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Translocal interconnections of the Chilean student movement: widening socio-political imaginaries, strengthening organisations

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the translocal relations of the Chilean Student Movement. While existing research has primarily focused on the movement's national context, this study explores its broader global interactions. Drawing on life stories and secondary sources, the article examines three pivotal scenes of translocal relations that shaped the movement's socio-political imaginary and organisational strategies. The Chilean Student Movement's translocal relationships, integrating narratives from the Latin American tradition and global organisations like the United Nations and OECD, deepened the movement's understanding of educational inequality and enhanced its mobilisation power. Furthermore, the connections with the Colombian student movement, highlighting the production of solidarity networks and collaborative knowledge efforts, raised awareness about neoliberal educational agendas and developed effective strategies against repressive measures. In the long term, the translocal connections between political collectives and former activists emerging from the Chilean student movement and the Spanish Indignados broadened the movement's political strategy beyond university campuses to institutional politics. To conclude, the article discusses the significance of translocal relations, stressing the importance of evaluating long-term consequences and addressing methodological challenges in such projects.

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Introduction

During the early 2010s, a global wave of protests emerged, with students often at the forefront. These protests were motivated by various causes, but a recurring theme among student movements was their demand for equal, accessible, and public education for everyone. These movements faced resistance but also inspired hope as potential agents of transformative change. The contemporary Chilean Student Movement (hereafter CSM) is a notable example.

From 2006 to 2015, the CSM consistently advocated for a more democratic and socially equitable education system, challenging the legacy of the 'Pinochet education' era. The movement opposed socioeconomic inequalities and educational segregation resulting from neoliberal policies during Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990), such as decentralisation and a voucher-system funding model emphasising the prioritisation of public interests over market-driven ones and advocating

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for free access to education for all (Bellei and Cabalin 2013). The movement triggered transformations, fostering new imaginaries, subjectivities, and social-political processes that underscored the importance of social justice in education. The mobilisation resulted in a new educational reform agenda that increased the state's public role (Ávalos and Bellei 2019; Labbé 2011), political recognition of youth activism (Sandoval and Carvallo 2019; Santibanez 2021) and awareness of the detrimental effects of social inequality and profit in various domains of society (Mateluna Estay 2018; Bellei, Cabalin, and Orellana 2014). The movement spurred new understandings of democracy beyond mere elections (Aguilera 2017; Ganter 2016) and helped to galvanise a new generation of activists and political parties (Aguilera Ruiz 2014; Sandoval and Carvallo 2019; Santibanez and Ganter 2016), transforming Chile's political system.

This article aims to complement our knowledge of the CSM by analysing the significance of translocal relations for constructing social justice frameworks, mobilisation strategies, and long-term political institutionalisation processes within the movement. Our ten years of research on the CSM have led us to findings that suggest that considering translocal relations in the global circuit of the CSM can help understand the processes of constructing strategies and imaginaries around social justice of social movements and the student movement useful for scholars but also social justice advocates in Chile and around the world. While some comparative studies have examined the CSM alongside similar movements in other countries (Cini and Guzmán-Concha 2017; Van de Velde 2022), they often maintain a nation-state interpretation of the CSM. Our approach analyses its relational dimension across various global spaces, complementing predominant national and comparative efforts. By broadening our analysis beyond the limited national perspective, we expect to encourage dialogue and discussion, opening new spaces for discourse on social justice in Chile.

Additionally, while research has highlighted the significance of social justice frames for CSM imaginaries, our study provides further insight into the crafting of these imaginaries. This approach reveals that the articulation can involve contradictory frameworks, impacting the mobilisation capacity of the CSM. While prior research acknowledges the CSM's innovative mobilisation strategies, more attention should be given to how it circulates ideas, incorporates new strategies from cross-border movements, and leverages external knowledge and experience to enhance mobilisation capacity. Dialogues with global movements can foster the development of new strategies and address shared global challenges, strengthening the global struggle for social justice. Furthermore, most research on the CSM has primarily examined its national-level political impact, delving into biographical trajectories and social organisations that arise from it, forming new political entities. We expect to broaden the scope by analysing connections with parallel movements in 2010 and their implications shaping long-term institutional political trajectories at a translocal level. This provides insights into national processes and contributes to the global discourse on the long-term trajectories of significant movements, particularly the 'movement of movements' in the late first decade of the twenty-first century.

As such, we expect to open a research agenda that benefits academics and social justice advocates. It is crucial to comprehend how the formation of ideals and strategies in the fight for social justice circulates globally. This understanding can help us emphasise the significance of exploring, thinking about, and designing new strategies to promote social justice translocal connections. These connections can enrich and mobilise national efforts, attract new audiences, and broaden the support base for social movements in Chile and across the planet.

