Beyond the political boundaries of the past: Chilean Students from the 'Penguin Revolution' to 2011

Valentina Álvarez López, Social Anthropologist (U. de Chile), MA Sociology (U. of Manchester.

Introduction

In 2006, more than 10 thousands secondary school students (SSS) went out to the streets every week between April and May, developing what has been called 'The penguin revolution'. Such name acknowledged not only the traditional way of calling SSS due to their grey uniform but also the deep level of the demands they raised. At the beginning they demanded free access to the University-entry test, free student fare in public transport, improvement of the facilities to develop the program of extension of study hours, and raising the number of food benefit. Although the current minister stopped conversations as a consequence of the level of violence in demonstrations, he had to retract that decision when school occupations began to spread all over Chile: in the high class and poor neighbourhoods of the capital, as well as in small cities and rural environments. At the same time, demands for structural change to the educational system began to be known and were put ahead in the list of demands.

The mobilization provoked the support of civil society: university students, teachers, parents, intellectuals, and even for a period, the media. They seemed to incarnate the ideal of citizenship that appeared to be lost in the transitional period after dictatorship. Indeed, after finishing a 17-year dictatorship in 1989, which was marked by the harsh violations of human rights and implementation of a neoliberal economic system, political apathy seemed to have won over old struggles between the left and right. The Chilean political elite showed the world an image of a country advancing fast to development through an unspoken agreement in a neoliberal economy. Yet, the electoral system tended to make invisible more leftist proposals.

This article summarizes the main results obtained through qualitative research with an ethnographical perspective, for my thesis in anthropology between mid-2006 and mid-2008. Its main objective was to explore the articulation of social and cultural diversity in a unitary movement, taking into account their material and symbolic elements. In this piece of work, I attempt to outline the most important meanings shared by different actors within the student movement –social and culturally different- and to interpret such meanings in the light of the political context of current Chile. Furthermore, it explores the links between the 2011 and 2006' mobilizations in terms of their generational meaning.

To start, the text develops a brief explanation of the recent transformation of Chilean society, the educational system and the recent events that have marked SSS's movement (secondary school students' movement). Then, it describes the most important meanings of the mobilization of grass-root students and links them to sociological perspectives about the social and political situation in Chile. It concludes that the 'Penguin Revolution' gave the symbolic basis from which the mobilization of 2011 could be developed.

Some words on methodology…

The research was undertaken by following 2 theoretical different premises. Firstly, I began with one idea with origins in Touraine's accionalism: in a particular conflict, actors should be defined by what they oppose to. In other words, it is an actors' position in a certain conflict that establishes the categories that define them as such and not their definition through theoretical or structural criteria (Baño, 1985). Secondly, I considered Melucci's statement (1999) that participants in collective actions are diverse and plural and have different abilities and resources to negotiate within it. From this standpoint, the process of 'collecting' information was divided in three phases. The first stage attempted to identify, from interviews generated among 10 leaders of all territories in Santiago, which were the relevant categories that defined modes of action within the student organization. The second stage attempts to describe, particularize and understand the meanings that grass-root students gave to their participation in the conflict. This was done through 12 focus groups in 6 selected case study schools. Having gathered all the information, the analysis attempted to understand what student's actors had in common, in order to be able to unveil the process of their articulation in material and symbolic ways. At the same time I interviewed 3 student representatives of a previous mobilization in 2001, in order to understand the student movement as a process.

This research is not ethnography in its classic understanding mainly due to its extensive character (it does not choose one particular case to study but attempts to consider all actors), and because it was undertaken after the end of the mobilization. Rather, it was thoughtfully developed with an ethnographic perspective in two different ways. On one side, at the time of the mobilization I was a university student engaged in the university student's movement that actively supported the 'penguins' revolution'. I took part in demonstrations, University occupations, visited occupied schools to bring them food and other type of support and followed the conflict in the media. In doing this, I had an ethnographic experience of the mobilization that nurtured my research even though, at that point, I did not know I would research the process. On the other, I analysed focus groups attempting to grab the student's web of meanings by reconstructing their context through eclectic sources. I looked at official information about student's results, social characteristic

of the students, student media, mainly fotologs[1] that were released during the mobilization period, news from the web, knowledge gained from conversations with selected people about the schools and its students, among other sources. Such information was useful to enrich and better understand the meanings that were expressed in the focus group.

It is necessary to state that, this article only works with part of the findings of the whole research[2]. It refers to the experiences and meanings of the mobilizations that were common to most actors and the mobilization as a whole. Thus, there is neither the description of particular actors nor of their experience except when considered indispensable.

