded to open spaces for a "reconfiguration of the field of experience" (Rancière, 1999, p. 35). The CME educator rejects the role imposed by the 'police order' (e.g., Expert in Management) and asserts her/his equality in relation to students, practitioners, and colleagues.

Regarding the second issue, namely that equality is not attached to consensus, Huault & Perret (2011) argue that management education must be transformed into a "stage" for political debate by including polyphony and resisting the privatisation of knowledge production from CME educators. In this sense, the debate about what and how management is taught must be part of a wider social discussion, extending the possibility to those who are silenced and excluded. This idea is further developed in the last work of Huault & Perret, in which the authors used a collaborative art-based exhibition as a method to document moments when the power of 'demos' emerges in the context of management education (2016, p.162). Promoting *dissensus* or 'politics' in the context of management education requires to open the discipline to other stakeholders and other recipients:

"In sum, in the field of management education, Rancière's philosophy implies rejecting the authorized form of expert knowledge and instead 'building stages' upon which silenced or discredited voices can become audible and where the subjects who are excluded or ignored can become visible" (Huault & Perret, 2016, p.165)

Summary

In this section I explored the currently available research that links both Rancière's philosophy and business schools and management education. Rancière's philosophy demonstrates to be a bridge

between contradictory stances, allowing us to circumvent certain debates by emphasising similarities instead of differences. To Rancière, any action big or small that asserts equality is part of a greater claim for radical equality. The narrowness of the literature presented here, however, makes evident that there is much space for further developments. Even though Critical Management Studies, Critical Management Education, and Critical Education extensively informed my thinking process, I decided to present only the intersection between them in order to make the absence evident. Once I decided to focus on the novelty of this gap, the main question was how to do it. Because operationalising Rancière as an ethnographic lens implies an experimental design, I had to create it from scratch. In the next section I will cover the difficulties this task entailed.

Methodology

As Rancière bases his empirical studies in historical events using alternative accounts included in newspapers, letters, literature, poetry, and others secondary sources, he does not present a fixed methodology (2009). Rancière's empirical studies include the interpretation of the *Secessio Plebis* (1991, p. 87; 1999, p. 23; 2004b, p. 5) occurred in Rome between 494BC and 287BC where the plebeians abandoned the city, refusing to work. As a consequence, most of the commercial activities in the city ceased. Lacking people to command, the aesthetic exercise (2004a; 2004c) intended to show the uselessness of the patricians, asserting the power of the plebeians as equal citizens. Another well documented experience is the one included in *Nights of Labour* (1981[2012])¹⁴, where some experiences after the French Revolution of 1830 are re-interpreted as aesthetic exercises of emancipation. According to Rancière, the main claim of workers was not only an improvement in working conditions, but the right to direct their own destinies. This idea is supported through the analysis of meetings of workers who gather in their free time, especially during nights, to discuss about politics, play songs, read and write poetry, and to integrally develop themselves beyond the extensive workdays of manual labour. Reclaiming the night as the moment to live their real life, displacing the worktime to the category of a mean to an end, allowed workers to assert their equality as integral citizens and not only as cogs in a production machine. Other examples include self-education experiences (1991), Saint-Simonian Utopians, twentieth-century trade unionists (Deranty, 2010), and the use of art as an emancipatory tool (2006c).

These experiences show what Rancière defines as 'politics', why he equates this term to *dissensus*, and why he claims that 'politics' is an aesthetic phenomenon. These moments when those who have no part assert their equality by transgressing the 'police order' through aesthetic exercises, are the moments of 'politics' that this research looked out for in an elite Chilean business school. As developed in the introduction, my interest in business schools comes from understanding how these institutions relate to inequality. By searching for 'politics' in a business school, I will explore how inequality is conceived in these settings. This conceptualisation of politics as something that is not always present, and in fact, as something that is always precarious and about to disappear and be 're-classified' into existent categories (2004b, p.7), positions the task of seeking *dissensus* as a tremendously difficult one. This section aims to shed light on the methodological constraints and

¹⁴ Re-published in 2012 as *Proletarian Nights*.

limitations of this attempt to operationalise Rancière. Because to seek for dissensus not in retrospective through historical accounts, but in in present time requires to adapt the "reconstruction of practices."

Difficulties in operationalising Rancière's philosophy are not new. Huault & Perret (2011, p.298), Huault, et al. (2014, p.36), and Bingham & Biesta (2010) mention the lack of a fixed methodology in Rancière's work, this is because:

"Instead of attempting to unveil the epistemic categories through which specific historical worlds construct reality, Rancière's histories are reconstructions of concrete practices (in politics, at work, in schools, in the arts) from within. [...] This is a form of hermeneutics. It lets discourses and actions speak for themselves." (Deranty, 2010, pp.185-186).

While working with a philosophy without a fixed methodology presuppose a challenge to any researcher, it also presents an opportunity to be creative and to go beyond traditional paths. Following one of the closing comments of Huault, et al. (2014, p.44), this research aims to engage with ethnographic data (Wilson, 1977; Mills & Morton, 2013; Jackson P. W., 1968) to conduct these reconstructions of practices "from within".

'Politics' as an Aesthetic Phenomenon

Jacotot's pedagogy, as exposed by Rancière (1991), is underpinned by an axiomatic equality that entails a presupposition of equal intelligence. Acting upon this presupposition requires rejecting the idea of knowledge as a linear and progressive process (Deranty, 2010, p. 26); passing from not educated to educated, from ignorance to mastery, from unknown to known. In order to verify our equality, the causality needs to be reversed; by associating what is already known to what is new, students can educate themselves without needing an external explanation, and therefore, without placing themselves as unequal beings (Huault & Perret, 2011, p.294). In the following paragraphs I will explore how this logic can be extrapolated as an iterative approach in the search for 'politics'. Later I will use the principles here developed to analyse data from fieldwork at an elite Chilean business school.

The movement “from known to unknown” might be interpreted as one of those fleeting moments of disruption of the ‘police order’ that Rancière (2004b) understands as ‘politics’. To go beyond the limits of what is known without relying on the ‘explanatory order’ or ‘never-ending mediation process’ (Huault & Perret, 2011, p.293) means to act upon the presupposition that we all are equally intelligent, and therefore, that we all are equal. ‘Politics’ seen as a transit “from known to unknown” means that its search can be addressed focusing either on the political subject (i.e., *demos*) or on the political quarrel (i.e., politics). I will proceed now explaining the methodological implications of this differentiation. First sketching *dissensus* as a search for the political subject -whom is always unknown- and then pointing out why this search needs to necessarily take the political quarrel as starting point. In doing so, I will articulate an operationalization of Rancierian ideas as a methodological frame to my research.

The search for those who are unknown -the political subject

As Rancière argues through his works, this transit from “unknown to known” might be seen either as an educational issue (1991) or as a political issue (1995, 1999, 2004b, 2006), and also as an aesthetical issue (2004a, 2004c, 2010). While in education *dissensus* might take the form of an emancipatory pedagogy, in politics it does so by understanding disagreement as a conflict between those who have part and those who have not. Both take equality as a starting point that needs to be verified through our political practices. The third standpoint to analyse this transit from the known to the unknown, and that it also entails a verification of equality, is to understand it as an aesthetic issue. Those who have part are visible, vocal, and considered. On the contrary, those who have no part are invisible, silent, and marginalised.

As it was explained in the Rancierian philosophy key concepts section, the ‘police order’ is a distribution of the *sensible* (i.e., Sensory) that does not recognise a supplementary part or *demos* (May, 2008, pp. 47-48; Rancière, 2004b, p. 6). This means that those who have part are not aware of those who have not. Those who constitute the current *partage* cannot -at least, cognitively- possibly know what lies beyond it. In other words, the ‘police order’ ignores the very existence of

the *demos* (Rancière, 1999)¹⁵. Thus, if we aim to look for moments of ‘politics’ in a business school, necessarily we need to look for those who are being marginalised, excluded, and invisibilized in it - the *demos* of that specific business school. Nevertheless, what gives the *demos* its nature of such is that we cannot know it unless a moment of ‘politics’ makes it visible. Following the idea of the transit from known to unknown involves that the starting point of a Rancierian “reconstruction of practices” must be to locate first those who do have a part -the ‘police order’. Before attempting to discover the unknown, we need to focus on mapping what is actually known, namely, to acknowledge those who constitute the current distribution of the *sensible* (i.e., Sensory).

The guiding question for a first step should be ‘Who is there?’, meaning that a method to look for ‘politics’ needs to start by acknowledging those who are heard, seen, and considered. This stage seeks to understand what the ‘police order’ is in a certain setting by mapping the core of its *partage* and its boundaries. In the context of an educational setting such a business school, as a first -and more obvious- level of analysis, the guiding question addresses the existence of formal groups expected to be found. For instance, undergrad and graduate students, teachers, members of staff, research centres, societies and clubs, sports teams, volunteering, students’ unions, and political youths. As a second step, the inquiry should evolve to include unofficial or informal groups, such as sub-groups of teachers that gather by discipline or hierarchy, students’ study and reading groups, political groups without affiliation, LGBT/Queer groups, indigenous minorities, disabled, among many possible others. While the first step can be easily achieved by accessing official sources (websites, newsletters, brochures), the second step already entails the difficulty of considering groups and organisations that, because are not formally constituted, might not be acknowledged by the school’s *partage*. The first step allows us to map the main core of the *partage* -those who are officially and formally acknowledged by all-, and the second step represents a movement towards the boundaries of the *partage* -those who are not necessarily recognised by all, but still have a strong enough presence in the setting to be noticed.

This movement towards the boundaries of the *partage* and the exploration of its limits are the starting point for a second stage. Following the initial idea of a transit from “known to unknown”,

¹⁵ Rancière summarises it as the “conflict between someone who says white and someone else who says white, but doesn’t mean the same thing, or who doesn’t understand that the other is saying the same thing when using the word whiteness” (Huault & Perret, 2011, p.296)

once we have already mapped those who constitute the core and boundaries of the *partage*, it is time to attempt to move beyond and explore what is left outside of it. In this context, there is a subtle but important difference that needs to be addressed. Exploring the boundaries of the current *partage* does not mean to think of who 'us' and 'them' are, namely it does not seek a characterization of people like oneself - 'us'- and people we consider different from ourselves -'them'. The reason for this is not only to avoid the binary logic and the potential reductionism of oppositions between 'good' and 'bad', but also because it would entail a misreading of Rancière's concept of *partage* (Rancière, 2004, p.12; 2010, p. 36; May, 2008, pp.47-48; Deranty, 2010, p.95). The *partage* is not a 'membership club' where some people are allowed in and other not, and where those who are 'in' know who (and how) those who are 'out' are. Oppositely, the idea of *partage* as a distribution of what is *sensible* (i.e., Sensory) implies that those who constitute the *partage* do not even know the existence of those who are out. Therefore, *partage's* characterization becomes impossible when it is attempted using only cognitive tools. As an example; in a business school it might be recognised that the dominant paradigm in economics teaching is based in neoclassical foundations -'us'- but also it would probably be noticed that certain teachers and students push for a greater inclusion of political economy -'them'. In this example, and although one group might be dominant and the other a minority, both are included in the *partage* as long as their existence is mutually acknowledged. To map the *partage* and then exploring its boundaries implies to put on the table all we know about those who exist, despite all of their differences. After reaching that point is necessary to go even beyond. The search for 'politics' is the search for what is missing at a given setting -the *supplementary part* of a business school.

Once that which is known has been acknowledged, we can move to address what is unknown. Searching for the unknown entails a reflexive task where we attempt to explore what lies beyond the boundaries of the *partage*. This task cannot be faced by using just a cognitive approach, as it entails an attempt to grasp something that is beyond what is considered sensory -something we cannot see or hear. The guiding question for a second stage is 'What is missing?', implying that once we know how the current *partage* is made of, we can move to challenge its assumed completeness. As it was discussed in Rancierian key concepts section, the functioning of the 'police order' restricts the *partage* by not recognising a supplementary part. That is to say, those who are already visible and vocal are all what exist. They are unaware of the existence of people who 'do not have a part'. Those who are not considered *sensible* or sensory, meaning the supplementary part of *partage*,

constitute the political subject or 'demos' (Rancière, 2004b). The 'demos', those who have no part, are what is missing in the distribution of the sensory, and therefore, they are inexistent to those who are considered visible and vocal. As it was explained before, this negation of the *other* should not be read as a contraposition of interests ('us and them') as the Habermasian approach does in the context of management education (Huault & Perret, 2011, pp. 292, 295; 2016, p. 163). This negation of the other is not a conscious stance nor an attempt to distance from whom is different, but a negation based in a genuine ignorance. A sense of unawareness of others' very self. This stance of 'what I do know is all that exists' cannot be challenged by insisting in a reflexive task that is purely cognitive, as it involves a methodological limitation. It does not matter how hard we reflect on what is missing, since it is not sensory to us, we will not find it using a purely cognitive approach.

A second stage of searching the *demos* represents a task far more complicated than the one previously described in the first stage. Moving from what is known towards what is unknown implies an exercise involving a reflexivity that goes beyond cognitive limits. It is necessary to include components of the sensory realm or "things that cannot be described by using just words" (Pink, 2008). We cannot *know* what lies beyond the *partage*, but we can work with the *sense* that there is something more that it has not been addressed and to attempt to explore it through our senses. Exploring what lies beyond the boundaries of the *partage* not only involves an acknowledgement process of who are left out, but also how those people left out are. This means that the inquiry not only questions who the *demos* -groups and individuals- are, but also what their cultures, beliefs, stances, desires, and feelings are. What is left out should not be understood only as 'people' in terms of discretionary subjects, but it also entails to question what those people are carrying with them - their processes of *subjectification* (Deranty, 2010, p.70).

A final consideration on the search for the political subject; Rancière (2009) uses the *partage du sensible* as a dynamic category that depends on contextual and historical conditions. Those who were the excluded yesterday not necessarily are the excluded today, neither those who are excluded in a specific context are excluded in a different one. This caveat implies that any attempt to map a *partage* needs to consider (a) context, (b) historical background, and (c) be an iterative process. Consequently, both stages previously described should be carried on as a hermeneutical process (Deranty, 2010, pp.185-186) that is iterative, never-ending, never-closed, and always open to new interpretations. Moving back and forth between these stages means to constantly go back to what

is known and ask again what is missing, to incorporate what we have become aware of, and then again attempting to expand the boundaries of what is currently known. This iteration is the core of 'politics' as it involves an aesthetical reconfiguration of sensory experience, meaning it involves an "enlargement of the public sphere"¹⁶ (Rancière, 2006, p. 55).

The search for what is unknown -the political quarrel

Previously I have explained what entails to look for those who are unknown, meaning the political subject or *demos*. Nevertheless, and as Deranty (2003) argues, the conformation of the political subject cannot precede the political quarrel, because "to engage in a democratic politics is not to discover a subject of politics; it is to create one" (May, 2008, p. 71). Diverting from Marxist approaches (Hallward, 2008), Rancière argues that the political subject arises because of *dissensus*, and not the other way around. In traditional Marxism, the political subject (the workers) are depicted *ex-ante* the political quarrel (exploitation) (May, 2008, p.50), meaning that a fixed category of people (the proletariat) are the target of another class (the bourgeoisie) that uses their condition (ownership of the means of production) to extract and appropriate the surplus of the former. Within this Marxist account, class structures, and therefore inequality, are the starting point that allows capitalist exploitation to take place. In the same way, in modern approaches (Hardt & Negri, 2004) to Marxism, the political subject (the precarious) is constituted by a fixed group of people that, due to their characteristics (financial, cultural, and social capital), must endure an ever-increasing process of dispossession (political quarrel). To Rancière, understanding the political subject as a fixed category of people to which structures are applied entails taking inequality as starting point, and therefore, unwittingly support its perpetuation. Oppositely, Rancière takes equality as starting point, implying that the *demos* cannot be known prior to the arising of a political quarrel. As May puts it:

"The proletariat is not the name of a group that pre-exists political action. Before such action there are only workers. The proletariat is the name of a group that

¹⁶ "Democracy, then, far from being the form of life of individuals dedicated to their private pleasure, is a process of struggle against this privatization, the process of enlarging this sphere. Enlarging the public sphere does not entail, as it is claimed in liberal discourse, asking for State encroachments on society. It entails struggling against the distribution of the public and the private that shores up the twofold domination of the oligarchy in the State and in society." (Rancière, 2006, p. 55)

emerges when it assumes the name *proletariat*, along with the internal unity and equality that that name implies.” (May, 2008, p.114)

The *demos* as political subject is a consequence of a disturbance of a particular distribution of the *sensible* (i.e., Sensory). The *demos* constitute itself when a transgression of a certain 'police order' that excludes them from partaking takes place. This entails that the political subject is a fluid and non-fixed category that arises because of, and can only be seen due to, a moment of 'politics'. *Dissensus* allows the emergence of the *demos*. This causality caveat has tremendous ramifications for the research design.

As the identification of the political subject comes after the identification of the political quarrel, the search should be focused on moments of 'politics' in the studied setting rather than on whom we might think are part of the political subject. Focusing on 'politics' entails to direct our attention to the moments where logics of domination are suspended, meaning where equality is verified through *dissensus*. The suspension of these logics is not merely an intellectual exercise of *subjectification*, it also necessarily entails a movement that has aesthetic consequences (Rancière, 2004c), meaning a re-configuration of the sensory experience -what is visible, vocal, and considered. The interruption (Ruby, 2009) necessarily entails a relational view, as one only can reject the imposed categories through an action that impacts on others. The actions of the *demos* that materialise the declassification process into an aesthetic reconfiguration inevitably impact the 'police order'. Here the example of Rosa Parks' refusal to give her seat up (Rancière, 2006, p. 61) as an interruption that suspends the logics of domination (segregation) and verifies equality (right to sit like everyone else) is enlightening. Her interruption succinctly shows how *dissensus* entails an aesthetic reconfiguration (a black woman using one of the 'white' seats) that necessarily impacts the 'police order' (go against the law and getting arrested). *Dissensus* is not innocuous, as our practices impact others, *dissensus* always has repercussions.

Methodological Implications

Following the ideas presented above, we must meet some conditions to operationalise the search of 'politics' in a certain setting:

- (a) we need to go from known to unknown, and from political quarrel to political subject
- (b) we need to consider context, historical background, and see the research as a hermeneutic process
- (c) and particularly, as a process that involves a reflexivity beyond cognitive limits
- (d) we need to understand 'politics' as a relational phenomenon with others
- (e) and where the interruption necessarily entails aesthetic consequences

Research Questions

Acknowledging the complexities to operationalise Rancière lead me to refine the overarching research question. To understand where and how 'politics' emerge in a business school setting, I needed to look closer at the processes and practices shaping the *partage*. Starting from what is known (identify the 'police order') to pass to what is unknown (identify the *demos*), to then attempt to grasp the tensions that emerge between both (identify the political quarrels by which the *demos* verify its equality). Lastly, as 'politics' is considered a fleeting moment, it would be useful to extend the search to understand what the reactions of the 'police order' to these quarrels are (identify the mechanisms of policing). This way, the refined research questions are:

RQ1: What are the political quarrels in this business school and who comprises their *demos*?

RQ2: What are the policing mechanisms by which the *police order* prevents 'politics'?

RQ3: What is the *consensus* and *dissensus* in this business school?

These questions are entangled, consequently they needed to be addressed simultaneously through a comprehensive process. In the next section I will make the case for a mixed-methods approach based in Sensory Ethnography (Pink, 2009) including elements of Contemporary and Oral History (Howells & Jones, 1983).

Research Design

In the previous section I have explained the methodological complexities that Rancière's philosophy entail and how they constrain a potential research design. In the following paragraphs I will explain the experimental design (Cassell, Cunliffe, & Grandy, 2017) I used to explore different alternatives to answer the research questions previously stated. As looking for *dissensus* means an attempt to find and to grasp something that is not sensory yet, the research design attempted to tackle the problem that 'politics' might or might not emerge during the fieldwork. Consequently, the design used was inherently experimental, as it addressed the problem of seeking for a moment that we cannot know in advance, neither its exact location nor its participants.

This experimental design aimed to look for 'politics' from two different yet complementary angles: ethnographic and historical. These angles considered different methods and were used in a modular-design fashion, meaning that they were designed to be used by separate or the two of them as a complementary whole. The modular design allowed me to reduce the risks of conducting experimental research.

Sensory Ethnography

We can understand traditional ethnography as "iterative-inductive research, drawing on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents within the context of their daily lives (and cultures); watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory as well the researcher's own role, and that views humans as part object/part subject." (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 3)

Complementary, Sarah Pink's work (2009) involves a rethinking of the ethnographic method by including sensory experiences, sensory perception, and the categories we use to talk about our senses. As an emergent field of research and practice, it "suggests a way of ethnographic learning and knowing by which the ethnographer seeks to participate in the emplaced activities of others through her or his own embodied engagements" (p.79). Sensory ethnography comprises an ethnography that is reflexive, gendered, embodied, visual, and digital (p.10). This emphasis on the

irreducibility of human experience is coherent with Rancière's understanding of research, not as the intention to sketch an underlying structure, but as interventions on specific contexts (Rancière, 2009).

Pink (2009) proposes looking "beyond written and visual texts" (p.49) and even "beyond language" (p.64), to incorporate "unspoken meanings" (p.76) and to attempt to grasp the "non-verbal, tacit, emplaced knowledge" (p.130). Instead of reading and interpreting the ethnographic subject as a 'text' by hearing what people say and watching what people do, sensory ethnography looks to read and to interpret the ethnographic subjects and their interactions as an interconnected network of sensory experiences that take place in a specific context and moment in time. Working with the 'sensorial turn' (p.7) is coherent with the complexities of trying to grasp something such as 'politics', because it diversifies the repertoire of tools to understand experiences by not reducing them to one specific sensory category.

Pink (2009) defines three principles taken from other authors to delineate the boundaries of sensory ethnography. First, it needs to consider the concept of emplacement, meaning the relation between mind, body, and environment (p.25). This way, ethnography is not only embodied, but also emplaced. Emplacement is coherent with the methodological implications previously sketched, namely the necessity to consider context and historical background using a holistic view, and also to understand 'politics' as a relational phenomenon that takes place in this context.

The second principle has relation with the interconnectedness of senses:

"[I]nterpretations of the senses as interconnected and inseparable invites ethnographic researchers to comprehend our perception of social, material and intangible elements of our environments as being dominated by no one sensory modality" (Pink, 2009, p.28)

To work through an understanding of all sensory categories as interdependent and indissoluble is coherent with the main complexity of looking for something that is not part of the sensory experience yet. By understanding experience as something beyond -and not reducible to- the visual and audible, we can tackle the task of looking for 'politics' as something that depends on all participants' and researcher's senses. Research questions are centred in making sense of lived experiences that are not perceivable only considering visual and audible dimensions.

The third principle is related with 'knowing in practice' (p.34), the recognition of forms of knowing that not necessarily can be expressed in words. It means that the fieldwork is an opportunity to learn 'with' research participants through a process that affects both parties, and in which the ethnographer learn to know how the subjects of the inquiry learn to know. As Pink puts it, sensory ethnography is:

“[...] the use of the ethnographer's own sensorial experiences as a means of apprehending and comprehending other people's experiences, ways of knowing and sensory categories, meanings and practices.” (Pink, 2009, p.46)

In the context of this research, 'knowing in practice' meant that I needed to engage with participants and the ways they learn to know. That is to say, a main part of the ethnography was precisely to connect with participants at a human level, developing mutual trust, and closeness. I will address this in a following section on the dilemmas on positionality.

In practical terms, doing sensory ethnography involves a turn from traditional participant observation (Shah, 2017) to 'sensory emplaced learning' (Pink, 2009, p.63). Understanding participation as producing multisensorial and emplaced ways of knowing implies that visual observation is not necessarily privileged, shifting away from approaches that position the visual as “the most important mode of understanding” (p.64). This shift entails that fieldwork experience is “*neither* dominated by *nor* reducible to a visual mode of understanding” (p.64). Pink also defines three key elements of multisensory participation: a) the 'serendipitous sensory learning of being there' (p.65), meaning that when the ethnographer is involved in long term research, usually something appears that could not be grasped otherwise than being there; b) the ethnographer as sensory apprentice (p.69), meaning the recognition that the ethnographer learns during the inquiry by engaging with the activities and environments he/she wants to learn about, and particularly, that learns to know how participants learn to know; and c) the engagement in embodied daily practices with participants (p.72), such as eating (commensality) or walking with others.

The understanding of participant observation as 'sensory emplaced learning' and these three principles are coherent with the understanding of 'politics' as something inherently emergent and relational, and therefore, as something that can only be grasped by being *at* the studied setting and by participating in its daily routines.

Contemporary Oral History

To reduce the risk of focusing exclusively on the unpredictable emergence of ‘politics’ in the business school during the fieldwork, this research also included an historical approach to *dissensus*. This historical approach follows what Rancière has done in his works; reconstructions of practices from within (Deranty, 2010, pp.185-186).

To introduce the pertinence of the historical approach, it is necessary to briefly review the turbulent last decades of local educational conflicts. Chile’s Students’ Movement can be fairly be qualified as ‘politics’ in the Rancierian sense, as it has been a series of protests between 2001 and 2018 that have questioned the foundations of the educational system by giving voice to those who have been historically excluded from the discussions – the students (Reyes & Vallejo, 2013; Rifo, 2013; Jackson G., 2013; Banda, et al., 2013)¹⁷.

The first burst of the movement took place during the 2001 with a protest known as “Mochilazo¹⁸”, where secondary students asked for a reduced tariff in the public transport. The second massive burst was during 2006 with a larger movement known as “The Revolution of the Penguins¹⁹”. This second burst was prolonged during almost a year, changing the focus from local demands to national laws. Later, the burst of 2011 not only aimed to change constitutional laws, but it had specific requirements on how to do it; universal gratuity in higher education funded with a progressive tax reform and the prohibition of profiting from education. Protests became constant events (Figueroa, 2012), achieving monthly demonstrations that reached 1 million participants (in a 17 million people country). These protests put education as a priority in the discussion table of the parliament for the next years and extended the critique of profiting to other institutions, such as the AFPs (pension funds administrators)²⁰. The movement tried to burst again in 2016, but it lost momentum due to on-going discussions in parliament²¹.

¹⁷ The full list of publications (books, articles, thesis, etc) based on the Students Movement can be found in <http://movimientoestudiantil.cl/publicaciones/>

¹⁸ Mochila = Backpack. In Chilean slang, “mochilazo” means “to hit someone with a backpack”.

¹⁹ In Chilean Public High Schools, students’ uniform is constituted by grey trousers, black shoes, white shirt, black jacket, and institutional tie, giving them the appearance of penguins. It is common to refer to secondary students hanging out in groups as ‘penguins’.

²⁰ More information on this social movement can be found on <http://www.nomasafp.cl/inicio/>

²¹ After several changes, laws were approved, and the ‘gratuity’ reform started to have effects during 2017. Nevertheless, the spirit of the law was altered as the Constitutional Court (TC) declared that to forbid the profit-driven nature of educational institutions was against the constitution.

In April 2018, several conflicts of public connotation within educational institutions took place, such as sexual harassment cases from teachers to students in universities, the raping of a female migrant worker by a High School student, and the diffusion of a viral video where students parodied the Spanish gang-rape case of “La Manada”. In this context the Students Movement reemerged (Silva, 2018; Toro & Saavedra, 2018). This new burst has been known as “Tomas Feministas” (Feminist Occupations) regarding their protest methods that combine occupation of key institutional buildings and participation in picket lines. Their main demand is “the end of the sexist education” (Vallejo & Darat, 2018; López & Mirando, 2018), pointing to the fact that the Chilean educational model has intrinsic features that make it sexist, and that those features are reproduced by teachers and students, as well as ignored by upper management.

To focus on this recent burst, the research design needed to include a method to study something that has just recently happened and, that at some level, it is still happening. Oral History and Contemporary History methods give an answer to the question “How does one apply the historical method to a live situation?” (Howells & Jones, 1983, p. 15). By understanding the present as “the past in making” (p.15), the phenomenon taking place “becomes immediately available for study” (p.15). According to the authors, this kind of analysis is only possible through the development of an oral history that tackles the lack of multiple sources by deeply engaging with informants (p.20).

By including contemporary oral history, we can give value to people’s voices (O'Reilly, 2005, pp. 128-129), and specially, by including accounts that potentially are different from what was officially declared on the conflict. This is precisely the aim of the methodology previously sketched, namely, to conduct an intervention that interprets an historical moment from the perspective of those ‘who do not have a part’ (Rancière, 2009). Nevertheless, attempting to obtain testimonies of people involved in an occupation is a difficult task, as it entails to overcome distrust and protect informants from possible retaliation from the ‘police order’. These complexities and the sampling issues will be covered in next sections.

Data Collection

Data collection was approached by using two different angles to tackle the questions derived from the search of ‘politics’ in a business school setting:

1) Ethnographic Lens

The ethnographic approach and its long-term engagement with participants are coherent with the understanding of 'politics' as a fleeting moment that cannot be predicted in advance, or in other words, as something inherently emergent. The ethnography comprised two stages. The first stage or Access Negotiation Process attempted to provide some hints on research questions. The second stage or Sensory Emplaced Learning aimed to be the main source of data to answer them.

1.a) Access Negotiation Process

Despite we cannot know where dissensus will take place, what we can know in advance is that the 'police order' will try to keep people's glances away from that place. As it is summarised by Rancière through the analysis of the police motto "move along, there is nothing to see" (Rancière, 2010, p. 37; Huault & Perret, 2011, p. 296), the 'police order' will try to deviate attention from aesthetical reconfigurations taking place. As aesthetical movements make something part of the sensory experience that was not part before, the task of the 'police order' is to claim that there is "nothing to see", to efface any trace of 'politics'. "Nothing to see" means that what is happening needs to be hidden because it challenges the current consensus. As in other Rancierian concepts, this assertion has a double meaning. On the one hand, the 'police order' will try to eliminate any attempt to modify the status-quo, so when "a dispute over the distribution of the sensible (i.e., Sensory)" (Rancière, 2010, p.37) is taking place (e.g., A group of people gathering in a public square) the 'police order' will try to disperse the people, make them move along, and prevent them from joining (e.g., The demonstration). On the other hand, the second meaning of "nothing to see" entails that what is happening does not *deserve* attention, meaning that those who are participating in this aesthetical reconfiguration do not deserve to be seen, heard, or considered. Those who attempt *dissensus* are the *demos*, and therefore, it is claimed by the 'police order' that nothing of what they might say is truly relevant.

The paradox derived from the motto -where the police custody something that, at the same time, they claim is not relevant- is enlightening for a research design that attempts to look for something that we cannot know in advance. To maximise the researcher's chances to be present where dissensus might happen, we need to look for those spaces that are safeguarded by the 'police order' and that, when asked to be accessed, they claim that "there is nothing to see there". In the context of an ethnographic inquiry that attempt to explore an institution such as a business school, the

negotiation process to gain access by the researcher was used as a valuable source of information to understand what those policed spaces are.

The method involved the documentation of the whole access negotiation processes carried with the business school and its result. The focus was to understand “What is out of the researcher’s reach?”, meaning which are those spaces or elements that, in order to gain access to the business school, are made forbidden by the ‘police order’. This stage was not centred in the final result, but in the process. Obtaining any form of access was not as important as the arguments given by the ‘police order’ to deny it. Including the access request as part of the ethnography directly tackles the research questions, as it allows us to understand how the *partage* is custodied by the ‘police order’, and consequently, giving me hints of where dissensus might happen.

The method consisted in requesting a meeting with authorities²² of the targeted business school to ask for consent (O’Reilly, 2005, p. 62). The meeting was petitioned through an email that contained: current affiliation of the researcher, an abstract of the research project (200-300 words) and that also will manifest a desire to use it as an instance of collaboration. After the meeting was granted, the researcher gave a short presentation (5-10 minutes) on the aims of the research and its potential contribution to the business school. By the end of the meeting, an Institutional Consent Form (ICF) was handed to the authorities and the instruction of return it within 10 days.

1.b) Sensory Emplaced Learning

As it was expected, at least one business school provided an acceptable level of access to the researcher (O’Reilly, 2005, p. 85). An acceptable level was previously defined as obtaining access: to conduct participant observation around campus; to interview students, teachers, and members of staff; to record and take pictures of the business school and the activities that take place in it; and to observe and to participate in open activities, such as students’ assemblies, talks, forums, and debates. This stage of the ethnography encompassed 6 months of Sensory Emplaced Learning (Pink, 2009, pp.63-80), meaning that the researcher engaged with participants’ daily activities by being present in the business school. The method can be summarised in the idea of “hanging out” with members of the business school, meaning to be present during their daily activities and to register

²² I use the label “authorities” to name the group of people that commonly takes decisions in business schools that are part of larger universities. This group of “authorities” usually comprises Dean, Vice-Dean, and/or Chiefs of Departments (Business, Economics, Accountancy)

both of the attitudes, behaviours, and comments made by the participants, and also the reflections, thoughts, and feelings experienced by the researcher.

The researcher's journal (RJ) was the main instrument to keep record of the daily interactions and to facilitate the reflexive process. However, and depending on the context of each situation, notes also were taken using the researchers mobile phone (MP). Either by texting or sending voices messages to myself, the mobile phone was used as an instrument to avoid interrupting the situations taking place, as it is a common device that does not arise suspicions. Notes were taken on daily basis, from Monday to Friday, and during 4 hours per day. The choice of attending to the business school in the morning, afternoon, or evening was randomised during the first month, and then modified depending on the results. Attending or not to events taking place during the weekends was decided depending on the context and nature of those events. Lastly, notes were summarised on weekly basis.