The struggle of student movements for social justice and the importance of exploring their translocal relations

Since the 2010s, global student movements have garnered academic attention due to their scale, social composition, imaginaries, and innovative protest methods, demonstrating the students' potential for advancing social justice globally. Student movements have effectively raised awareness and advocated for structural reforms to address systemic inequalities. The 'mustfall' student protests

in South Africa highlighted the link between neoliberalism and colonialism (Chikane 2018), while #yosoy132 emphasised the importance of promoting media transparency and accountability, challenging dominant narratives and including marginalised perspectives in the Mexican political system (Treré 2013). The Maple Spring movement in Canada, initially protesting tuition fee hikes, had a broader impact by sparking collective resistance against austerity measures, ultimately resulting in the downfall of the regional government (Bégin-Caouette and Jones 2014). Globally, student movements play a crucial role in championing alternative visions of collective societal action, serving as pivotal forces catalysing social justice in educational institutions and broader society.

Extensive studies on CSM emphasised its role in evaluating and addressing socioeconomic inequality. The movement proposed changes in recognising students as relevant educational actors, shedding light on how the neoliberal model led to inequality that damaged social justice and education in Chile (Larrabure and Torchia 2015). Moreover, the CSM encouraged research to find solutions for a more equitable education system. The movement brought together different groups, including social, political, and academic sectors, resulting in education proposals and new approaches to social justice (Donoso 2016). The movement promoted studies on social justice, examining the economic inequalities and segregation resulting from the country's neoliberalization since the 1980s. Neoliberalization has particularly impacted segregation and perpetuated economic disparity in the educational system (Bellei 2013). The CSM fostered research that shared perspectives with global literature that seeks to critically understand the rise of neoliberalism as a 'Global Trend in Education' (Rizvi and Lingard 2006; Apple 2004) and research exploring how neoliberal ideologies have had profound impacts on social justice, especially in the educational realm (Davies and Bansel 2007). However, student mobilisations in Chile crafted a student agency-centred social justice conceptualisation, emphasising social movements' transformative potential. CSM played a pivotal role in questioning and producing the concept of social justice (Guzmán-Valenzuela 2016; Inzunza et al. 2019). As such, studies on social justice in Chile highlight young people's role in producing, expanding and representing the concept.

The collaboration between the CSM and social justice studies in Chile has made notable progress in understanding critiques of the neoliberal social development model, navigating individual challenges, and uncovering the strategies of social movements for justice. Nevertheless, we contend that further development is necessary. Developing a comprehensive understanding of student movements within the social justice framework requires research exploring how their imaginaries and repertoires circulate needs to be *relational* and *translocal*. A *relational approach* involves directing attention towards the interactions among various actors within student movements, thereby avoiding assumptions of internal unity and recognising the internal diversity within these movements. This perspective is supported by multiple studies conducted on the CSM, which reveal the existence of diverse views within the movement (Aguilera Ruiz 2014; Paredes 2019). We complement the *relational approach* by delving into the *translocal relations* of these actors, thereby addressing the interconnectedness that extends beyond national boundaries within student movements. Drawing upon Appadurai's insights on the production of locality (Appadurai 1994), our focus lies in investigating how the imaginaries and frames of student movements are shaped in a context where technology enables dialogues between subnational, national and transnational spheres. This framework allows us to analyse the social and cultural bonds that emerge in an era characterised by globalisation and the increased mobility of people and ideas (Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013). Drawing from the experiences of past movements like the Zapatista uprising in 1994 and the Global Justice Movement, we recognise that there is still much to learn about the translocal relations among activists, where shared objectives concerning democracy, social justice, and human dignity intersect (Bringel 2017; Glasius and Pleyers 2013). In doing so, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of the CSM and uncover the intersections between the CSM and broader global struggles.

Nevertheless, when it comes to our research approach, there are significant challenges that require careful attention. One of the main challenges is crafting a methodological device that can capture the fluidity and complexity of translocal relations and help us understand the subtle but

relevant aspects of the movements and individuals involved. Specifically, this challenge is evident in how we choose, build, analyse and interpret data comprehensively. These methodological challenges demanded a constant awareness of the limitations inherent in the approach, laying the ground for further research in this area.

Methodological device: small stories

Since 2012, our research team at the University of Concepción in Chile has extensively studied the CSM as a crucial form of youth activism, delving into its ideas, collective action strategies, and its relationship to personal experiences within the context of neoliberalism (Ganter 2016; Santibanez 2021) and generational dynamics (Ganter and Zarzuri 2020; Santibanez and Ganter 2016). Our decade-long focus has evolved to examine the CSM's long-term dynamics using diverse research techniques, including interviews, focus groups, life history interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, and document/media analysis. This progression has led us to explore connections with new political processes (Ganter 2022; Santibanez 2022) and shed light on overlooked aspects in existing academic studies, such as the translocal relations of the CSM.

This article analysed digitalised news (2011-2017), 22 activist interviews, and six focus groups to examine the CSM cycle. The study explored narratives connecting the CSM to translocal spaces beyond national borders using a 'small story' analytical approach. It illustrates how CSM imaginaries, frames, and strategies shaped or were shaped by experiences beyond national boundaries. The Small Story Analytical Framework prioritises studying diverse narrative activities focused on ongoing, hypothetical, or shared events within a conversation (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). It emphasises participants' action orientation in constructing their sense of self and the world within specific social contexts such as interviews (Ryan 2008). Following Georgakopoulou (2006) by exploring former CSM activists' small stories, our study shifted from life narratives to contingent, emergent narrative productions, revealing unnoticed translocal relations embedded in the larger life stories of activists. As such, the approach helps us to recognise ten life stories representing a range of translocal experiences, showcasing more active involvement experiences within the movement from various student collectives, including leaders and coordinators of student federations.