Politics of consensus and Social mobilization in Post-Dictatorship Chile

By the end of the 30's the labour movement and its parties, allied with the middle classes won the presidency of Chile. They created a populist state whose role was to mediate in class conflict among entrepreneurs and workers by using democratic institutions 'to negotiate an unevenly accepted balance between economic growth and redistribution' (Rosemblatt, 2000:5). The state promoted industrialization to substitute importations and redistribution policies amplified the welfare state and democratized the educational system (Maira 1974:p. 266). Working and middle class became the main social actors of the whole period (See Ruiz and Toro, 2006). This type of social contract was widely known as 'compromise state' and its emergence was a common characteristic in many Latin American countries. Such experiences finished violently through military coups that spread in Latin America.

Chile was not the exception but its process presents certain particularities. After creating a strong political coalition between leftist parties –The *Unidad Popular* (Popular Unity, UP)- and popular social movements, the Socialist Salvador Allende won the presidency in 1970. Thus, Chile became the first country in the world that aimed to reach socialism by democratic means. Following that direction, the government developed public policies that attempted to improve the working and living conditions of popular sectors[3]. The UP also triggered an economic re-structuration that, for the first time, really threatened the capitalist order. The 1000 days of the UP were not easy but marked by an increasing

[1]Fotolog is a Social network that allowed posting one picture and a limited number of comments per day. By 2006 was a very popular social media, lately surpassed by facebook. They became an important means of information during the mobilizations. For a deep description of the importance of this means of communication, see Domedel, A. Peña y Lillo, M. 2008 "El mayo de los pingüinos". Santiago: Ediciones Universidad de Chile.

[2] Alvarez, V. (2008) Observándonos, objetivándonos, organizándonos. Sobre la articulación de la Revolución Pingüina. Profesor Guía Juan Le-bert. Tesis para optar al grado de Antropóloga Social. Available at : www.cybertesis.uchile.cl/tesis/uchile/2008/alvarez_v/sources/alvarez_v.pdf

[3]There is not an exact translation in English for the Spanish term '*sectores populares'*. 'Popular sectors' broadly refers here to the urban and rural poor that have reached political but not economic citizenship.

polarization. The *Unidad Popular* finished with a military coup that was followed by a 17-year dictatorship, marked by harsh violations of human rights and the imposition of a neo-liberal economic system[4]. The new model opened the market to foreign capital, run a huge plan of privatizations, and fully changed the system of social policies, focalized in extreme poverty sectors (Raczinsky, 1995: p. 221).

The economic crisis of 1982 made the delicate situation tense. The first protest against the dictatorship happened in May of 1983 that led to a wave of protest that lasted until 1986. In shanty towns, industries, schools, universities, women's organization, cultural centres, political parties and collectives, people began to overcome the fear and struggle against the dictatorship in both, armed and pacific ways. Some of oppositional parties decided to participate in the referendum of 1988 (which was established by the new constitution of 1980), to define the future of military rule. In doing that, they gave their formal acceptance to the dictatorial constitution and accepted the economic model (See, Moulian, 1997).The option NO to the dictatorship won and, by 1989, the Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin was elected the president of Chile. Thus, the dictatorship finished, but the new centre-left governments maintained the same political and economic structure as the dictatorship, what Tomás Moulian (1997) calls 'the transvestite operation".

Indeed, the new 'democratic' order was built in a way that avoids political and social polarization -considered guilty of the democratic break- through the model of consensual democracy (Ruiz Schneider, 1993:93-94). Such a model eliminates competitive practices by encouraging the formation of big coalitions, giving priority to negotiation over political confrontation. The new democracy was also built over a foundational consensus that, in the struggle of two different versions of modernity, capitalism and socialism, only the first had been successful and was able to be applied in Chile (Moulian, 1997: 45). In such new context, 'old' political struggles were considered as no longer relevant and therefore, supposed that Chile was now facing the end of its history (Moulian, 1997:45-55). In this situation of political 'presentism' (Lechner, 1987) decision making became a technical problem that disregarded political perspectives and social actors.

The very consequence of this political model was apathy. There were high figures of abstention and invalid votes that showed a peak in 1997 (PNUD: 1998). The electoral list almost got frozen after the referendum of 1988, despite governmental efforts to overcome that situation (Ahumada and Cifuentes, 1998) Youth was vindicated guilt of apathy. Such idea was reinforced by the image of a young tennis player who reached the first position in the world ranking of ATP during some weeks in 1998, whose favourite phrase was "I do

[4] As a consequence of these important changes, the Chilean Sociologist Tomás Moulian calls this process as the "Contrarevolution" (See, Moulian, 2006). It is necessary to state that other Latin American dictatorship did not destroy the previous economic models at that level. Neo liberal policies began to be applied once in democratic elected governments.