2) Oral Contemporary History Lens

The historical lens is the one that more closely follows what has been done by Rancière through his works. As it was previously developed, Rancière uses examples of the *past* to conduct hermeneutic interventions in specific contexts. This experimental approach attempts to include the *present* as part of the historical by using the Contemporary and Oral History (COH) approach previously described.

Originally this research considered an historical reconstruction of the 2011 burst of the Students Movement as a moment of 'politics' in Chilean business schools. Nevertheless, and as it usually happens according to Rancière, *dissensus* emerges as something spontaneous:

“Time ago, nobody would have believed that an occupation of the School of Economics and Business was even possible [...] a symbol of the neoliberalism and the patriarchy” (Vera, 2018).

During the preparation of this document the Students Movement has burst again, and what has just happened -or still is happening- can be considered contemporary history as it adds a new chapter to an on-going process of *dissensus*. Consequently, the historical approach was focused on the latter moment of this movement, namely the occupations during the “Feminist May of 2018”.

To document the occupation of a business school that took place during the Feminist May of 2018 was a way to construct a source for future developments of social movements' history in Chile. As Howells & Jones (1983) put it, "Contemporary oral history can create the historical source itself or make a contribution to the available range of historical sources" (p.16). At the same time, I chose focusing exclusively on the occupation of one specific business school that lasted only one week, limiting the complexity of the task, and therefore, reducing the amount of data to be collected. This does not mean that is an easy task, but it radically differs from the complexity of other feminist occupations, like the one that took place in the Faculty of Law due to the case of sexual harassment from a professor to his assistant, which lasted 74 days (Porrás, 2018).

To reconstruct the oral history of what happened during the occupation of the business school, I conducted 60 in-depth interviews with members of the school. More specifically, the method was based in recorded (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 150), qualitative (p.112), informal (p.124), non-structured (p.116) interviews with people who participated in the occupation either way. Interviews took place outside of the business school (p1.46), in a near coffee shops located either in the School of Architecture or in Lastarria Neighbourhood²³. Choosing an external scenario allowed me to avoid intromissions and potential involuntary disclosure of information regarding the identity of interviewees who directly participated in the occupation.

The guiding question was an open-ended request (p.120) to narrate what happened during the feminist occupation from their own point of view, considering minimum intervention from the researcher. Most interviews started with the simpler and more neutral question possible:

Can you tell me what happened during the 'Toma Feminista'?

Even though the aim of this approach is to reconstruct the unofficial side of the story, namely the practices "from within" (Deranty, 2010), heterogeneity of participants needs to be taken seriously to create a trustworthy source of contemporary oral history. Consequently, interviews with upper management members and official accounts were also incorporated to the data analysis.

²³ 'Barrio Lastarria' is a neighbourhood known due to its restaurants, coffeehouses, and pubs. It is located half mile from the business school.

Methods

Data collection was carried through a variety of ethnographic techniques, including observation, written fieldnotes, voice notes, digital pictures, and in-depth interviews. In the following paragraphs I will describe and provide details of each one and how they were carried on:

- **Observation:** In the span of seven months (September 2018 to March 2019), I spent approximately six months attending to an elite business school located at Santiago de Chile, City Centre, on regular basis. Most of the school's premises are closed each year during February. Commonly, I spent time on the same schedules that most students and academics do, meaning Monday to Friday between 8am and 8pm. Although, on some special occasions I also attended the school on less common schedules or during weekends in order to cover special activities such as ceremonies, events directed to professionals and graduates, and networking gatherings. Observation spots changed throughout the fieldwork's span to reflect the learnings I obtained. For instance, if I wanted to talk to academics, the hallway that connected two buildings was a good place to find participants because they were either going or coming from teaching. By having a small yard with a smoking point I could spend a lot of time waiting without looking suspicious. Oppositely, if I wanted to talk with politically active students, sitting on the tables near the students' unions offices was not productive because it raised suspicious looks. Once I was asked to identify myself by a group of students of a political youth, and even after doing it and explaining what I was doing, they nevertheless decided to move to a different table and keep their conversation far from me. These learnings allowed me to identify certain spots where people were more prone to engage on a talk with a stranger. Moreover, I also learned the importance of having a clear "elevator pitch" to introduce my research. Nothing was more suspicious than not being able to explain in simple words what I was doing in less than a minute.
- **Written Fieldnotes:** Following recommendations from ethnographic handbooks, I always kept a dedicated notebook with me. By the end of the six months of fieldwork, I had already completed one notebook of two hundred sheets and started a new one. Notes were made on every topic that caught my attention. There are personal reflections on casual conversations, students' phrases I overheard at the hallways, irreproducible confessions made off the record during interviews, extensive descriptions of landscapes and upper

management offices, etcetera. Sometimes this practice took me to moments of despair, because I treated every random thought as potential data. Unsurprisingly, most notes were useless afterwards. With the exception of a pair of sentences, this final document does not have quotes from those notebooks. The reflections made, however, led me to the findings I will discuss in the following chapters. Looking in retrospective, I can see now how taking notes was crucial to make sense of the research process, especially of a topic as slippery as 'politics'.

- **Voice Notes:** Something I did anticipate was the impossibility under certain scenarios of taking written notes. As a pre-emptive measure, I created a WhatsApp's group called "soliloquy", where I was the only member. Using my mobile phone allowed me to take both written and recorded notes without rising any suspicious look. Most voice notes are reminders for myself, such as comments on the connections I made between things different interviewees said, or questions on what certain artefacts might mean, etcetera. Similar to written notes, I included every random thought when I could not grab my notebook and write it. Once again, as the same as with the written notes, most of the audios of my "soliloquy" were useless when I wrote this document, but truly important to document each step of the thinking process that led me to this point.
- **Digital Pictures:** Following the same pattern than with written and voice notes, I took pictures of everything that caught my attention. These pictures were particularly important in order to write physical descriptions of campus that might sound coherent to the reader. Because the business school has been built throughout decades, there are three buildings (A, B, and C) where the latter is considerable older than the first two. Pictures allowed me to build upon the architectural pattern of concrete, glass, and steel, I will discuss later. Pictures also allowed me to exemplify the radical differences among the atmosphere that teachers and students experience. The student's yard and the surroundings of the students' unions are the only places where the cold pattern of concrete, glass, and steel is broken. There are colours, handmade banners, people handing pamphlets, playing musical instruments, and of course, tons of political slogans. I took around 400 pictures, enough to write a whole chapter on them. I included those I considered the best in terms of aesthetics or because they helped to exemplify a certain point.



Figure 1 "We Fight for a New Chile"

- In-Depth Interviews: In-depth recorded unstructured interviews were the main method used to carry on the ethnography. Because the topic to research was to understand where does 'politics' emerge from, the sampling method was a crucial question. Firstly, I tackled the issue designing certain parameters, such as having gender parity among interviewees and trying to balance the department origin of different academics. However, finding the first participants was harder than expected due to a series of reasons. The most important one was that I did know what I was looking for in abstract terms, but I did not where to look at nor whom to ask to. As I have mentioned before, at the beginning I did not even have a proper "elevator pitch" that helped me to motivate potential participants. Also, by being known among certain academics, I felt there was a bit of scepticism in participating. After a few failures, I understood I did not have alternative rather than a snowballing sampling. I started by students already involved in politics, such as members of the students unions and political parties youths. In spite of certain initial resistance, after a few interviews with

feminist students who participated in the occupation, I made myself a name. Some of them suggested classmates for me to interview or even asked me to give them my mobile phone so they could contact me. Similarly, with teachers I started with former colleagues who wanted to participate precisely because they knew me and wanted to help. In both cases, the participants initial scarcity became an overwhelming mountain of data. In total, I conducted 60 in-depth interviews with an average length of 90 minutes each. Data gathered was a bit more than 100 hours of recordings.

Sampling

As it has been previously developed, sampling (O'Reilly, 2005, pp. 39, 123) for this stage is tremendously problematic, as it is a methodological contradiction try to sketch the 'political subject' on beforehand. Consequently, try to narrow down the potential participants or to specify categories of people would go against the very purpose of identifying the processes and dynamics shaping the *partage*. Nevertheless, there are some lessons that we can extract from Huault & Perret. To improve the conditions that allow *dissensus* to emerge, sampling needs to consider: heterogeneity and polyphony, using a mediating artefact, and build on an open and emergent design (2016, p.166-167). Following these recommendations, sampling:

1. Considered every level of the organisation: Students (undergrads and graduates), teachers, administrative staff, tech teams, research centres, unions, political associations, and security and cleaning services. The purpose was to be as heterogenous and polyphonic as possible by considering every participant despite their status or position in the organisation.
2. Included a mediating artefact (opening-question) to which all the previously mentioned people can relate, such as the common event of the feminist occupation.
3. Was open and random, meaning that the opening-question was asked to anyone and everyone who came across the researcher.

As Howells & Jones put it, "the selection of informants, and the criteria to be adopted in choosing some whilst rejecting others, has always been a difficult and multi-faceted problem" (1983, p.16) that can only be tackled by deeply engaging with the phenomenon that is taking place and its

participants. Moreover, the sampling creates an *impasse*; even though the aim of this approach is to reconstruct the less known side of the occupation, meaning to focus on students who directly participated in the occupation – *demos*, the COH approach requires to use multiple sources to exhibit the heterogeneity of the event. The decision taken to tackle this problem was to start snowball sampling process with the students who occupied the building. After carrying these interviews on, the process followed by including the people mentioned during the interviews, whether they were authorities or other students. The process was carried on until I have got 60 interviews of 1.5 hours each, always privileging the quality and depth of the data. Originally, I intended to not let it turn it into an exhausting task (O'Reilly, 2005, pp. 143-144), something I clearly failed.

Data Analysis

Frequency was used as the main category of coding, even though 'key events' (O'Reilly, 2005, pp. 42-43) also influenced this disposition. Above all, data analysis always maintained an iterative-logic that embraced the fieldwork in a holistic way (Willis, 1977; Vedel Hadberg, 2006).

For instance, if the researcher bumps into several participants that claim to have felt marginalised when the business school organise social meetings, we can take this element as a starting point to go deeper in our analysis. After understanding "What", the next step should be related to the "How". How are these students different from those who have not felt excluded? If the reasons given point to the fact that social meetings organised by the business school always take place in the east area of Santiago (the richest area of the city), that gives us hints of a class-related political quarrel. While the upper-class students either have their own cars or live within the east area, the working-class students must use the public transport, and since it does not work after the ending time of the social meeting, they are subtly excluded from participate in those events. The last step relates to identify where the exclusion comes from, meaning that we need to challenge the 'police order' to address the "By whom?" When confronted with this reality of working-class students getting excluded from socials, the 'police order' might argue that those are the only luxury venues available for such a large amount of people, and that working-class students can always carpooling with others. These explanations only confirm that, when confronted with a choice, the 'police order' decides that a "luxury venue" is more important than the inclusion of all the students despite their social class. In Rancierian terms, inequality is verified through the 'police order'

practices of deciding the venue, imposing categories to students where “luxury” is a valued attribute and, towards this process, marginalizing those who cannot face this burden. Exclusion is subtle and easily disregarded by the ‘police order’ through its suggestions of carpooling, but it still can be felt as a humiliating experience by working-class students. Confronted with this situation, some working-class students might accept the categories imposed by the ‘police order’ and validate them by attending and paying private transport. Other students -those who aim to declassify themselves- might attempt to execute an *interruption*, a form of *dissensus* that entails an aesthetical reconfiguration, such as organizing an “alternative” social meeting.

This example shows the iterative-inductive logic (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 178) that was used to analyse collected data. After transcribing all interviews, analysis was pursued in a hermeneutics fashion following Rancierian method of “reconstruction of practices”. No computer software (p.188) for qualitative data was used in the analysis.

An important caveat: Data was registered and analysed in Chilean Spanish, which is a dialect with many particularities²⁴ that enrich the communicative process, and that might be lost due to translations. The final products of the fieldwork, as well as reports to my advisors, were translated into English.

Dilemmas on Positionality: “Another man talking of Feminism”

In 2018, Chile and Latin-America were experiencing a feminist wave that infused students’ political activity all across schools and universities. However, unlike previous political episodes of Chilean post-dictatorship history propelled by students’ movements (2001, 2006 and 2011), this time even some business schools got involved. Previous students’ movements had always had a clear *leitmotiv*. In 2001 the demand was a reduction on students’ bus fares. In 2006 it was the derogation of the LOCE (Organic Constitutional Law of Education), which gave guarantees to private agents and enabled them to use public schools for profit purposes. Lastly, the movement of 2011 gathered students both from schools and universities under the shared demand for a “Public, Free, and

²⁴ Here you can find a blogger’s reflexions on how difficult is to foreigners to understand Chilean Spanish and the explanations of some of its particularities, such as the “S” aspiration and the “D” elision: <https://gringajourneys.com/chilean-spanish-difficult/>

Secular” higher education. Although participation incrementally grew with each one, during all of these student-led movements, business schools had a passive role.

I was a politically active undergrad student at the business school in 2011 and vividly remind how frustrated many of us were when tried to make others join the demonstrations. Trying to convince them of the importance of a ‘universalist’ approach to higher education when 70% of our classmates came from private, expensive, and religious high schools seemed a futile exercise. They either did not understand the importance of “Public, Free, and Secular” education or plainly did not care. We could not convince nor influence others and gain enough momentum to massively join the protests. In Rancierian language, we did not “universalise the singular”. I remember we not only were a small bunch during demonstrations, but we also were criticised for carrying a banner with the school’s logo and a phrase that showed the school’s support of the movement’s demand. “It is not necessarily the position of the school”, I remember some classmates said during assemblies.

Feminist protests of 2018, on the other hand, succeeded on that same task. They joined the national students’ movement and positioned their business school as part of it. Perhaps they did not gather a massive number of students in comparison to the overall number of people enrolled at the school, but they were enough to be visible. As an upper-management member would later tell me, “They are not so many, buy they are noisy”. Furthermore, feminist groups did not only show that students from business schools could join the national wave of protests, but that it was also possible to take political actions a step beyond. In May of that year, 2018, they carried on a short but impactful occupation, winning all of their demands in less than a week. They were able to ignite a political spark in a place apparently dominated by indifference. “What had been different this time?” was a question that guided my search for ‘politics’ during the whole time the fieldwork lasted.

I did not want, however, to strictly focus the ethnography on the occupation due to concerns regarding representation. Rancierian philosophy implies a strict rejection of ‘mastery’, meaning a rejection not only of hierarchical categories but also of any attempt to arrogate another’s voice. I needed to avoid the “explanatory logic” because centring the ethnography on a feminist occupation would necessarily put me in a position where I should talk about it. How could I conduct a “reconstruction of practices” when I was not even able to understand the complexities female students had to dealt with? I did not want to be, as a student who did not give me an interview called me, “another man talking of Feminism”.

My first approach to a students' feminist group was not great, but not a total disaster either. By social media I found out there was going to be an event celebrating the launch of a "feminist library", meaning a section of the school's library devoted to feminist theory and literature. I thought it was a good timing to make a first approach and get some contacts. With a little bit of luck, I would perhaps even have the chance to schedule an interview. The event took place at the inner yard where most student's activities are held. Attendance was similar to other political assemblies I observed, although this one had a clear female majority. A table positioned at the middle of the yard exhibited all the books that were going to be available for lending. A spokeswoman took the mic and talked for around 20 minutes. She explained why they had carried on this initiative and thanked the library shops and people that had donated the books. She also emphasised how important was to both use this newly acquired space and to defend it. The word "defend" got my attention. By that time, I only knew of the creation of the OGDIS (Office for Gender and Sexual Diversity) by the press, but I ignored all of the others tangible effects the occupation had had. The spokeswoman ended saying they all should feel proud of themselves, because they had earned that space fighting. Then she gave the pass to an artistical number where two pairs of students played a few songs.

After the launch has ended and people starting to disperse, I approach to the table I asked if I could take a picture. They nodded, but the spokeswoman looked at me suspiciously. I asked if she had a minute to talk, introduced myself and -as better as it was possible- explained what I was researching. By her look I can say it was confusing. I mentally rebuked myself for not having a clear opening line or an 'elevator pitch' prepared for the occasion. She asked me what I wanted, to what I replied that I was looking for interviewees. She agreed on an interview, right there and right now. I tried to explain that I wanted in-depth interviews, but it only raised her suspicions. I gave her my number but never got an answer back.

During that encounter I learnt my first significant lesson on fieldwork. If I wanted to conduct a "reconstruction of practices", I had to understand the background of those practices first instead of directly skip to the results. If I wanted to narrate the story without arrogating protagonists' voices, I needed to understand how they had got there in the first place. I could not just go there and tell them I was researching a topic that directly involved them and their mates. In spite it might seems obvious, it is needed to be said occupations are illegal under the Chilean law. Although participating in the occupation of school's or universities' premises is unlikely to conduct to pecuniary fines or

penal sanctions (i.e., Jail), and even unlikely to be formally prosecuted at all, it still is an illegal action that enables the educational institution to act. Potential disciplinary measures range from a note on the permanent record to non-appealable expulsion. If I wanted to find out all the details of their transgressive political action: how it was planned, how long, how many were they, what were they thinking when crossed the threshold of the building and put chains and locks on the doors, etc. If I wanted to find out all of those details, I first needed to gain their trust.

Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Repercussions

When this ethnographic project was proposed, I was asked to submit forms detailing foreseeable conflicts and ethical dilemmas. I also had to include an ethics section in the upgrade document and attach previously approved participants' informed consent templates. Although this exercise was useful to make me think of the importance of ethics while conducting research involving people, it was not even close to help me to anticipate the real dilemmas I did encounter. Moreover, in none of those forms I had to deal with the consequences of my decisions. I learnt there was a large gap between what I expect the ethical questions would be and what they actually were. Ethical dilemmas were not black and white as in theory, nor clearly transcendental issues. Most times were small and apparently irrelevant things. Fieldwork's ethical dilemmas were not "taping someone with a hidden recorder", but things such as being asked "what have people told you so far?" by other participants.

As it will be discussed in Chapter 2, the business school exhibits a highly fragmented social fabric. Many of its members feel lonely and isolated in spite of the massive number of students and organisations the school has. In the case of the academic departments, that fragmentation is accompanied by a sense of mistrust and antagonistic interests. A rivalry sometimes even experienced by colleagues within the same department. In addition to the limited physical space for leisure, the fact that many academics share secretaries and waiting areas made easy to spot when I had an appointment with one of them. Thus, one of the ethical dilemmas I constantly faced was to being asked what the "other" has said on regarding any particular issue. These questions were usually followed by a rant and the advice of do not trust them nor believe what they have said. I felt trapped in a war between two parties demanding me to take their side. "Why do you think people do not leave their offices except for lunch, and many others eat at their desks?", an interviewee

asked me once. It was a rhetorical question though. He continued, "Because there is no privacy here. If you are seen talking to someone, it means you are *with* them. There is no middle ground."

Sharing collected information with other participants was clearly a forbidden action, but I constantly questioned myself where the red line was. I would not ever disclose participants' identities nor information that would point to someone in particular. However, sometimes I found myself forced to hint pieces of collected information as a way to elicit certain topics or to contest certain claims made by interviewees. I specifically remember an interview where an upper-management member said the feminist occupation had been awfully violent and destructive. Without providing any evidence, he said the occupation had been planned by communist and anarchist groups, in cooperation with far-left political youths. On the top of that, he claimed that "most" people in the occupation were men from other schools of the university. Lastly, he added that protesters had tried to set the building on fire. Over a dozen of interviews made to students, teachers, and students' affairs workers who had been there that day contradicted his testimony. According to them, the occupation had not only been as peaceful as an occupation can be, but also that students had taken care and cleaned the space every day. Not a single window had been destroyed in the process. What should have I done then? Should have I just listened to and nod? Should have I confronted him with all the information I had collected? I left him go on with a story that turned increasingly implausible, but when he said that female workers now felt terrified of going back to work, I felt the urge to stop him. I asked if those were the same female workers that every morning during the occupation had brought sandwiches and snacks from home to hand out to students. I felt the anger on his look. He started lecturing me on how to and not to conduct research. He said I was unprofessional and that my role was not to take sides. I replied that a researcher must be sceptical and inquisitive, as well as capable of contrast testimonies. I stepped back, however, and changed the subject to a less sensitive one to prevent blowing the whole interview up.

I still reflect on that episode and whether I made a mistake by using collected information to contest him. I have also thought what would have happened and what he would have told me if I had not stopped him. After that interview I went home blaming me for having lost control of the situation and got dominated by the heat of the moment. However, it also helped me to reflect on how being in between this war dynamic was affecting me. As other academics also mentioned, it was tiring to experience this polarised atmosphere every day. Moreover, in my case, I also had to collect information from both sides, meaning that many times I had to just nod and pretend to agree with

whatever people were telling me. Otherwise, I would have been targeted as part of the “other” and would not have been given more interviews.

Another main ethical dilemma, and one I still experience, is related to what is included in the written version of the ethnography and what is left out. Most researchers would agree on the claim the written document should be the fairest possible representation of the ethnographic process. But what happens when doing that involves providing information that would endanger participants’ jobs? Most secretaries, clerks, and administrative workers I had the chance to talk with refused being recorded. Moreover, they were not available for an in-depth interview as academics and students were, but only had 15-30 minute windows to talk. Most of them, however, wanted to participate in the research and give me their testimonies. They just did not want to appear mentioned due to concerns with their jobs.

What shall I do with all the information given by them? Their testimonies have definitely informed my reflections and the conclusions I arrived to. However, including it as evidence might endanger their already precarious positions. As this business school is part of a public university, its employees are ruled by the public servants’ code, meaning they cannot be fired unless an administrative process is carried on against them and evidence provided to justify their dismissal. However, the school has opted for diverse forms of outsourcing that enable it to have flexibility when hiring and firing employees. Since I was looking for the ‘demos’ at the business school, it was a fair assumption thinking that testimonies of outsourced employees would shed some light on my search. On the other hand, I would not be able to use them. I decided to collect them anyway and solve this methodological conundrum by prioritising the commitment made when I asked them to talk. In other words, their testimonies informed my research but are not explicitly included. I decided no academic project is worth enough to endanger participants’ jobs, even if those chances are low.

Some of the most insightful, unexpected, and sometimes funny anecdotes were narrated by people I cannot mention. Anonymity in these cases is not possible, because they are the only ones that know those stories. To tell their stories necessarily implies to reveal their identities, even if I anonymise all the rest of it. Sometimes these stories involved unknown and obscure details of the history of the school during the dictatorship and the obliging attitude of its upper-management members with political persecution of students and teachers. Other times, funny anecdotes such as the time a drunk business student -literally- kicked the Architecture’s Dean in the butt for having asked him to get up from the hood of his car. However, my personal favourites are the ones related

to current upper-management members that used to be students at the school. Elder employees remember them not as the prominent figures wearing expensive suits they are now, but as the humble and timorous middle-class boys they played football with. "Please do not change. I have seen how people change when they come back being *doctors*", one of them told me with saddened voice after finishing a funny story.

I have always been aware of the potentially negative consequences this project might have in my future career, but it was only when I started writing it up that I assimilated them. Thinking of these consequences reminded me when I was in the management department head's office waiting for an interview. His secretary told me she had been calling me on the phone, but she did only get an "out of zone" message in return. I replied I had been in the school since the morning, but my top-up mobile's coverage was awful. She looked at me confound and asked "Why do you have a top-up mobile? Someone like you... I mean, you studied here...". She was implying my economic situation should be better than that. I replied that a top-up mobile was what I could afford then. Her following question baffled me. She asked, "Why do not you forget about all of *those* things and just make money instead?". A clerk in charge of the office supplies was standing next to her waiting for a signature and looked at me with a question mark on his face. As same as the secretary, he has also known me for years and wanted to know my answer. "I grew up in a catholic school", I replied without really thinking about it. They did not seem to understand what I was implying or how both things were connected. Even though I have not been a believer for years, I still can recognise the influence religious education had on me. I continued, "In the hall of my school there was this paint of Francis of Assisi. When I was a kid a used to look at it while I waited my dad to pick me up. The paint had a caption with a bible's quote "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?". Both of them laughed, and then I did it too. The clerk left and the secretary told me I will be received by the department's head in the following minutes.

After the interview I headed home thinking of what she meant by "those" things. Somehow, she knew I was conducting research that would make me an unattractive candidate for the school, therefore, that I would not be hired back. But, without even thinking it, I had spontaneously replied what I deep down still believe.

Other Ethical Considerations

As the research aims look for 'politics', defined as the conflict that arises from the verification of equality by those who are usually excluded and marginalised, it necessarily entails to be looking for those who are in the weakest positions, and therefore, those who need to be safeguarded the most. Working with students and workers that might be critical of the business school requires not only to guarantee their anonymity (if required), confidentiality, and right to opt-out at any moment, but also to work with the data provided by them using the most general and untraceable labels. For example, writing that a specific opinion comes from "an outsourced worker" is not enough, as this only includes cleaning and security outsourced services, and therefore, it puts at risk the identity and job position of people already working in precarious conditions. Consequently, the researcher did not disclose any raw data provided by participants to upper management members.

Information given to Participants

The information given to participants was mainly focused on explaining the practical issues addressed by the research, avoiding including philosophical issues unless is explicitly required. Although the focus of the research is the Rancierian understanding of 'politics', to explain how the concept of 'politics' is understood in an unconventional way, how *dissensus* is understood as a positive trait of democracy, and how this is connected to the conflict between the *demos* and the 'police order', is potentially an overcomplex and/or unnecessary way to proceed.

When introducing the research to potential participants of the ethnographic approach, the emphasis was placed in "understanding marginalisation, exclusion, and invisibilization in the business school", stressing that the aim of the project is to recognise and to value new voices. Using opening-questions was a way to capture the essence of the phenomenon that is being studied (i.e., 'politics'), and at the same time, to be honest and truthful to participants in relation to the aim of the research.

When introducing the research to participants of the historical approach, the purpose of reconstructing an oral history of last burst of the Students Movement was openly declared. As potential participants are people who participated in the protests and occupation, they are already aware of the social movement and its political implications. Consequently, the relation between Rancière's philosophy and this wider societal phenomenon is more explicit and straightforward than

in the ethnographic approach. Ideological stances of the researcher were revealed to the participants when required.

Regarding other issues related to inform participants prior to partake in the research, information provided was name and affiliation of the researcher, source of funding, lack of affiliation to any political party or any political movement, uses of the collected data for the PhD thesis and the fact that results will be available in the university's library collection.

Data Security

All data collected through notes was kept in the reflexive journal of the researcher, a notebook that was always carried with me. The notebook includes a note on the cover where is detailed that the information contained is confidential and private, and in case of being found missing, it must be returned to the address provided without making any copy or divulging any of its content. Electronic backups of the notebook were made periodically in order to prevent any loss of important information.

Electronic data such as videos, audios, and pictures were recorded by different electronic devices, such as personal mobile phone, video camera, and audio recorder. Electronic files, as well as backups of the reflexive journal, were encrypted using 7-zip application and then stored in the cloud using the Microsoft OneDrive account of the researcher provided by the IT Services of the University of Bristol. Once backed up, data was safely deleted from all electronic devices used to record them. This allowed the researcher to minimise risks of both to lose important data and to vulnerate the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

Presentation of the Business School

Before starting with the findings' chapters that answer each of my research questions, I think it is necessary to provide some contextuality and historicity to the reader. In the following section I will provide a brief description of the business school I conducted the fieldwork at, in order to give the reader a sense of "emplaced knowledge". The initial description is followed by an historical account of the institution and how its recent history was shaped by the political events that took place many decades ago in Chile. Lastly, the process of access negotiation is narrated to the reader as both a source of data and a personal insight regarding the necessary commitment with the Rancierian philosophy.

Rancière goes to the business school

When you walk through the gates of the School of Economics & Business into the main hall today, the first thing you will notice is that nothing really stands out. The main structure, including its walls and upright pillars, are made of naked concrete. All of the floors are decorated with the same light-grey ceramic tiles. Stairs and their railings are made of white painted steel, the same than safety fences on each floor. The ceiling and some internal walls follow the same pattern of concrete and steel, sometimes adding glass to allow light to come in, and in others, adding wood-covers to create a sober colour contrast effect. At one side of the main hall, an information desk made of wood and steel is surrounded by naked concrete plant pots. The same aesthetic pattern repeats itself again and again in all the three buildings, despite they were constructed using different architectural styles and their facades are not similar at all. Nevertheless, it feels solemn and ceremonial. Moreover, by combining geometrical shapes and cold colours, the result is that nothing really stands out nor gives you any hint of where you are. It could be anywhere.

Sometimes people joke about it saying it looks like a hospital's lobby or the waiting area of an airport. And they do have a point. There are flat screens hanging on almost every corner showing video loops with information tables and schedules. Every communication is presented following an institutional colour palette and with a persistent presence of the organisational brand. And, either as footer or header, they always include the most important distinctions the institution has obtained: accreditations, membership to international associations, and places in rankings. Twenty-

eight flags of different countries decorate a height bridge connecting two opposite sides of the main hall, infusing the space with a cosmopolitan aura. The formula repeats with six banners with gigantic fonts hanging from the third floor showing the words Empathy, Ethic, Respect, Commitment, Truth, and Responsibility. It could be anywhere.



Figure 3 "Main Hall"

The School of Economics and Business is a massive organisation, both in terms of size (>20.000 square metres) and population (>3.300 students only in undergrad). Masters programmes add around 2000 more students, but the aggregated number including all graduates programmes could not be found. The organisation chart reported in annual reports reflects this complexity by dividing it into three schools, which later are divided into departments, and then those departments into disciplinary areas. Without going into too much detail, the school offers 3 undergrad programmes, 11 masters, 2 doctorates, 7 versions of MBA, and a series of diplomas, courses, and even dual-degree programmes in collaboration with overseas institutions such as the MIT Sloan Management

School. On top of that, it also hosts three well renowned research centres that report both to internal and external audiences. Physically, it is divided into three separate buildings that I will label as A, B, and C.

Building A is a tower of twenty-two floors constructed during the '70s for welfare housing purposes. It has been refurbished several times since then to adjust to new requirements, although by paying enough attention to the layout it is possible to distinguish the previous six flats per floor configuration. The tower is strictly divided into dedicated floors, namely each department has a number of floors that they can use and distribute for their offices as they please. The distribution of offices on each floor is also tacitly divided into disciplinary areas. Working spaces are closed, individual, and there are neither dedicated common areas nor kitchens. The tower currently hosts full-time academics' offices, research centres, and most activities related to executive education programmes, such as Diplomas and up-to-date training courses. Floors exclusively dedicated to these programmes have modern amenities, colourful common areas for coffee breaks, and inspirational quotes screen-printed on the walls.



Figure 4 "Decide"²⁵

²⁵ "Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision." — Peter F. Drucker

There are twelve quotes in total, all of them highlighting one word as tittle such as Lead, Decide, Innovate, and Differentiate. Among the authors of the quotes, it is possible to find people such as Richard Branson, Tom Peters, Mark Sanborn, Paul Rand, Peter Drucker, and Ingvar Kamprad. There are neither women nor non-white people among them. No Chileans either.

Building B, where the main hall is located, was finished in 2005 and later connected to a previous construction dated from 1982. The joint building hosts all the undergrad classrooms, postgrad classrooms and lounge rooms, library, study spaces, computer labs, silent areas, and two masterclass auditoriums. Amenities are spacious and well-illuminated, commonly carpeted, and provided with digital temperature control, both traditional and electronic whiteboards, two projectors (or three, depending on the size of the auditorium), a desktop computer, and ergonomically designed chairs. Outside of the main masterclass auditorium there is a flat screen showing the names and face pics of students with the higher grades. The video broadcasted on loop shows both the “Excellence Circle” (higher 5%) and “Roll of Honour” (higher 1%). In spite of the spaciousness and minimalism of the design, the fact every inch of the building has been optimised to host as many classrooms as possible gives the visitor a full-to-overflowing feeling. Everything seems crammed to fit as many people as possible. Undergrad students’ exponential growth from 400 to 1000 students per year during last periods provides evidence to support this feeling. Every year around 1000 new students enrol in one of the three undergrad programmes.

Building C is the newest of the constructions built in 2010 and one exclusively dedicated to host the administrative units of the school: admissions, secretary of studies, students’ welfare and scholarships, exchange programmes, tutoring programmes, sports unit, social responsibility unit, and inclusion unit. Contrary to the Building A, working spaces are open and only the directors of each unit have a closed office. Main authorities’ offices are also located in this building, among which it is possible to find the Dean, Vice-Dean, and Schools’ directors’ offices.

Deanship is located on the fourth floor, and it comprises the whole west-wing. On the entrance of the Deanship there are large billboards with the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the school written only in English. Next to them, it is possible to find a board with the names, face pics, and periods in office of previous Deans. This billboard was subject to controversy years before due the protests of students who demanded to remove the names of those who were designated by the military junta during the intervention of the university by Pinochet’s dictatorship (1973-1990). The demand asked for, at least, mentioning the division the school experienced in 1972 and the people

who were in charge of the School of Political Economy before the military closed it forever. Instead of any of these alternatives, the unaltered billboard was moved and placed at the Deanship.

All the coffee tables in the waiting area have copies of the same three newspapers on them: two specialised in finances and a third one known due to its ideological inclinations and collaboration during the right-wing dictatorship. Facilities are not only spacious and well-illuminated, but also slightly luxurious. There is a conference room with a sixteen-chair round table made of native oak, which is integrated with cutting-edge technology for presentations. Lunch is provided directly to the offices, and it comprises an *à la carte* menu that is not available at the canteen.