Afterwards, we conducted a detailed analysis of these small stories to understand the main characteristics of the constructed narratives and how they relate to other narratives that emerged from interviews and focus groups. This led to the identification of three broad categories discussed in the following section. The first category concerns the construction of imaginaries around social justice, the second focuses on strategies used during mobilisation around social justice, and the third pertains to long-term strategies for achieving specific social justice goals. After organising the different small stories on these three categories of translocality, we draw connections between these and the specific translocal experiences emerging in each category. We then analysed secondary sources, including interviews and digitised press reports, to explore elements not necessarily detailed in the translocality stories. These resulted in connecting with the following translocal experiences:

- OECD and IMF: Translocality stories unveiled the student movement's perspective on social justice imaginaries integrated discourses from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The CSM strategically navigated its relationship with these organisations to leverage their legitimacy while critiquing their policies.
- Student Movements in Argentina and Colombia: Elements of the CSM connected with Historical and Contemporary Student Movements, emphasising Argentina's relevance. Simultaneously, they connected with Colombia, a country that, like Chile, witnessed substantial student

mobilisations against education privatisation and commercialisation. These connections established solidarity relations and mutual learning.

- **Podemos in Spain:** Translocal small stories indicate that elements of the CSM forged long-term connections thanks to translocal experiences. Secondary sources analysis suggests that some of these groups connected with Podemos in Spain, a political party originating from institutionalised sectors of the Spanish 15M Social Movement. The analysis focuses on how these processes shaped long-term strategies and knowledge for political institutionalisation.

Utilising the Small Stories approach has proven to be effective in our analysis of the translocal relations of the CSM, offering potential applications for studying other social movements within Chile and beyond. Upon reconsidering previously overlooked data, this approach helped us to unveil unrecognised relationships, pointing to new emerging issues highlighted by Chilean literature. However, the methodology has certain limitations that could be improved in future research. The suggested findings primarily emerge from narratives that may need to fully capture the practical significance of these translocal relations for the CSM, and the small stories approach led us to focus on high-militant experiences within the movement that only encompass some CSM experiences. Acknowledging the literature on contemporary social movements, which emphasises the richness of heterogeneity and diversity in explaining social phenomena, our findings provide initial insights into globally scaled and circulated phenomena in the context of the CSM and worldwide. So, these findings must be taken cautiously as an invitation to further developments in the area.

Three scenes of translocal relations

Right to education as a public good and critique of its commodification

From 2006 to 2015, the CSM demanded free, high-quality education, targeting the market-driven model established by the 1990 Organic Constitutional Law on Education. The concern was its adverse effects on quality, equity, and accessibility. Their demands also included increased government investment, democratising the education system, and improving infrastructure for equalising learning conditions. Peaking in 2011, the CSM also pushed for free university education and advocated for a non-profit educational system, changes to student selection in higher education, and democratised governance in Higher Education Institutions. The movement wove together its frames and imaginaries with education and social justice, envisioning significant changes for education and society.

The CSM acknowledged its pragmatic demands for social justice as anti-neoliberal, reflecting an evolution deeply intertwined with Chile's complex neoliberal history. Arising from a critique of the Pinochet dictatorship era, the CSM questioned intensive neoliberal policies, such as education decentralisation, marketisation, and defunding public schooling. Left-wing student collectives challenged the persisting neoliberal legacy of the education system since the 1990s. The 2002 student protests criticised the state's reduced support for school transportation and highlighted the challenges of neoliberal modernisation, perpetuating structural inequality by reducing support to low-income students. This critique expanded in 2005, with higher-education students questioning student loan-based funding policies. A process that set the stage for the widespread call of the CSM in 2006, weaving an imaginary of social justice deeply rooted in an anti-neoliberal critique.

As such, the CSM emerged as a powerful force opposing the neoliberal model, transcending pragmatic demands to advocate for structural transformations addressing root inequalities. The CSM effectively compelled the political system to shift its educational agenda toward addressing social justice issues in education. The movement influenced the 2013 presidential election and subsequent reforms by the Bachelet government. Facing political challenges, the government enacted the Law of Educational Inclusion, prohibiting arbitrary discrimination, regulating financing, and

prohibiting profit in state-funded educational institutions. Another critical reform was the Higher Education Law, aiming for equitable, accessible, and quality higher education, including free education for low and middle-income families, a new financing system, and a ban on profit. In this context, the CSM raised critical issues but faced challenges translating their anti-neoliberal stance into actual educational reform, primarily because of the complexity of navigating institutional politics and parliamentary negotiations. The movement faced significant cooptations (Segovia and Gamboa 2012; Espinoza and González 2015), and reforms differed from CSM's demands (Penaglia and Mejias 2019). The criticism of Bachelet's reforms by the CSM led to the emergence of new political groups, such as the Frente Amplio. Taking advantage of the 2019 protests in Chile and working alongside other parties like the Communist Party, Gabriel Boric – a former student activist and Frente Amplio member – was elected president in 2022. During his campaign, Boric pledged to 'dismantle neoliberalism'. However, his government, similar to Bachelet's, faces limitations due to its weakened political power.