not give a damn" *("No estoy ni ahí"*) and was represented by the media as an icon of Chilean youth[5]. Similarly, in the realm of social movements, social actors that had lead the process of socio-political transformations and had been active in the struggle against dictatorship -such as shanty town dwellers or workers-, virtually disappeared. The consequence of such a loss of collective identities was a 'social opacity' in Chilean society (Ruiz and Toro, 2006). Yet, during the 90's and mid-2000, there were very few social mobilizations marked by a very particularistic perspective and unable to articulate more general demands. Indeed, they had been focused in rebuilding struggles, actors and institution of the previous compromise state, no longer current (Ruiz, Toro: p. 2005; Rojas, p. 2000). This, however, did not mean that Chileans were happily satisfied.

In 1998, the Human Development Report of UNDP[6] found out that, despite the high levels of employment and economic development, Chileans were suffering from high levels of insecurity; fear of others, fear of economic exclusion, and fear of non-sense, that they called a 'vague uneasiness'. In the following years, many social scientists attempted to explain the origin of such uneasiness, some of which are considered here as examples.

Intellectuals of the Transition understood such uneasiness as a common process of adaptation of values and moral to urban modern life, more secularists and autonomous (Bruner, 1998). Or in an even more optimistic way, as a consequence of the expansion of consumption that made elites lose their hitherto exclusive access to consumption (Tironi, 1998). Those who were critical of the model blamed social inequality, placing uneasiness in the middle (Ruiz and Toro, 2006) or popular classes, (Rojas, 2010) rising complains against the model and the basis of the transition. Meanwhile, Lechner (2002) drives his attention to the difficulties of people to appropriate the country's definition, action, changes and the necessity to create a 'Tale of Chile' for creating that link. The 'tale', however, faced difficulties as a consequence of increasing levels of individualisation contradictorily coupled by a feeling of the lack of control of individual lives which resulted in and step back from society to the comfort of the family.

Educational system and Secondary Students' Movement

From the end of the 19th century until 1973 there was a steady extension and organization of public education. For the 'compromise state', education was an ideal to follow, coining the phrase "governing is educate"- even though at that point, the state did not have the capacity to provide public education for those who needed it (Zemelman and

[5] Yet, some critiques were raised against such statement, as a far as did not considered other forms of social participation extended among youth making invisible the critiques that were raised from young people against the political system (See, Contreras, 1999:3, Muñoz, 2004: 79).
[6] United Nations for Development Program.

Jara, 2006: p. 105). In the 80's, the dictatorship and its neoliberal ideology created laws to step back the State's educational responsibilities. Among the most important changes account the transference of public schools from the Minister of Education to local councils and created a new way of distributing public funding through payment according to the number of students. It also encouraged private education through allocation of public funds to private schools with the same criteria applied to public one's (OECD, 2004: p. 71-72). As the OCDE[7] notes, such organization generates an educational system segregated by class, as a consequence of its dependence on councils' availability of resources and the right given to private education to select its students. Thus, council education concentrates the most deprived students. The system includes three different types of schools: council school that tend to concentrate working class and low middle class students; private schools that receive public and private[8] funds and concentrate students from low to upper middle class; private schools that concentrate students from upper middle, high class, and corporations that offer technical careers run by entrepreneur and receive public funds (OECD, 2004: p.21). After the dictatorship the structure of the system was basically maintained, however the OECD (2004) points out two important changes. Firstly, curricular reform in 1996 which emphasized the value of integral education and included a program with more studying hours for curricular and extra-curricular activities, which by 2006, was still not fully implemented. Secondly, a steady increase in funds available for education that, in 2001 had been accounted to be three times more than in 1990.

Secondary school students have a tradition of defending public education. During the dictatorship they struggled against the privatisation of education and the infiltration of their organizations, through protest and school occupations. They were not successful in their aims but became a visible actor in the process of resistance against dictatorship, demanding "safety for studying, freedom for living". By the end of the 80's, they re-built their traditional organization, banned under dictatorship, the Secondary Student's Union (Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios, FESES). However, in the next period, student movement followed a process similar to those of all social movements after dictatorship and by the end of the 90's, the FESES became a bureaucratic organization that did not represent students' needs and interest. Many small political and cultural organizations spread among SSS and, by the end of 2000, the FESES was eliminated and replaced by an assembly, the Secondary Student Assembly Coordinator (Asamblea Coordinadora de Estudiantes secundarios, ACES). This organization –whose spirit was close to anarchist political practices-, was horizontal and participative, where spokespersons had to follow student grass-root decisions.

[7] Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation
[8] Generally, in this type of schools parents contribute towards fee.