In spite of the extension and complexity of the school, most students will spend the majority of their time and will get to know only the Building B. Which is why most of the participant observation takes place in those facilities. It is also important to remark that the division of buildings is not only an infrastructural one, but it is experienced as a division of parts and roles as well. Students only *visit* the Building A when they are asking for a review of their marks in a test or when they have to hand in an overdue homework. In the same way, academics only *visit* the Building B when they have to teach a class. Most academics (Building A) and administrative staff (Building C) only communicate via telephone or email, and some of them have never even met in person.

Exiting the main hall of Building B by the west entrance will get visitors to a canteen managed by an outsourced company, offering a non-gourmet although nutritious menu for around 3 pounds a meal. Alternatively, the consumer can choose from a wide range of allegedly-overpriced snacks, soft drinks, and other items (according to a student's-led survey, canteen prices are 15% more expensive than closest stores). Moreover, the canteen has capacity for roughly 300 people, which is less than a 10% of the undergrad students' body. Lunch time is chaotic on daily basis. On the top of the long queues and limited time between classes, sometimes conflict arises between students when some of them try to reserve a chair putting their backpacks on it.

In front of the canteen entry there is a gift shop offering every imaginable merchandise product with the school's logo stamped on it. Profit goes to scholarships. Beside the classical hoodies, shirts, pencils, and mugs, it is also possible to find less conventional items, such as a small cubical Bluetooth speaker made of bamboo, also painted as a gambling dice.

Despite it looks like a generic space, when you wander around long enough you will start noticing some peculiarities. For instance, there are oddly few spaces to take a seat; only three sinusoidal-

shaped benches (wood and steel, of course) are distributed in which is a massive space such as the main hall. In other parts of the building B, you might find a loose couch, a few chairs and tables of what pretty much seem garden furniture with the logo of a coffee brand, and occasionally one bench here and other there. These arrangements look less as an organised attempt to create a recreational space than as a way to fill an empty corner with whatever it fits. In contrast, the library and silent areas are spacious, well illuminated, and with plenty of seating available. They even have vending machines conveniently located near the exits to grab a coffee or a candy bar without leaving the place. While study spaces seem designed for groups to share during several hours, the common areas paradoxically seem designed for the exact opposite purpose.



Figure 5 "Silent Area"

When scrutinising little bit closer common areas, it also gets noticeable that they are divided into two categories: sports and recreation. In the case of sports, facilities are exceptional. There is a cutting-edge football field court with synthetic grass, an indoor court for basketball, tennis, and

volleyball training, a well-equipped gym, five multi-purpose rooms for Yoga, CrossFit, and Zumba dance, and there even is a climbing wall for bouldering practice. Recreational areas, however, are the opposite both in terms of quality and number. These areas are distributed across the campus in small green “pockets” that, although offer a visual rest from the dominance of the naked concrete, do not represent a realistic alternative when it comes to have a space for sitting and relax. Unsurprisingly these tiny green areas are typically overly crowded, especially during warm days and at lunch time.

Even though lunchtime and recreational arrangements are not ideal, commercial ones definitely are. The school not only has a couple of cash machines scattered around its buildings, but it also hosts a bank branch. Conveniently, a sales rep stands in one of the hallways offering students a promotional gift if they open a bank account with them. Private companies’ presence, however, is not limited to these services. Next to every classroom entry there is a plaque with the name and logo of a company (e.g., Coca-Cola, Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers, among many others) which indicates the building, floor, and number of the room in a coded way. For instance, the seventh classroom located on the third floor of the postgrad building would be P-307, or alternatively, the Unilever auditorium. The larger the donation, the more noticeable the recognition will be. For instance, one of the most generous donations in the history of the school was enough to name the library after the former family patriarch of the richest economic group in Chile and to maintain a permanent display of his life and work.

Next to the main walking entrance to the hall there is a plaque with a name list of the donors; many of the names are as known to many Chileans as strange. Known in the sense most people have heard of these families in the news or read about them in history textbooks. At the same time, they are strange in the sense that they have never met any of their members. Ironically, this entrance is almost always closed due to business-related events for which the school’s hall is rented as a venue. Either due to its location at the heart of the city centre or its parking availability, or maybe because they even offer an integrated catering service, the main hall of the school is always a place where events take place.

The economics and business school work as its own rhythm. It functions from Monday to Saturday and from March to January. Undergrads’ classes start at 8am in the morning and finish at 8pm in the evening. Some executive programmes for students working full-time jobs end after 10pm, while some versions of the MBA start before 6am. Undergrad classes comprise blocks of time of 80

minutes each with 10-minute breaks between classes. Last year, the 30-minute lunchtime was eliminated, and class blocks reduced from 90 to 80 minutes in order to fit an extra block of classes during the day. This dynamic creates a space that is both loud and silent at the same time. During classes, the place seems almost abandoned and a sepulchral silence dominates the main hall. Any disturbance to this atmosphere would be quickly frowned upon. Oppositely, while the 10-minute breaks last, the main hall gets flooded with people and then bursts in strident sounds.

Maybe this constant flux of people is what offers a rationale for always having someone cleaning. *Always* here is used in a literal sense. It is not only that the place is pristinely clean, but that there is always someone *cleaning*. This aseptic aesthetic configuration vividly contrasts with the neighbourhood the school is emplaced in. Less than a hundred yards from the school's entry there is the emergency room of one of the most crowded public hospitals in the city centre. As a consequence, the school is emplaced in a zone with an important presence of homeless and beggars. The school appears as a place sterilised from all the impurities of the surroundings; where outside there is poverty and dirt, inside there is opulence and the strictest cleaning protocols. At any time you wander around, you will find cleaning workers mopping the light-grey tiles, or sweeping a hidden corner of the naked concrete, or vacuum cleaning the auditoriums carpets, or dusting off the white painted steel railways, or sanitising a toilet. It seems impossible to walk around and not find at least one outsourced employee wearing the uniform that identifies them as cleaning personnel.

By exiting the canteen by a lateral door, visitors will get to a memorial. The monument commemorates the students, teachers, and workers of the school victims of political persecution, incarceration, torture, and disappearance during Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990). Despite the considerable size of the memorial and its position almost at the centre of the courtyard, it gets visually lost in between the constant movement of people. From time to time, however, anonymous people lay red roses on the ground next to the names of those who once fought for a different society. The memorial to the victims of human rights violations is the first reminder of the long institutional history of the school of economics and business, and of the collective memory of its members. And, maybe because of that, it almost looks like an extemporal artefact; in the same way that only a hundred yards separate an opulent building from the struggles of a public ER room, far less than a hundred yards separate the quartz and bronze memorial from the cutting-edge computer

labs crowded with dozens of the last iMac's models. It resembles an oasis at the middle of the desert.

By continue walking through the courtyard and heading back to the main hall now by a different path, the visitor will find a fence that delimits the boundaries of the school. The 8-foot-tall fence is constantly patrolled by the guards and some bits of it are smeared with black grease to dissuade people from jumping it. A protective fence would not be something unusual, except for the fact that it separates the school of Economics and Business from another school of the same university. Rationale given by the authority is based in security costs, although the general feeling is that campus is divided due to the different students' profiles on each school. As if it was a cold-war scenario, on the one side are those dedicated to serious matters such as economics and business, and on the other, those dedicated to more ethereal matters such as design and beauty. If students from one of the schools wanted to, for instance, use the library facilities of the other, they must first exit their school and go around the street to the walking entrance of the other.

Progressively, institutional narratives of diversity feel more and more contestable. For instance, there are not exclusively dedicated toilets for people with disabilities, but only a larger cubicle provided with some handles. Bathroom doors are regular size meaning that it would be highly uncomfortable for someone on a wheelchair to attempt entry. Moreover, there are no power-assisted doors, meaning that it still would be necessary to request help to get into the bathroom. Due to the number of people that on daily basis transit through the school, lifts are locked and people are forced to use the stairs. In the case of people with temporary physical impairments (e.g. A broken leg), a key to the lifts can be requested providing medical certificate. In the case of other disabilities, there is neither infrastructure nor assistance of any kind. Given the high levels of investment in other areas of the school, the absence of these arrangements is notable.

Little by little the school seems less a generic space and more one with certain identity that, however, is very difficult to grasp due to its contradictions. While I watch a security guard removing posters of a feminist protest call while leaves the promotional ads of a Tal Ben-Shahar seminar on corporate happiness, I think of the organisational identity as a battle against dissent; the monochromatic army fighting against the insurgence of colours; the surgical sterilisation fighting against the tiniest of the stains; the solemn silence fighting against the slightest of the laughs; the uniformity realm fighting against the rebellion of individualities. It feels like whatever does not fit within an extremely narrow view of what "economics and business" mean must disappear or be

relegated to the background. As I will develop in Chapter 2, what is included in the notion of “excellence” has many forms.

If you keep walking following the delimitations of the fence, visitors will find the students union offices and a tiny students’ lounge room where the atmosphere is radically different to the rest of the school. Here you know that you are somewhere, although not sure where. There are people playing guitar and singing protest songs from the 70s, practicing juggling and aerial silk, learning a K-Pop song’s choreography by repeating it over and over again, rising funds by selling orange juice spiked with vodka from a hidden backpack, working on a community compost garden, and painting banners for the next Fridays for Future protest. Dozens of posters and other forms of interventions cover the surroundings of the offices, many of them calling to revolutionary actions against the neoliberal establishment and others rising awareness of long dated gender issues. The immaculate aesthetic of the schools gets diluted in between these few square meters surrounded by hand-painted murals with messages such as “Economy at the service of the human. Not humans at the service of the economy”. There are open assemblies and heated discussions, as well as shiny colours and strident laughs. Here is where this ethnography that looks for ‘politics’ begin.



Figure 6 "If the world were a bank, they would have saved it already"

Historicity: Dictatorship and Intervention of the School

Trying to summarise the historical development of the school is not an easy task to approach as it is part of the oldest university of the country. Thus, one of the firsts in creating a specialised school to approach the study of economics and business. Opened during the 30's as an addendum of engineering schools, as the same as other business schools, its mission was to develop tools and knowledge to support the economic development plan of the country. By emphasising an engineering-like approach, the study of economic and organisational dynamics was aligned with certain scientific assumptions on human nature and rationalist behaviour. Perhaps the best example of this approach is the way economics and business are joint in just one degree called Commercial Engineering. The fusion of both disciplines in one degree is still the general rule rather than an exception in Chile. The programme commonly has a duration of 5 years or 10 semestral terms. Although, during the last years, business schools have been pressured by the market to shorten programme's extension. Professional degrees in Chile, however, need to be of at least 10 semestral terms to be considered as such. Less than 10 semestral terms would be considered a technical degree instead of a professional one. Business schools have tackled this issue by encouraging students to undertake a master's degree equivalent one more year. The undergrad programme has core courses during five terms with a robust formation in math, statistics, econometrics, macro and microeconomics. Then, students choose either economics or business as a major. During the remaining five terms, they undertake specialisation courses according to their election and some elective courses related to their major. Despite their major's election, students get the same degree title: Commercial Engineer.

The history of commerce schools, as they were called in early years, is intrinsically intertwined with the history of the country and its economic model. During the first half of the 20th century, a series of governmental initiatives promoted inner development as the main mechanism to achieve economic growth. A large number of public-owned companies were created to manage strategic industries such as communications, steel, water distribution, and electricity supply. During the 60's, a step forward in this direction was taken by passing a series of reforms with the objective of redistributing idle land. Political tension grew as squirearchy opposed reforms while revolutionary ideas gained momentum. In 1970, Salvador Allende was the first democratically elected socialist president in the world. Disputes over economic reforms grew to the extent the economics school

split in two factions in 1972. It was separated into a political economy school and a liberal economy school. One year later, amidst CIA intervention and local sabotage, the inevitable will happen. "I will pay with my life the loyalty of the people", Allende promised during his last radio transmission from the governmental palace. Under bombs siege and surrounded by the army, he fulfilled his promise.

The 11th of September of 1973 marks not only the beginning of one of the most atrocious dictatorships in Latin American recent history, but also of a series of economic experiments. Some of the most aggressive neoliberal reforms the world has seen were propelled by a group of economists under the tutelage of Milton Friedman. The influence of this group known as "Chicago Boys" due to their doctoral studies in the University of Chicago, transformed the country's inner development approach into an exportation-based one. Even though their effects are still a matter of debate, neoliberal reforms were portrayed by the regime media as a spectacular economic bonanza. Economic growth was communicated as the "Chilean miracle" and embraced by the centre left. With the parliament closed and debate mostly forbidden, public companies and natural resources were privatised and handed to Pinochet's family and friends. Public services such as education and healthcare were underfunded almost to their dismantlement (Errázuriz Tagle, 2017).

Economics and business schools were naturally a main focus for intervention. Topics such as political economy, unions, and co-ops were obliterated from the syllabus. Politically active academics, workers, and students were persecuted, tortured, killed, and sometimes, even disappeared by the military police. The stone monument I previously mentioned has a list of their names. Deanship of the school was replaced by military officials. Academics who adhered the regime were appointed as department's heads. Neoliberalism became the main doctrine to be taught, and free-market ideas the only acceptable ones. Resistance was linked to neo-Keynesian ideas and focused on technical discussions, always within the boundaries of liberalism as undisputable paradigm. Up to date, academics who participated as collaborators of the regime still are part of the school, either as active members or as emeritus professors. The later still have got the right to vote in Dean's elections. As they did it in the last one.

Access Negotiation Process

As I have stated before, the ethnography starts by using the access negotiation process as part of the data collected and analysed. In the following section I will explain what actually happened and how it differed from what I planned. The narration is based on the research journal notes taken at the very beginning of the fieldwork:

“It is the end of August 2018 and there still is a month of winter left. Temperatures are low for Santiago, but I am so glad of not having to face another British winter that I do not care much. I have been back in Chile for a few days and I am still trying to secure a business school to conduct the fieldwork from September and on. I have got 7 months, but clock is ticking. I know that September is a “short” month due to National Holidays week, and that summer holidays are right after the corner. Even though many academics keep working in December and January, most universities in Chile do not have a summer term. It means part of December, whole January and February will be lost months for interviewing purposes if I cannot get access quickly. I need to get permission from a business school in order to start interviews, ideally right after National Holidays. Without an institutional clearance, I will have to constantly deal with security guards and definitely will not have the opportunity to observe the school’s dynamic without being noticed”. My plan was simple, but now I know, totally flawed.

Previously I have discussed Rancière’s interpretation of the police motto “there is nothing to see here”. The analysis suggests the only way to search for ‘politics’ before it happens is to look for which the policed areas are, meaning to search for those elements that are safeguarded by the ‘police order’ and where a curious observer is asked to “move along”. The original idea was to contact diverse universities and ask them to give me access to conduct the research. I would provide them a consent form to detail allowed and forbidden areas. The consent form would include requests for confidential information such as financial statements on purpose, in order to calibrate the instrument and get a sense of how sensitive these and other areas actually were. With a little luck, an unexpected forbidden area would pop up and I would get a first hint of where to look when conducting the fieldwork. I also sent emails to universities where I did not really want to conduct the fieldwork hoping their answers would give me cues of where to look at the school I was actually interested in. The ‘police order’ would be helping me to find ‘politics’ without even being aware of it.

The plan was a total disaster. I never expected many schools enthusiastically replying nor one giving me total access without further questions, but at least I expected an answer. I started to worry. Even if it was a negative one, at least I wanted to know that someone had taken the time to read the emails. I tried a different approach and sent emails to heads of departments and secretaries requesting meetings to explain the potential benefits a research as this could provide for the school. Answers took me back to the starting point; people in main roles such as Deans and Vice-Deans were the only ones with the authority to approve such requests. Time was running out and being without even the smallest sign that an authorisation was on the way started to unsettle me. Progressively I envisioned the possibility of an unauthorised research as the most likely scenario. However, I first wanted to try every alternative. I moved from virtual platforms to the physical world and started calling by phone and visiting offices. Answers were precisely the ones I expected: “The Dean is overseas”, “Call back on Monday”, “I can give you an appointment a month from now”, and my personal favourite, “I will get back to you”.

The first week of September was gone and the National Holidays rapidly approaching. Concerns were evolving into despair. I had to decide either use my contacts network to pull some strings or give up on the authorisation and start doing interviews on my own. Using one’s contacts network to get access might be an unproblematic course of action for most researchers. However, for me, it implied to recognise that the project did not speak for itself. I whimsically held to the idea it meant that the proposal was not attractive enough to bring the attention by its own merits. Moreover, to take what I interpreted as a shortcut also created a methodological tension. I felt that in order to make a “reconstruction of practices”, as Rancière defines his method, I needed to do it from the standpoint of the ‘demos’ I wanted to represent in the ethnography. Otherwise, I would be just another well-intentioned academic arrogating the voice of the oppressed. An agent of *mastery*.

During that week I also began to meet with former colleagues from different universities for casual evenings and also to get updated on what was going on their schools. While having a snack and a drink I told them of my doubts and received their support. Advice on how to proceed was unanimous; it was naïve to think I could get access without internal support. Two colleagues from different universities committed to help me, one from a small private business school and other from my own Alma Mater and former workplace. Both universities had their own unique features that made them attractive prospects to conduct fieldwork. I knew, however, any of these alternatives would take some time to materialise into a formal commitment.

I managed to get an appointment with the head of school of the small private university for the last week of September and one 'to be defined yet' with the Vice-Dean of my former school. Both asked me to write up and email them a *brochure* to summarise the purpose of my research and to list the potential benefits for their schools, something I did tailoring customised versions of the same one-page document. Following the advice of the internal contacts that were rooting for the ethnography to take place at their schools, I avoided problematic words such as "politics" and "students' movement", and highlighted concepts such as "diversity" and "differentiation seal" instead. While access requests were slowly going through institutional bureaucracy, I began visiting both schools to take notes and do some observation. I occasionally talked to students and, after briefly explaining what I was doing there, made them any question that popped up the top of my head. For the first time my main concern was not how to get access, but what would I do after getting it. 'Politics' was such an extensive topic. Moreover, Rancierian interpretation of 'politics' did not allow me to predefine a sample, but instead I would have to sort a criteria out while conducting the fieldwork.

Instead of giving me hints of where to look for 'politics', the access request process had left me with the idea of business schools as institutions with a high level of secrecy. A conclusion that although insightful, was absolutely worthless for sampling decisions. My plan was, once again, proven to be totally flawed. However, for the first time also, ethnographic concepts such as 'emplaced knowledge' and 'serendipity' stopped being grandiloquent words only. I began to understand why textbooks talk of ethnography as a craft and the prominence that expertise has on it.

The last week of September, after the National Holidays passed, I finally had the meeting with the head of school of the small private university. After explaining the same research objectives and potential benefits for the school the *brochure* explained, the meeting concluded with a handshake and a "I will come back to you". I got back to my flat by foot, hoping that the hour and half walk would help to sort my head full of thoughts up. During the walk I made three decisions. The first, I would start conducting interviews without waiting for a permission. Second, I would choose my former school to conduct the ethnography using my familiarity with it and the fact it is by law a public building to my advantage. Lastly, I would use the whole access request process and its obstacles as a lesson on policing mechanisms. During that walk I understood I was not waiting for clearance to start the fieldwork and to collect data, instead the fieldwork had already started, and I had been collecting data for a month now through the access process.

However, as a last resort to speed things up, I found out the Vice-Dean of my former business school was going to be present during a seminar highly reputed among businesspeople. I decided to wait for him after the presentation and attempting an approach. At least I wanted to know whether he had read the emails or not. I stayed after the seminar concluded and patiently waited in line while photographers took pictures and people greeted him. When our looks coincided, I can tell he recognised me. After all, I worked there for a few years and he probably had seen me a few times. He said hi, and I -as casually as possible- mentioned the email I had sent and how my contact had called him to discuss this proposal. He made a gesture of being thinking and said “yeah, yeah, he said something”. What followed his initial answer was, however, what one can always expect when something that could potentially backfire is offered. “Ethnography” is a scary word. I learnt that. He said, “send me an email”, to what I replied, “I already did”. He made another gesture, as in when you try to communicate that you have been busy and that everything is a little bit chaotic right now. He asked me to send it again to his secretary, specifying in the request for an appointment that we have already talked. I smiled and thanked him for his time. I had done it. At least I would have the opportunity of being listened to, instead of being just another unread email in the recycle bin.

I was worried that using my contacts to obtain formal access would preclude me from “experiencing the standpoint of the ‘demos’”. I held that fantasy during that time. If I was searching for ‘politics’, I should be on the ‘demos’ side -I thought. But, because I did not know what I was looking for, it was difficult to take decisions on how to pick those sides. How would I know if I was on the right side? Would it be as simple as “picking sides”? Why was I even thinking on a dualistic perspective?

On my notes of those days, I reflect on how lost I felt. I knew the ethnographic process would be enormously uncertain, sometimes labyrinthine, although I thought at least I would have the certainty of where I should stand on. I did not. I had not even noticed how useless a conscious search for purism was. When we finally had the meeting a month after I requested it, and ten days after our encounter after the seminar, I had been attending the school every day for almost three weeks. I had been attending random undergrad classes and also some seminars with external guests, including the one where we talked at. I had been chatting with teachers and students almost every class day during recess, eating at the canteen, asking cleaning ladies for their working conditions. I even had scheduled interviews for the following weeks. So, when the Vice-Dean did ask me “When would you start?”, my answer was identical to the one I gave him when we briefly talked after the seminar, “I already did”. At that moment, I did not even understand the meaning of what I

spontaneously said. Later I would reflect on how this episode was a tipping point on my attitude towards the research. I could not “have the cake and eat it too”, meaning I could not be transgressive and play it safe too.

This episode will allow me later to understand that the Rancierian notion of ‘politics’ precisely means to take action in spite of what the ‘police order’ might dictate. The methodological dilemma that put my stance in conflict was not whether to use my contacts or not to request access, but to request it at all. Even though now I recognise it was useful sometimes to have a formal access clearance, it did not alter the conclusions I arrived to nor the people who wanted (or not) talk to me. If any, the only meaningful difference made by having a formal permission was to surpass bureaucratic demands from both the university I am currently at in the UK and from the governmental agency that sponsors my scholarship.

In this brief presentation of the business school where I undertook fieldwork, I have covered a physical description of the premises in order to provide the reader with a sense of “emplaced knowledge”. Following this description, I informed some relevant historical data that is popular knowledge among the Chilean people but might be unknown to foreign readers. Lastly, and as part of what was discussed in the methodological section, I treated the access negotiation process as part of the data to be analysed. This last part did not work as I expected in terms of giving me hints of where ‘politics’ might emerge from, but it did help me to fully commit with the Rancierian philosophy.

In the following three chapters I will cover the main findings of the ethnography and how they relate to each of my research questions.

CHAPTER ONE: 'Politics' & the Business School

In this chapter I will develop the main core of this ethnography, a “reconstruction of practices” of the feminist occupation that took place in May of 2018 at the studied business school. I will start by narrating the *interruption*, that is to say, the occupation in itself. This reconstruction was made using testimonies of the participants and observers. Views of detractors and the official position regarding this political action are included too. This chapter is considered the core of this research project insofar narrates an experience of what Rancière calls ‘politics’ throughout all its stages it takes, from the *universalisation of the singular* to the *recuperation*.

The Occupation

After midnight of the 15th of May of 2018, around thirty students are nervously gathered at the School of Law. The school is located at the very heart of the City Centre of Santiago, only one mile away from the School of Economics and Business. A strategic position where they decided to sleep the night before the occupation, planning to the last detail. They have been carefully designing the plan for several weeks and the moment of carry their political action on is finally close. They need to strike quick and strike hard. But some of them have second thoughts. They say it is too soon and that the plan is not polished enough. It is better to wait. Members of a feminist group accuse those who belong to a political party of instrumentalization. They say a radical faction has taken over the direction of their movement, using it for political benefit. Atmosphere is tense. Mistrust grows and threatens with ending the momentum. Gathered students call for an assembly, the main mechanism by which differences are solved among them. Horizontal assemblies without hierarchies, but with many leaderships. Either continue or abort, those are the only two options. Arguments, positions, and strategies are presented to the group and discussed, but there also are many emotions involved in each one of those who take the turn to speak their mind up. There is crying and shouting, accusing and arguing. ‘Politics’ is tremendously personal.

The assembly ended and the verdict was clear; it is now or never. “Some relationships were broken since then”, said a student who adhered to continue, “I lost a friend that night”. When I asked her whether it did worth it, she nodded and added, “It was for a greater good”. The decision has been taken and the occupation will be done, in spite of those who were defeated by their doubts. That

does not mean those who wanted to continue were calm. Nervousness is so strong some cannot sleep during the whole night. They play table tennis, go out for a smoke, go over the plan again, or simply chat waiting the darkest part of the night is over. Beside those who are gathered at the School of Law, there are around twenty more students waiting at a secondary location. Adherents who did not want to participate directly were called and texted to show up early and manifest their support. Depending on the extent of their commitment, the message received could be as brief as “It is today”. Most students are aware of the existence of politicised groups who might want to carry on an occupation of school’s dependencies but did not know of a plan nor of the determination of feminist groups. Moreover, even if they had been aware of the plan, most of them would have disregarded it as an unlikely possibility. The School of Economics and Business has not been directly involved in political action since the 80’s. It would be historic. It was historic.

At five in the morning the last clearance is given, groups start to mobilise and take their positions. Planning started months in advance and included a carefully designed distribution of essential roles. As it has been described, school’s architecture is dominated by concrete and glass, meaning most walls of the administrative building are transparent. Some students will be in charge of covering them with newspapers, while others will be in charge of locking down main doors with chains. Security cameras also were carefully studied, identifying blind spots and taking different precautions to avoid them to secure their identities. Students were dressed in black and hid their faces with ski masks. No precaution is excessive, as they know their school’s membership is at stake. Being spotted by a security camera could mean immediate expulsion. Planning was made through informal assemblies and mouth-to-mouth. Politically active feminists were aware that surveillance was thoroughly and even some staff members used to report upper management about students’ political level of agitation. Up to the date, I never received a straight answer to the question of whether the security cameras have audio or not. A concern that politically active students also had, and one of the reasons why they were extremely careful to plan their interruption. Most communication were made through a chatting app with enhanced security -Telegram- and the word “occupation” was by all sort of means avoided. “What was the coded word?”, I asked during many interviews, always obtaining a loud laugh and some embarrassment faces in exchange. “Cake. The day of the occupation was the cake’s day. Preparing the occupation was to put the cake in the oven. And so on.”

Students gathered at the School of Law start to move. They are divided in small groups of no more than five. They take different roads to the secondary location in order to avoid suspicious looks at school's surroundings. The place is the Students' Federation, an old two-floors house where all the Students' Unions of the different schools of the University can meet. Due to its strategic position, the Students' Federation is commonly used as a gathering point for demonstrations. Moreover, its autonomy in relation to University's and Schools' upper management members makes it a good place to depart from. Around six in the morning the last small group arrives, completing the final number of fifty students approximately. Atmosphere is tense due to last minute anxiety, but also there are some nervous laughs as they had squeezed fifty people in a small house. But there is no time for kidding, they are waiting the command that will definitely influence their passage through college. A collective action that will defy the authority of those men who said sexual harassment protocols were not a "priority".

The student that risked the most is the one in charge of making the call. She had been outside of the administrative building waiting for the precise moment to make it. Her identity is exposed, but if everything goes well, she will not face reprisals. If it does not, she surely will be expelled. The time has come. Quarter past six she makes the call and the students' troops start to move. Ski masks are on and each one knows their part. Avantgarde advances entering the administrative building. Covering security cameras with black disposal bags is the first action, a substantial step towards carrying on the rest of the plan. The second group moves. They have to cover the transparent walls with newspapers and tape. There is no time to communicate whether the previous part was successful or not. Time is crucial and blind trust is needed in absence of quicker mechanisms of communication. A problem emerges. There are not enough newspapers to cover the transparent walls of the staircase. They did not think of them. They will have to improvise. A student takes some brochures and leaflets from a shelf. It is advertisement for the graduates' school programmes. "Come to study with the best!" says the slogan in white letters next to a picture of smiley people sitting at a modern classroom. A third group enters running through the hall room and bumped into one of the outsourced cleaning ladies. She screams in panic. One of the students approached her and try to explain they will not hurt her, that they are just occupying the building. But it is not the time for apologies. Even if they wanted to, how can they ask her not to be afraid of a large group of people dressed in black clothes and ski masks?

The last group enters and close the main door with chains and locks. But the building is labyrinthic, and all the preparations seem not enough now. Studying blueprints and making drawings of their tactical actions was a good exercise but it was not the reality. Behind the simplicity of the seemingly compact structure there are many electronic accesses that cannot be chained and four underground levels for parking with individual entrances. A total of eight floors that simply cannot be covered by untrained people. Each group has the mission of securing a different part of the building. Those who were in charge of taking the fourth floor where the deanship is located, however, found an unexpected guest. The Vice-Dean arrived early to attend the gym and is at his office now, earlier than in any of the planned scenario. Trespassers demand him to leave the building, but he refuses. He says he will not move. Tension grows as the situation quickly escalates and move into physical struggle. There are not fist punches, but they are really close. Another guest arrives. The head of the Information and Technologies Systems department is also there. He backs up his colleague and asks students to quit their action. Verbal attacks intensify. "Who are you?!, Why are you here?!", the Vice-Dean yells at the group that also grows in number. "We are occupying!", "We demand a sexual harassment policy now!". Physical struggle and verbal exchanges come back and forth. The I&T department's head tries to ease the atmosphere, but the uncontrollable attitude of the Vice-Dean does not help. Students, on the other hand, start to get nervous and envision failing as the likely scenario.

During physical struggles, the wristwatch of the department's head jumps away. "That is my father's watch! Give it back!", he says in anger. One of the students picks it up and returns it. The student asked him to calm his colleague, saying that his presence is not helpful right now and that they will carry on the occupation anyway. A few feet away from them, the Vice-Dean yells that a policy is not necessary, that *if* any of them has been harassed they can talk right there and solve it. His words are like throwing fuel into a bonfire.

This precise moment of the occupation is what Rancière defines as a disagreement. What fuels the dissensus is not the confrontation of ideas or interests, but the very lack of acknowledgment of the demos' stance. Disagreement for Rancière is about *not understanding* why the other takes certain position. With his words, the Vice-Dean shows he does not understand the demand that school's women have been pushing for over two years. By saying "if", he disregards the importance the subject has for those who have even felt necessary risking their careers to carry on an occupation. "If" implies that sexual harassment accusations might be false. Or as it happened many times in the

past, that investigations will be closed and filed without effective sanctions. By adding that he is open to talk “right there”, he also trivialises the problematic as something that can be quickly solved. Moreover, as something that can be forgotten. Dissensus is triggered by the treatment of invisibility given to those who are powerless in certain *partage*. In Rancierian terms, the complains of the demos are not “language” but just “noise”. A sexual harassment protocol is not seen as a “priority” because those who are in position of sanctioning it has not experienced it nor believe in the testimonies of those who have. Police order’s lack of recognition of the suffering experienced by the demos is the heart of this, and any other, *mésentente*.

While a large part of the fifty students is gathered on the fourth floor trying to kick the Vice-Dean out, the other groups have been securing the entries facing their own unexpected conflicts. There are far more administrative workers at their desks than what they expected. It is time to pass to the “Plan B”. They need to change their scope and direct their efforts to secure the strategic points. The plan changes from occupying the whole building to occupy just the west wing. They will lose control of most of the building but will assert their dominance over the deanship and department’s heads offices. That is enough to negotiate.

Administrative workers reactions are diverse. In spite of the absence of force, some of them complain of the action and accuse trespassers of violence. Others, especially younger ones, had a different attitude about it. Later in interviews they will confide me how happy they actually got. “I had to pretend; you know? It would not look good to say what I really thought. So, I agreed and said that it was not the right way of doing things. But then when I was alone, I said to myself: yes! finally!”. Administrative workers of the west wing were asked to leave as if it was an evacuation. “Girls, in my chest of drawers there are snacks. Please, take what you want”, said a senior female clerk before leaving her desk with a complicit smile on her face.

Tension continued on the fourth floor. I&T department’s head convinced the Vice-Dean to leave the building and let students have their moment, he said it will be faster to negotiate later when spirits were calmer. It is time for a last sweep to confirm they have control of the west wing. It is done, they have successfully occupied a strategic section of the building. Students gathered at the building’s hall room and remove their ski masks. A cheering shout resonates throughout the building. Excitement and joy take control of the atmosphere, but it is not time to celebrate yet. The last part of the plan needs to be executed. After gathering at the hall room, they open their backpacks. All of them have a change of clothes ready to change their clothes. In spite of ski masks,

most of them are afraid of potential repercussions. Those who have been previously involved in politics have had meeting with upper management, therefore, their voices and eyes can still lead to their identities. "I am sure he [the Vice-Dean] recognised me. I am absolutely sure because of the uncommon colour of my eyes and because I did not remove my piercing. The day after, during the first round of negotiations, he looked at me and gave me a knowing smile". After changing their clothes, occupiers open the lock that secures the chains from the main door and allow other students to get in. As there are security cameras that could not be covered due to the height they are hanged from, the alternative was to make impossible to know who and how many executed the occupation. The plan goes well. Now those who trespassed and occupied are mixed with those who are just sympathizers to the cause. It is impossible to distinguish whom was inside before they opened the doors from whom was not.