In the long term, the CSM faced cultural challenges in consolidating the legitimacy of its anti-neoliberal imaginary, emphasising the public role of the state for quality education versus a meritocratic approach to shaping reforms. To garner support at the time of mobilisation, the movement crafted an imaginary combining anti-neoliberal concepts with the aspirations of lower and middle-class Chileans for accessible, high-quality education, representing the social integration aspirations of new classes shaped by neoliberal policies amid the decline of the workers' movement. Over time, the CSM's crafted imaginary, merging anti-neoliberal and meritocratic discourses, faced challenges in influencing educational reforms. Support for the CSM declined among initial backers. The reforms implemented by the Bachelet government, which the CSM perceived as timid, encountered broad rejection in polls. One notable example was the widespread criticism of eliminating merit-based selection in public schools. In this context, right-wing parties adopted CSM's call for quality education but coopted it with a neoliberal-conservative logic. These groups have increasingly gained support in advocating for selection, competition, and increasing private roles as a valid response to this demand. This challenge underscores the complexity and tensions within the CSM's imaginaries and frames.

In crafting these CSM imaginaries and frames, our study suggests that activists established trans-local relations with collectives in Latin American universities, aligning with the historical demands of the Latin American student movement rooted in the Cordoba Movement of 1918 in Argentina. Originating at the National University of Córdoba, the Cordoba Movement influenced higher education in Latin America, including subsequent student movements in Chile. Interviews with former activists indicate that core elements of the reform, such as university autonomy, student participation, and educational modernisation, resonated in the CSM, forming solidarity and joint work. However, at the same time, despite acknowledging the influence of the Latin American tradition, participants in the CSM also suggest a movement of expansion to other 'discursive pillars':

Although we connected with Córdoba, the Argentine case was always discussed because public university education is free in Argentina. However, Argentina has always been difficult to reference in Chile because its economic system has always been in turmoil, and all the phenomena that occurred in Argentina prevented it from being a flag, an example to follow. So, we did more internal work that took several years, and finally, the discourse of the CONFECH¹ 2011 began to synthesise in 2008. In 2008, in work done by FECH at that time, together with the Catholic University, where we also participated, we attended a Congress call for reform for the new university. It was there where this idea of free, public and equal education emerged. It was there where the pillars, such as financing and institutionalisation, emerged as significant discursive pillars (LS2).

The Latin American imaginary, inspired by the Cordobazo movement in Argentina, was shaped through strong connections between student federations. Continental congresses held in various countries, such as Mexico in 1920 and 1931, Costa Rica in 1933, Chile in 1937, Uruguay in 1955, and Argentina in 1957, sustained this narrative. This continuity over time influenced social mobilisations in the 1960s, democratising all the national universities in Chile between 1968 and 1972. Suppressed during the Pinochet Dictatorship, demands for university autonomy, academic

freedom, free education, and the democratisation of higher education have been reinstated by contemporary student movements, as the student congress of 2008 suggests.

However, as we have discussed, a noticeable shift connected the anti-neoliberal imagination around social justice with meritocratic-centred and economic development-based educational narratives. In this sense, our study suggests that from 2006 to 2015, translocal relations played a role in shaping this articulation. In 2011, CSM activists broadened their discursive foundations by using reports from the OECD and IMF to underscore the relevance of their demands. Despite the historical criticism of these institutions by the CSM, student collectives utilised these reports to highlight the issue of educational inequality and the imperative of state intervention in higher education. In October 2011, the IMF recommended directing Chilean fiscal resources towards addressing education, infrastructure needs, income inequality, and the expanding middle class. The advice cautioned against significant cuts in public spending on these areas, citing their comparatively low levels compared to regions with similar per capita income. In response to this report, Giorgio Jackson, the president of the student federation of the Pontifical Catholic University, expressed:

It is the IMF saying it, and within the OECD countries, Chile is one of the countries that pays the least in taxes. So, making that leap so that the country grows harmoniously and not in a concentrated form as it is today essential (...) It is four percentage points of GDP that could be allocated to spending. We need 1.5% to finance all education (Jackson 2011a).