This organization would lead a successful secondary school student mobilization in 2001 which set the precedent for 2006's one. They protested mainly against the private administration of student ID for public transportation. Of course, those 10,000 students that at different moments went to demonstrations and/or participate in strikes, were not just motivated by those issues: as one of the student spokeperson says "*I think that those that went (to demonstrations) for the problem of student ID were just a few, there were high levels of dissatisfaction in High Schools"*[9], caused by precarious conditions of schools and repression.

And the revolt, arrived

After 2001, the ACES was again disarticulated and political parties and small collectives developed isolated protest with no relation among them. Despite such differences, during 2005, secondary school student organizations worked -to different degrees- together with the Minister of Education, to generate a short and long term working agenda that included a variety of educational issues. By the end of this year until the beginning of 2006, the two more important organizations -that grouped centre-left parties' youths of ruling coalition and the Left- began to approach each other until they became one organization, the Secondary Students' Assembly (Asamblea de Estudiantes Secundarios, AES)10, which inherited the working structure of the ACES. Thus, when at the end of March, the Minister of Education did not give any answer to the most pressing demand – no limits for student reduced fare for public transport- as it had compromised (Domedel, Peña y Lillo, 2007: p.64), the secondary school students had enough summoning capacity to make themselves visible. From 26th of April, more than 10,000 secondary school students went to the streets once a week mainly demanding: free access to the University-entry test, free student fare in public transport, improved facilities for developing the program of extension of studying hours, and raising the number of food benefits (Domedel, Peña y Lillo, 2007: p.15). Such demands formed part of the 'short-term agenda' or 'economic demand'. They also had a long-term agenda that set out plans to revise of the Program of Extended Studying hours (Jornada Escolar Completa, JEC) return public schools into the hands of th Ministery of Education, and repealing of the Organic Constitutional Law of Education, (Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza, LOCE) that point to the structural problem of the education. Demonstrations developed with violence encouraged by extreme repressive responses from the police, finishing with almost 600 or even 1000 students –out of 10,000- arrested only in Santiago[11]. The fact that the

[9]Extract of interview in Domedel, A. Peña y Lillo, M. 2008 "El mayo de los pingüinos". Santiago: Ediciones Universidad de Chile.

[10] A proper description of the whole process of constitution can be found at the original text of the research, available only in Spanish at: http://www.tesis.uchile.cl/tesis/uchile/2008/alvarez_v/html/index-frames.html

[11] Santiago is the capital of Chile, were the mobilization got its more massive participation and where this research was developed.

government stopped conversations coupled with the bad image that mass media was constructing of the movement, students decided to change their strategy: they passed from demonstrating in the street, to school occupations in order to stop violence and advance to higher pressure measures.

At that moment, the participants of the mobilizations had been in Emblematic Council schools, mainly placed in Santiago's City Centre. By contrast with most of the council schools, these high schools are characterized by academic excellence and a tradition of political mobilization. Other council schools from the south of the capital, although a minority, were in a more disorganized way developing local protests motivated by economic demands. However, once the protest and violence stopped, the media for the first time focused it's attention on the short and long-term agenda of the conflict demands, even the most popular: repealing the LOCE12. This implied a change in the fate of the movement, as one of the spokes women of the ACES said:

> "I think the most important landmark the change from marches to school occupations, because we were in a social scenario where all people looked at us as if we were criminals, because, for the media, we all were hooligans that threw stones (…) When they saw all this pacific vibe, transversal, for the education, etc., we became heroes. We had and the big change from public opinion to us" (ACES speakeperson).

The media also covered what was happening in the most emblematic occupations and kept updating the number of school occupations and strikes, which began to spread along Chilean schools, even private ones. Similarly, mobilized students also created their own media and networks were they communicated their everyday life in the occupations and discussed their demands. Bit by bit, the students were gaining more support and a feeling of power was felt in the air. Students felt that "*something was happening*"[13] that could *"make the change possible",* a sense of euphoria and excitement grew every day about what was achievable, that even touched those students from privileged schools. The image of a penguin There was 'something' that we, as university students felt, and motivated us to support the mobilization in different ways, 'something' that also motivated teachers, parents and public characters to give students their support.

It was '*Something'* that '*all people was aware of'* which motivated students who had never been involved in students' mobilizations to discuss the situation of education, take positions and act –they thought- consequently with it. Beyond those who initiated the mobilization, Council school students were the first to occupy their schools, motivated

[12]For an interesting discussion about the discourse of the media, see Domedel, A. Peña y Lillo, M (2008).
[13] This expression was used in one of the focus groups with grassroots students. However, similar expressions can be found in all focus groups developed for this research (See Alvarez, 2008)

mainly by the bad conditions in their schools and short-term agenda. The Students from private schools that joined the mobilisation, both from those that receive public funds and those that do not- did not have an easy decision to make. Their needs and uneasiness were not visible and therefore, they had to evaluate their position in the educational system according to the type of school they were studying in. Just then, they were able to think which demands were more important for them, mainly those considered in the long-term agenda. Yet, all SSS, had complaints against the program of extra study hours because it included more of the same things and left them tired, with no spare time.