Now they can finally take a breath, but not for so long. It is time to strike the last blow: communicate it. A group of students go to the rooftop of the building and hang a gigantic banner that covers the whole façade of the building from the top to the bottom. Large letters with the word "Occupied", the name of the School of Economics and Business and the University's logo. Moreover, the banner can be seen from most of the undergraduate's classrooms. Informal communications have also been running by its own track. WhatsApp and Facebook groups are boiling. Mouth to mouth messages have reached most students. A group of over two hundred of them await outside of the occupied building, cheering and chanting "Patriarchy's gonna fall!".

In spite of the illegitimacy that illegal acts entail, direct democracy is at the very heart of these feminist students' ways of doing things. The first action of the occupation, therefore, is to call for a women's assembly to ratify the occupation. Results are overwhelming and the occupation is ratified as valid. But the cherry of the top is still about to come. After the ratification of the occupation made by students, spokeswomen are pointed out. One of them will have a key role in the negotiations, but first she has to face her baptism by fire: talking to the press.

It is around noon and most students are exhausted. Many of them did not sleep the night before at all. After the adrenaline of the moment and the assembly, now they have to deal with the press. CNN and other tv channels have been waiting for declarations. Maybe better than the school's upper management, press members knew this occupation was an historical event.

How was this moment of 'politics' possible?

The feminist occupation of 2018 changed the school of economics and business, not only because it broke a tradition of non-participation that lasted more than 40 years, but also because it was an inexplicable phenomenon for many of the upper management members. "They got paralysed. They did not do anything because, I guess, they did not even know what to do", says the director of an administrative unit of the school. "It took *men* by surprise [...] Some of us [women] actually expected it".

Antecedents

Rancierian philosophy characterises 'politics' as a fleeting moment. 'Politics' is unlikely to happen, and even when it does, it rarely prolongs throughout time. As I will discuss later in this chapter, 'politics' is quickly recuperated and incorporated as part of a renovated 'police order'. The aesthetical change triggered by the fleeting moment of 'politics' transforms the *partage* by offering a new, improved, 'police order', that seems sanitised from its old shortcomings. Recuperation by the 'police order' signals the end of 'politics', however, delimiting its beginning is not so straightforward. According to Rancière, 'politics' starts with a process of subjectification, namely when the 'demos' becomes aware of its condition of minority and attempts to escape from it. That escape is done through an action that asserts their equality. Tracking the beginning of 'politics' is, therefore, problematic in itself. We cannot talk of 'politics' before the 'demos' constitutes itself as such, namely when they carry on an action that makes them visible and audible. However, after the 'demos' asserted its equality, we can observe in retrospective that it has always been there, wanting to be seen and heard.

When did 'politics' started in this business school? Was it the day when fifty students occupied the deanship demanding a sexual harassment protocol? Was it perhaps when they decided carrying on their plan the previous night? Was it months before that when they started sounding whether other students would be on board for an occupation? To answer those questions, the idea of "interruption" might be useful. *Interruption* allows us to differentiate between the whole episode of 'politics' and the precise moment (i.e., the particular action) that triggers the aesthetical reconfiguration. Rosa Parks' bus protest is a good example to differentiate between 'politics' and

interruption. During the segregation, Rosa Parks' action on the 1st of December of 1955 was not her first experience of changing seats nor was the first time someone did it, but it was somehow emblematic. We can label the whole episode of protests as 'politics', while the specific action of that day as 'interruption'.

Even though the political action that can be summarised in the notion of *interruption* is extremely brief, that does not mean the reasons that led to the whole episode of 'politics' are equally sudden. Most times those reasons have been long developed through years. In the Rosa Parks' example, the episode of 'politics' likely started the first time someone refused to obey the segregation laws. 'Politics' starts before the *interruption* that is taken as an emblematic moment and the used to symbolise the whole episode of 'politics'. In other words, *interruption* can be interpreted as a climax of 'politics', a moment where the new distribution of the *sensible* (i.e., Sensory) emerges or makes itself evident. Similarly, in the case of this school, 'politics' started before students even conceived the idea of occupying. In both cases, Rancière's method allows us to start a "reconstruction of practices", meaning a discovery of all those moments of 'politics' that happened before the final 'interruption' and that only now can be seen as part of that episode of 'politics'. In this sense, Rancière's method is an historical one insofar only is possible to be carried as a retrospective look of the past. This research is an attempt to advance its use to the 'recent' past.

Antecedents to the interruption are diverse, and many times, weighted differently by the various groups involved in it. After five or six interviews with feminist students directly involved in the occupation, however, its timeline became quite clear. Testimonies had small divergences on dates or different appreciations about certain details, but the big picture narrated before was consistent among participants. With the occupation's timeline being clear after only few interviews, I had cleared plenty of time to obtain complementary data. At that moment I did not understand the importance of these details, I thought they were secondary to the main event. But, as Rancière reminds us on his extremely brief notes on methodology, the *context* in which 'politics' takes place is of the utmost importance. How was possible that a school of economics and business that had been relatively aside during the last 40 years of social movements, now carried on the most radical action that students can take? The answer to the unlikeliness of 'politics' happening in a place as conservative as this lies in what Rancière identifies as the "universalisation of the singular". To *universalise* the singular means to socialise the unrest of the soon-to-emerge 'demos'. *Universalising* the singular is giving the start kick of the subjectification process by which the 'demos'

acquirees awareness of its condition of minority and attempts to escape from it. In the business school, the subjectification started with a simple question: “Do you feel safe?”

Not a priority

On November of 2017, one of the delegates of the Secretary of Gender and Sexuality (SEGS), a student led organisation that treated gender issues, received and communicated the news to her classmates. The protocols of sexual harassment they have been co-working on during almost two years had been disregarded by the School’s Council. Every session, the topic was at the bottom of the discussion table, meaning that most times the Council did not even get to consider the point. But this was the last session of the academic year, and despite their insistence, students from the SEGS had not received a clear answer from the Council. When the SEGS’ delegate demanded one, the response was that the protocols they have been working on would be “considered as an input”. Moreover, the attitude of the members of the Council created tension by adding that sexual harassment was not “a priority”. Lastly, the proposal of the Council was to create a policy for all types of negative attitudes such as bullying and plagiarism, where sexual harassment was only a different type. The policy would be designed by the inner circle of the School’s Council, meaning the Deanship cabinet and academic departments’ heads. At that moment, there were not women among them. The inner circle did not include representatives of students or workers either.

The answer was received as a cold-water bucket. It was not only disappointing, but also insulting. All the work SEGS’ students had been doing for almost two years with representatives of the academic departments and different workers of the school had been reduced to “an input”. Their work included a thoroughly review of sexual harassment politics of top leading universities and public institutions of the world. It started with a survey of sexuality and harassment in order to gather data. Data then would be processed, analysed, and publicly reported. The expected result was a policy tailored to the needs of the community. “It was like a door slammed onto our faces”, says one of the SEGS’ members who worked on the policy for over a year, “Why did they make us do all this then? What was the point?”. The key concept on this impasse was the notion of “institutionality”. According to the school’s upper management, the board in charge of designing this policy never had the authority to create a policy, but only to write a proposal that then would be modified by the Deanship’s inner circle. In other words, they argue it always was thought as “an

input". However, all the board members of the SEGS and Students' Unions who worked on the policy argued that claim was false, and that they were actively deceived to think they had the authority to design a policy that then would only be approved and signed by the School's Council.

"They are lying to you. They cannot say the board did not have *institutionality*, because there were representatives of each level and group of interest of the school. The right-hand of the Dean was present during those meetings, she knew everything... She knew of every step we took. Until the [last] Council session she said was on board, that she supported us. Look... We met at school's facilities for almost two years, monthly. They even had coffee and biscuits catered for our meetings! They cannot now say it was not official. They are lying to you."

When I faced this situation during fieldwork, I had two options. The first one was to play the role of detective or journalist, attempting to discover who was lying and why. A second option, the one I finally opted for, was to interpret these different views as part of a disagreement. Rancière reminds us that a *dissensus* is not simply the clash of different views, but a situation where one party does not acknowledge the other as equal, and consequently, communication between both is impossible. Disagreement means that one party does not *understand* the other's stance. When the School's Council asserts that sexual harassment is not "a priority" and tries to include it as part of a broader collection of "negative attitudes", they are demonstrating their lack of understanding of the problematic. Similarly, when the Vice-Dean offers to discuss harassment cases "right here, right now" in order to "solve" them during the occupation, it becomes evident that we are in presence of a *dissensus*. The core of the disagreement was not having either having sexual harassment protocols or not, but the urgency with which one was needed. Therefore, what allowed the universalisation of the singular was not the negative of the School's Council, but the reasons given to it. Those reasons disregarded the very existence of the disagreement by making the 'demos' invisible and mute.

Three different cases, just one answer

To understand the demand for a sexual harassment policy is needed to know the extent of the problem and how school's authorities overlooked it during years. In interviews with feminist and politically active students, three cases were recurrently mentioned. Due to obvious reasons, I will

only discuss them briefly and avoiding most details. The first one involved constant stalking through text messages, staring in classes, and constant unwanted invitations. When the student made a formal complaint, the director of students' affairs made them meet at her office. There, she asked them to "straight the situation up" and to "solve their differences". There was not a proper investigation nor sanctions. A SEGS' member reminds, "When you see handbooks and guidelines on how to deal with sexual harassment, that is the first thing it says you cannot do. You cannot bring victim and victimiser face to face in the same room. And that is exactly what she did and why we demanded protocols, so these things do not keep happening". The second case is more complex and obscure, as it took place within a couple's relationship. In short, the boyfriend uploaded his girlfriend's nudes to the internet and then offered himself as her saviour, saying that he will track them down and take them out of the web. What makes this case a business school's matter, however, is that he was a member of the students' union. Moreover, other members knew of his actions and kept silent. The denounce was made through the police of investigations, cybercrime division, but the school did not take pre-emptive measures (i.e., To suspend the student while the investigation was being carried on). The third case was similar to the first one in terms of harassment, but far more socialised than the others because it was made public on social media by the victim. After she made a formal complaint against her harasser, an investigation was opened. In spite of her testimony and proof provided (i.e., Text messages), the investigation was closed without sanctions. When she was still dealing with having to periodically bump into her harasser at the school's hallways, an article at the school's newsletter appeared. There, the school congratulated the alleged victimiser for his newly acquired scholarship to study abroad during one term. That was the tipping point for the victim. She decided to make the situation public through Facebook, exposing the situation and all the evidence, as well as sharing her feelings of impotence and anger. She paid a tremendous personal cost, as it usually happens with the ones who expose what they have been gone through. For many interviewees, this case was the most symbolic one. The school not only did not do a proper investigation nor sanctioned the harasser, but also did not even consider the allegations when gave him a substantial scholarship.

Later during an interview with an upper management member, I asked about this case and the way the school had acted upon. His answer allowed me to feel a tiny bit of the impotence female students felt on daily basis. "If an investigation concludes without sanctions, then why should we even consider it? That is how justice works; you are innocent until proven guilty". If he had said just that, I would have interpreted it as an expected answer. It was something that someone in an official

role would say. But then he added, “Otherwise, I could say that you harassed me here today, and then, how would you defend yourself? Would that make you immediately guilty, only because I said so? No. That is why procedures are important. Allegations need to be grounded on evidence.” I got speechless.

Women’s Assembly

Academic year in this business school is divided into two regular semesters, autumn (from March to June) and spring (from July to November). There is an optative shorter term in summer (December and January), which is likely to be taken only by those students who have previously failed courses. Although, few times, advantaged students use the term to advance their studies quicker. Summer term is well valued by students as it allows them to finish their programmes on time, even if they have failed a few courses. Summer term is paid separately, meaning it entails additional fees. But it also has considerably less students than regular terms. For the many, their academic year begins in March and ends in November, leaving them three months of holidays.

As November is the last month of the regular academic calendar, December is the month where most of the next year’s planning is done. Members of the unions and politically active students strongly criticise this practice, as they interpret it as an active effort made by the school to avoid having to debate any change with students. By taking budgetary and planning decisions on December, when most students are on holidays, the school upper management does not face any opposition to introduce changes. When students come back in March, those debates are already closed, and measures implemented. There are no chances to fight back.

By shutting down the discussion of sexual harassment protocols at the end of November, the school bought itself some time, but unwittingly cultivated a stronger opposition for the next year. During summer, feminist students and SEGS’ members did not forget how their work had been disregarded. On the contrary, their determination grew and was made stronger. It gave them time to process what happened and to think smarter ways of fighting back. When the new term started in March of 2018, they already had recovered strength and reflected on how to proceed. However, their numbers are not enough. A dozen of active members and, perhaps, another of supporters are not a real opposition in a school with over 3300 students. If they wanted to fight back, they needed

more people. Moreover, they needed to involve people who would not normally get involved in this sort of fights. They needed to *universalise* their quarrel.

A student who joined the SEGS during that campaign remember, “I saw her at recess, she approached and asked me *Do you feel safe here?* I did not understand at the beginning, but then she started talking of the last sexual harassment cases and how investigations had been closed without any sanctions. I had found out about the cases through Facebook, but I could not believe the school had not done anything. That shocked me. We talked during the whole recess and then she invited me to join them”. A fourth-year economics student narrates a similar experience, “I had never got involved in politics before. I remember seeing them during my first two years, having assemblies and things like that, and I remember thinking *oh, communists* [laugh]. But then you hear of all the things that happen here, you know? You hear teachers making sexist remarks in class or the case of this guy who harassed a classmate and then the school gave him a scholarship to study abroad, and you think, *What the hell?! How is that possible?!*”

During March of 2018, politically active students handed out leaflets and campaigned during recesses between classes. They approached every woman and asked them whether they were aware of the sexual harassment cases that had taken place at the school, of how they had worked on a policy for almost two years, and how the School’s Council had disregarded their work. They raised awareness and sometimes even added new members to their groups. Furthermore, they achieved something in which all political groups of the school commonly had failed, they *universalised* what had been something *singular* so far. By emphasising how all school’s women might be subject to harassment, discrimination, and violent attitudes, the campaign went beyond politically active students. By emphasising sexist violence over any other category, students who would normally not even talk to each other had a chance to meet and share a common experience. Furthermore, the campaign allowed students to put their ideological differences on pause in order to tackle a problem that affected all of them without exception. It did not matter whether someone identified with right-wing or left-wing ideas, whether they were part of a political youth or not, whether they were upper or working class. Harassment and sexism were part of a common experience among them, were part of the same *partage*.

Every day of campaign strengthened students’ determination, but still was not enough to end forty years of political inertia. During interviews I commonly asked politically active students about the difficulties they faced. The most frequent answer was that being politically involved was incredibly

demanding as it entailed a “trade-off”. On the one hand, political activities such as assemblies and participation in protests were time-consuming tasks. Moreover, the time they dedicated to politics needed to be balanced with academic duties, something very difficult on an elite university. Most of them, however, assessed the experience as a rewarding one. Participating in politics gave them purpose and allowed them to have what they labelled as a “real” university experience. Participation is demanding but also a source of valuable lessons as well as a place to cultivate significant relationships. On the other hand, participation in politics was tiring also because mobilising others was almost impossible. “If it is [something] not related to the school, most students will not get involved”, says a militant of a political youth linked to a left-wing political party. The answer repeated over and over again. “People here do not participate unless it affects them, like, directly affects them... at a personal level”. I will discuss the lack of political participation later in the second chapter, but for now it is enough to say that non-participation in politics is, without a doubt, the general attitude. The best proof of this attitude is the attendance to school’s assemblies, which goes around the 50 people at a school with 3300 undergrad students.

Although something different happened with the feminist claim. During those days of March 2018, the feminist wave exhibited its first signs of emergence at a national level. The 17th of April the first feminist occupation took place in the School of Philosophy and Humanities of a university located at the south of Chile. In the meanwhile, the business school experienced its own awakening. More and more students started to get involved, either through direct participation in assemblies or discussions on social media. “Even those who never want to get involved on anything had to say what they thought about the movement. Like, you *must* take position [laugh]. You were either with the cause or against it.”, reminds a feminist student before the first voices talking of occupation emerged. For the first time in many years, this business school was experiencing a moment that demanded stances. Those who were against the feminist movement were exhorted to give their arguments, or at least, to make their stances public to the community.

Rancière discuss that ‘politics’ is leads to a subjectification process, a moment where the ‘demos’ emerges from the contradiction between the assertion of equality and a reality that does not recognise that assertion as valid. The ‘demos’ asserts its equality, only to find a ‘police order’ that neglects it. When the SEGS’ students demanded protocols for sexual harassment and found despise for their work, the emergence of the ‘demos’ became clear. Socialising the unrest allowed the *universalisation of the singular*, meaning that sexual harassment personal experiences were

positioned as a common experience. The quarrel demanded to take positions, as school's women needed to know who their allies were. Students exhorted to show their positions made 'politics' available at a business school. A rare event at an unexpected place.

After the first occupation in the south, other schools and universities quickly adhered throughout the national territory. As a snowball rolling down a steep hill, the feminist movement gained an unprecedented momentum. Amid this national context, women's assemblies started to take place in different universities. Women's Assemblies were conceived as separatist spaces, meaning only women were allowed. Feminist students at the business school wanted to hold their first women's assembly but were concerned of the attendance, they were worried that a low attendance similar to regular assemblies would only frustrate them. During a meeting between the different school's gender secretaries, the economics & business' representative explained what had happened with the protocol and how their two years' work had been disregarded as "an input". There, other schools' representatives narrated similar episodes with the upper management of their schools. A feeling of impotence became a transversal experience. "We realised it was not something happening just to us. That was super important. We realised it was happening the same on every school, on every university... We understood that we were not the only school with these sort of problems [...] that we were not alone on this". During that meeting a call for a campus women's assembly emerges, meaning a gathering between the schools of Law, Architecture & Design, and Economics & Business. Each school would have its own women's assembly and then they would merge them in just one big assembly to analyse the results. The general meeting would be at the School of Economics & Business, that way in case the local attendance was low, it would be compensated with students from other schools.

As it usually happens in moments of change, there are unexpected surprises. Attendance at the business & economics women's assembly exceeded even the most optimist expectation. Moreover, when their classmates from Law and Architecture arrived, it was possible to feel in the atmosphere that something was different this time. The image of hundreds of female students with flags and banners entering the business school is narrated by interviewees as one of the most emotional moments before the occupation. "I could not believe it. It was beautiful, very exciting. We were worried about the attendance. I thought... We thought that the other schools would look to our assembly and feel pity, like, *the economics & business school is always an embarrassment for the university* [laugh]. But it was not anything like that. We were many. And we saw our classmates

coming into the school and it was like when you feel that something is changing, when you feel that *this* time things are really going to change. That day was one of the happiest of my life.”

The extended women’s assembly had a huge impact on the feminist students’ spirits. It showed them that sexual harassment and sexist practices were transversal to educational settings. Moreover, it reinforced their lack of faith on institutional mechanisms. Most schools had gender secretaries and feminist students’ groups working on policies that led nowhere. The business school’s case was especially representative of this bureaucratic blockade, as their work had been disregarded despite its meticulousness.

At a national level, occupations kept growing and the protest’s motto slowly mutated from a claim against sexual harassment to a wider slogan: “the end of sexist education”. Women’s Assemblies in the business school became a common practice, a regular meeting where female students shared experiences and supported each other. “It was a safe place. For the first time since I got into the school, I felt totally safe. We talked of our own experiences and heard our classmates telling theirs. I found out of many things. Denunciations disregarded without investigation. Cases that were closed without sanctions for harassers. Things like... You know, this case where the school did not do anything, and our schoolmate had to sit next to her harasser in class! Can you imagine that? After you had done a complaint, with all the things that entails... The exposition, being pointed with the finger by your own classmates, people saying things like *maybe she made everything up, there are no proof*. After all that, all that victimisation, you still have to sit next to the guy who has been harassing you for months.”

Women’s assemblies allowed female students to stop experiencing harassment as a silent, invisible, and even shameful experience. By *universalising* something that so far has been *singular*, a subjectification process emerged. The ‘demos’ of this *partage* acknowledged its condition of minority and decided to escape from it. At the same time, institutional mechanisms have proven to be insufficient or unwilling to take measures. Moreover, decision taking spaces were dominated by a ‘police order’ that disregarded their unrest and ridiculed their requests. During a women’s assembly, the first voices calling for an occupation started to emerge. If regular mechanisms did not work, more radical actions were needed. Taking direct political action was not a radical idea anymore. It was not something that only militant students or “extremists” would do, but something that increasingly more and more students saw as common sense. The *universalisation* of harassment as a common experience left class struggles and ideological differences aside. At least

for a while. Upper-class female students had been as harassed as working-class ones. In spite of their ideological stances, all of them had felt uncomfortable when a teacher had made a sexist joke on class. Moreover, all of them felt equally frightened of saying anything. Feelings of impotence against a 'police order' that did not discriminate based on class or ideology but on gender became the common experience the 'demos' shared.

Women's assemblies were the space where the *universalisation of the singular* was possible. That universalisation, however, could have only been a place to socialise the unrest or to support each other. It could perfectly have been only a safe space to discuss new actions to take through institutional mechanisms. As I will discuss extensively in the second chapter, the business school is a highly policed place that exhibits a fragmentation of the social fabric as consequence. Individualism and competition are far more present than solidarity and cooperation. The universalisation was possible due to women's assemblies, but what did it make an *interruption* the logical way of asserting the demos' equality? The answer to this question lies in the Rancierian notion of "reconstruction of practices". To understand why the universalisation led to an interruption, is needed to reconstruct the subjectification processes of its protagonists.

Subjectification Processes

Rancierian 'politics' is commonly described as a fleeting moment because it triggers an aesthetical reconfiguration of the *partage*. However, something that is not mentioned enough is that 'politics' is also brief due to the effort it demands. In the case of this business school, the Deanship's occupation *had* to be brief to avoid the attrition of forces. Students' movements have experience on this; when an occupation prolongs over time, chances of getting their demands fulfilled decrease. Sleeping at an occupied space demands a tremendous effort. Students have to cook, clean, and secure accesses while sustaining all their daily activities and preparation of exams. On the top of that, the constant threat of a violent eviction by the police adds a stressful component. Deterioration and tiredness are common enemies of occupations. Similar occupations of schools and universities during 2018 gave a valuable lesson. The longest one prolonged over 108 days at a university of Valparaiso city, without many favourable results. Feminist students of the Economics and Business school knew this very well, therefore they wanted the occupation to be as brief as possible.

They also were aware that many classmates might share their concerns regarding sexual harassment, but they would not engage with an occupation, as they would consider it a too radical action. The occupation, in consequence, was designed by a small group of students and then grew as a snowball including members one by one. The occupation also was designed through different circles of trust. People who knew everything and took the main risk were the few, most only knew some parts of the plan or have access to limited information. For instance, some students knew about the intention of occupy but did not know which building. Others knew the plan of taking the administrative building (A), but not the date in which the action was planned. Distributing roles was a main part of the plan in order to decrease the risk for participants, and at the same time, to maximise the chances of triumph. What made the difference between students concerned with sexual harassment and the ones that undertook the risk of planning it? The answer is the same than in other historical events when 'politics' has taken place.

The subjectification or de-classification process is an extremely personal stance. It is a moment of awareness when one realises is part of a minority and decides to escape from that condition by asserting one's equality. Whenever I talked with the students who promoted the action, the answer was the same or at least quite similar: "If it is not me, then who?". That conviction of knowing that we have the power to assert our equality, by any means necessary, is the result of a personal de-classification process than then is shared with others by a process of universalisation. In other words, and as it has been developed above, Rancierian philosophy rejects the almighty structures and brings back responsibility to people. It does not ignore the power of structures, such as the forces that shape inequality, but address that only people's agency is able to subvert it. That is why equality is a starting point and not a goal.

Subjectification processes, as said before, are extremely personal. 'Politics' is a fleeting and unpredictable moment precisely because it depends on the agency of its protagonists. These protagonists wanted to make a point. Same as in the *Secessio Plebis*, the occupation was an exhibit of power. The power of the 'demos' is succinctly summarised by one those protagonists, when she said "Something my mom taught me is that changes are made without permission. We didn't ask for permission to occupy the school, and that's why we were able to change what was wrong. You have to dare to change what you think is wrong."

Recuperation or “We all are feminists now”.

Whoever visits the school of economics and business now, likely would not believe the amount of resistance to implement gender related initiatives I have previously narrated here. The school has now modified its syllabus to include elective courses such as feminist economics, and although timidly, it quickly has moved to incorporate topics such as gender biases for managerial decision taking. More than that, it also seems genuinely involved with these initiatives. For instance, now there are banners on murals reminding new incomers of the school’s commitment with a space “free of sexism”.

It is hard to picture how the institution that had to be occupied to carry on a modest protocols modification is the same institution that now celebrates its practices as an example of inclusion and diversity. Transformation is shocking, not only because students achieved most of their goals, but also because all the credit has been taken away from them. Because the school passed from strong resistance to a proactive stance, an occupation now seems an extreme and disproportionated political action. Current openness to talk and engage with gender topics makes previous reluctance seems an unplausible scenario.

“We are the only business school of the country with a dedicated administrative unit to gender issues and sexual diversity”, says a finances academic known among female students due to his sexist remarks during classes. I looked at him with scepticism in one of the tensest interviews I had during the fieldwork. I reminded him that creating that dedicated unit was not out of good will of the upper management, but on the contrary, it was necessary to carry on an occupation to force the change. “So what? That does not change the fact we are the first ones, does it?”, he replied before I decided to change the conversation subject. It is true the school went even beyond the plans of the whole university -a university that is considered quite progressive among the local educational institutions. The OGDIS now have a dedicated administrative unit with two full-time professionals in charge, a physical office located in campus, and annually budget. It is a radical improvement in relation to the absolute lack of sexual harassment protocols that existed before. Furthermore, it positions the school in a more advanced development stage than any other business school of the country and other schools from the university. The change is real, but the narrative around it has been totally transformed. From being pushed against their will to carry on a change, now the school emerges as an authorised voice in the debate. Until today it still baffles me how a

radical political action such as an occupation can be incorporated into an official narrative, as if they have always wanted it to be that way. Rancière's assertion that 'politics' is a fleeting moment makes sense not only because political action here was to a short and powerful intervention, but also because it is quickly sanitised from its more radical features. The main one of these, the wider demand for a change in the working conditions of outsourced cleaning personnel -mostly entirely female.

On the top of the creation of this dedicated unit and intervention on the syllabus, there are other areas where things have changed. There are parity quotas among tutors, a new students' induction "with gender perspective", and seminars are now more likely to have a female member among the speakers. Moreover, students recognise there has been a progressive improvement among teachers' attitude in classes and among the students during parties. Sexist remarks and sayings are less likely to be said, at least, in public. In spite there is a long road until machismo is eradicated, if ever, it is hard to imagine that this school is the same place that was previously described.

The partage has changed, and with it, what is considered tolerable also has. An accountancy teacher saying "Women are more expensive to hire than men because they get pregnant. And because they like *it*, they do not have one, but two or three [children]" during a class will now likely be immediately fired. Moreover, if a student raised this complain now, her word would be enough to open an investigation. It was not anything like that before. That sexist remark was made and the answer the student who denounced got was "That academic has received many prizes. Some students like him, and some do not". It is hard to imagine that all the resistances to incorporate minimum protocols to solve situations like the one previously described happened in the same institutions that now writes its communications using neutrals pronouns.

Rancière defines 'politics' as an intervention that entails an aesthetical reconfiguration. It is precisely what has happened here. Beyond all the ongoing initiatives to be more diverse and inclusive, what has changed is the 'tone' with which they are carried on. There are tangible effects as the ones I have described in previous sections of this chapter, but participants recognise the main change is a 'cultural' one. I asked feminist students who participated in the occupation to narrate me an anecdote or funny episode that reflect this change. One of them told me a particularly illustrative one. Since the feminist wave started gaining momentum but months before the occupation, a few male students felt compelled to sabotage separatists gatherings. According to them, calling for meetings where only women were allowed was discriminatory. Consequently, these men constantly

attempted to attend initiatives organised by feminist collectives and threatened with complain to students' affairs if not allowed in. Among these initiatives there was sexuality workshop. In the session titled "vulva self-knowledge and pleasure", a student from a right-wing collective attempted to attend arguing he identified himself as a woman, therefore it was a transphobic stance not allowing him in. In the next students' union elections, this student who also was part of the right-wing list competing, declared himself a feminist and argued his previous behaviour had been a misunderstanding. Anecdotes such as this are not scarce and reflect the cultural change that was triggered since the occupation. "Now all school's men are *feminists*", said a participant while chuckling and air-quoting the word "feminists".

In spite of the signs of institutionalisation, there is a long road to eradicate gender biases. Up to date, it is not uncommon to receive invitations to seminars where keynote speakers are only middle-aged men. Moreover, it seems like women are invited only when it comes to discuss topics related to being a woman. That is to say, speakers are mainly women when the topic in discussion is, for instance, female participation in the labour market. However, when topics are of national or international relevance, main actors remain being male. According to my notes from all the seminars and talks during the six months of fieldwork, 87% of the panels were only masculine when the topic in discussion was either macroeconomics or Central Bank's policy.

In this chapter I have narrated the feminist occupation of the administrative building of the school of economics and business that took place amid the "Feminist May" of 2018 in Chile. The chapter offers a written testimony of a political action that was not only successful in their demands, but also that shook up the status-quo of an institution who had not seen 'politics' in over forty-five years. I hope this written testimony has value in itself to be a reminder for future generations that political action is not only possible, but also necessary. Moreover, the episode of 'politics' includes a narration of the antecedents and consequences the occupation had. It also includes a brief description of the process of recuperation, by which the 'police order' sanitises the political action from its radical components and embrace it as part of its own narrative. As Rancière (1999, págs. 30-31) reminds us, there is better and worse police order. That is to say, even though 'politics' is brief and recuperation inevitable, the result of political actions will leave us with a better 'police order' than without carrying it on.

CHAPTER TWO: The Police Order and its Policing Mechanisms

In this chapter I will take a step back and attempt a “reconstruction of practices” of the whole school of business, revealing its internal dynamics and policing mechanisms. The reconstruction is made through vignettes that exhibit the research process carried on during fieldwork and the connections made by the researcher during that time. The chapter starts with the moment in which, as an epiphany, I noticed how the notion of “excellence” was ever present, all encompassing, and mostly inescapable. During the whole chapter will I question what “excellence” really means, the way it operates, and the consequences in terms of isolation and mental health it entails. I conclude the chapter linking this notion of “excellence” with the silent, or maybe even unconscious, *consensus* of the school.

Searching for ‘politics’

It is the first day of March 2019 and the beginning of the academic year in Chile. Summer is coming to its end, although temperature in Santiago still fluctuates around a pleasant average of 27 Celsius degrees. It is warm and sunny, but it also is possible to feel a delicate breeze touching your face from time to time. The city has recovered its usual rhythm as workers and students have come back from their holidays. Tube stations and streets are crowded as metropolitan city centres often are. I decided walking from home to the school.

As it has always been since I was an undergrad student there, the road from my flat to the school is a reminder of the wide inequalities of my country. Homeless and beggars sleep next to the hospital urgency unit located in front of the business school, while office workers wearing suits walk next to them heading a nearby tube station. Many cannot hide their disgust due to the unpleasant smell, but I always try to seem undaunted. I do not always succeed. I walk and remind myself of the importance of estrangement to conduct an ethnography, but I cannot help anticipating what I am going to feel once I cross the threshold of the school. It has always been like being wandering in a desert and suddenly finding an oasis. It feels like entering into an immaculate temple where all the impurities of the surroundings have been purged. Or maybe into the guts of a monster that suctions and destroys any odd characteristic, leaving only a homogeneous mash where everything looks the

same. I think of Rancière's ideas on the close relation between 'politics' and aesthetics for a moment, take a deep breath, and get in.

Fieldwork at the business school started by the end of September 2018 and since then I have been conducting as many interviews, taking as many notes and pictures, and chatting around as much as possible. I have done more than 50 in-depth interviews and I am quickly approaching to the 100 hours of recorded material. I am going through my second book of fieldnotes and there are at least 400 pictures taken with my mobile. I still have no idea where 'politics' does emerge from though. Moreover, in spite of the hundreds of hours spent at the business school during these months, I still do not have a clue of how I am going to make sense of the whole process. I feel as soon as I am back in the UK my main problem is going to be how to do not drown in an ocean of data. In the original plan, I had thought of taking February's summer break as an opportunity to start my analysis and come back to the school in March only to finish any pendant details. Not a single part of the plan went as I forecasted. What I did not expect even in the worst scenario, however, was that I would not have a clue of where to begin the analysis from. I thought at least I would have a vague idea. I hoped something would have emerged after 5 months of fieldwork and left me with a clear sense of what the core of the ethnography was. But it did not. Or at least, I had not noticed it yet.

I wave the doorman when arrive at the school and he waved back. I can immediately notice how the atmosphere reflects the excitement of a welcoming event. Visually, the school is never as crowded as when new incomers show up all at once during the first day. I see some students passionately hug after not seeing each other during summer vacations. Others still wander around looking for their mates. A fairly a difficult task in a space that is so crowded that people overflow the main hall. I hear strident laughs and fragments of allegedly epic parties. Two blonde slim girls chat about their holidays in paradisiac Caribbean beaches, while two tall muscular guys next to them talk about the new car one of them bought and which now it is parked close to the school. "You'll shit in your pants when you see it!", he yells. "You apparently already did! That's the smell I was getting", the other replies. Both laugh and hug in a rough way, while the girls next to them roll their eyes and keep talking of their travels. A few metres from them, three short brunette guys talk of the long bus rides they will have to make every day from their districts located at the periphery of Santiago. They also make jokes and gossip about how posh everyone looks there. "I came here in my Mercedes" one of them said mimicking an upper-class accent. "A Mercedes public bus though" one of the others added, triggering a loud group laugh.