Something similar happened with the use of OECD narratives. While the CSM criticised the institution for emphasising education quality and effectiveness for global economic competition, they also used this discourse to question the education system's failure to provide competencies for the Chilean job market. In October 2017, CSM leaders travelled to Europe to advocate for their cause and seek international support. During their tour, they had a meeting with representatives from the OECD. Giorgio Jackson commented on this visit by saying:

Many of the concerns relate to how countries that have achieved development implemented, especially before achieving development, free public education in many cases and of high quality (...) How this demystifies the argumentative and absurd claim that it is impossible or regressive for the poor to pay for the education of the rich, and how it can be made sustainable through tax reform and the benefits it has brought to different OECD countries ... We need to invest in knowledge to achieve development. Investing in this is a decision made by society; it only remains for the president to put it into practice and thus be able to advance towards equitable development. The state is indebted to one of the main recommendations of the OECD, which has to do with strengthening the public education system and ending the reproduced structural inequalities (Jackson 2011b).

Between 2011 and 2012, social media facilitated global access to institutional reports, like those from the OECD or IMF, empowering student activists with insights into global education challenges. This knowledge was leveraged to advocate for educational reforms in Chile. Student leaders utilised TV appearances to articulate issues, drawing on OECD and IMF reports and comparisons with European welfare states to critique Chilean education policies. In this sense, the CSM adds to the historical importance of the OECD and IMF in shaping the country's educational reforms. Through these translocal connections, activists fostered dialogues that contributed to building an imaginary centred on educational transformation, anchored in the 'Right to Education' principle. While its impact on CSM mobilisation potential is uncertain, it demonstrates a translocal layer in shaping a social imaginary and frames appealing to those seeking radical change and those aspiring to improve educational opportunities to climb the meritocratic ladder in the Chilean neoliberal society.

As such, from 2006 to 2015, the CSM exhibited remarkable adaptability in navigating and shaping mobilisation frameworks. This unique characteristic, evident even in integrating opposing imaginaries, distinguishes it within the history of student movements. CSM's capacity to read the socio-political context may recall student protests in 1949 aligning with the broader mobilisation to reduce transportation fares or the student protests against the dictatorship that pressed for educational reform and co-governance of universities but also expanded their scope to engage in the mobilisation for the return to democracy. In both historical cases, akin to the one scrutinised in

this article, the student movement emerged as a pivotal societal actor, forming significant alliances with various sectors of Chilean society. However, these movements, in the long run, faced setbacks. The demand for reduced transportation fares faded quickly, and the authoritarian practices of the dictatorship persisted in the 1990s, preventing students from reclaiming the spaces of democratisation and autonomy experienced before its onset in 1973.

The CSM showcased unparalleled adaptability and framework-building for social justice. The CSM's resonance with Chile's complex history of neoliberal modernisation made it a key player in pursuing a more equal society. Simultaneously, the CSM utilised neoliberal frameworks from institutions like the OECD and IMF to legitimise their demands. Despite effectively introducing critical issues into public discourse, the student movement has struggled to translate anti-neoliberal frameworks on social justice into tangible changes in the education system. Using these global ideals by institutions such as the IMF or the OECD has benefited legitimisation. Over time, this flexibility may have created vulnerability for the CSM, allowing opposing actors to exploit it. They might capitalise on the movement's legitimised issues, adopting its slogans while dismissing the provided solutions and diagnoses.

Imaginaries and repertoires against the criminalisation of protest: translocal relations with the MANE in Colombia

As discussed earlier, the Student Movement has a rich history of international collaboration and connections, including active engagement with Latin American student movements. However, translocal relations reached a significantly higher intensity from 2006–2015. Concurrently with the CSM, student movements emerged globally during the same period in Quebec (2012), Spain (2011), England (2010), and Puerto Rico (2010–2011). Our findings indicate the presence of translocal relations between these movements. In 2011, the CSM received widespread global solidarity from social and student movements. Demonstrations and protests supporting the movement occurred in various cities across Latin America, Europe, Asia, and North America (BioBioChile 2011). During the 2006–2015 period, a notable instance of regional collaboration occurred with Argentina, a country with which the student movement has a longstanding history of translocal connections. These connections were pivotal in shaping CSM frames, and collaboration proved essential for international support and reinforcing the narrative for educational reform. With support from the Argentine Student Movement, Chilean students organised the 'Assembly of Students Exiled for Education' in Buenos Aires. They leveraged social media to highlight problems in the Chilean education system, comparing them with public education in Argentina. The CSM's discourse gained legitimacy in Argentina, leading to positive news coverage and videos. These videos, which were used as an alternative to critical media coverage in Chile, were shared on social networks, serving as alternative media outlets that inspired Chilean activists. Additionally, the CSM's social media campaigns reached new heights with live streaming of university takeovers, going viral and gaining global media coverage. This provided alternative perspectives through international media, adding credibility to the movement's demands. The expanded media coverage influenced opinions and garnered support nationally and internationally. As an interview suggests:

Social media was crucial in mobilising people and spreading information during the protests. We used to gather to watch videos from Argentina, which offered a much more critical perspective of the Chilean education system and aligned closely with our demands. Thanks to social media, we managed to break through the media blockade and even got interviewed by international networks like CNN. A Medicine Student did a live broadcast of the repression on August 4th, which gained a significant number of views and caught the attention of CNN International. Using the same live broadcast, she was interviewed for the entire continent by 7 pm That was motivating (L.S.8)