Beyond the boundaries of the transition

The social and cultural diversity within the student movement not only raised the attention of public opinion but more importantly, became the main core of meaning that grass-root students gave to mobilization. Such unity was represented in the image of a penguin with a lifted arm that became a symbol in social media and demonstrations and many times was represented fighting the power. Being "*all together"* enabled them to be endowed with strength, the conviction that by "*going all to the same side"* they could achieve better results. Such unity of action was possible because they had included a demand that could be an object of appropriation by all the actors involved. The demand of repealing LOCE became, paraphrasing Laclau (2005), "an empty significant that enabled wide references by losing its connexion with particular meanings". Even though most of the students had not heard the word LOCE before the mobilization, the demand allowed them to channel certain and particular uneasiness they had with the educational system. For instance, the privilege over private education, the decrease of quality and conditions of the public ones, the constriction in personal development that formal education imposes through the school-university-professional life path, the pressure they bear for obtaining good results, the differentiation-by-class education they received, etc.

In a context were the educational system is very segregated by class, the participation of students from a diversity of social and cultural background[14] became an exercise of raising awareness of the students' position in social and cultural space. Either by mass and student media or face to face in conversations, assemblies or conferences, the process gave faces, bodies, names, recognized ways of living and position in the urban space of those 'others'; richer, poorer, 'hippier', 'posher', 'scallier', than 'us'. In doing that, it generated a space and a moment where such diversity could meet as it almost does not exist in Chile today –with the exception of those schools called 'emblematic'- and, in some cases, allowed the defeat of stereotypes. In a social context with no clear social actors, the

[14] Is important to assert that high class's schools whose students participated in the mobilization were traditional elite-schools (or close to them) as well as those that offer a more 'alternative' type of education. Those institutions that offer opus dei and Christ legionary teaching -where the new high class educates their children- were absent.

mobilization became an exercise of recognition against the 'social opacity' described by Ruiz and Toro (2005) and showed in its interior the social contradiction that was denouncing: that educational system reproduces social inequalities.

Cultural and social diversity also provided students with the possibility to think of their struggle as generational. Such a feature invested with authority their demands and at the same time challenged the common belief that the youth were apathetic because many did not want to be part of the electoral list. For students of emblematic schools, the action of a whole generation of students allowed them to bring to light the structural problems of the educational system that they have been denouncing for years. As one student of this type of schools said:

> "Something happened to me. I could not change the system, or the world (…), but when I told my dad 'I do not want to go to school, we do not do anything there', he did not believe me. I felt something that enabled me to demonstrate that I was neither crazy nor lazy spending all day lying at school".

Other sectors felt committed to a generational task consistent in "*fix a bit how things are"* or *"give a first step"* for the changes that education –and the country- needs. A student of a private school from the upper middle class described her generation as follows:

> "I think there are three types of generations in the country. The ruling generation, our generation which could be thought as the replacement generation, and the new generations that, basically, are those for whom we need to change a bit the things, because… there is a mess!"

Mass media, that some weeks before had been focused in outrage, was now overwhelmed by student's ability to engage reflexively, praising their 'citizen profile'. At the local spaces, teachers and directive boards generally supported student's mobilization –although not without contradictions and sometimes in authoritarian ways- feeling proud of their students' commitment. Students of the most deprived schools –stigmatized as a consequence of their social conditions- felt themselves respected and invested with authority to speak out their uneasiness with education. This testimony is eloquent:

> "The occupation was something beautiful because there was willingness to listen; because they wanted to listen to students, because their rights are hardly ever taken into consideration (…) they have not been heard for long time".

As a generation they demonstrated that they were interested in their education, in their country, in social justice and had gained the respect from the adult world. However, such support did not last long: for certain sectors of the establishment, the mass media or the political elite, they went too far when students decided to insist in the long-term agenda.