I keep walking and observing people, trying to mingle among the students and do not raise many suspicious looks. After all, I am at least 10 years older than the average student. I start regretting not having paid more attention to my wardrobe that day, but then I noticed the wide variety of fashion styles among new students. It is possible to find any dress and hairstyle. While some of them are very casual and wear flip-flops and t-shirts, others wear designer shorts and trendy flowery *guayaberas*. Footwear ranges from Converse sneakers to goth boots, and hairstyles from clean cut to dreadlocks. It feels like the United Nations of fashion. However, it also seems to mimic socioeconomical differences. “Many people feel forced to buy clothes to wear at the school”, said an interviewee when explaining the importance given to personal appearances. She explained it was a way of filtering who could buy new season’s trends and who could not. She also reproached herself for having, more than once, relinquished to the social pressure. Even though there seems to be a great diversity, students tend to group with those who look similar. Consequently, diversity look less as a single group with different elements than a collection of small homogeneous groups. “How do you ‘spot’ upper-class students?”, I asked another interviewee, “Because they move as a herd”, he answered, “A group of blonde heads walking together”, he added before laughing and feel slightly ashamed of his prejudiced comment.

While I was lost in my thoughts and taking notes someone approaches and ask me “Did you find a *mechón*²⁶ to talk with?” I turned around and saw a familiar face. A member of a political party youth I had interviewed before the summer vacations and to whom I told I needed to interview first-year students. I said I have not, and he looks at the crowd and points someone with his finger, “There you’ve got”. Interpreting my face of doubt, he added “You can identify *mechones* because they’re the ones looking for friends during the first days. If you do not do it now, you’re screwed forever”. I approached this student and asked whether he was a *mechón*. After his positive answer I introduced myself and briefly explained what I was doing there. He said he would like to help me but did not know how, because he was a new incomer did not know much of the school. I replied I was interested in understanding why people like him had chosen this a no other business school. “Because it is the best”, he proudly said with a timid smile on his face. He told me had done some research before applying to schools. Although he was not completely sure of the programme election, he knew he wanted to be part of this university. His confidence over the institution’s

²⁶ Chilean slang referring to a first-year university student. Freshmen.

election reminded me a younger self. Moreover, his confident response stuck with me during the rest of the day.

“Come to study with the best!” is the slogan that can be found in all the institutional advertisement that covers the walls during this new students’ welcoming event. Using institutional colours white and blue, advertisement depicts smiley students doing activities such as practicing sports, sitting on the grass while chatting, and of course, studying in the library. Advertisement emphasises that the school is positioned both locally and in Latin-America as a leading institution according to the QS World Universities Ranking. Moreover, at the bottom of every leaflet and brochure there are a collection of watermarks that inform the reader of the many accreditations and partnerships the school has.

The Ideal of “Excellence”

I became increasingly interested in the notion of “excellence”. An ideal shared among members of this business school with at least three clear characteristics. The first one, it has a collective sense of importance. “Excellence” is one of the main if not the most important identarian trait of the school. It is officially acknowledged through institutional branding efforts and constantly communicated as part of the school’s project. It is portrayed as an ideal. However, it also emerges as a spontaneous topic in conversations with students and teachers. Even if it goes accompanied by a critique, talking of “excellence” is most times part of any conversation concerning the school. Moreover, “excellence” has a pervasive presence that surpasses the academic and intellectual domains and can be seen in every aspect of the school’s daily life. Cleaning must be incessant cleaning. Surveillance must be ubiquitous surveillance. Classrooms capacity must be full occupied capacity. There is no room for waste, rest, or inefficiency. It seems as if leisure in every of its forms has to be obliterated.

Secondly, the focus on excellence is not assessed as something neutral. It has a positive connotation instead. School's “excellence” project is shared by its members and envisioned as the path through a better future. The “excellence” ethos perfuses a sense of superior quality and thoroughness. It means to get the closest to perfection. Consequently, members of the business school take pride on their membership and identify themselves with this ideal of excellence. Students see their passing through the school as an ‘objective’ achievement because it meant they got high scores in

multiple standardised tests, both during the four years of high school and in the PSU (Universities Selection Test). Even if they come from privileged backgrounds, they earned their right to access. Furthermore, for working class students and those who are part of the first generation of their families going to college, it is more than an achievement, it is an honour. They defied the odds and, as long as they keep approving courses to maintain their scholarships, they are winning. Teachers constantly remind new incomers they are part of an intellectual elite now, “the top 3% of the country” they say. Any welcome event is a good moment to remind the audience the many presidents and central bank’s presidents who have graduated from this school. It is similar for academics. To be employed by an institution such as this also represents an opportunity for researchers to be seen and respected by their colleagues. It increases their future employability and gets them a powerful institutional endorsement when public funding contests are open. It seems as if membership is accompanied by an aura of greatness that infuses whoever holds it.

Lastly, “excellence” is an interpretable and all-encompassing term. Even though it is considered of utter importance and shared as the ultimate positive value, there is no available definition of it. I not only went through annual memoirs and strategic plans of the school searching for it, but also asked most people I had the chance to talk with to provide a definition. However, every attempt of precisising the concept during interviews and casual talks proved unfruitful. Every person had a different understanding of it. For researchers it meant to conduct cutting-edge research. For teachers it meant to deliver an employability enhancing professional training to their students. For the economics department it meant to have an authorised voice when discussing public policy. For the management department it meant to position graduates in the top companies and boardrooms. For most students it meant to “burnt their eyelashes” studying to endure difficult tests, pass courses, and graduate on time. “Excellence” seems to be open to any possible interpretation, but always carrying a positive connotation. This ambiguity is the reason why I have always used the word “excellence” between quote marks so far. And also, it is the reason why I became even more interested in it. I constantly reflected on how hard it is to find such a flexible concept. It means something different for everyone, but at the same time, it gathers all the people around it. It is not strictly defined in any way, but still identified as something intrinsically good. It seems as if all the members of the business school were wearing headphones playing a different song, but all of them agree on how good the song is.

For the first time since I started the fieldwork, and with only one month left before coming back to the UK, I had finally found my first lead in the search for 'politics'. As Rancière defines it, 'politics' is a situation where dissensus is produced. Dissensus is not a difference of opinions, but a situation where a party does not understand the other's interpretation of the distribution of roles and parts. In a dissensus there is no 'common' because what they think is 'common' is actually different for each of the parties. I was closer but still needed to understand how this utterly important, positive, and flexible notion of "excellence" did operate. I needed to know what song each headphone set played.

Before continuing, it is necessary to make a caveat. The notion of "excellence" that I will develop here has some elements that have been previously discussed from a number of different perspectives. For instance, Aristoteles sees excellence as a simile to virtue. This is extensively discussed in MacIntyre's work, who rejects the homologation of excellence with effectiveness in the business discourse (Horvath, 1995). On the other hand, popular literature among business practitioners, such as Peters and Waterman's "In Search of Excellence" (1982), have placed excellence as part of a managerial discourse where never-ending improvement and personal identification with the organisation are not only possible, but almost a moral duty -virtue. Oppositely, authors such as Aubert and De Gaulejac (1993)²⁷ have scrutinised "The Cost of Excellence", where the constant mandate of improvement leads to exhaustion, shame, depression, and finally to *karoshi*²⁸. Critiques to this enterprise discourse have been extensively developed by the Critical Management community members, assessing even the effects it has had in their own academic practice (Butler & Spoelstra, 2014). Recently, the unrest in relation to excellence has become a popular topic among wider audiences due the work of authors such as Byung-Chul Han with "The Burnout Society" (2015).

I acknowledge the many meanings the word excellence may have, and the many theoretical standpoint views it may be questioned from. In this piece of research, however, the term "excellence" (always in between quote marks) will be used to group and label a set of practices and discourses that are somehow unclassifiable to the observer yet. The notion of "excellence" is treated throughout the chapter as an abstract term, that encompasses an emplaced phenomenon which has its own local meanings.

²⁷ Originally published in French in 1991 as "Le Coût de l'excellence"

²⁸ Translated as "overwork death" from Japanese.

Familiarity and Estrangement

During most of the fieldwork I fantasised with having a “estrangement” sensor tool. I became progressively aware of the familiarity I had with the school and how it was a highly sharpened double-edged sword. On the one hand, it did allow me to access people and collect information that would have been likely impossible to obtain by completely external researchers. Colloquial language, swearing, and the many “You know what/who I am talking about” I heard during interviews, made me think of the privileged position as a researcher I was in. Relationships were close enough to elicit cooperation for the doctorate’s project of a former colleague. Or in some cases, to elicit pure old fashion politeness -It is rude to say no. In any case, it did allow me to get access. What I always was interested into. Access would allow me, I thought, to search for policed areas. Therefore, it would allow me to follow the trace on this shapeshifting “excellence” phenomena I had got interested into. Familiarity enabled some interviewees to trust me enough to openly talk of sensitive issues and to provide me classified information. Entertaining anecdotes and guttering gossip too. However, none of them seemed to help me finding the elements that trigger ‘politics’. Familiarity helped me to have more interviewees and longer recordings, but also made me feel jammed at certain depth. Familiarity had created a comfort zone that, at some level, was discouraging me from getting even deeper. My senses told me I was missing something important. As when you are in museum watching a renown paint, but it is so crowded you are forced to get right in front of it just to get a glimpse. I felt there was something I could not see because I was too close.

I noticed, then, familiarity also meant I was passing over important details any external researcher would likely have not. The best example is that hints on the importance of “excellence” had been there the whole time. In front of my own nose. It is -literally- part of the school’s slogan. How could I have it passed over? I felt I had been spellbound by the benefits of familiarity. I was so comfortable with the casual language I had forgotten the basics. I had to open my senses, collect everything as data, and then run through that material over and over again. I decided to start a new section in my fieldnotes book. I draw a 2 columns table and started making a list of the things that had changed since I was a student there. A “before and then” comparison where I put every detail, any change I was able to think of. The list quickly grew ranging from infrastructural modifications regarding the

layout to the attitude of students regarding marihuana consumption on campus. I recall students used to hide to smoke a joint, but now it seemed much more socially extended²⁹.

The day after I started the list, I had an interview with the head of the students' affairs office. It was one of the longest interviews I did, almost three hours of record. We talked of many topics, but surely the most extensive one was regarding the social mobility of students attributable to their pass through the school. According to this upper-management member, the school enables as many students as possible to economically and culturally progress. He argued both the reputation of school's graduates and the contacts network each one creates during their pass through the programmes allows them to get places they could have not otherwise get to. His argument was simple. The business and economics education provided transformed students from middle-class backgrounds into people who could now access new spheres of influence, either in the public policy discussion or in high positions in companies. The progress achieved, it was argued, not only impacts them individually but also their families and communities. He stressed how important was for many students to understand that the world was bigger and more diverse than their neighbourhoods at the periphery of Santiago. Consequently, this new vision of the world perfuses their surroundings. I sometimes contested his narrative with data I had collected. For instance, the fact that around 70% of the economics & business undergrad programme came from elitist private schools. As in many other occasions, interviewee's answers acknowledged this gap but, at the same time, highlighted their relative position in relation to other top business schools. It seemed that been the "less elitist of the elitists" was assessed as a triumph.

We talked of how 'public' this public university really was, and what being 'public' really meant. Questions I asked most upper-management member I interviewed. His answers revolved around the same; there was not better public good that to enable the most talented and hard-working ones to ascend in the social ladder. However, he also gave an example that shocked me. He mentioned a senior and really conservative professor of economics who only allowed Honour Roll students to be part of his assistants' staff. He said, even though this professor was really conservative, in the last year he had hired a "queer" assistant. I asked to precise what he meant by "queer" and he described an effeminate and hipster-styled young lad. Even though I was uncomfortable with the use of the label, we talked of how he aesthetically stood up from the homogenous mass. He quickly said it did not really matter he was "queer" or not because it was just an example. It was a proof to show how

²⁹ According to a UN report (2019), Chile is the 3rd country with the highest consumption (15,1% of the population).

even people like this old-fashioned professor cared for “excellence” the most. According to his narrative, this brilliant young student would not have had the same opportunity in any of the other top business schools, as most of them are tied with religious and conservative political views. He said, this young lad would likely not have been given the job in one of those because of how he looks. We then talked of other topics and continued the conversation, but that example and his particular interpretation of it really stuck with me.

“Excellence” as a brand

As likely most schools do, the business school ranks their students’ academic performance. Highest scores are classified as either part of the “Circle of Excellence” or the “Honour Roll”. The Circle of Excellence is the top 5% of students with the highest grades average. The Honour Roll is a subsample of it, considering the top 1% only. Both are measured by cohort, meaning that students compete with others from the same year and programme. Reward seems purely symbolic, as it only includes an award given at a ceremony at the end of every academic year. There is no cash prize or any other tangible beside a small trophy. However, as the aforementioned economics professor did, many academics choose their staff of tutors from those with the highest grades. In a school of 3300 students, tutoring positions are scarce and highly competitive jobs, even though the salary is also purely symbolic. Not to say paltry³⁰. As there are many contestants, the easiest way to filter applicants is through their grades. Moreover, because this filtering practice is far more common in initial courses (i.e., Quantitative methods, microeconomics, macroeconomics, statistics, and econometrics), most freshmen’s tutors are part of either the Circle of Excellence or the Honour Roll. Tutors are, therefore, more identifiable than others in a school of 3300 undergrad students. Many of these tutors are not only respected but also admired. They are praised as students that not only manage their academic demand to the perfection but also have enough time and energy to do tutorials.

The previously mentioned “queer” student was one of them. He worked as tutor for several different courses, gave private lessons, and was the very first of his class since he has got into the school. I wanted to talk with him but did not know how to approach. I did not want to go and tell

³⁰ Around 120 pounds for the whole term (4 months).

him “Hey, I want to interview you because I think you are interesting.” I felt it was rude and prejudiced. A few days later, however, I bumped into him entering the library. Without knowing what I was going to say, I stopped him and asked for a word. He kindly listened to me introducing myself and briefly explaining my research. Then he asked the question I was afraid of, “Why me?”. I do not know how, but the words spontaneously came to me. “Well, your face is everywhere, is not it?”. He chuckled and agreed. I gave him my phone number and then we scheduled a tentative date for an interview. I walked away feeling I had dodged a bullet, and at the same time, have got a great chance for a meaningful interview. Everything went well, but why have I said that? Furthermore, why it had made sense to him?

As usual, I decided walking home and use that time to reflect on the experiences of the day. Saying “his face was everywhere” made sense to him because it was true. His face and others’ were part of the Circle of Excellence and Honour Roll list showed on the flatscreens placed on every hallway. I had never noticed how periodically the video was looped though. It is mixed with other communications, such as school’s academics appearances in media or the economics & business students’ football team last triumph against their peers from engineering. It was mixed with other videos, but also clearly more repetitive than any other. That is to say, part of the recognition given by the school to its most academically excellent students is to exhibit their faces, names, and percentile. Not only whether they are part of the Circle of Excellence or the Honour Roll. Not only their relative position in these rankings, but their precise distance till the best place. Each one has their exact percentage next to their names and faces. I thought why I had never felt odd with it. It is invasive, I thought, especially due to the periodicity it is looped into the communications’ mix.

When I got home that day, I felt somehow uncomfortable. I could not help to think that the answer to “Why have I said that?” was incomplete. I remembered my training in socioanalysis³¹ and the concept of “unthought known”, a way of describing an unconscious knowledge that has not been brought to the conscious yet. What was the thing I knew but I had not thought yet? I went back to the list I started the day before, the one in which I was writing down any visible change from the time I was a student. I saw it there: “flatscreens do not show class schedules anymore”. It made sense. When I was a student almost no one had a smartphone, thus class schedules were repeated on loop as the same as flights in an airport. Flatscreens now showed internal communications, sports achievements, and institutional activities. Flatscreens had increased both in number and in variety

³¹ The study of group, organisational, and social dynamics using a psychoanalytical approach.

of the information showed. They had also refined their audiences. For instance, the ones on the waiting lobby of the academics building (Building A) more often showed press appearances of school's teachers and upper-management members. While screens placed in the administrative building (Building C) more often repeated internal communications such as the dates for the graduating exam inscription and wellbeing services' reminders. Flatscreens on the hallways of the students building (Building B), on the other hand, were way more mixed in their scope. They showed diverse communications regarding sports and students' organisations, wellbeing services reminders, or mentions of the school in media. There were two common elements though. The first one, the Circle of Excellence and Honour Roll were repeated more often than any other communication. Second, everything was presented in institutional colours, with the school's logo and accreditations. Messages were built with an encouraging language and titles were often triumphalist. A way to communicate news while building a brand, I thought.

Flatscreens' communications made me think of Rancière's ideas on aesthetics. If 'politics' means an aesthetic reconfiguration of the partage, it also means that the 'police order' could be assessed as an aesthetical configuration too. One that is subverted when 'politics' happen. What were the flatscreens telling me of the school's 'police order'? They communicate the ideal of "excellence" promoted by the school, as if it was a brand of its own. By highlighting academic, sport, and institutional achievements, the school communicates an image of success. An image that is embraced by its members, internalised, and proudly reinforced. But it is more than that. It is not only the message but the way it is told, moreover, what is left outside of that message. Rancière defines the 'demos' as the supplementary part of the partage, meaning the question should be slightly different. What are the flatscreens not showing me? Who is absent from them? I went back to my notes and noticed how often the Circle of Excellence and Honour Roll were mentioned in the interviews I conducted months before. I noticed that since the very first interview, it had repeatedly emerged how highly valued is to perform well. Not only in academic terms, but in everything. Having that in mind, I went through several recordings until a sensemaking process was triggered.

"Excellence" beyond intellect

My very first interviewee was a politically active student who had participated in the occupation of May 2018. Although she valued the process and its achievements, she was also critical about it. She argued the occupation had a "bourgeois approach", because school's women had fought without a

“class view”. She said the occupation was short-sighted insofar only considered the problems and demands of students, disregarding the much more violent dynamics that working-class women of the school experienced every day. Her words were bittersweet. On the one hand, she proudly valued their local action and the incorporation of the school to a broader social movement. It was a major change since 2011’s protests, and certainly a political triumph. On the other, she assessed its scope as conservative and self-centred. “Because they are *cuicas*³², you know?”, she naturally answered as it was a self-explicative reason when I asked why it has had that scope.

The conversation passed from her critiques on the lack of intersectionality to the lack of political participation in general. She addressed how hard it was to attempt a more radical approach when students’ participation was so limited. Something I noticed myself when observed school’s assemblies up to 50 participants. That is a 1.5% of all students. Despite the poor participation in assemblies, I argued during our talk, most students (53%) do vote in unions’ elections. She replied that was true, but that political activity in the school was always “reactive” to context and prone to follow trends. She exemplified her point with the soon coming students’ unions elections which had four lists competing. All of them were leaded by women. She assessed this change as a tactical effect of the occupation and not as genuine ideological shift. I then asked of her opinion on which list had the greatest chances to win. At that time, her answer did not tell me much, but now I know how important it was. She argued the election was on dispute between two lists, one sponsored by centre-left political parties, and a second one closer to anarchist ideas. Out of the four lists, three of them identified as leftists. Dispersion of the left and a potential triumph of the single right-wing list was also part of her concerns. However, she put her stakes on the anarchist list, arguing that the leadership and charisma of the candidate for president was exceptional. “She has got everything”, stated, “She is part of the Honour Roll, do tutorials, is pretty, thin, good at sports... She even comes from a ‘good family’³³, you know? She has got everything”. Then continued, “People here really value those things, you know? If you are a slack, do not even try to run for president. You won’t hold a chance.” I asked whether the academic performance was the most important attribute, but she replied it was a whole. People had to perform well on everything. It was not useful to be part of the Honour Roll but do not have a social life in exchange. Neither being sociable while failing courses. It was not a popularity contest, nor an intelligence test. Although, a balance where each attribute is

³² Slang for upper-class; posh.

³³ A way of referring to people with certain surnames associated with the local upper-class.

taken to the limit. Lastly, she made a statement by coining a term that gave me the chills. “There is no place here for ugliness either. Only ‘right bodies’, you know? You cannot be less than perfect”.

Going through the recording of that interview again allowed me to take a step beyond to interpret “excellence”. What it means in this business school for those who could not or did not want to fit. I started to pay attention to many of the topics we discussed during that first interview. Trying to understand them “as a whole” as my interviewee has said. As crude as it might sound, she was right saying overweighted people in the business school were noticeable fewer than what you may observe on the streets. Communications in the school constantly reinforced the privileged place sports had in its ethos, for instance, through the many scholarships given to elite players. Moreover, none of the dozens of institutional advertisement pics had a single overweighted student.

In spite of the diverse fashion styles, people dressed well and following popular trends. It seemed also true that personal appearances were of crucial importance to the extent some students felt compelled to buy clothes to assist to the school. “I know of people who buy clothes to attend to the school, even getting into debt”, first interviewee said. Every small detail goes to promote an image of “excellence” that exceeds the limits of the academic and intellectual realms. School’s cleaning pace is almost obsessive. Classrooms availability and schedules are adjusted to be used at the top of their capacity. Communications constantly talk of triumphs and victories, even when that implied to skip relevant information. For instance, if a second place is obtained in a competition, communications would emphasise how the team got to the finals instead. “Excellence” was not about academic performance, as I have initially thought. It was a wider and far more encompassing dynamic, one that did not allow “less than perfection”. “Excellence” became a concept that was not just an ideal or a moral value, as I have initially thought. It was entangled with a fierce sense of competition based on individually measurable outcomes.

“Excellence” as competitiveness

During a casual talk while having lunch with a former colleague, she mentioned an interesting discussion held by her students in the session. The course is titled “Organisational Change” and it has an action-research methodology where students have to lead most of the sessions (24 out of 32). The topic in discussion that day was related to the organisational consequences of competitive behaviours in work environments. As it usually happens in many courses, and more often in one

where students sit in circle facing the whole class, participation is limited. When my former colleague asked the reason for the generalised silence, a male student pointed they did not know of work environments because they had not graduated yet. One of her more enthusiastic students, a young woman who had critically approached previous tasks intervened and said it was not necessary to have working experience because they all experienced an extreme competitiveness on daily basis. The teacher asked for an example. She replied that days ago had asked a classmate for his phone charger, but when it was handed to her the guy had extended his hand and said, “one quid”. My colleague got surprised by the student’s comment. The whole class laughed. None of them denied that kind of things happened at this school.

As in applications for tutoring jobs or to get to be part of the Honour Roll, competitiveness in the school is pervasive and ever-present. I became increasingly aware of how it was embedded on every small detail. For instance, because classrooms and schedules are filled to the limit of their capacity, students have to compete to take courses. A complex algorithm calculates a “priority” number for each student. The “priority” number appears in the students’ intranet profile, and it determines the relative position in the queue. Students with the highest grades get the courses, schedules, and teachers they want. Those with the lowest grades get what they can. Sometimes that implies to have a class at the 8am and the next one at the 13.40pm, leaving no chance to get back home in between for those who live in the periphery and do not own a car. Other times, having a low “priority” number directly entails some students cannot take the courses they need and got delayed one term. The economic consequences of these cases are not covered by the school, but students are offered to take the courses over summer. However, the student must gather at least other ten students to request it.

“Priority” number is also influenced by other variables beside academic performance. For instance, all the students with a sports’ scholarship have the highest priority, the same as those in the Honour Roll. Moreover, they are allowed to skip compulsory classes and to ask for tests’ rescheduling. In exceptional occasions, students can request to improve their “priority” for medical reasons or when a close relative has recently passed away. Interestingly though, “priority” number is not influenced by participation in any other activity, even if it is recognised by the school. For instance, activities such as politics, participation in social organisations, or non-federated sports (e.g., Dance, circus arts, etc.) are not considered to calculate the “priority” number nor can be used as arguments to

request a higher one. It seems not all “excellences” are equally important, but only those which allow to rank participants. It seems less important to “be good” than to be “better than others”.

This business school frequently takes pride on the many social organisations its students lead. There are more than 50 organisations that work on a voluntary participation basis and cover many different activities. Most of them have altruistic missions, as they use personal time and resources to tackle collective issues. Some of these organisations focus their activities within the school. For instance, there is a peer tutoring programme streamed on YouTube where advanced students explain what they identify as the hardest parts of each course. That way, students with learning difficulties have the chance to pause and replay the lesson every time they need it. Another organisation takes care of stray dogs that live on campus. They raise money through donations to take them to the vet once in a while and pay for shots and other health expenses. I will come back to the students’ organisations later in the third chapter.

What the school does not mention, however, it is that students need to compete for budget. Out of the 50 organisations only a 10% gets money from the school. Moreover, organisations need to compete for budget every year, meaning they are in a precarious position even if they have been working for several years. Unsurprisingly, initiatives which receive the funding are always the same or related to the same topics (i.e., Academic tutoring and business development). Consequently, most initiatives do not even apply for funding, as they consider it a waste of time and effort. This is what happened to a new students’ organisation with the goal of making sexual dissidences visible. “Sure, a school led by conservative straight old men is going to give us money”, their president sarcastically replied when I asked whether they would apply to the funding contest. I asked what they would do if hypothetically get budget, “put a condom vending machine in the students’ union” he answered.

Competitiveness is not circumscribed to students’ experience only. The atmosphere in the academic departments is fierce, both between departments and within them. Discussions over prizes and publications’ rewards are common and had ended with heated fights and layoffs in the past. By the time I finished fieldwork, there still was a discrimination sue ongoing. “It is like one of those soup operas.”, said once a secretary while I waited for an interviewee, “Every day here there is a new drama.” During a lunch meeting with the Graduates School Head, I found out of the last one. The Information Systems department had a quarrel with the Management department due to the request of a new master programme the former had done. Dispute was over the disciplinary ground

of the programme. Information Systems department argued there was a market niche for a new programme in operations management. Management department, on the other hand, argued those areas were part of their discipline, therefore, they should at least have informed about it. The most surprising part of the quarrel though was to become aware of the lack of an institutional development plan. Autonomy of departments was such that they only found out of a new programme when it was sent to the university's council to get approval. Moreover, creation of new programmes was entirely a matter of revenue opportunities instead of an educational discussion.

I was told of quarrels that likely will be found in most academic departments of any university. The atmosphere experienced within the management department, however, was often described as "extremely polarised", "tense", and "unbearable". As the management department is divided into four disciplinary areas, competitiveness also adopts an internal productivity nature. The more publications one area gets, the more power feel entitled to demand. Disciplinary areas compete for internal funding, control of the syllabus, and new hiring vacancies. Similarly, there also is a generational gap by which elder academics have a lower publications bar to meet than younger academics, in spite of tenure. A sense of unfairness raises and materialise into a tense atmosphere where the slightest discrepancy can -and had- quickly escalate.

But, perhaps the best sample of the competitiveness within the department is its limited multidisciplinary work. When it does exist, it is either conducted through semi-autonomous studies centres or is the result of purely individual initiatives. During interviews with diverse academics, many of them addressed this gap but felt unable to help to bridge it. The absence of multidisciplinary work is only a consequence of a deeper phenomenon, they agreed. A statistics' teacher with whom I had an over two hours talk regarding the management department's issues summarise it as: "There are two groups here. One group has the power. The other one wants it. They say are going to do things differently. But you know what? They are going to do the same. When they eventually got in power, they are going to do exactly the same. That is why I have lunch in my office."

At the beginning, it made sense to me that students' grades, school's rankings, and publications' productivity were taken as measures of "excellence". They allow standardisation, and consequently, entitled the winner with a non-inscrutable label. A student can choose to dress or to act differently because is in the Honour Roll. A disciplinary area demands more courses in the syllabus because its academics publish more Q1 journal articles than the others. It got more and more relevant how

“excellence” in this business school was a relative measure of performance, instead of an absolute one. If no one wins, it did not seem to be as important as when someone does.

Competitiveness, consequently, displaced my previous target on “excellence” as main fieldwork emergent. But it also forced me to face it was a dynamic that likely will be found in any other school or university. I felt lost again. My only hint in the search for ‘politics’ had left me in the same place I started. After all, critical approaches to education had been discussing issues as these over the last five decades. What was different here? Was this business school just another example of Freire’s notion of banking education? Moreover, was it something worthy enough to write an ethnography on? The answer to those questions will come months later fieldwork ended.

Another example of the internal animosity commonly referred as “tense calm” by some academics took place during the opening discourses given by upper-management members when the academic year began. Some assistants remember an unfortunate sentence said during the ceremony: “there is nothing more important than macroeconomics”. The words pronounced by the Dean, a worldwide renown economist and researcher, were considered untasteful among the audience. “It is the kind of comments that give economists their bad reputation” said an academic from the Information Systems & Technologies department. Even among other academics of the economics department his words were condemned, although with a more indulgent tone. According to a colleague and close friend of him, the words of the Dean reflected the “not so empathic personality of academics”. Other members of the department were slightly harsher, although they also apologised on his behalf. They said he really meant “macroeconomic stability”, referring to the autonomous role of the Central Bank in maintaining inflation rates and taking decisions on the interest rate grounded on data.

Despite the episode might seem just a bad election of words, it also allows to observe how the different areas and departments think of each other. There is a tacit hierarchisation among disciplines. One pole is represented by the mathematical sophistication that finds its most refined version in macroeconomics. Math, statistics, and econometrics are the foundation pillars that enable researchers to climb to the top of the academic ladder. The other pole, the “soft” one, it is represented by those disciplines closely linked with human features. Organisational behaviour, customer choices, branding, or industrial relations. Anything that minimally inspires traces of subjectivity is considered at the other side of this tacit division.

These differences are likely to be found in most business schools, especially when they cohabit with economics. What is interesting here is how they are seen as rivals instead of complements. The words pronounced by the Dean in a welcoming event where are students who entered accountancy or information systems technology programmes is passed over not only because of his position, but because he is a “man of numbers”. As a member of management department told me, “Mathematical brilliance here is treated as a license to be rude”.

Moreover, academics from each subdiscipline constantly advocate for the primacy of their areas. For instance, some people from economics and finances say that the management department has “soften” the curricula and now students are not as prepared in statistics and econometrics as they used to be. Consequently, they root for more analytical courses. Oppositely, some people from marketing and HR criticises the lack of relational skills, critical thinking, and ethical reflection of a strongly math-based curricula. They argue that currently demanded job skills are not the same than years ago and that syllabus need to evolve. Both arguments were based on the same notion of fulfilling job market’s expectations. Realising that both approaches actually led in the same direction made me question whether I was unconsciously looking for a hidden curriculum (Margolis, 2001; Martin, 1976; Blasco, 2011).

A member of the management department specialised in innovation puts it as, “some people here are lagging not one paradigm behind but three or four.” The obsolescence of some theoretical approaches taught in the management major was an agreement between students of the programme. Moreover, it was an undenied assertion when I asked academics from the same department about it. Academics want to conduct their research and publish in top journals. All the incentives go in that direction. As a by-product, they spend as little time as possible working on teaching related activities. Many of them recognise a culture of tutors dependence where academics often delegate tasks and responsibilities that should be carried on by them.

In sum, there is not much debate about syllabus. “Now a new syllabus reform is coming to reduce academic load. But it always returns to the same discussion. Which courses will be removed? That is a political decision. It has nothing to do with the well-being of the student.”, an insider from syllabus planning team admits.

There surely are reforms and reconfigurations from time to time, but they are cosmetic rather than substantial ones. For instance, when the ACSSB commission assessed the school’s syllabus, the recommendation was to transit from knowledge-based to competence-based courses. In theory this

change did entail a whole reconfiguration of the course aim and its pedagogic techniques. In practice, however, syllabus was rewritten to incorporate words such as “competences” and “skills” without actual intervention of the courses. Head of students’ affairs seems to agree. “You only change the name of the course in the little box”, says referring to the organigram of the economics & business programme. Another example refers to the presence of ethics courses in the syllabus. When Ethics was eliminated from the syllabus under the promise that the topic would be transversally incorporated throughout all courses, most academics knew what would actually happen. Ethics was eliminated to free up time for analytical courses, while the rest of the courses adjusted their syllabus to include “ethics competences” among their goals. Again, there was not actual change on how the courses were conducted nor of the topics covered.

“Excellence” as atomisation

During September and before getting interviews scheduled, I spent the days wandering around the school. I thought it would help me to see things I have not before. My fieldnotes reflect on my intentions of reaching a “desirable” level of awareness to conduct ethnography, meaning a sort of estrangement that would allow me to be impressionable when faced to a place I felt I knew so well. I had spent five years as undergraduate student, two as master student, and two more as assistant teacher. A total of nine years that made me feel as if I was conducting research at my own home. Searching for that state of estrangement led me to attend to many talks, seminars, and random undergrad classes. I kept this practice during most of the fieldwork. However, it was far more intensive during the first weeks, precisely because I had more time due to the lack of interviews. On every one of those activities, I bumped into people I knew. It might be only a far acquaintance, but at least they would wave at me. I felt it was impossible to take the “distance” I was looking for. On the contrary, I noticed how personally linked to the school I was. The search for estrangement had definitely failed and it would be better to stop pursuing it. But then this brief search for estrangement unexpectedly led me to reflect on the functioning rhythm of the school. While I was busy trying to “escape” from spaces where I might be known, I realised the massive number of activities every day take place there. It is a vibrant atmosphere. Walking through the hallways and looking through the small door’s window allows you to see that most rooms are always occupied. Precisely because of the many simultaneous activities that take place, it is possible to have

alternatives. It is impossible as researcher, however, to collect all available data. Even if I had focused only, for instance, on seminars. It would have been impossible to attend all of them. That relentless the school's rhythm is.