In addition to the social media solidarity campaigns, student movements' shared concerns and aspirations worldwide led to translocal connections, including physical gatherings. Significant

connections emerged in the 2006–2015 cycle, for example, with the Quebec student movements. This translocal engagement facilitated the exchange of ideas, refining strategies based on shared experiences. For example, there was a symbiotic exchange between Chilean and Quebec student activists in the discourse on participatory democracy and direct action, enriching their advocacy repertoire. The open letter, signed by 109 Chilean student leaders and academics, condemning Bill 78 and expressing solidarity with the Quebec student movement, epitomises the spirit of translocal relations. There were also shared spaces, such as the ‘Student Leaders Speak Out’ event on October 15th, 2012, at the Graduate Center, CUNY, fostering a conversation between protagonists from hemispheric student struggles in Chile, Quebec, and New York. Our study found that one of the densest CSM translocal relations was established with the Colombian movement during this period. Since the emergence of the CSM, calls for solidarity mobilisations to support Chilean students were made by Colombian students. In August 2011, during the initial ceremony of the recently established Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil² (hereafter MANE), the links with other movements and explicitly with Chile were outlined in their inaugural declaration:

Hundreds of thousands of students, unemployed, workers, and ordinary citizens filled squares and parks, protesting against an unjust international economic order that is in a state of decline. In Latin America, students in Puerto Rico, Colombia, and other countries are mobilising under the banner of the social struggle in Chile, which has already completed more than three months of student takeovers and marches, culminating in the recent 48-hour worker-student strike (MANE 2011).

From the beginning, MANE emphasised the significance of the CSM, considering it a reference and inspiration for their struggles and demands. Interviews suggest that the connections among activists went beyond solidarity and recognition, playing a crucial role in shaping a translocal social imaginary – a collective transformative vision transcending geographical boundaries. This shared vision addressed challenges posed by neoliberal reforms in higher education. It extended across various territories where relationships between CSM activists and those who would later form MANE were crucial. The XVI CLAE conference in Uruguay in August 2011, titled ‘For Our America: Education, Unity, and Freedom,’ played a significant role by providing a platform for extensive political debates, focusing on the Chilean case. As a former activist suggests:

Our first encounter with the Colombian movement was at the OCLAE Congress. In more political terms, based on the diagnosis we brought to all these international instances, Chile had the most neoliberal educational model in Latin America. In many of the national contexts of Latin America, Chile was used as an example of progress and advancement. Based on the credit and financial policies implemented in Chile, many of these countries tried to implement reforms to generate a specific fee for the university. This collapsed with our mobilisation, or in other words, it collapsed as an example of success due to what was happening in our country. (...) So, I think that particularly the influence that the phenomenon of the CSM and social protests in Chile was to finally show the crisis, the social effects that the Chilean system generated and, therefore, a clear example of what not to follow (LS3).

Thanks to the mobilisation, Chile served as a cautionary example for other countries in education reforms within student movement platforms like student congresses. In these conferences, Chilean students highlighted the heavy burden on families, leading to indebtedness and significant educational segregation. These discussions revealed the challenges in Chilean society and underscored the adverse effects of neoliberal educational policies. Juan López a MANE member, emphasised this in an October 2011 interview.

We have been denouncing a systematic crisis in the university and higher education (...) What we foresee is that if we continue like this, we will end up like the universities in Chile, which are self-financing (...) I have read that in Chile, traditional universities are self-financed at 70%! We cannot get to that! (López 2011)

Interviews with activists suggest that translocal relations went beyond sharing frames and horizons of struggle. They aimed to extract insights from each other’s mobilisation repertoires, specifically to counter government attempts at criminalisation. In doing so, the student movements intensified their connections. In 2011, MANE invited students from CONFECH to their Congress in Bogota,

further enhancing the exchange of ideas and strategies between the movements. As an interviewed suggest:

The Colombian student movement invited us to their Congress at the end of 2011 (...). One line of work we had was facing the criminalisation of social protest. So, from there, our organic experience as federations, how we had organised, and what things had worked within the student mobilisation inside the university. The students somehow took over this space, made it their own, and began to do more spontaneous activities. The important thing was for the students to take ownership of the demands and, therefore, also try to be protagonists of that. I think Colombia understood it perfectly as they understood it well. One can see how the Colombian student movement imitates Chilean movements, especially regarding performance. (LS4)

Translocal relationships among activists in physical and virtual spaces facilitated the exchange of diagnoses and strategies within their shared struggle. During the 2011 student movements in Chile and Colombia, both governments employed the criminalisation of protests to discredit and depict protesters as a threat to public order and social stability. This strategy has historical roots in Latin America's latter half of the twentieth century when specific university student sectors adopted armed struggle or political violence to instigate political changes or confront military dictatorships and political repression. These historical experiences in countries like Chile and Colombia contributed to a narrative that periodically associates students with violence. As such, isolated violence incidents were exploited to justify intense police repression, discouraging student activism. In Chile, this resulted in 4,045 arrests, 235 injuries, and one fatality.