On the 1st of June, after only two days after meeting between the Minister of Education and secondary school students – in the middle of a national education strike supported by university students, teachers and other social organizations- the President announced her proposal by T.V, in chain. For the 'penguins', such an announcement was a surprise: they were expecting to meet and discuss as they have done previous days. The proposal gave important solutions to most of economic demands[15] but rejected free students fare in public transport. Regarding long-term agenda, it offered the creation of a 'counsellor board' of educational experts and students' representatives to discuss a new organic law for education. The next day the ACES' assembly decided to continue mobilized as far as the solutions of the long-term agenda were not satisfactory. Although at that point the movement showed visible signs of tire and division- –one of the 4 spokes people left his post-, the ACES called to meet other social movements and to engage in a general strike on 5th of June. The media stopped supporting them thinking that they have gone too far (Domedel and Peña y Lillo, 2008:p. 158) and the political elite closed the spaces for negotiation. Students wanted guaranties that there would be advances in changing the basis of the educational system created by the dictatorship, and that the changes would be maintained. Tired, students stopped mobilization and joined the 'Presidential counsellor board' to renounce it some months later, when they realised that this was not a real alternative to a change in the model.

For grass-root students' the experience of mobilization actualized their ideals of solidarity and social compromise, which was expressed at least in two levels. In schools occupations, students built social relations that may be conceived as communitarian ones. They began to know each other and work together to achieve a collective aim. As a student said, *"if you want to be in the occupation, you need to do something for it".* This implies that in order to keep occupations properly running participants have to show their commitment with everyday life activities such as cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, painting the school, participating in assemblies, amongst others tasks, constituting a community with roles and responsibilities. The difficult conditions in which many developed their struggle underscore such importance *"(the T.V) did not show the reality we were living here, that sometimes we were hungry, that we were cold at night, that we were afraid… there were some that were afraid (of the neo-Nazis that attacked occupations)"*. It is necessary to say that the significance of occupations as the most important element of the mobilization is stronger in more deprived schools.

[15] The offer increases in 500.000 food benefit, it created a program for improving facilities in 520 schools and to replace furniture in 1.500, it extended the time to 24/7 of student fare in public transport and offered benefits for those families unable to pay for it, released 155.000 scholarships for paying entry-test to universities an compromised a law project to demand paid internships for technical education. The full offer presidential offer is available (in Spanish) at: http://www.opech.cl/bibliografico/calidad_equidad/discursopresidenta_1_Junio.pdf

Similarly, students did not only interact with their school mates but also built solidarity networks with students from surrounding schools. Such relationships allowed them to *"make many friends"*, with those neighbours which hitherto they only relate through stereotypes. Thus, the ideal of solidarity was actualized through relations between students of deprived schools and students from schools with better conditions. The latter, realised their privilege and engaged in the mobilization as an act of solidarity that, they say, helped make visible the main characters of the mobilization –council's schools- were demanding. As students of a private school say:

> 1: (…) from our school we were helping the others in the way that we could. This was the idea to engage in the strike, because…
> 2: the fact that we were on strike was not relevant for anyone (in public opinion)
> 1: If we went on strike was no important, the idea was to help other schools and give massive support to the cause.

In this sense, students actualized the values of solidarity and social compromise; the same that some intellectuals had thought were lost in Chilean society. Against a society consumed by individualism and looking for shelter in the family –as Lechner (2002) states-, students experienced relations of solidarity among their peers and other students belonging to other social classes in the name of changing the educational system.

Final words: in the light of 2011

Beyond the achievements of the 'Penguin revolution' in the short-term agenda[16], the mobilization made visible the deepest problems of educational system and, by doing so they made visible the legacy of dictatorship under 'democracy'. Yet, in November 2007 there was approval in the senate the General Law of Education –that came to change the previous LOCE- which, however, did not change the essence of its predecessor. At that point, even the president of the board that created the law had given up his functions as a consequence of his disagreement with its result. Such an act, however, went unnoticed by the political elite of both the, Right and Centre which, hanging their hands, celebrated the publication of the new law. The political elite almost ignored what the students said –they made only superficial changes-, attempting to update the ideals of the transition, of pacific, clean and consensual way without the social actors that had raised the demands.

In 2011, the mobilizations led by university students found the political elite- this time with the right coalition ruling- at the same stage. As Francisco Figueroa (2012) shows - one important university leader of the mobilization of 2011- transition's intellectuals kept explaining the 2011 mobilization in very similar ways that they used to explain the 'diffuse

[16]Is necessary to say, that was much more than any other movement had achieved by that time in post dictatorship period.

uneasiness': they were considered as an expression of Chile's higher demands as a consequence of high levels of development and low levels of poverty and unemployment, something that one of them called the "Dutch sickness". One of them even compares the mobilization with the hippy movement (see, Figueroa, 2012: p. 40-41).

Upper Level Education System shows its own particularities –for which there is no space here to explain- but the core of its problems refers to the same origin, to the changes developed more than 30 years ago during dictatorship. In this model, upper level education is considered as another business area which does not assure quality and implies high levels of debt for its students (For an interesting discussion, Figueroa, 2012). This time, however, students went even further; they did not attack a specific law but the enrichment of few at the expense of all common Chileans, destroying family' dreams. And such a complaint can be extended to other realms: health, pensions, and natural resources. However, the political elite replied, once again, with some changes in the system of student bank loans, together with the endorsement of the state[17], thus showing its lack of willingness to tackle the origin of the problem.