Because of the many alternatives it is possible to choose where to spend your time. Something that would surely be interpreted as a strength in any business school of the world, here it had a different vibe. The rivalry and polarisation observed among academics translated into an audience segmentation. For instance, those academics who attended Ben Tal Shahar's motivational talk on "happiness" are not the same than those who attended Harmut Rosa's "acceleration society" masterclass. Academics not only have different disciplinary interests, but also profound personal differences that preclude some of them from attending an activity organised by "the other side". The most striking example of this dynamic was a presentation made by researchers of the ECLAC, the United Nations' centre for economic development of Latin-American. The activity took place at an auditorium with capacity for one hundred attendants, approximately. Due to its staggered distribution, it is possible to look at the whole audience when one is placed at the first rows. I was sitting there when a former colleague spotted me and asked to join me. Once again, I had failed achieving "distance". However, in our talk before the seminar started, I had the chance of asking him where the rest of the management department academics were. He turned and looked to the rest of the audience. There was none. "I do not think they are interested". "How they cannot be?", I inquired. The activity was the presentation of a report on living conditions of private-sector workers. "I would understand if they were not interested in macroeconomic indicators or public-sector workers, but we are talking of the people they are supposed to teach how to lead and work with". He shrugged. "You know how it is", he murmured just before the presentation started.

By going through my notes on diversity of activities, political views, school's projects, and students' organisations, made me realise how atomised everything was. Interactions between these different "worlds" are incredible scarce, sometimes to an absurd extent. The best sample I can think of this absurdity happened the 4th of December. That day two different activities on pensions' reform took place. One of them was organised by academics of the economics department. It was held at the Masterclass Auditorium at 8am. The activity was directed to executive professionals of AFPs (Pension Funds Administrators) and public-policy makers, as well as academics from other schools. To the activity attended the Dean, upper-management members, and economics department's professors. Atmosphere was solemn. It even had an anchor who introduced speakers by giving a

brief summary of their credentials. There were coffee and biscuits provided next to the entry. The activity goal was to discuss proposals of reform to the Chilean pensions system, which the last decades has consistently showed its inability to offer liveable pensions.

Another activity with the exact same objective was organised the exact same day by undergrad and economics master's students. It took place at one of the largest graduate's school classrooms at 4pm. The activity was open to anyone, and it promised no technical knowledge was required to understand the discussion. There also were prestigious economists as keynote speakers, but the tone was completely different. Unlike the "official" activity of the morning, the one organised by students had women among the panel members. Moreover, there also were representatives of a "heterodox economy" study group. There was not an anchor-person though, nor coffee and biscuits.

The diversity of activities represented a methodological problem as researcher because I somehow had to justify why I picked one or the other. But while trying to do that, I noticed school's audiences were like oil and water. Some people went to certain talks and seminars, while others attended to different ones. There was not exchange, as if crossing to "the other side" was considered treason. Consequently, one of the lessons I got from those weeks though, it is the relentless rhythm the school experiences every day. It is a way of functioning that facilitates dispersion.

For instance, Masterclass Auditorium -the largest room of the school- is all year booked even before students start the academic year in March. They do not even have a chance to request a date, in spite of any anticipation. Whenever students do conduct an activity at the Masterclass Auditorium it is because they negotiated it with whomever had the date scheduled. Or because that activity was sponsored by one of the academics' departments or by a research centre. Something similar happens with regular classrooms and small auditoriums. They are booked with several weeks in advance and it is really difficult to get one for students' activities. Studying rooms, on the other hand, are most of the time available to book. Studying rooms are small cubicles with capacity for five people or less. Similar to the computer labs located in the same floor, studying rooms are located at an open area. Most separation panels are made of glass or transparent materials. Even though they allow certain extent of noise cancelation, there is no visual privacy. Studying rooms can be booked online through the school's website. Classrooms and auditoriums, on the other hand, require a formal request that kicks out a bureaucratic process. Students have fully access to study areas, but only to those. Common areas and gathering spaces are extremely limited in number, and

even more in availability for students. Even though studying areas are open, they are also segmented to divide people in small groups.

The school's rhythm is frenetic. Activities are scheduled six days per week, from 8am to 8pm, eleven months per year. It is also possible, however, to hold activities during closed hours and Sundays, depending on who asks for it. The school does work always at the verge of its capacity. One of the workers I often talked but did not interview was the "Physical Resources" administrative manager. His work was to assign and coordinate classrooms and auditoriums logistics. He described his work as one of "putting out fires", meaning he also was in charge of sending someone to fix any last-minute issues such as a non-working projector or audio connection. The longest occasion we talked was around fifteen minutes, just before he had to run to fix something up. We mainly chit chatted. Not because I had not questions, but because I thought how unfair was to push him to carry on the type of conversation I wanted. I thought it was selfish to "interrogate" someone so seemingly agitated. So, every time we talked, we only chit chatted. During those conversations, however, I could connect the rhythm the school experiences every day to the inner pressure people also experience.

Each group at the school experience the pressure in their own unique way. For academics, it can be summarised in the known motto "publish or perish". I talked to many of them who confided me how they have had to attend therapy and take prescription drugs to cope with their work. For cleaning workers, it means everything must look spotless, otherwise, they might be replaced on the next term. For administrative workers, it means the bureaucratic machinery must run smoothly and without students' complains. There is literally no space for mistakes because there are no spare rooms nor schedules. As the same as a Jenga tower, only one block out of place is enough to spoil everything. For students, this pressure manifests as academic charge and performative social duties. Students must deal with academic demand at the same time they "achieve" certain extent of popularity.

Making this connection between the restless functioning of the school and how people felt made me notice that "excellence" exceeded intellectual activities. "Excellence" was about taking every activity to the limit of its capacity.

“Excellence” as *sensible* experience

By April 2019 I was back in the UK. I quickly started to transcribe the 60 interviews I had done, classifying the pictures I had taken, and attempting to sort all my notes under any seemingly reasonable criteria. Fighting against tedium while drowning in a sea of data, I began to feel confused and unsure on how to proceed. I had read how ethnography was a back-and-forth process, but it did not prevent me from feeling confused. I felt unsure of how well I had used my fieldwork time. Moreover, I did not know whether I was supposed to be just take a path and embrace my decision, or to keep going through data over and over again until it became clearer.

While I finished transcribing interviews, I carried on a preliminary analysis that gave me some hints on how to make sense of the massive amount of information. I started focusing on the most repeated topics during interviews, paying attention to those which participants had strong quarrels over. For instance, while female students’ perception on the number of sexual harassment cases was worrying, upper management members held these cases were extremely limited. They based their argument on the number of reported cases and whenever an investigation has been conducted. As Rancière defines dissensus, a quarrel means one party does not understand nor acknowledge the message of the other. Upper-management members disregarded the urgency of creating a sexual harassment unit not because they did not agree with having one, but because they did not consider it a priority.

By the end of September, I started an in-depth data analysis process using a list of 13 categories. By continually grouping and regrouping them I felt I was doing grounded theory. Consequently, I had to deal with ambiguities of not knowing how to systematise a philosophically coherent treatment of data. I was forbidden from trying to draw an underlying structure or ulterior explanation of collected information. Rancierian philosophy demanded me to put the context at the very centre of the method. I had to tell the story of what I observed, without offering interpretations nor arrogating participants’ voices. At the same time, I had to narrate an engaging and rigorously well supported story for the readers. “Why did not I just do surveys instead?”, I sporadically lamented while spent hours in front of my laptop without knowing how to proceed.

On October 18th, however, the largest political uprising Chile had seen in the last 40 years begun. Every day during months many Chileans as me followed the massive protests through social media. Some of them with over one million people gathered just in Santiago. In spite of my joy with what

Chilean protesters called an “awakening”, I also had to watch the police brutality the government answered back with. Distance made me feel powerless and heartbroken. The same it was promised will not ever happen again after Pinochet’s dictatorship ended, it was actually happening again. International organisms such as Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, and United Nations wrote reports detailing human rights violations. Violations include although were not limited to 400 people permanently eye-injured or blinded by rubber pellets and 36 deaths. I could not focus on my tasks. Some days I could not even eat. I decided, therefore, to request a pause in my studies. I did not care whether it was an extension or a suspension. At that time, I did not even care what the difference between both was. I only knew my mind was elsewhere. What I will not ever forget though, is the answer I got by an upper management member when I tried to explain the horrifying images I woke up to every day. “Try not to think about it”, he said, while emphasising how important was to finish on time.

I felt dehumanised. Treated as a number on a spreadsheet. A cog in a machine. A brick in the wall. I felt part of the ‘demos’ of my own *partage*. Rancière warns us though the demos composition cannot be known in advance of a dissensus because it has not been constituted as such yet. When ‘politics’ happen, the demos emerge from it. Or, as Rancière’s (1995, pág. 48) puts it, the ‘demos’ takes conscious of its condition of minority and decides to escape from it. As when female students felt so unsafe in their own school, they decided to occupy upper-management members’ offices. A ‘demos’ emerged when they refused to keep waiting for an answer from upper-management members who did not consider sexual harassment cases a priority. They acknowledged their condition of minority and decided to escape from it. Furthermore, ‘politics’ triggered an aesthetical reconfiguration of the *partage*, as it was discussed in the previous chapter. However, thinking of the ‘demos’ as something that emerges only after *dissensus* happen made me reflect on my experience with the bureaucrat. He did not have bad intentions nor did any different from what his job position demanded from him. Management members enforce guidelines and rules as a way to control outcomes, therefore, his mission was to dissuade me from requesting more time. A student -any student- behind schedule spoils school’s numbers. The situation started to sound incredible familiar. I was in the same exact position many interviewees narrated. They did not reject “excellence” nor had epistemological critiques to they it was conceived in the school. They rejected the effects this excellence-based competitiveness had in their lives.

It gave me a hint on how to methodologically proceed with data analysis. I became aware it did not matter whether I called it “excellence” or tried to detail the concept further. It did not matter either it was entangled with other related concepts. All it did matter were the effects the policing mechanisms had, in spite of how I called them. I finally understood why Rancière carefully chose the words “reconstruction of practices” to define his method. Reconstructing practices meant to acknowledge the effects policing mechanisms had and how people dealt with them. It was not as important to explain how those policing mechanisms work as it was to understand how school’s members were affected by them.

The Costs of “Excellence”

Similar to the quarrel between female students and upper management over the priority sexual harassments cases had, another evident disagreement between school’s members was focused on the perception of academic demand. “You studied here, you know it is not rocket science”, replied to me a member of students’ affairs when I asked him of academic pressure. Both teachers and upper-management members agreed the academic difficulty was not as demanding as it was in Law or Engineering schools of the university. Moreover, they all agreed the syllabus difficulty had decreased over the last years. A series of reforms have “softened” the syllabus, they say, reducing standards in those courses (i.e., Statistics, econometrics, etc) identified as core. However, they also agreed current students had more troubles dealing with academic requirements than previous generations. The argument given was that new generations were less resilient and more interested in other activities beside studying. “For us it was either to study or to find a job. These kids today... They want to get the degree while having fun playing videogames and partying with friends”. Some even extended the argument to the whole society. “These days people want to have it all without making an effort”, a senior academic grumbled when I mentioned students’ complains on academic pressure.

Interviewed students’ perception was not as clear though. “If you organise well and study on a systematic way, you will not have problems”, a fifth-year accountancy student affirmed. She insisted most of her classmates had poor time-management skills and a general lack of studying methods. Consequently, they faced troubles with what she considered was a challenging although perfectly manageable academic demand. Other students assessed academic difficulty as suffocating and non-

stoppable. "That is why you see students totally wasted on school's parties. After weeks of having tests almost every day and tutorials on Saturdays' mornings, what can you expect whenever they had a weekend free? They just want to blackout". Alcohol consumption and abuse of recreational drugs was one of the reasons why I got institutional access to conduct research at the school. To help upper-management members to understand the rationale behind some students' attitude was one of the things I got asked to return in exchange of the permission to conduct fieldwork.

Taking either school's or students' stance, however, seemed reductionist. I became aware I was in presence of another disagreement. One party did not understand nor acknowledged the other's stance on academic demand. Going through my data over and over again had consumed a massive amount of my time, but it also had given me a notion of how diverse opinions regarding this topic were. "The problem is not the academic demand", a third-year economics student said, "It is that demand is meaningless". She was not only an academically high achiever students, but one of those students who manage to be a member of the Circle of Excellence, do tutorials, and practice sports too. I was interested in her opinion as she did not portray the problem in binary terms as other interviewees did. She argued both stances were wrong. Neither academic demand was excessive nor students lazy. "Academic demand here is just an excuse", she replied when I asked to detail what she meant. "It does not matter whether you learn or not. Neither whether it helps you to be a better professional or not. It is just a filter." She exemplified her point with something that happened in Maths courses where she did tutorials for first- and second-year students. She explained that students were asked to learn unnecessary topics such as differential equations, even though they will likely never have to use them. Moreover, she explained there was a system of homework guides that students had to complete in order to take the tests. "You can get a perfect score in the test, but if you did not do the homework, you still get a zero", many students told me. Academics argued this system was designed to teach students to dose studying hours and to work in advance of their tests. The system had, however, some interesting side effects. Students from privileged backgrounds decided to study for the test and to buy the answers of homework guides. Students with learning difficulties, on the other hand, failed in one or both tasks. The final result was that a high percentage of students failed these courses and had to retake them the next term.

Mental Health Crisis

Before carrying on any interview, I had a list of preparations I used to check out. Two sets of charged batteries for the voice recorder, cash for buying snacks and beverages at the cafeteria, notebooks and pencils, many copies of consent forms, a clock timer, a bottle of water, sweets, and a copy of the Vice-Dean authorisation. Also, I reviewed previous interviews' notes and highlighted certain recurrent topics to bring up if necessary. I thought I had all the flanks covered. But as the same as in other research's aspects, the distance between design and reality usually takes us for surprise. Only the experience of 'being there' is able to show us how unprepared to face human uncertainty we really are. I never thought of something as essential as tissues. I regret I did not.

The seventh interview conducted was the hardest one. It was during the fifth week since fieldwork had formally started. The participant was a young woman in her third year of the Information Technologies & Accountancy Programme. We initially met to talk of the feminist occupation, her role on it, and how it did help to boost her self-confidence. However, at some point the interview took a different direction. As the same as in previous interviews with students, the mental health situation within the school spontaneously emerged when topics such as "excellence" or competition were discussed. I mentioned that in previous interviews some students had flagged mental health issues as a potential crisis. She timidly nodded while her eyes filled up with tears. I tried to step back. I apologised and immediately offered to change the topic, but she declined. "Last year a classmate committed suicide. We were friends. She suffered from a severe depression. Her family told us that she was depressed years ago, but that the school ended up killing her.", she softly told me while trying to hold her tears. I could not have foreseen it but still felt terrible for not having tissues at hand.

Later that day I went through my notes and noticed mental health has not only emerged in previous interviews, but it had done it in all of them. Seven out of seven. All of them students. Moreover, mental health would always appear immediately after asking how the atmosphere of the school was. As I still was learning how to conduct unstructured interviews, I used to start them with open questions. One I used from the first interviews to the very last was one was "Can you describe how the school is?". I emphasised I was not asking what the school was, as if asking to describe its functioning or status, but *how* was it. How was to spend days there, how was to live the experience of being there from their unique personal point of view. Most students describe mixed feelings

regarding their experiences. They positively valued the people they have met during these years. Most times they mentioned significant friends or inspirational teachers, but sometimes also members of staff. People who work at the library, information desks, and the sports facilities are commonly referred to as “aunt/uncle” by students as a form of endearment. Specially to those students who come from working-class backgrounds and spend most of the day at school, “aunties and uncles” represent supportive and caring figures in their lives.

In spite of the significant people met and bonds forged, the school’s atmosphere is also described by students with a series of negative characteristics. It is portrayed as fiercely competitive place, prone to individualism, and where each person *must* be able to thrive in spite of any obstacle. A fourth-year management student describe it as a “filter” where is not as important to learn as it is to endure the process. “[Academic demand] here is like a huge strainer. You have to hold on and keep going, no matter what. As long as you get to be above the average, you are fine.” In most of the maths, statistics, and econometrics courses there is an unspoken rule known as “relativisation”. By the end of the term and once all the exams are done, the teacher takes the best mark’s average and increase it to the maximum (7) and then correct other students’ marks proportionally. The lower the highest mark is, the greater the relativisation will be. When I asked for the reasons to do it, students argued it is related to this “filter” dynamic where individual performance is not enough to pass, but it is also necessary to be above one’s classmates. To exemplify his point, he describes what happened in the Mathematical Methods III course in the previous term. “The average mark was around a 3³⁴. If I was a teacher and most of my students are failing, then I would have to ask whether I am demanding something impossible.” Some students even speculate relativisation is done in order to fulfil a Students’ Affairs courses planification for the next term, meaning that teachers are subject to deliver a certain number of failings in order to have enough demand for the next term. I did not find evidence to support these suspicions, and failing quotas were disregarded as a false claim when I asked it to upper-management members. However, reasons to make academic demand excessively hard only to then adjust it at the end were still unknown.

I felt again the analysis was going in circles. Even though I had decided to focus on the effects of the policing mechanisms instead of the phenomenon itself, examining mental health issues had brought me back to “excellence”. Moreover, while going though previous interviews, I noticed how all the

³⁴ In the Chilean educational system, marks go from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 7. Approval is obtained with a mark of 4 or higher.

leads I had been following were entangled. “Excellence” led to competition, competition to individualism, and individualism to a hostile atmosphere that seemingly has repercussions on mental health. “Excellence” was definitely more than a rhetorical narrative over academic performance. It was the word I had found to describe an overarching dynamic that had its clearer manifestation on academic pressure but was not limited to it.

I decided to go through all previous interviews again to see whether I had passed something over. I noticed that every time the Psychological Support Programme had been mentioned it was followed by a complain over the waiting times. Piecing together all the interviews where mental health had emerged as a conversation topic, the extent of the mental health crisis became clear. Waiting time to schedule an emergency appointment went around the three months. The program has two full-time psychologists and over a dozen psychology students doing their apprenticeships. Undergraduate students are 3300 approximately, meaning there is one professional per 235 students if we count apprentices. However, when cases are classified as “severe”, law demands that a graduated professional must carry on the therapy which consequently diminishes the personnel to only two people.

Testimonies of students asking for an appointment and not getting it soon enough were abundant. All of them shared a certain extent of resentment against the school for not providing a support they considered critical. Moreover, they blamed it for not promoting a healthier life-studying balance. The days after the interview where the participant told me of the suicide of her friend, my questions were noticeable influenced by it. For instance, while talking to the president of a LGBTQ+ organisation, he directly blamed the school for the deaths. According to him, the school had failed in warning students of the risks of the dynamics they promote. “The excellent culture is very superficial. They do not explain to you that to be part of the honour roll it is necessary to sacrifice a lot. This year we had three deaths, including the suicide of the classmate you mentioned. We have been demanding mental health initiatives for a long time. Another classmate died hit by a car, totally drunk. Another classmate, also drunk, fell from a 20th floor. And the only thing we have got from the school are these shitty little trees outside the canteen.”, says while he points to three small trees planted by the school as a memorial.

Whenever I referred to this mental health support shortcoming during interviews, most academics and upper-management members reacted without surprise. It was a known problem but most of them only limited to address it as a gap that needed improvement. In few cases, academics

addressed the extent mental health crisis had, but also contrasted the argument with statements over students laziness and lack of resilience of new generations. One of them did go further though. She declared her rejection to the very idea of having mental health support. We were precisely talking of “excellence” when the topic unfolded, but her stance gave me goosebumps. “Why should we get counselling to someone who is going to crumble in the future anyway? It could be in their job, or in their marriage. If you need therapy, go to therapy. It is not the school’s responsibility”.

“Excellence” as aesthetic regime

During the days before my departing from Chile, on my fieldwork journal I reflected on the conflicts of not having more time. I wondered whether it had been enough, and whether I had spent it in the most productive way or not. These questions, as well as the tendency of wanting to keep data collection *ad infinitum*, are described in ethnographic textbooks. However, none of them really prepare the researcher to face it in reality. Time goes by quickly. Faster than expected or wanted. As when I was a kid resisting my parents’ command to get up for school, I just wanted “five more minutes” more than any other thing. Even though consciously I knew it would not make a substantial difference. Likely, I would have found another hint and then wanted to keep digging, just to find a new one once again. Despite I understood ethnography was a never-ending task, I really wanted those extra “five minutes” to make new questions and follow new leads. I guess that is precisely what I makes it such a challenging and exciting task.

After a couple of months back to the UK, my analysis kept stuck. Transcribing interviews and codifying recurrent themes surely helped me to gain a deeper understanding of each interview conducted. It also helped me to listen more carefully to what participants had said. It allowed me to listen to more details than I did at the moment. Sometimes I reprimanded myself for not letting someone continue a certain thought or for having asked a question that changed the course of the interview. However, I also noticed how comfortable I was on the interviewer role. Despite minor inconveniences and regrets, in general terms I liked the way I had conducted the process. Many interviewees confided me sensible information, either about themselves or the school. I collected a series of anecdotes, stories, and personal confessions that provide evidence of the extent of confidence achieved with some participants. A coherent interpretation of the data, however, seemed at that time completely out of my reach.

I had elaborated many labels to describe what I had experienced during the fieldwork, but none of them felt entirely satisfactory. Moreover, I constantly had to fight with the philosophical tensions that precluded me from offer an explanation (i.e., Drawing an underlying structure - arkhe). What I knew for sure was that "excellence" here was a far more complex dynamic than one circumscribed to an academic, intellectual, or disciplinary refinement. It was surely highly valued to master the discipline, but "excellence" was not only about the discipline chosen by the student or academic nor the level of technical sophistication achieved in it. It was an aesthetical regime. "Excellence" was also related to the ways school's members experienced their lives within the boundaries of the institution. "Excellence" discriminated right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, and proper from improper. Excelling at sports was as equally important for social life as to get high grades. In opposition, being a slack was as socially punished as not fulfilling the minimum social standards of fashion. Less than a pristine sanitisation of campus was as unacceptable as not using all its classrooms at maximum capacity. "Excellence" as an aesthetical regime goes beyond the academic realm. Of course, it does include the acknowledgement of the worldwide academia and other forms of prestige, such as institutional rankings. But it is not limited to institutional visibility either. Interpreted as an aesthetical regime, "excellence" permeates school's daily life by establishing unspoken guidelines of what is allowed and what is not. These unspoken social norms exert sophisticated forms of control and direction of school's members.

For instance, as I have described before, the school promotes the idea that students might create social organisations. As it happens with workshops and trainings for SME's owners, the school prioritises those organisations with a focus on business. During 2018, a group of students attempted to start a new initiative directed to Haitian migrants. In the context of successive migration waves Chile has received in the last decade, there has been a relevant number of Haitians migrants. It is the first time in contemporary history that the country experiences a migration wave from a non-Spanish speaking country. Therefore, it is the first time Chileans have had to add language barriers to the cultural ones. The initiative contemplated Spanish classes, legal assessment on migration status, and of course a quick training in local work laws and rights. The aim was to enable Haitian migrants to improve their language skills, to generate a network of contacts and support, and to teach them to apply for funding to start small entrepreneurship. Students' petition was denied though. Reasons argued were that the initiative did not fit with the school. "Let the Literature School do it", sarcastically replied an upper-management member when I asked him about it.

“Excellence” as policing mechanism

Mental health services constant collapse was evidence that supported the veracity of the unpleasant environment described by some students. Also, fierce disputes among academics also had also given me the sense of what themselves described as a "tense calm". It was not only a perception of some school's members, but an internal dynamic with profound mental health repercussions and feelings of overwhelm. But how was “excellence” related to the policing mechanisms and the ‘police order’ discussed by Rancière in his philosophy? I only had an answer to this question once I reflected on the notes taken during the summer term and the conversation I had with a former colleague.

By the end of the summer term -in January- the school looks totally different from the rest of the year. It is opened as usual, regular schedules, but the flux of people makes it unrecognisable. Nobody would say it is a place with 3300 undergrad students and a couple of thousands more if the graduate school is included. During the last days of January is as quiet as it gets. Hallways are almost clear. When a slot of classes ends, small groups of students get out of classrooms and commonly disperse in a matter of seconds. Even though academics should be on their offices by contract in January, there is an unofficial agreement during that month. At least half of the academics do not attend the school unless they teach or have a meeting. Number of stimuli are considerably less, which allows me to hold longer casual conversations or even going to have lunch with school's members. I discussed my thoughts on not being doing enough with one of them, a former colleague from the management department. At some moment during that lunch, the words "lack of resilience" went out through my mouth. He looked and me and asked, "Have you notice what this place *makes* to us?"

During most of the fieldwork, I felt pressure of not been doing enough. I discussed it with my supervisors, partner, friends, and family. All of them agreed I was working a lot and that the number of interviews done, pictures taken, and notes written reflected on it. There was tangible proof of all the hours I spent wandering around campus, using each opportunity to gather as much data as I could. However, despite the robust evidence of my effort, I felt pressured to do more. Many times, I felt overwhelmed because I could not do ‘everything’.

What if interviews were too unstructured to give me consistent results later? Or maybe the opposite What if I am not giving interviewees enough space to speak freely? What if something I say, or the

way I said it, influence certain responses? What if I unwittingly am trying to prove my own hypothesis?

I was constantly worried of failing or doing it in a wrong way. At the same time, an inner voice reminded me I needed to be open to sensory experience. Concepts such as serendipity and emplaced knowledge were theoretically clear in my mind, but the relative success of 'being there' was something impossible to assess. That stressed me out. Perhaps it is something that happens to any PhD student. Or maybe it was just a character flaw. A personal issue I was not dealing right with. I felt as anxious as when I was an economics and business undergrad student.

I had gathered data on "excellence", reflected on competition, and even pointed to an emergent mental health crisis, but I had not yet connected it with what I was feeling then. Until that question, I had not noticed how I was observing emergent patterns that also were affecting me. I felt the pressure of the "excellence" mandate. I constantly asked myself whether I was doing enough. But then, compared to what? I felt overwhelmed, exactly as the students narrated to feel on regular basis. Exactly as other academics confided me they felt many times. I felt the "tense calm" in the school's atmosphere that many members have previously referred to. I understood why some preferred to have lunch at their offices. My former colleague's question triggered a sense-making process. I wrote on my notes of that day "The sensory experience of the *partage* makes things to people. It surely pushes them to excel. That was off the table. But what does make them during the process? What are the side-effects and costs of "excellence"?"

Later I would connect this reflection with the new Vice-Dean's question, "What do we do to our students that they do not want to participate in class anymore?". Excellence pushes students and academics to surpass their own expectations, but when do we stop? This insight that "excellence" does not have an end, but on the contrary, it always demands more and more made me connect all the dots. "Excellence" is not only a rhetorical resource to make people feel proud of belonging to an elite institution, but it also works as a policing mechanism that pushes people in unhealthy ways. Insofar "excellence" does not have an end, or at least some boundaries, works as a policing mechanism by which the 'police order' silently dictates what is right and what is wrong. Moreover, those expectations are aligned with the values of a late capitalist society in which guilt is introjected to individuals. We are our own masters, but only if we decide to exploit ourselves. Rancière's philosophy talks of mastery and dominance, as well as of equality and emancipation. However, a topic that does not cover is our current tendency to be -or live under the fantasy that we are- our

own masters. "Excellence" as policing mechanism might represent an advancement in Rancière's philosophy, precisely because points out that the 'police order' is sustained through our own practices. "Excellence" exerts a sophisticated form of control of school's members insofar they embrace it as a symbolic guide.

In this chapter I have drawn upon the internal dynamics of the business school studied during fieldwork. Dynamics of competition, individualisation, and atomisation have modelled a policing mechanism of "excellence" by which members of the school are lured to exhaust themselves. This dynamic entails repercussions on mental health and feelings of isolation as well as overwhelm. The atmosphere described is one of a highly disjointed social fabric where little to no spaces for encounter exist. I will continue developing this idea in the following chapter and connecting "excellence" with the notion of the consensus that takes places in this business school. Moreover, I will cover how resistance and fighting takes place in small groups and micro-organisations that function with different logics, and which offer students with more nurturing alternatives that allow them to cope with the pulsion of always been doing more and more.

CHAPTER THREE: Consensus and Dissensus

In the previous chapter I have sketched an image of this elite Chilean business school. More precisely, I have drawn upon some of its internal dynamics while offering an interpretation that hopefully will give readers a glimpse of its daily life. A sense of “emplaced knowledge” tried to be transmitted by taking the reader step by step through the train of thought of the author. The narrative I constructed though must always be open to reinterpretation. As in any other ethnographic venture, the researcher must always recognise that their own subjectivity is what allows a particular reading. In my reading, the fieldwork experience and the iterative analysis of notes and interviews made me focus on the emergent theme of “excellence”. Noticing the flexibility of the term led me to dig in how people interpreted it and what it did mean to them. Following the concept of “excellence” triggered a sense-making process where the term became attached to its consequences; a competitive atmosphere, mental health issues, and an atomisation of individuals and groups. These dynamics are facilitated due to the size of the institution, its infrastructural segmentation, and disputes over the managerial control.

The school was therefore experienced as an individualist place where only few spaces were open up to find a sense of community. The school is a place where ‘politics’ is unlikely to happen precisely because the absence of platforms to “universalise the singular”. By promoting “excellence”, individual worth is exacerbated to the extent the ‘Other’ is seen as a rival. Consequently, at every level, the school’s social fabric is reduced to small groups that do not communicate with others. However, as I will develop in this chapter, it is important to notice that the ‘police order’ does not adopt the form of an intentional will or an ideological agenda. In spite these traits might also be present, the ‘police order’ here is characterised by a lack of direction. In the name of diversity and pluralism, the school’s consensus is to support any initiative that helps to build the “excellence” brand.

Not having a stance is the stance

Before engaging with Rancierian philosophy in my upgrade process, I explored the possibility of conducting the ethnography under a Bourdieusian lens. Before my research questions were directed to search for ‘politics’ in a Chilean elite business school, as they are now, I considered to shape the

research as a way to scrutinize its hidden curricula. During that time, I thought the contents business schools decided to teach were part of a -wittingly or not- ideological agenda. Consequently, I assumed syllabus was the result of modelling efforts seeking to direct the way business professionals reflected and acted upon the profession. I did not think business schools were the origin of all social inequalities, but that they indeed played a substantial role on them. Business schools were, I thought, just one of the many institutions enabling class-based reproduction of inequality (i.e., An apparatus).

Moreover, considering the history of this particular business school described in the presentation chapter, I was convinced that upper-management members had clear guidelines on what to include and what to let aside on their syllabus. The way of doing business, the economic model, and certain assumptions on human nature were embedded in the contents chosen to be taught. Also, rituals such as black-tie parties and artefacts such as flatscreens showing top students must be a meditated decision. I thought all these symbols were part of the hidden curricula. Bourdieusian theory and its derivatives, however, were in tension with the Rancierian lens I finally decided to use. Searching for a hidden curriculum would fall into the category of underlying structure, leading me to a theoretical impasse. For the first time during fieldwork, I questioned myself for the research design decisions made on the upgrade and whether I had taken the right ones or not. I decided to restrain myself from making interpretations and stick to the “practices”.

What I found though was the absolute lack of direction. In spite of the disputes between departments and disciplinary areas within them I referred in the previous chapter, institutional strategy is shaped without much questioning. The political agenda I thought I would find was absent. Or at least it did not take the shape I thought it would. Rituals such as black-tie parties had been relocated to centric parts of the city adopting humbler budgets. Videocasting top students on loop was the last attempt to give some use to the flatscreens purchased ten years before. Moreover, syllabus reforms that take place from time to time also seemed just a way of coping with the requirements of accreditations and international associations. I expected to find a purposely defined direction, but I only found reaction. Strategic decisions were not guided by current academic debates or clear ideological stances. Instead, they were just a way to answer to higher education market requirements.

For instance, there is a dedicated administrative unit to connect graduates with the work market. As likely in most business schools, this unit is in charge of making alliances with private companies,

preparing students for job interviews, helping in finding an apprenticeship, etc. Among their tasks, they collect employer's feedback to incorporate it into the studies plan. If employers assess students from this business school are not as prepared as students from others in, for instance, spreadsheet's analysis, that will trigger a questioning on whether there is enough emphasis on these skills on the syllabus. Moreover, this administrative unit is constantly updating its database in order to track graduates' trajectories. How long it takes them to search for a job, how much money they make, and how long they stay in a job are part of the statistics gathered.

However, while the syllabus is constantly informed by the results of job's and apprenticeship's fairs, there is no unit in charge of keeping undergrad syllabus updated to current debates (e.g., Automation, sustainability, etc.) Moreover, some courses of the management major still include long questioned abstractions and obsolete models. "It is my fourth year and I have seen Porter [analysis] in three different courses", says a student while moving his hands expressing his puzzlement.

Acknowledging that the strategic directions the school takes are mostly guided by the market, allowed me to connect the emergent dynamic of "excellence" described in the previous chapter with a wider notion of consensus. Moreover, I understood that not having a clear stance and arguing that they were open to any initiative that promoted "excellence" made me question what the real disagreement in this school was, if any.

The question of Consensus

After student unions' elections took place, I finally had the chance to talk with a student who had been frequently mentioned in other interviews. Portrayed as a powerful leader as the same as a devoted tutor, I felt it was part of my researcher duties to talk with her. It was fairly difficult to make an appointment due to her agitated schedule. On the third week of November, a few days after she assumed as president of the economics and business students' union for the upcoming term, I finally had my chance. We met at a coffee break point located between the Students' Building (B) and the Academics' Building (C). There she constantly watched her surroundings with suspicion and even lowered her voice when upper-management members passed nearby. I offered moving us to an external cafeteria where I conducted most of my interviews, but she refused. Her watchful attitude though made me think of the censorship some students might experience in the school.