Collaboration between the CSM and MANE facilitated discussions to counteract the criminalisation agenda promoted by both governments. Activists shared experiences of expanding citizen support and destigmatising the student struggle through festive and theatrical elements in protests. This enabled them to bring attention to government repression and human rights violations, further enhancing the movement's legitimacy. This includes creative utilisation of civil disobedience, playful expressions, and leveraging social media platforms for sharing materials from diverse contexts. The movements have amplified their impact by nurturing these connections, sharing experiences of countering repression, expanding their legitimacy to a broader audience, and effectively countering government strategies. This underscores the significant role of translocal networking as a catalyst for collective mobilisation and emphasises the power of grassroots movements, especially when using social media to draw motivation and material support from various contexts, in driving impactful social change.

Building a platform for institutional contestation: from student collectives to the 'Frente Amplio'

Student movements in the 20th and 21st centuries display unique mobilisation capabilities. Unlike other social movements, these movements face a distinct constraint – their members, primarily students, have a defined and limited period of involvement in educational spaces, which discontinue their involvement once they complete their studies, posing a challenge to sustaining pressure on governments over an extended period. The CSM mobilised actively from 2006 to 2015, sustained by the continuous participation of secondary and higher education students. To maintain momentum and sustain its agenda the movement also triggered a broader social movement for education, garnering support from sectors like the teachers' union and civil society organisations. These alliances persisted during the legislative process initiated by the government, enabling ongoing advocacy for their demands.

Simultaneously, former CSM activists and political collectives recognised the need for new strategies to sustain advocacy for public education and address systemic issues requiring long-term efforts. One such strategy involved active participation in institutional politics, marking a significant shift in public discourse. The entry of student movement leaders into Congress in 2014, known as the 'student bench,' was pivotal, showcasing the potential to challenge established political institutions. They adopted a dual strategy, combining their presence in parliament with ongoing

street mobilisation to advance their objectives. At this turning point, political collectives, including former student movement leaders, actively worked to establish a more organic and depersonalised approach to interactions with political institutions. Recognising the importance of overcoming internal political fragmentation, they emphasised constructing a new framework for diverse pressure tactics. Translocal relationships and experiences notably influenced the shaping of their strategic orientation during this transformative process. In the Latin American context, various organisations invited workshops and conferences, offering valuable platforms for exchanging CSM-related experiences. In these dynamic settings, diverse collectives from the student movement, despite differing perspectives, ultimately recognised shared commonalities.:

I believe it was very significant that several of us found in the training schools in Argentina and Brazil, that our histories were too similar to continue working separately. The libertarian left and the consejos were separate. However, we had been working together in all the federations at the national level for about three years, doing almost the same thing for a long time(..). These international relationships and solidarity made ideological and national differences, or what we thought was different, dissipate (LS6)

A collective identity, symbolised as the sense of 'us,' formed through non-conventional interactions diverging from traditional street gatherings. Meeting in diverse locations and engaging in various contexts allowed a reassessment of shared elements previously obscured during the pursuit of a federation or student council elections. During this journey, the Frente Amplio emerged as a significant political entity, established in 2017. Swiftly positioning itself as a third electoral force in Chilean politics, it unified diverse ideological perspectives to establish transformative political and social power. Central to its vision were transcending the neoliberal system, fostering unity within diversity, maintaining autonomy from corporate influence, and constructing a democratically formulated programme as the foundation of collective strength. Its roots trace back to the aftermath of the widespread protests in 2011.

In 2014, the *Podemos* political party emerged in Spain and formed important connections with former activists of the CSM. It quickly gained attention as an institutional reflection of the *indignados movement*³ and a representation of people's desires for political change. *Podemos's* entry into the European Parliament in 2014 exemplified its challenge to institutional power, serving as a model for collective projects with similar aims. This success highlighted the potential of linking social mobilisation with the emergence of new political forces capable of challenging traditional parties. In 2016, six months before the formation of the Frente Amplio in Chile, *Revolución Democrática*, a constituent party originating from the NAU Student Collective at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, received an invitation from *Podemos*. They were the sole Chilean political party invited to observe the general elections in Spain, providing them with a valuable opportunity to witness firsthand *Podemos's* confirmation as the third political force in Spain. During the visit, Sebastián Depolo, the national coordinator of *Revolución Democrática*, shared his perspective.

Podemos shows that it is possible to revitalise the idea of a broad and appealing left coalition that takes on the demands of citizens calling for change ... we are working, with our people living in Spain, to learn from the experience of *Podemos*. We see that bipartisanship is coming to an end in that country. While acknowledging differences, this is what we would like to push for in Chile in 2017, (Depolo 2016).