During 2011 I was living in England and could not join the mobilizations. However, according to what I heard from friends and what I saw in the news and social media, I am sure there was a general sense of excitement and conviction that big changes could be made, which was even bigger than in 2006. The incredible number of participants can give an idea of this: they reached 500,000 in a cultural activity held in a Park[18] in Santiago where not only participated secondary and university students participated but also their families and other social actors. Furthermore, the great variety of cultural expressions and activities lead by grass-root students held the attention of society and the media to the problem of education: from a zombie dance organized through flash mobs, running for 1800 hours in the name of education, to holding kissing meetings for education to the carnivals that the marches became. The University of Chile placed at the heart of Santiago became an open place for citizens were cultural activities and forums were developed. Yet, the student movement achieved an 89 percent of society's approval[19].

In the light of the events of 2011, because of its massive support, radical claims and its duration[20] it is possible to think that the main contribution of the 'Penguin Revolution' is

---

[17] This policy attempted to support students from private superior education in the acquisition of loans with private banking, through the act of the state as bank endorsement.

18 For a detailed chronology of the conflict, see Urra, J. (2012) La movilización estudiantil chilena en 2011: una cronología. *OSAL* Año XIII, N° 31, mayo. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

[19] According to a survey undertaken in September of 2011 developed by the Centre of Studies of Contemporary Reality. Information obtained from: http://www.cooperativa.cl/noticias/pais/politica/encuestas/nueve-de-cada-10-chilenos-apoyan-las-demandas-del-movimiento-estudiantil/2011-09-27/120124.html

[20] Indeed, the mobilization continued with smaller participation in 2012 and is being revitalised nowadays (June of 2013).

placed in the symbolic realm. Referring to May 68', De Certau states "*an event is not what one can see or know about it, is what it become"* (De Certau, 1974;p. 32), showing the attention about what possibilities it opens in the symbolic space. For him, 68's May was "*a symbolic revolutions as consequence of what it means, more than what it really do, as cause that contest the relations (social and historic), for creating other new, the authentic ones"* (Ibid). Indeed, the 'penguin revolution' pushed the imaginaries of the political sphere beyond the tight boundaries imposed in its transitional period. This was expressed in 2011 through the demand of the 'end of profit in education' and therefore attacked the whole system that dictatorship had built. This statement can be supported by the research of anthropologists Riquelme and Skewes. In their piece of work, they show student's motivation to engage in the marches of 2011 making the difference between students over and under 22 years, that means, those who were secondary students by the time of 'Penguin Revolutions' and those who were already studying at the university. They state:

> "While older generations want to express their solidarity through their participation in the marches convened by the student' movement, younger generations raise at their main interest a complaint for structural changes. (…). The first ones seem to recover that republican solidarity that was taken from them in the period of 'I do not give a damn'[21]. By contrast, the 'post penguins' do not see obstacles for the legitimated raised demands for their predecessors that were lost in the commissions formed by the government" (Riquelme and Skewes: 2012)

Such findings allow us to think further about the symbolic consequences of 'Penguin Revolution' for political struggle. They transformed -at the level of civil society- the imaginaries of what is possible to contest, what is possible to be changed and what can be spoken about, despite the silence of political elite. The transformation of such imaginaries seems to penetrate deeper in younger generations, precisely those who were part of secondary education by the time of the 'Penguin revolution'. In this sense, it is possible to think that the mobilizations of 2006 broadened the boundaries of the possible within the political sphere by contesting the common ideas that consensus establishment had constructed, in three different ways. Firstly, it created an image of social inequalities. Secondly, it allowed students to contest the extended idea that conceived youth as essentially apathetic because of their null interest in formal politics. Consequently, they felt invested with authority to claim proposals beyond political consensus by displaying new ways of relation and decision making with a youthful nuance of joy and festivity. Thirdly, they re-actualized what was considered to be lost in Chilean society: community and solidarity networks. I believe that 2006's mobilization gave the symbolic foundations for what is today thought as politics and how society can be transformed.

[21]This expression refers as the image that from society and media was given to youth during the 90's. See previous section "Politics of consensus and Social mobilization in Post-Dictatorship Chile", Page 5

References

Ahumada, R. y C. Cifuentes. (1998). *Desencanto juvenil en la política: a diez años del plesbicito.* Tesis para optar al Título de periodista. Profesor Guía, Roberto Hernández. Universidad de Chile.