We discussed many topics and our talk lasted almost two hours. I listened to her opinions of the feminist occupation and the role she had taken on it. As the same as other politically active women in the school, she valued the occupation as a huge triumph, but also was tremendously critical about it. Later, we discussed our views on the direction the school has taken in the last decades and debated on the current challenges it faces. It was one of most fruitful interviews I conducted due to her extensive knowledge on both students' daily life and school's affairs. As the previous president told me during his interview, "[the role] allows you to see how the school does work on every level". Among the topics discussed, I emphasised my interest on understanding the public role of the school. "How public this public school actually is?" and "What does public means in this school?" were among the most recurrent questions I asked to many interviewees. Her answer, however, it was different from all the other ones. She answered with another question. She rhetorically counter asked, "Why does the Estate owns an economics and business school if they are going to do exactly the same than any private school?" I did not know how to answer. What I did know though was that her question was of the utmost relevance to gain this understanding of how the school did work "on every level". Her question moved my current focus on the policing mechanisms' effects (i.e., Competitiveness, atomisation, loneliness) to a bigger picture view on the school's consensus.

Even though I was no longer focused on trying to interpret the policing mechanisms described in the previous chapter, prior to the elected president's question, I still was focused on the effects those policing mechanisms had on school's members. The "reconstruction of practices" of both students and teachers led me to see the school's social fabric as a highly atomised one. A place where the individual worth was so exacerbated, people desperately looked for different ways to cope with it. Some students participated in social or sport organisations that provided them an emotionally nurturing and caring environment. Others preferred to maximise their chances to have fun and, as a member of the swimming team told me, "To live the experience of the American college, as in those fraternity parties' films". Lastly, a majoritarian but silent group of students decided to attend school as minimum as possible. On any case, the "practice" was a way to deal with the loneliness identified as a pervasive dynamic in the school. A feeling described by an information systems' student as "being alone while surrounded by people". I initially misinterpreted this phenomenon as dissensus. While one group of students were highly engaged with organisations and tried to motivate their classmates to join them, the majority did not seem to care for any of these initiatives. Active students, and especially those involved in politics, were very harsh with their schoolmates. Labelling them either as posh or self-centred, depending on their class origin. But who

was the 'demos' here? I wanted to believe it was the group of active students engaged in political and social organisations, perhaps because I felt identified with them. I wanted them to be the 'demos' because it allowed me to label the group of passive students as the 'police order'. It would be an easy thing to do insofar as it allowed me to frame the research's findings into my own political stance. But once again the philosophy I was working with put me in trouble. Rancière's notion of 'demos' emerges from the experience of being marginalised. It made more sense to think of the absent majority of students as the 'demos', even though they decided to exclude themselves. I was puzzled.

Is academics' disagreement a disagreement?

The situation was not so different for academics. Most of them belonged to one of the two groups that dispute internal leadership. The first one has its focus put on technocracy and mathematical refinement, the other emphasises the importance of cultural capital and cross-class networking. Each stance is related, although not excluding, to traditional political tendencies. The focus on technical expertise and discipline (being "made of steel") resonates more on the left side of the political compass. On the contrary, the right-wing is closer to a meritocratic stance where working class students can ascend while those from wealthy families learn about diversity. This divergence of stances is more evident in elder academics and more frequently in economics areas than in management. However, at plain sight it seems like a dissensus. An impasse that divides people between two different development projects for the school. During the last decades, the scale has leant to the conservative side, and their triumph materialised in rankings and accreditations has cemented their argument.

However, there is evidence of an underlying and not so evident consensus between both. Both stances are intersected by another category in which both worlds can merge into one. The consensus that transcends both school's political stances is the shared belief in 'progress'. The idea of *progress* here is understood in the Rancierian sense of an explanatory order. Drawing upon Jacotot's pedagogy, Rancière identifies the idea of progress with the notion of explanation: "To explain is to arrange the elements of knowledge to be transmitted in accordance with the supposed limited capacities of those under instruction" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, pág. 3). This explanatory order not only presupposes the capacities of those under instruction, but also sketches a non-

escapable hierarchical order that reproduces itself: “If explanation is in principle infinite, it is because its primary function is to infinitize the very distance it proposes to reduce” (ibidem). That is to say, the explanatory order is not only a mean to an end, but an end in itself. By verifying an axiom that creates a distance between those who know and those who do not, the process of explaining becomes a never-ending task. “Pedagogical logic appears as the act that lifts a veil off the obscurity of things. Its topography is that of top to bottom, of surface to depth.” (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, pág. 4)

Academics holding the technocratic stance argue that students must learn increasingly sophisticated models. Moreover, many of them vehemently argue that the school has lost its old times rigor in order to allow the entrance of a larger number of students, therefore, in order to get greater funding coming from fees. In words of those who proudly carry this stance, school’s syllabus has become *soft*. There is a distance that it proposed to be reduced. It is argued that educating students to be “made of steel”, meaning an irrefutable technical expertise, is the only way in which working class and middle-class students can climb up the socioeconomic ladder. Social mobility is their main goal, and intellectual perfection the path to get it. Their notion of *progress* is entwined with the ascension of those who are capable and hardworking. Something similar happens within academic departments. Colleagues, it is argued, must aim to publish in prestigious journals, because that is how academics get connotation and how institutions climb up rankings. Ordinary pedagogical logic is supported, Rancière writes, by two axioms: “First, one must start from inequality in order to reduce it; second, the way to reduce inequality is to conform to it by making of it an object of knowledge” (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, pág. 4).

On the other hand, those who hold a meritocratic stance focus on the development of social and cultural capital are also trying to close a class-based gap, but from the perspective of mixing upper-class students with those who come from working class environments. This group, currently in power, had prioritised students’ massiveness and ties with the private sector, leading the school to an explosive growth accompanied by climb positions on different rankings during the last two decades. Larger and more frequent donations as well as the proliferation of executive education programmes allowed the school to fund a rapid expansion. Cutting edge technology, new classroom and office infrastructure, succulent prizes for researchers, and diverse accreditations and associations’ memberships were among the advancements achieved during these years. The group in power takes great pride of these developments and point themselves as the ones who led this

change. As the head of the management department told me, “We are very proud of what we have done here”.

There is also a third but smaller groups of academics. Those who want to stay apart from the political war by locking into their offices and trying to get back home, every day, as soon as possible. It is a small but increasing group that only attend school to teach and then left to avoid meetings or any other non-compulsory collective gathering.

I initially misinterpreted conflict as *dissensus*. While one group of academics fiercely gripped school’s direction and key positions, the other made every possible effort to promote an alternative agenda. I initially thought of this as an example of *dissensus* where the losing side was the ‘demos’. But I was wrong. The ‘demos’ has to be invisible, and this fight is quite visible. Then I went to academics who stepped aside from participate in the power dispute. Most of them were straightforward researchers, they did not want to be bothered with people they refer as “not as interested in research as they are in money”. But again, this was not the invisible ‘demos’ I was looking for. Political game outsiders are acknowledged as part of the *partage*. Proof of that, during elections, they are usually approached by members of the two main parties. Oppositely, Rancière’s notion of *dissensus* requires a disagreement on the very idea of having a disagreement.

As it was previously discussed in the key concepts section, Rancierian *dissensus* is different from Habermasian notions of conflict. Rancière defines the ‘demos’ as the supplementary part of the *partage*, meaning the ‘demos’ is invisible and silent to the eye of the of those who stand on the current *partage*. The *mésentente* implies a lack of acknowledgment of the other’s voice. It is different from an antagonist stance. Here the question “Why does the Estate own an economics and business school if they are going to do exactly the same than any private school?” made by the elected president of the students union, became relevant. I finally understood that every conflict I had found so far was not part of a disagreement, but on the contrary, they were part of a consensus I was not able to see yet.

Talents' School

It was not until I connected the discussion of “Excellence” in Chapter 2 with the Talents' School that I realised how all these features, including the conflict among academics, were part of a coherent consensus. I used to think that they could not be part of the same phenomenon, but that was because I was focused on their contradictions. I was focused on conflict, not in *dissensus*.

As the same as other educational institutions, the school's narrative had recently started emphasising a commitment with “diversity”. However, students who reported disabilities were 4 out of 3300. Moreover, the school did not have adapted facilities nor opened priority access quotas for students with disabilities. On the other hand, more than 70% of economics & business students came from the most elitist privates schools of the country. Full-time female academics in the management department were 2 out of 32 members. Where was this alleged diversity present? By what means could they be keeping a narrative of inclusion when the school's members homogeneity was so seemingly evident? I thought it was perhaps just a marketing effort to be up to date with societal demands. But every time I pointed out one of these examples, the answers provided ended up calming my concerns – genuinely.

The school could be subject to many criticisms regarding diversity, but it is fair to acknowledge the many ongoing initiatives to tackle it they have. Moreover, each critique was always acknowledged as a problem planned to be solved. When I interviewed the Vice-Dean and presented a brief report of preliminary findings as it was agreed, I pointed out some of these contradictions. Far from trying to minimise them, he sincerely acknowledged them and said that all business schools were elitists, and their efforts were put in being “the less elitist” of them. Something similar happened whenever “diversity” emerged as conversation topic in interviews with other upper-management members. I was deliberately provocative. I usually pointed out that adding “diversity” to the school's slogan was a bold claim when the demography of the school was so clearly a reflection of our local upper-class. The main answer was always to bring the Talent's School example to the table.

One of the most noticeable initiatives of this business school is a propaedeutic school called “Talents' School”. Every year, the Talents' School gives a life-changing opportunity to 50 promising students from unprivileged backgrounds. After a selection process made case by case, they are admitted to a programme to prepare during two or three years for the Universities Admission Tests (PSU). It is totally free of charge opportunity, emplaced in a cutting-edge educational setting. The

Talents' School exemplifies the consensus of the business school and its ideals of social mobility and meritocracy. Those who are capable must progress.

I said it was not until I connected all the emergent themes with the Talents' School that I did not understand the extent of the *consensus*. Not only because this initiative is the epitome of the meritocratic ideal, but also because its students are the ones who most profoundly question it. Their testimonies during interviews were highly emotional and our conversations encompassed all the previously discussed emergent topics. Students coming from the Talents' School had to fight against all odds, and even when succeeding, some of them did not really feel comfortable at school.

A common example given by Talents' School students was the difference to their peers in relation to English language. There are seven successive courses of English language. To take each one is prerequisite to approve the previous one. The seventh course, "English for Business", is compulsory in spite of the English entry level of the student. Most students who entered the school through the regular mechanism (i.e., Standardised selection test) fitted in the upper-middle of those seven courses. Most of the students who entered through Talents' School quotas, on the other hand, had to start with the first course. This difference was expected by upper-management members and academic reinforcement workshops were designed to help them to cope with this disadvantage. Something similar happened with math core courses. Whilst most 'regular' students had already seen the contents of initial courses on high school, the ones from the Talents' School were overwhelmed by the new contents they had to quickly master. Official reports showed that even though Talents' School students struggled harder, after two or three terms they had catch up the rhythm and performed equally to their peers. It did not seem to be a conflict. Talents' school students' testimonies, however, told a different story. They did not focus on the academic side of the knowledge gap, but on the human one. It was not about knowing less than their classmates coming from private schools. That part was expected. What really did hurt was to feel out of place. Not being seen, heard, *sensed*.

School's *consensus* is reified in the figure of the Talents' School, an initiative that allows a small number of students from working-class backgrounds to access one of the school's programmes. This initiative enables social mobility of a small group, and it is seen as part of the 'public' role of the school, precisely because it allows to change life trajectories. In spite of the benefits it entails, it also reaffirms the meritocratic ideal promoted as the main vehicle for social mobility. The Talent's School then can be seen as the place where both academics' stance meets, a place where the individual is

exacerbated and positioned at the centre of the equality/inequality debate. Equality, therefore, is not conceived as an axiomatic reality to be asserted, as Rancierian philosophy suggests, but as a goal to be achieved by guaranteeing better opportunities for the capable hardworking ones.

Disperse forms of Dissensus

Fieldwork showed me that *politics* cannot be predicted nor artificially elicited, nevertheless it is always present. When an interruption such as a feminist occupation happen in places such as this business school, *politics* is easily identified as such. When the aesthetical reconfiguration takes place, *politics* becomes self-evident to the extent the *police order* cannot ask anyone to “move along”. There *is* something to watch. A 32-foot banner hanging from a pole on the roof with the words “E&B School at Feminist Occupation” it is an undeniable proof of it. Moreover, from now on, anyone with internet access can google the previously quoted words and will get to view this photograph -or a different angle of it.



Figure 7 "Occupation Day"

Something has been disrupted and will not be the same again. The *partage* has changed.

The rest of the time, however, *politics* is far more discrete and subtle. It is not self-evident, and in many cases, not evident at all in spite of hints pointing into that direction. Interruptions as radical as an occupation in an institution as conservative as this business school are like an erupting volcano; no one can deny it is spilling magma when it is active. But that does not mean the volcano is emptied from magma when not. Subterranean forces accumulate and gain strength at a silent and unpredictable pace. There might be small exhibits of this accumulation emerging from time to time, but nothing can be interpreted as a clear sign of an oncoming eruption. Volcanos' next activity episodes are unpredictable both in magnitude and date. However, there is one certainty we can have; in the long run, they will erupt again. This small certainty provides reason to study those small exhibits that might lead to a larger episode of activity such as an eruption -or *interruption*.

Before those fleeting moments of what Rancière calls *politics* happen, there are everyday samples that inadvertently happen too. Every day, moments of questioning the school's consensus take place. Every day, small acts of resistance to the 'police order' are performed in relative silence. Every day, there are an unimaginable number of assertions of equality that no one keep record of. Every day, the not-yet-constituted *demos* is one step closer to its emergence. But until then, no one is watching. Or, more precisely, viewers are watching to something invisible -not *sensible* yet. The *demos*, Rancière argues, does not emerge as such until the *interruption*. It cannot be grasped on beforehand because it has not been constituted as such yet.

The constitutive moment of the *demos* though, does not take place in the void. It has a context – practices- that allow us to understand the transit towards the tipping point. The reconstruction of those practices allows us to recreate and make sense of the process of accumulation that finally led us to an interruption. Conduct this reconstruction ex-post, as it was done in chapter one with the feminist occupation, it is a useful activity to reflect on what happened or how could we have done things differently. However, it tells us little about what will happen next or how could we inform our present decisions better. Can we use the Rancierian method in present tense? Can we enable ourselves to observe current events under a lens that demands to view the invisible? Can we open ourselves to grasp the experience of a *demos* that has not been constituted as such yet?

When this ethnographic inquiry was proposed, Sarah Pink's sensory approach was selected as a fundamental part of the methodological design. The election of this particular paradigm of ethnography was useful to answer the questions I made before. If *politics* cannot be predicted nor

artificially elicited, what is the value of the Rancierian method in present tense research? Or, in other words, has the Rancierian philosophy any utility when *politics* has not happened yet? Using an example from fieldwork, I will argue that when there is openness to experience, a reconstruction of practices might lead us to primitive forms of *politics*. We will not have certainty these primitive forms will develop into episodes of *politics*, nor if they might even lead to an *interruption*. Following the volcano analogy, because we only have the certainty it will erupt again, our best course of action is to pay attention to the variations and changes of seismic forces, even though these might lead us nowhere. It is an anticipatory exercise without guarantees. Similar to volcanologists who trace seismic forces changes and variations hoping they can anticipate a destructive event, openness to experience allow us to grasp small traces of *politics* that might help us to anticipate an interruption. These small traces of *politics* flow underneath the surface or emerge in the form of subtle hints. They are ever present although in small details. They can happen in casual interactions that at first sight might seem mundane. In summary, we cannot predict nor elicit episodes of *politics*, but we can pay the utmost attention to the emergent signs that might be alerting us of an incoming one.

Through my attempts to seek for *politics* -considering how abstract that task might be- I attended to many open activities. Among them were initiatives sponsored by the school or by one of the school's departments, which as I had discussed before, are most times framed into a narrowed view of "excellence". However, students' calls are different. There are diverse calls for all sort of meetings. In the case of students activities, most times meetings had less than ten attendants. I do not mention this to suggest irrelevance, but to emphasise how experimental they were.

According to my experience as student there, and also to the data gathered through fieldwork, those activities are an essential step towards newer and better organisational relationships. Students are learning through action. They are not 'thinking' of alternatives to capitalistic relationships; they are actually performing them. In consequence, those activities are organised in hectic ways, rejecting hierarchies and dealing with what unpredictability entails. Organising in different ways to those they criticise.

"Piños", as they called them, are radically different from the organisational models taught at the school. While management handbooks and study cases focus on the experiences of large for-profit vertical corporations, *piños* commonly are small non-profit horizontal groups spontaneously formed and which constantly evolve, appear, disappear, and fragment. They do not study but perform new forms of organising.

“Piños”?

Students at this business school use a Chilean slang word to label any group or small organisation of students within the business school that have certain shared goal or specific interest. “Piños”, which might be translated into English as “flock” or “herd”, it is colloquially used to refer to a part or section of a larger group. A “piño” also commonly applies to a political organisation associated with a political tendency or that is part of the youth of a national political party. In the context of this business school, however, it is also used to refer to both political organisations and social organisations without political interests. In short, a “piño” is a group of students than hang out together and have common interests or goals they pursue.

“Piños” represent spaces to share and hang outside of the classroom, to discuss and learn about topics not covered in the syllabus (i.e. Political economy, unions, NGOs and alternative organisations, etc.), to exercise (i.e. Circus, yoga, dance, etc.), to create and express themselves artistically (i.e. Theatre, film club, etc.), and to offer help to the community (i.e. Taking care of stray dogs, assess family-businesses and SMEs for free, etc.). These “piños” or small organisations have a formal goal that gives them legitimacy to be recognised by the faculty, but they also are a space for recreation, collaboration, solidarity, and to give emotional support to each other. These “piños” are recognised as one of the few –if not the only- space where they receive nurturing and care. Authorities of the business school usually take these social organisations as examples of the creativity and engagement with the community of their students, recognising them as part of their institutionality and praising them. However, from students’ point of view, these organisations usually function *despite* the bureaucracy and obstacles placed by institutionality. Either way, the political and social students-led organisations or “piños”, fulfil a pastoral care function that is currently not tackled by the institutionality of the business school. “Piños” are the main vehicle by which students can express their emotions and receive support, thus constitute the principal space in which they attempt to counterweight the atomisation, individualisation, and lack of social fabric they experience in the business school setting.

A question that I commonly made after hearing students’ experiences involving their “piños” was “What happens if you don’t have one?”. Answers were usually accompanied by a shrug and a pity gaze. “Then it [the business school] becomes an unbearable place”

Students without a “piño” to socialise are likely to use the school as a passing place, meaning they arrive, attend their classes, and then leave to their homes. This “passing place” is described by students as an “airport-logic”, meaning that students spend as little time as possible in the school. The “airport-logic” decrease social interaction beyond the classroom and discourage intellectual exchanges that could flourish in a different setting. It has an operational benefit though, as it allows having a population of 3300 undergrad students in facilities that would not fit all if they decided to attend altogether. The “airport-logic” is not the best scenario for enabling collective dynamics to emerge, but it is great for making the machinery works at its full capacity. The main opposition to the fragmented and atomised sensory reality of the business school are these “piños”.

"Businesses are masculine"

One of the most interesting examples of this forms of resistance and horizontal organisation that happened during fieldwork was the call for a refoundation of a LGBTIQ+ visibility group.

During their meeting I heard of problematics the collective faced. They extensively discussed matters such as logos, names, and main intentions. Interventions were extensive and the rhythm of the debate was parsimonious. Discussions were seemingly trivial, but at the same time, they were held with the utmost seriousness. Dialogue was fierce sometimes too, but the approach was different. Here there were not enemies, but opponents. "It is absolutely the opposite of the activities organised by the school", I wrote on my notes. The meeting was centred on identities, feelings, and purposes. Meetings that ended without decisions taken. Moreover, likely people ended with more questions and doubts than when meeting started. A meeting like that would be considered a failure by any of the academic departments. But for these students it was an open space, it was an opportunity that did not exist before they created it.

Among the catch phrases I listened to during the meeting, one I could not get off my mind from the following days was "businesses are taught as something masculine". I thought I understood what students meant by this. They referred to certain characteristics commonly related to hegemonic masculinities, such as competitiveness and individualism. For these students who advocated for the visibility of LGBT+ groups within the school, the way businesses and management were taught had these characteristics embedded, both in the contents and in the way they were presented to the

student. Again, I thought of the Bourdieusian notion of “hidden curriculum”, but I felt there was something more, something that was not so obvious, something I was not seeing yet. By the end of the meeting, the student who was leading it open up the conversation for those who had not talked yet. Most times I was a silent observer during talks, seminars, and students’ meetings, but I felt like it was a good opportunity to intervene. I raised my hand and the leader looked at me; he recognised me with a smile, and I smiled back. He had been one of my students during an introductory course to people’s management. I began my intervention introducing myself, telling the audience I had studied and worked in the school years ago and that now I was carrying on research. I briefly mentioned the research aims and asked for volunteers to interview to approach me by the end of the session if they wanted to participate. Many of them did and I got a good number of participants who were concerned with topics such as visibility and equality. Moreover, I talked with the leader of the meeting who asked me if I remembered him. He not only signed up for an in-depth interview, but also offered me help to recruit participants and even invited me to their following meetings. In my notes I remembered that day as one of huge progress, furthermore, a day in which I felt I was on the right track.

Two days after this meeting I was as usual wandering around the school when I saw them sitting on the tables of the courtyard. The leader of the group waived at me, so I decided to approach. They were having a meeting with the organisation’s inner circle to evaluate how the previously mentioned open call had worked and what they could have done better. I asked whether I could stay and after a brief check between them I got their clearance. Most of the meeting I remained in silence, taking notes of their discussion and pointing out some questions that popped on my head. When some members started to leave by the end of the gathering, I started to involve and ask the questions I had previously written. When only the leader and other two members left there, I asked the question which had been stuck in my mind: *What did you mean when said ‘businesses are masculine’?* Their answer gave me a crucial hint to think of these small groups as a form of resistance and counter-hegemonic association. “Business here are taught based on masculine traits; competition, winning, being better than the other... There is no place for cooperation, or solidarity...”, one of them said when other interrupted, “nor love”, a third one added “an if it is gay love, forget about it!” while laughing. That thought stuck in my mind. I had forgotten that ‘politics’ is not only about ideological leanings or material conditions, but also and mainly about equality. ‘Politics’ is happening even if we do not see it as such.

The Mural

As I have mentioned before, the role of President of the students' union offers a unique opportunity to have a view of the school at every level. Elections take place every year during November, which is the last month of the regular academic year. Conducting fieldwork between September and March gave me the chance to interview both the president in office and the newly elected one. I have previously mentioned the impact a rhetorical question made by the new president had in the direction the research took. However, so far, I have only briefly mentioned the conversations held with the former president. When met we found out we grew up in the same southern city and even attended to the same Jesuit catholic school. Perhaps because we had acquaintances in common, we immediately bonded and started talking as if we were long dated friends. As I have also mentioned above, only a minority of students stay in school between and after classes. One of those groups are the one of politically active ("militant") students. Painting a protest banner, holding an assembly, playing guitar, or just having a laugh with other politically active students. There is always something to do at school for those who want to spend their time there.

Consequently, we bumped into each other several times during the six months the fieldwork lasted. Despite I met him for an in-depth interview as the same as with other participants, our conversations transcended that formal space. We chatted for a few minutes each time. Every time we talked during these casual meetings, wittingly or not, he gave a new piece of information. I particularly remember when we talked of the students' intention to paint a mural on remembrance of the feminist occupation. They had the antecedent that in 2011 during the massive national protests claiming for free higher education, a group of students painted a mural on one of the inner walls that separate the school of economics and business from the school of architecture and design.



Figure 8 "The economy at the human service."

As a final action before their period in office ended, the economics & business students' union of the 2018 wanted to paint a commemorative mural. As the same as a previous generation of students did when the massive protests for free education erupted in 2011, they wanted to leave a graphic testimony of school's involvement with a social movement. This time the feminist occupations that took place all over the country were the protagonists. I interviewed the president of the students' union a few days before their period ended. There he told me of his last meeting with the Dean and how they intended to discuss there of the mural, its content, and whether it would be painted on wall of the administrative building (Building C). The students' union had made some preliminary designs, but they also had the intention of making it a collaborative task involving the whole school's community. I asked whether they had chances of getting the initiative approved, but he just smiled and replied, "we will see". A few days later I encountered him while sitting on the coffee tables located at an inner yard. I used to spend time there as it was a good spot for unnoticedly observe

students, take notes, and listen over to casual conversations. He passed by and waved while I had a coffee, I waved back inviting him to approach. I said I wanted to ask about the mural, and he laughed, “what do you think?”, he rhetorically asked. I laughed too and said, “I am doing research... I cannot make assumptions”. The initiative had been shut down despite the prior commitment of the Dean. When I asked for the reasons, he shrugged and said the Dean had seen the mural’s drafts and said they could not “put *that* there”. I asked for details, and he laughed again with a complicity smile on his face, “you know”. I replied reminding him my role again. “He said that first of all, we could not make an historical mural considering the last ten years. It was not right because we could only label something as an historical event after time has passed after it. But then he said that even if we fixed it, we could not put *that* there”, he explained. “What did he mean by ‘put *that* there?’”. He laughed once again, “you know, like... managers are going to pass by here” said while mimicking an upper-class accent.

The episode made me reflect. It was interesting not so much because an upper-management member did not authorise a mural where an occupation of the school was glorified or their role in the dictatorship mentioned, but because of the real reason behind it. It was not about the political content of the images. “Put *that* there” meant instead to take care of an aesthetic order. It was not about the mural or the political stances it might reflect. It was about the people who might see it when meeting those who had their offices there. Political authorities, ministers, CEOs and directors of companies were the ones to likely meet with the Deanship and schools’ heads at their offices. The consensus custodied by the ‘police order’ was disguised under the lack of political commitments. Not having a stance was the stance.

The Democratic Business School

Rancière breaks with his Marxist contemporaries because he realises that the way inequality was conceptualised by them necessarily implied a reproductive nature. That is to say, when we accepted inequality as a reality and took it as starting point, we condemned ourselves to repeat it. Even if we advanced in the direction of reducing it or making it more tolerable, we perpetuated it. The analysis, in order to escape from this impasse, therefore, needed to start from equality. In Rancière’s philosophy, equality is a reality even if the material conditions (i.e., income inequality) contradicts the assertion of equality. Equality is taken as an axiom, as a political principle, as something that is

reality because it spontaneously emerges between two 'speaking beings'. Equality is independent from all the ways people experience everyday -economic and others- inequalities. The matter for Rancière is not how equal we can get, but why in spite of being equal we are not living according to it. We are equal, even if we are not experiencing equality right now. Rancière breaks with the Marxist tradition arguing equality is not something we need to advance to, but something we need to assert as starting point.

As I have previously discussed in this chapter, there are two streams of thought within the school that, despite their different methods or emphasis, both hold the same consensus. On the one hand, the 'progress' of the institution in terms of rankings and academic recognition in the international scenario. And, on the other, the 'progress' of students through social mobility and/or by accessing spheres of power. They want students to move upward, to climb the social ladder, to succeed and access places where businesses decisions and public policies modelling takes places. If meritocratic 'progress' is the consensus of a traditional business school, what would characterise a democratic one? I sincerely hope this ethnography will be a step into research that allow to answer those questions.

Going beyond representativeness

Playing a role on the resistance against the 'police order' is hard for many reasons. But the first, and likely the most important one, it is because people do not necessarily know that others are playing it too. A great example of this is the case of politically active students demanding participation on the deanship election. They are a small but fierce group who have been campaigning for this during years. They want to exert influence because is the easiest way to grip some control, they however cannot make others to unite to their demand. It sounds appealing but too utopian. Participation in traditional politics means -for the largest part of students- an exercise limited to representativeness. More politically enthusiastic students accuse passive ones of "living in a bubble". Those with clearer ideological leanings to the twentieth century narrative of the left, accuse them of "bourgeois privilege". In spite of mutual prejudice, research shows that most students feel disaffected at the business school. Disaffection is a shared reality across students and teachers, economics and management, upper and middle class.

Most of them however lack a *common* language to describe their own disagreement with the school. Even though unrest is experienced, the coping mechanisms do not evolve into the socialisation of unrest -to the universalisation of the singular. While the police order is organised around the neutrality of "excellence", the resistance against it is totally diffuse, scattered, dis-organised.

Attempting to imagine a democratic business school would entail a radical intellectual exercise reserved for future research. However, having real participation (voice and vote) and not only representation is the bare minimum where a democratic business school should be grounded. These students want to exert influence over decisions such as the deanship election, but not only due the reason people currently in power think. For them, students are students, consequently, they need to hold to their level. It is immature or naive to think they can have or should have an influence that overrides their level. Students, on the other hand and through an innocent request, reveal a whole sphere of power. As Rancièrè's philosophy would say, the police motto "there is nothing to see here, move along" becomes a hint of where to go. Forbidden places are the only ones where 'politics' might emerge from. 'Politics' cannot be foreseen nor predicted, but we can speculate where it would emerge from by paying attention to the custodied areas. What the police order forbids, that precisely is where politics would emerge from.

For academics -whom already have a lot with their own disputes- the very idea that the minority of politically active students intend to get at their same level is laughable. Moreover, the very suggestion of achieving something similar to "co-governorship" is be labelled as ridiculous. However, what they ignore is that by disregarding students' request as something without value, or in Rancierian terms something that is not even "language", the result is to fuel that request.

Lastly, I would like to conclude this chapter by presenting two pictures that I think speak a lot of what those who dissent actually want. The first one, "An education that develops knowledge and form practitioners to serve the people". The second one, "That our knowledge and technique be a weapon for popular dignity". Both phrases, beside its combativeness, reflect what the *dissensus* at this business school really is. The fight is for a change of paradigm.