Alvarez, V. (2008) Observándonos, objetivándonos, organizándonos. Sobre la articulación de la Revolución Pingüina. Profesor Guía Juan Le-bert. Tesis para optar al grado de Antropóloga Social. Available at : www.cybertesis.uchile.cl/tesis/uchile/2008/alvarez_v/sources/alvarez_v.pdf

Bachelet, M. (2006). Intervención de S.E la Presidenta de la República , Michelle Bachelet por cadena nacional: http://www.opech.cl/bibliografico/calidad_equidad/discursopresidenta_1_Junio.pdf

Baño, R. (1985). *Lo social y lo político, un dilema clave del movimiento popular*. FLACSO**.** Impresiones Salesianos, Santiago, Chile.

Bruner, J.(1998). Malestar en la sociedad Chilena ¿de qué exactamente estamos hablando?. *En Estudio públicos nº 72.* Disponible en www.cepChile.cl/dms/archivo_1151_741/rev72_brunner.pdf

Contreras, D. (1999). jóvenes de los noventa: de las microsolidaridades a la construcción de ciudadanía. Revista Última década n 11. Centro de Investigación y difusión poblacional de achupallas. Viña del Mar. Chile. Disponible en

http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/redalyc/pdf/195/19501105.pdf

De Certau, M. [1974] (1995). *La toma de la palabra y otros escritos políticos.* 1a. Edición en español. Universidad Iberoamericana, A.C. Mexico D.F.

Domedel, A. Peña y Lillo, M. 2008 "El mayo de los pingüinos". Santiago: Ediciones Universidad de Chile.

Figueroa, F. (2012). *Llegamos para quedarnos. Crónicas de la revuelta estudiantil.* Santiago: Lom Ediciones.

Laclau, E. 2005. populismo. ¿qué hay en el nombre?. En *Pensar este tiempo. Espacios, afectos, pertenencias. Arfuch Leonor (comp).* Editorial Paidós. Buenos Aires. Argentina.

Lechner, Norbert. 2002. La recomposición del nosotros. Un desafío cultural. Discusión de resultados de informe del desarrollo humano de 2002 del PNUD. Recuérado el 18 de septiembre de 2006 desde: http://www.desarrollohumano.cl/pdf/2002/05.pdf

Melucci, Alberto. 1999. *Acción colectiva, vida cotidiana y democracia***.** Primera edición. Colegio de México. México D.F.

Moulian Tomás. (1997). *Chile Actual: Anatomía de un mito*. LOM ediciones. Santiago de Chile

OCDE. (2004). Informe de calidad y equidad de la educación en Chile. Recuperado el 5 de Julio de 2006 de: http://www.opech.cl/bibliografico/calidad_equidad/informe_chile.pdf

Programa de Naciones Unidas para el desarrollo (1998). Las paradojas de la modernización. *Informe de desarrollo humano en Chile.* Santiago de Chile.

Petras, J. (1973). *Latin America, from dependence to Revolution*. New York, London: Willey.

Raczynski, D.(1995). La estrategia para combatir la pobreza en Chile, Programas, instituciones y recursos. *In* d. Raczynski (ed.), *Estrategias para combatir la pobreza en América Latina, Programas, instituciones y recursos.* [Accessed on 18 of August 2011]. Santiago de Chile: CIEPLAN-BID. Available from: http://www.cieplan.org/media/publicaciones/archivos/21/Capitulo_5.pdf

Riquelme, W., & Skewes, J. (2012). El quinquenio de la indignación estudiantil:Las marchas estudiantiles en Chile. *Le Monde Diplomatique. Edición chilena*, Diciembre, 8-9.

Rojas, J. (2000). la sociedad Chilena Post dictatorial. Entre la modernización y el imaginario democrático. *En Nueva Sociedad n· 165*. Disponible en: http://www.nuso.org/upload/articulos/2823_1.pdf

Rosemblatt, K. (2000). *Gendered compromises: political cultures and the state in Chile, 1920-1950.* Chapel Hill, NC : University of North Carolina Press

Ruiz Schneider, C.)1993). "*seis ensayos sobre teoría de la democracia".* Santiago de Chile. Universidad Andrés Bello.

Ruiz, Carlos. E. Toro. (2006). La opacidad social**.** *En Análisis 2005.* Departamento sociología Universidad de Chile. Disponible en http://www.csociales.uChile.cl/publicaciones/sociologia/docs/analisis2005.pdf

Tironi, E. (1999). *La irrupción de las masas y el malestar de las élites: Chile en el cambio de siglo*. Grijalbo, Santiago de Chile.

Zemelman, M. I. Jara. (2006). Seis Episodios de la Educación Chilena, 1920-1965. Ediciones Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades. Universidad de Chile. Santiago de Chile.