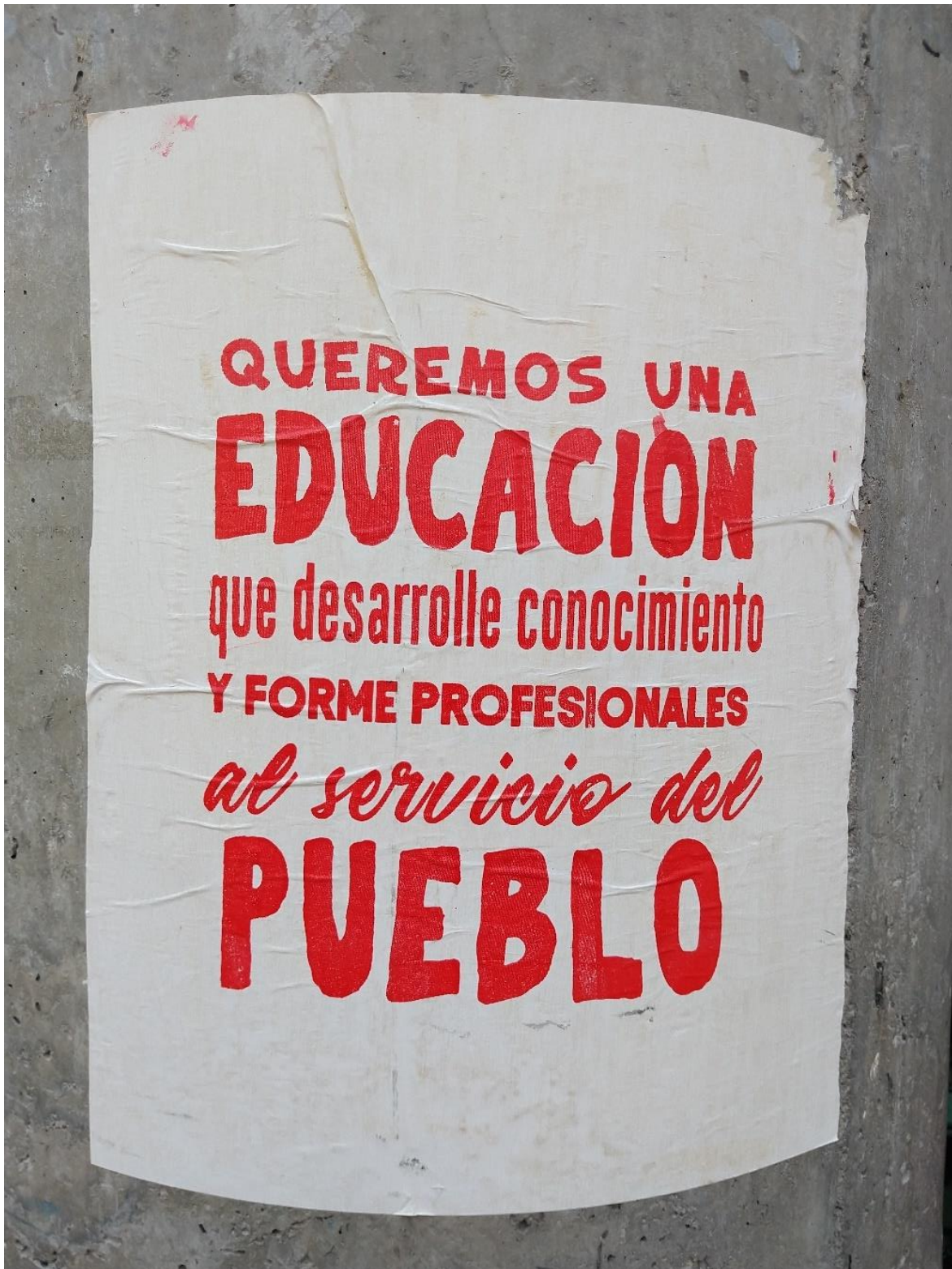


Figure 9 "to serve the People"

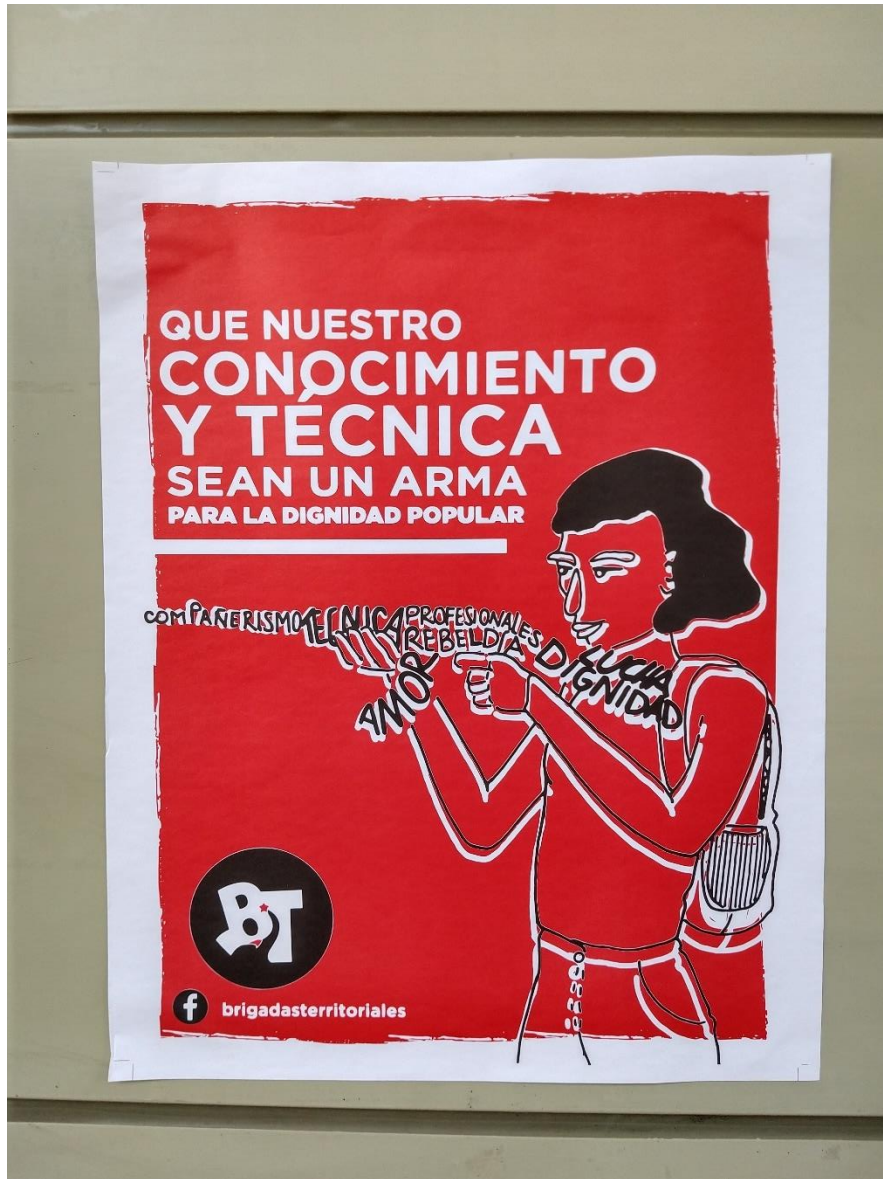


Figure 10 "For popular dignity"

Conclusions

In the following chapter I will summarise the main contributions of this ethnographic inquiry. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first three ones relate to the findings obtained from fieldwork and more extensively discussed on each of the three findings' chapters. At the same time, each contribution mirrors one of the research questions, namely: where politics emerges from in this business school, what are the policing mechanisms that prevent politics from happening in this business school, and how does dissensus might emerge in this business school.

More specifically, the first section of this chapter refers to the contribution made by this ethnography to the literature on business schools. As it was presented in the key concepts section, Rancierian philosophy has only recently begun to cross paths with management education. The contribution, therefore, provides a case study of 'politics' that took place in a business school. The reconstruction and documentation of the feminist occupation in 2018 shows how we can use Rancierian philosophy as a research lens to study contemporary political events. Consequently, and answering the main question that drives this ethnography, 'politics' emerge from those spaces in which the universalisation of the singular is possible. Such as the women's assembly allowed female students to share their experiences and overcome their differences in the name of a higher purpose. 'Politics', therefore, emerge from within those nurturing spaces where subjectification processes are allowed to emerge.

The second section summarises the methodological contribution of using Rancière's as research lens. The contribution is distilled from the dissection of the policing mechanisms that operate at this business school and how they prevent politics from happening. The lesson of studying the policing mechanisms is that politics cannot be tracked directly, but it needs to be done through the scrutiny of the police order's practices. The methodological contribution then is a way to understand how to operationalise Rancière's philosophy using ethnography and how it might be developed as a tool to foresight disagreements.

The third section describes the future directions of this research, while the fourth reflects on the strengths and limitations of the method. The chapter closes with my personal reflections on the importance of bringing Rancière's philosophy and business schools together. I argued that Rancierian thinking invites us to think of *provocations* as ways to assert school's members equality. To provoke is also to perform our equality. I also suggest that, as a consequence, the introduction

of Rancierian philosophy into business schools might allow to question how we currently conceptualise management's goals and objectives. By contesting the sources from where domination emerges from, Rancierian thinking offers an opportunity to reshape our very understanding of the managerial practice and theory.

Where does politics emerge from, in an elite business school in Chile?

My motivation to study elite business schools, and particularly my former school in Chile, was to understand how inequality was ideologically sustained within these spaces. During my bachelor and master's years I understood that inequality was seen by teachers and classmates as a problem to be solved. Or in other words, equality was a goal to be gradually achieved. While economists saw economic inequality as a problem of uneven opportunities and public policies to remedy them, managers saw it as the price to pay for a free-enterprise model where innovation and individual initiative were the keys to social mobility. Both views, although with different approaches, attempted to reduce economic inequality and make it more tolerable while allowing a limited group to climb the social ladder. I also understood then that my view was different. I did not want to measure *how* unequal we were in macroeconomic terms, nor I was interested in how to enlarge that selected group subject to meritocracy. I was concerned with inequality as an underlying principle and with its moral ramifications. I did not want to decrease inequality nor to boost social mobility. I wanted to understand *why* we were unequal and how this social order was ideologically justified, explained, and even supported. I understood that equality as a value in itself was not part of the concerns of business schools, and I needed to understand why and whether was possible to defy this consensus.

These questionings led me to focus on inequality reproduction (e.g., Bourdieu and Althusser, among others) and the role of business schools in it. Quickly enough though I also understood this theoretical framework was a dead end to me. Inequality was possible to be tracked, explained, measured, and slightly alleviated, but never dismantled. At the verge of disaffection, during my literature review I encountered Jacques Rancière's philosophy and his view on inequality. I felt relieved. For the first time during the doctoral programme, I found a thinker I could relate to. He was not interested in slightly reducing inequality nor tackling the mechanisms by which it was reproduced. He presented a radically different departing point, one where equality was acknowledged as an axiomatic truth. At the beginning it was difficult to grasp Rancière's philosophy,

not only because its philosophical density, but also due to the assumptions most of us have unconsciously been socialised into. For Rancière, equality was a value in itself. A starting point that took distance from the cold calculations I was used to discuss in the business school. For the first time, reflections were concerned with the underlying values that sustained inequality instead of ways to achieve discrete improvements on macroeconomic indicators of income inequality. Rancière's philosophy was not interested in enabling or boosting social mobility for the few, instead, he proposed that equality was an incontestable reality that needed to be asserted. Rancière's philosophy does not conceive equality as a goal to be achieved, but as an experiential reality that is denied to the many when it comes to material conditions.

Rancière's argument gave me a sense of purpose while reviewing research on business schools. I noticed that, even though there were extensive bodies of literature that critically approached management, management education, and business schools, only a few of them were focused on the daily experiences of schools' members. To be even more precise, ethnographies of business schools were astoundingly few. More commonly, studies explored the pertinence of business school's syllabus, teaching-learning methods, study cases of original experiences, and assessment of courses designed to boost ethical reflection and critical thinking. Incorporating Rancière's philosophy into my research gave me a greater understanding of inequality as a sensory experience; a multidimensional inequality that was not reduced to income inequality. This conceptualisation of inequality as an experience expanded the object of my inquiry into different sorts of disagreement.

As it has been documented through the findings chapters, far from the common misconception of business schools being non-politicised places, ideological conflicts are actually quite present on every level of the studied institution. Those conflicts are kept under control most of the time by the policing mechanisms the institution has developed over the years. Only on few occasions and during fleeting moments, such as the feminist occupation of 2018, those policing mechanisms are momentarily suspended. The suspension of the "categories of domination" lead to a reconfiguration of the distribution of the *sensible* -a new *partage*. The feminist occupation succeeded in all of their demands, obtaining an administrative unit with capable professionals dedicated on full time to handle cases of sexual harassment. Moreover, the occupation triggered an aesthetical reconfiguration where sexist attitudes are no longer tolerated nor passed by.

Most of the time, however, policing mechanisms such as those described in Chapter 2 held disagreements under control. In the case of this business school, the notion of "excellence" works

as a policing mechanism infusing people into an overwhelming sense of competition where the individual worth is exacerbated. The institutional growth achieved during the last decades is presented as the undeniable proof of success of this strategy. International accreditations, market share, and joint programmes with American universities also reinforce the idea of how much “progress” has been done. The price paid for “excellence”, however, is worrying in terms of mental health issues. Moreover, it seems to be an extended phenomenon affecting both students and scholars. Lack of common areas and places for leisure are resented among members and also reinforce the feeling of an impossibility for emotional connection. The social fabric is conceptualised as atomised, disjointed. Descriptions such as “tense calm”, “passing place”, and “crowded but lonely” are recurrent, expressing a sense of hopelessness regarding the possibilities of the future.

In contraposition to these feelings of disaffection, however, many school members manage to find nurturing spaces in peer-based initiatives. For many students, their “piño” (“flock”) represents an escape from the school’s dynamics. A place where they can be themselves, learn, discuss, and allow emotions to emerge. Similarly, for some scholars, promoting academic spaces that surpass the obligations of the classroom such as workshops and the propaedeutic (Talents’ School), allow them to reencounter with their vocational call. These initiatives provide a great sense of purpose, but also are time-consuming and emotionally demanding tasks. Narratives of scholars and students abandoning them are recurrent due the price involved in terms of time and effort. Testimonies give account of the personal sacrifice needed to persevere in these initiatives, that even though are well valued by the community, the school seems to overlook. Scholars sacrifice time otherwise destined to conduct research. Similarly, students involved in political and social organisations sacrifice time otherwise destined to study. Both acknowledge that to try to create social value is somehow punished by the structural forces that measure productivity.

While the Rancierian philosophy might keep us alert of potential sources of dissensus, it also fails on predict them with exactitude. As discussed in Chapter 1, the feminist occupation of 2018 was part of a larger national movement, obeying to a specific contextuality and historicity. It is hard to image the same occupation without other twenty-five universities being subject to similar political actions. Moreover, the three cases of sexual harassment narrated in Chapter 1 also tell us a story in which the accumulation of unrest against the upper-management members is evident. The poor management of these cases served as a catalyser for the creation of the Women’s Assembly because it made evident that school’s authorities were not measuring the extent of the problem. Not feeling

secure at the school was a common experience for school's women, one that was transversal to ideology, class, or any other individual trait. The conjugation of all these variables had the occupation as tipping point, but it could not had been predicted on beforehand even with all the information. Rancierian method is conceived as a "reconstruction of practices" precisely because it tracks back to the antecedents that allowed certain interruption to happen. In other words, the Rancierian lens enable us to speculate over potential sources of politics, but not to predict them.

The reconstruction of practices led me to understand the Women's Assembly not only as recurrent meeting, but as nurturing place where universalisation of the singular was possible. A place where participants were not teachers, students, or workers, but only women. A safe zone where sexual harassment can be shared as a personal experience showing to many others that they were not the only ones. Shame and silence become awareness and voice. That is where politics emerge from, a space in which the 'demos' become conscious of its condition of minority and attempt to escape from it.

What are the policing mechanisms operating at this business school?

This ethnography was conceived in order to seek for a specific type of disagreement, namely those fleeting moments of 'politics'. Where do they emerge from? How long have they been incubating? What are the signs that might warn us from such events in the future? Furthermore, the ethnography gives to the task of finding those brief moments in a place that is so frequently labelled as "unlikely" when it comes to these sorts of political disruptions.

Rancière's philosophy applied as an ethnographic lens demands a seemingly impossible duty. That is to say, to be alert to a political subject that we will not ever see until it is self-evident. To straightforwardly seek for the *demos* is an impossible task: before *politics*, the *demos* have not been constituted as such yet. The subjectification process that allows the emergence of any *demos* might take time to shape itself. Consequently, to use Rancière as an ethnographic lens implies to be alert to political processes rather than to try to search for a political subject. That is to say, since we cannot reach for a political subject that has not been formed yet, we need to use emergent political processes as a proxy. Those processes are where 'politics' might emerge from. How can we know in advance where they will take place? We cannot. However, we can trace them back through the policing mechanisms. Rancière's definition of the police motto, "there is nothing to see here", hides

the key to operationalise his philosophy as a methodology. To find where politics might emerge, we need to wander around until we receive a warning. “Move along” is the signal that something might be worth our attention. Just as Rancière’s philosophy talks of dissensus, to operationalise it as a research method demands to hold an attitude of defiance.

A secondary research aim, therefore, was to search for ‘politics’ in the business school through scrutinising its policing mechanisms. In chapter 2, I discussed how these regulatory mechanisms revolved around a notion of “excellence” that impose a burden on school’s members. These constant pressures end up tearing the social fabric apart and carrying mental health issues and feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem. Among students the idea of the school as a “passing place”, similar to an airport or a tube station, is a recurrent image. Students describe campus’ life as lonely and individualistic. Mental health issues arise in many students as a consequence of the difficulties to create truthful and genuine bonds with their classmates. Socialisation processes take place in small and homogeneous groups, grouped due to affinities such as team sports, intellectual interests, or class extraction. Similarly, among scholars at the university the atmosphere is described as a “tense calm” where dynamics of competition between and within academic departments creates a sense of mistrust. A politically polarised division among scholars was also observed. Those who do not participate will usually self-exclude and “have lunch at their offices”. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, there are two stances among scholars at the university that despite their different emphasis, also lead to the same consensus. This business school equates “excellence” with employability in high positions; therefore, the consensus is characterised by the chances of accessing spheres of power both at the public and private sector.

School’s policing mechanism of “excellence”, therefore, is both a narrative of diversity and entrepreneurial spirit while actually sending mixed signals of what is really important. Competing on handball is part of the narrative of “excellence” promoted by the school, while performing circus arts is not placed in the same level. Teaching basic accountancy to small business owners is celebrated as a great community service, while hosting workshops on unionising rights might not be equally celebrated. These unwritten norms, called vocal silences by Anteby (2013), are part of a consensus that is fragmented, diffuse, and disguised as if was ideologically neutral. Using Rancière’s philosophy as a methodology provides a fresh approach when it comes to analyse institutional conflicts. Different from other approaches on conflict, Rancière’s philosophy is focused on a specific form: dissensus. Dissensus is distinct from the general notion of disagreement because it reveals a

conflict in which one part does not acknowledge the other as equal. This is to say, the dissensus-type of conflict is one where the very idea of conflict is not acknowledged by one of the parties. For the *police order* there is no conflict because the *demos* are invisible until a subjectification process takes place. Organising unrest and acting upon it is what triggers a reconfiguration of the *partage* that makes the political subject self-evident. For instance, as it was developed in Chapter 1, the Deanship and upper-management members did not understand the conflict on sexual harassment until the occupation. The subjectification process starts with the formation of a Women's Assembly that demands the school to act on sexual harassment by approving a policy. By finding no answer to their requirements, the Women's Assembly assert their equality by occupying the offices of the Deanship and upper management members. This fleeting moment of 'politics', that lasted less than a week, reveals the political subject to the 'police order'. In other words, by pursuing the radical action of occupying, the *demos* constitute itself as such. Consequently, Rancierian philosophy allows us to explore conflicts beyond the surface. Holding in mind that dissensus is characterised by one party that does not acknowledge the other as counterpart, we can read the institutional signs of conflict under a new light. We will need to pay special attention to those areas in which conflict is disregarded by the 'police order'.

For instance, in the case of the studied business school, the very idea of students shaping the syllabus is considered laughable by the scholars who have specialised during decades on their specific areas. A student might have the right to voice issues or to provide inputs, but never to take decisions on the studies programmes. Something similar happens with the school governance. Out of the three stakeholders among which students and workers are, only academics have right to vote on elections. Navigating through the conflicts of this educational institution while holding a Rancierian lens provides us guide to question these taken for granted debates. It is precisely from these areas where 'politics' might emerge because they are the ones in which the 'police order' disregards the very existence of conflict. Once more, it is relevant to remember the police motto "move along, there is nothing to see". Insofar the police order claims that "there is nothing to discuss here", we might be in the presence of a potential source of 'politics'.

Future Directions

Rancière's philosophy is an invitation to rethink the grounds on which the management discipline has been built. Understanding the way 'politics' emerges in business schools allows us to explore

the possibilities for a democratic business education in the future. However, Rancière also warn us that true democracy or 'politics', as the same as equality, is a starting point and not an end. Consequently, for a democratic business education, we certainly need to scrutinise the purpose of teaching business and the role of business schools. Rancière's philosophy poses a demand upon organisation studies' scholars; we cannot aim for a democratic business education unless we already practice that democracy. Equality is not a goal; it is a starting point. That entails the predicament of look into our very practices, to "reconstruct" them in order to search for 'politics'. A democratic business school should have, according to Rancierian views, the capacity to be constantly seeking for 'politics'. But, as it has been extensively discussed throughout this study, it is a methodologically titanic task. Operationalise Rancière's philosophy requires to question our natural predisposition to think of consensus as inherently positive and dissensus as inherently negative.

Surely, the mere idea of promoting a stance of constant and never-resolving disagreement might be intuitively rejected, and maybe even more emphatically at a business school. Management as discipline seeks for exactly the opposite (Parker, Stoborod, & Swann, 2020). Risk is dangerous for business, and expectations are everything. The certainty of consensus sounds evidently safer than the uncertainty of conflict. It is necessary to remind, however, that state of comfort is only for those within the *partage*. The not constituted yet 'demos' have a different experience, one that we cannot *see, hear, or sense* on beforehand. Part of the consensus of the 'police order' will always be to claim that dissensus is chaotic and unproductive. But, as it has been theorised in the educational field by Biesta (2014), what entails a risk can also open a promising future. Exploring the possibilities of democratic management education and democratic business schools might imply to lose some of the gains the upper management members are so proud of, such as position in rankings or accreditations. Maybe even entail a reduction of the donations made by benefactors who are not ideologically committed with the reduction of inequality. It also might imply the resignation of scholars and teachers who do not want to give up on some of the benefits that entail to have complete control over the institution.

But any of these risks has to be put on the scale in relation to the potential benefits. Similar to Biesta's conceptualisation of education, Rancière's understanding of democracy also implies a bet. We cannot secure an outcome, we cannot give any guarantees, but we can imagine a future that is different from the business school we have now. That future is already been prefigured by teachers and students who promote spaces where "excellence" is not the main goal. Initiatives such as the

ones carried by students do not aim to strengthen “excellence”, but to offer nurturing and selfless micro communities. These communities have different codes and values than the rest of the institution. Hierarchies are flatter, formality is reduced to the minimum, and people are valued not only in terms of productivity but also considering their humanity. People seek and want to be involved in these “piños” or micro communities because the “official” institution makes them feel “like a number on a spreadsheet”. Here they have got a name, an identity, an individuality. They feel valued and respected. As it was extensively discussed in the policing mechanisms chapter, the main trait of the studied business school is how teared its social fabric is. A democratic turn for the studied business school would be to embrace as its first mission to understand how current practices have deteriorated the social fabric and how it can be repaired.

A democratic business school should make ‘politics’ the leitmotiv of its activities, but as also has been discussed before, trying to institutionalise ‘politics’ is a contradiction in itself. Precisely due these reasons, Rancière’s philosophy has been accused of unpracticable or flawed in shedding light in current social conflicts. However, as discussed by Rancière (1999, pg. 30), “there is a worse and a better police”. That is to say, after the interruption and reconfiguration of the *partage* after an episode of politics (e.g., New official narrative on sexual harassment and gender issues after the 2018's occupation), a recuperation will take place (e.g., “we are all feminists now”). It is important to recognise then, that the latter police order is better than the one before the occupation. In other words, whenever we try to institutionalise ‘politics’ what we really get is just an improved ‘police order’. Consequently, in order to exercise a democratic turn in the business school we need to put in practice the democracy. We cannot repair the social fabric by decreeing it. On the contrary, it needs to be built from the everyday practices that already defy the ‘police order’ consensus on “excellence”. This ethnography aims to contribute with this challenge by providing a written testimony for future generations that ‘politics’ is not only possible in a business school, but also necessary and potentially successful when done right.

This written testimony leaves on evidence some of the other challenges, such as the problem of continuity among students led organisations. Many of the altruistic initiatives of students and teachers that defy the “excellence” consensus do not transcend over time. The constant students’ turnover, that is part of any educational institution, difficult to keep these initiatives functioning in the long run. However, once again, to leave a written testimony of their existence and the role they

fulfil might encourage others in the future to keep them functioning or even motivate them to start new, improved, aware of the past initiatives.

Rancière's philosophy is hard to operationalise as research, and even harder to assume as a stance to carry on institutional transformations. However, it also allows us to highlight what is already happening in terms of 'politics'. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 3, there are groups of students who demand to take part in the school's governance. Keep pushing initiatives to democratise the decision taking of the school might be one of the first steps towards a democratic business school. It is hard to imagine a business school debating the syllabus on open assemblies where workers and students also have a say and vote. But something less ambitious and far more doable is to open spaces to debate the community's expectations on the role of a business school. At least, those business schools that are under the wing of the State and have a public duty, such as the one in which the fieldwork was conducted, should be willing to hear what the people expect and want from the way businesses are conducted. Otherwise, the statement that this business school fulfils a "public role" is no other than an empty rhetoric.

This ethnography also aims to promote a renewed commitment between the business school and its community. Opening the business school to the community, not only through initiatives such as helping SMEs, but also through hearing what people want and expect from the economic model might be the topic of a whole new research. The main finding of this project was the understanding of where and how 'politics' emerge in a business school. Particularly, a transcendental finding is that 'politics' is happening even if we do not see it. Or in other words, that we can only see it when it is already late for the 'police order' to take actions. These findings might help upper management members of the school to reflect on how close they currently are in relation to the everyday reality the community experience. Rankings and accreditations might be important, but when they are obtained to the detriment of the community's mental health and sense of purpose, it is a signal to stop for a while and hear what people are saying. I hope this ethnography has provided enough evidence to at least rethink the link between the school's strategic plans for the future and the needs of its members.

Strengths & Limitations

Conducting ethnography using the Rancierian lens necessarily makes positionality a topic that must be examined.

Research's outcome is inevitably influenced by the ethnographer's biases, meaning by their ideological leanings, biographic experiences, worldviews, and so on. Addressing these shortcomings requires to transparent them, to make them available to the reader. A Rancierian lens, therefore, has the strength of starting from a clear declaration of principles (i.e., equality). By committing to the method, the researcher declares to agree with taking equality as an "axiomatic reality", that is to say, to embrace equality as a departure point for any interpretative process. The equality syllogism (Rancière, 1999, p. 16) is, according to Rancière, "a political principle" we need to "act as if" (Rancière, 1991, p. 46). To operationalise Rancière as a methodology means, therefore, to start by declaring to the reader, one will do their best to act according to this syllogism.

In second term, it also implies that equality needs to be asserted when it comes to position ourselves in the fieldwork. Consequently, a Rancierian method that aims to put equality in practice demands to abandon certain values of quantitative research we commonly use to judge qualitative research. Instead of confidence measured by probabilistic intervals, we need to engage with concepts such as credibility and trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). Operationalizing Rancière invites us to engage with a different set of parameters from those predominant in quantitative research. Using a Rancierian method implies that research will be an intellectual exercise that in spite of its thoroughness it always be an interpretation made from the standing point of a spectator.

The aforementioned strength also provides one of the limitations of using Rancière philosophy. As it was addressed on the ethics section, being both an insider and outsider of the school gave me a dual role. A hard to ignore reality which influenced the ethnography from start to end, and also carried both positive and negative consequences. The dual role allowed me to quickly gain access to certain levels that otherwise would have unlikely been reachable by other researchers in a six months' time span. It also gave me chances of gathering more data on certain areas, and particularly some sensitive information on the internal atmosphere. On the other hand, it also diverted me from devoting more time to other groups of the school. The agile functioning rhythm of the institution, as discussed in Chapter 2, gives this feeling of always being missing out of something. There is a lot going on within those walls, and it is certainly much more than any individual is able to cover. Due the size of the institution, the fieldwork time span available, and my dual role, I took decisions over

the way the research was conducted. It was a learning process that evolved at each step. As I reflected on the methodology section, those decisions influenced my data collection and subsequently my interpretation of it too. It is important, then, to understand the use of Rancière's philosophy as an intellectual exercise that will not aim to reflect reality, but the standing point of an emancipated spectator (Rancière, 2008).

A different strength of the method and that also grounds subsequent research is Rancière's philosophy capacity to be used as a tool for conflict anticipation. Rancière's conception of equality requires the presence of 'politics', that is to say, we can only briefly see true equality when disagreement is present. Equality is defined as that fleeting moment when *the part without part* demands what is considered owned, triggering a reconfiguration of the *sensible* through an *interruption*. In other words, because the Rancierian method requires to tackle research activities having the equality syllogism as a permanent companionship in our minds, it is a method that constantly push the researcher to seek for conflict. Even where there might not be one. Operationalising the method into questions about the 'politics' of an institution, as it was done with this business school, will reveal that seemingly apolitical spaces are actually struggling with constant tension at different levels. On every *partage* there will be a 'police order' and a 'demos'. By focusing on potential conflicts and how they might erupt, Rancière-driven research might help an institution to foreseen *not-yet* conflicts. As the joker in the courtroom who had a "poetic license" (Gabriel, 2000) to laugh at the authorities by showing them their shortcomings, Rancière's philosophy as a tool might be useful to identify and anticipate conflicts. In spite of these benefits, however, the very nature of the method likely makes it an undesired guest at the table. After all, disagreement needs to be understood as a certain type of conflict that is unsolvable because one party does not acknowledge the other. In other words, asking the police order to *see* the demos is a contradiction in itself.

Personal Reflections

Lastly, I would like to offer some words on what I think is the most valuable contribution of bringing Jacques Rancière's philosophy and management education together.

When I was an undergraduate student at the business school, the same school I had the opportunity to observe now from a different standing point, there were many assumptions embedded in the

syllabus' contents I found contestable. I did not have, however, neither the rhetorical tools nor the knowledge to contest them. Moreover, management teachers were re-vested with an authority mantle that made extremely difficult to raise uncomfortable questions. On the other hand, I had always liked to be provocative.

For instance, if I wanted to know more about consultancy models such as Porter's or Drucker's, I just had to raise my hand and I will be provided with tons of recommendations. Maybe a smile will draw in the teacher's face. If I, afterwards, asked why Starbucks had abusive policies with its employees and several demands over anti-unionising practices in Chile, the response will dramatically change the tone. There were, on the contrary of the popular saying, good questions, and bad questions. There were "interesting" topics and others... Others that were "not part of the contents of this course". I was reminded of that feeling when talked to students who attended classes where professors made sexist remarks and they felt pressured to not saying anything. I also learnt there were confrontations classified whether as acceptable or unacceptable. There were tremendous silences on any area that might lead to political, ideological, or moral debates.

Being provocative, or at least trying to be it, might of course have consequences. I especially remember an episode when I spoke up regarding the Black necked swans slaughter in the Cruces River in 2004 (Valdivia, Chile)³⁵. When I asked, why were we seeing as a success case a company that had purposely polluted the river in order to cut their costs off. The teacher's posture and tone changed. He intervened saying that was not truth, that the paper company had been found not guilty in court. I replied that the Austral University had proven the responsibility of the company on dumping waste into the river, but that our justice system was rigged and did not touch the rich. The discussion then got even more tense and diverted to deeper ideological areas, such as the role of profit he attributed to private enterprise and what I called back then "the normalisation of greed". He also harshened the tone and accused me of prejudiced and naïve. It was ten minutes past our class ended and most classmates stood at their seats. I ended my -perhaps excessively passionate- intervention by saying that the upper management members of companies like those should be in jail because they were partners in crime of an ecocide. I did not know it before, but the teacher also worked as a strategic consultant for the paper company. I was backlashed the whole term.

³⁵ <https://www.olca.cl/oca/chile/cisnes.htm>

I mention this anecdote because being provocative is also a matter of being equal. Rancière invites us to be provocative because equality is not a goal to achieve, but a sensory experience to perform. A business school cannot be expected to promote a narrative of equality and social justice when its members do not assert their equality through their everyday practices. That is to say, business schools cannot be expected to have among their objectives to achieve social equality, as some students and teacher would want to. The change must come from the internal disagreements -such as the magnitude of the sexual harassment issues in campus- that put in evidence an underlying dissensus, and therefore, the existence of a *demos*. Rancière's philosophy invites us to study the underlying consensus of our business schools and getting it into question. As I have argued throughout the ethnography, in this business school there is a consensus on "excellence". The notion is dissected in Chapter 2 by studying the policing mechanisms of the partage. The process reveals a consensus revolving around a notion of "excellence" that permeates every layer of the institution, leading to exhaustion and feelings of loneliness. The emphasises given to "excellence" is, however, successful regarding its main goal; to position school's members in key roles both at the private and public sector. As also discussed in Chapter 3, the dissensus emerge from small and ephemeral organisations that put in question what is understood as "excellence". They talk of altruism, degrowth, and cooperation. They put ideals before the technique. A language that is unintelligible for the rest of the school, even to those who have similar political leanings. Politics take place in a business school when members allow themselves to be provocative. Particularly, when they allow themselves to scrutinise their *superiors*, because they are not such, they are peers.

Bringing Rancière's philosophy and business schools together suggests that instead of focusing on the management syllabus, theoretical or practical models, courses of ethics, etcetera, we should focus on the institution itself. To collaborate with democracy is to have a democratic business school. That democratic turn only will be triggered by the equality assertion of the very members of the school, namely students, teachers, workers, etc. That is to say, it is unlikely that business schools will transit to organisation schools (Parker et al., 2020), if its members do not break the contours of the partage custodied by the 'police order'.

Moreover, bringing Rancière's philosophy to business schools and management education is a way to contest the very management's objective. "Management is about control; the word derived from manus (hand) or maeggiare (to handle, especially horses)" (Parker, Stoborod, & Swann, 2020, pág. 31). Then, the primary objective of management as discipline is currently conceived as taking

what is wild and unpredictable and standardise it. To make it a commodity, an expected outcome that is somehow useful to certain planned process. Same as taming a horse, management's ultimate goal is to erase outliers and wildcards. Rancière's philosophy is an invitation to exactly the opposite; to be provocative, to universalise the singular, to be a catalyst of 'politics'.

As a method, Rancière's philosophy not only allowed me to reconstruct the practices from the inside of a recent, successful, and landmarking episode of 'politics' at an elite business school in Chile. It also helped me to make sense of it by framing the whole episode as part of a contextuality and historicity. In Rancierian language, all quarrels always lead back to the same pursuit of equality. That is the reason why bringing this philosophy into business school might help to interrogate current management education paradigms and how business schools are currently conducted. Rancière's philosophy also scrutinise the very foundations of the very idea of management and its limitations. It is an arrow directed right straight to the heart of the discipline, insofar it questions *how* we validate a source of authority -categories of domination (Rancière, 1999).

However, this questioning is nothing new (Parker, 2002; 2018; Parker, Stoborod, & Swann, 2020) and it has been going on for decades now. What Rancière's thinking offers though, it is an opportunity to break the circle up. As Huault & Perret (2011) argued, it offers an opportunity to reconcile both the macro versus micro emancipation debate, as well as the relevance versus rigour debate (Syed, Mingers, & Murray, 2010). Rancière's idea of 'politics' as a moment in which categories of domination are suspended is crucial for management as discipline. It calls into question hierarchies, orders, levels, and any other position of mastery. Rancière's philosophy interrogates the very foundations in which the managerial science taught in schools -like the one investigated- is erected upon. Accreditations, rankings, impact factors, top journals, and a large etcetera. The critique, of course, goes beyond the boundaries of a small country like Chile. It also goes beyond business schools and whatever they do to keep their businesses running. As it has been supported by research in education (Biesta, 2010), the introduction of Rancierian philosophy is a front attack to the notion of mastery. It is not surprising then, that the Rancierian philosophy has been much more prolific in terms of research in both the educational and sociological fields. The challenge then, is to incorporate Rancière's philosophy into management education and business schools. In order to do that, the organisation studies field must keep up to the challenge of promoting spaces where provocation can happen.

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