Podemos's efforts in Spain were a model for challenging established institutions, influencing the vision for the future Frente Amplio organisation. Engaging in these institutional disputes provided opportunities for exchanging experiences and conducting joint analyses. In October 2016, Gabriel Boric, a leader in parliament and former CSM activist, and Giorgio Jackson, the only deputy of *Revolución Democrática*, were invited to Barcelona. They participated in a 'Chile: Politics and Social Movements' discussion. During the discussion, Gabriel Boric compared the challenges faced by *Podemos* with those the still-unknown Frente Amplio would encounter. Boric emphasised the need for the social movement to expand into areas of political influence, including local, regional, and national governments. The challenge lay in reconciling these processes, often characterised by inherent imbalances. About a year before the formation of the Frente Amplio, in early

2016, amid the rise of Podemos as a prominent force in the Spanish parliament, Boric met with Pablo Iglesias, the leader of Podemos. In a column titled ‘Podemos, learning for Chile, without copying,’ Boric expressed his viewpoint on the matter:

One of the topics we discussed was the challenge of the need to allocate their best leaders to strictly electoral tasks. Undoubtedly, they are aware that they have a deficit that is not sustainable in the long term and that they run the risk of becoming an electoral machine (bureaucratised), neglecting the social struggles that are inherent to any transformation project(...) We both agreed on the irreplaceable importance of being involved in real processes for the constitution of any emerging political force(Boric 2016).

In forming the political force to translate CSM’s visions into governmental action, Gabriel Boric, drawing from his analysis of Podemos in Spain, highlighted the inherent tension between institutionalisation and active participation in ongoing social struggles. In 2017, the emergence of Frente Amplio as Chile’s third major political force led to significant responsibilities in the 2019 Social Protest. This heightened tension caused internal divisions and the disintegration of Frente Amplio, resulting in the departure of numerous former CSM activists. New readings of the institutional landscapes after the Protests left wounds within the conglomerate. However, these paved the way for this former student leader to assume the country’s presidency.

Final comments

This article contributes by spotlighting and analysing the CSM’s collective impact in bringing public and common issues to the forefront, especially in Chile’s history marked by deregulation, market influence, and private sector dominance. We analysed the translocal relations of the CSM, identifying three key scenes in its emergence, development, and long-term trajectory. We underlined the CSM relevance to addressing new educational demands centred on social justice, highlighting how the market system intensified social inequality and deepened socio-educational segregation in Chile over the past 30 years. The movement was led by young activists who employed translocalisation, merging global and local elements through face-to-face and digital collaborations that facilitated regional and global dialogues during the CSM and its sustaining strategies. As such, this marks a significant contribution of the movement and this article to academic and policy debates in Chile. The study highlights the importance of analysing global translocal relations in CSM and similar campaigns. It aims to emphasise the relevance of translocal thinking for both scholars in social movements and social justice advocates. These strategies present opportunities for organisational strengthening, but their diversification poses challenges that require careful consideration for long-term effectiveness, particularly regarding institutional and cultural changes.

Drawing from our experience on the topic, for future research, we recommend a deeper exploration of intergenerational learning within CSM’s translocal expression, which is crucial for understanding its impact on social justice over the past 30 years. First, exploring translocal forms of generational collaborations is an avenue for further investigation. Significant and enduring lessons from student movements may be linked to sustained collaboration between diverse generations. This ‘long march of cooperation between generations’ has been observed nationally in various waves of youth movements, including the youth social movement in the ‘90s, the student protests of 2006 and 2011, the feminist mobilisation in 2018, and the social protests in 2019. Their translocal intergenerational linkages are still unknown. Second, further exploration can delve into the translocality of the current prefigurative ethos of political socialisation among generational peers of youth. The autonomous development of social justice by youth in recent Chilean history is marked by autonomy and a prefigurative ethos. However, more is needed to know about the translocal relations in building this prefigurative ethos beyond national borders.

To conclude, with over a decade of observation and analysis of the CSM, we expect our contribution from this article to crystallise at least four levels. First, studying the student movement

provides a unique lens to understand the construction and enactment of social justice globally. It reveals challenges, offers hopeful possibilities, and explores agency as people in various places, allowing us to map and build new horizons of social justice. Second, incorporating the translocal dimension in analysing the student movement reveals resonances globally, shaping a diverse political culture. Collective action repertoires start to speak a common global language, often involving social media-communicational tactics. Translocal adaptable frames and imaginaries play a structuring and coordinating role across various scales, fostering massive and rapid engagement. Third, this article advocates for examining social movements through a situated relational perspective, focusing on the trajectories of former activists. Interdisciplinary collaboration is proposed as a valuable approach, integrating sociology, history, and political philosophy alongside knowledge from the student movement in diverse formats (conferences, documents, discussions, narratives, and experiences). However, at the same time, creating a methodology to investigate translocality presents various challenges. Although traces of translocal relations are evident, comprehending the degree of their significance for the CSM and other student movements necessitates a more detailed and complex methodological approach.

Lastly, this article emphasises the relevance of student movements from over a decade ago as they continue to resonate and have enduring impacts on understanding and doing social justice worldwide. In this medium to long-term perspective, ongoing translocal relationships shed light on defining characteristics influencing how the envisioned changes by these movements are unfolding and being challenged. It is crucial to advance further studies and approaches to explore and strengthen these transformative processes, as they have a relevant role in improving the lives of many people around the globe.

Notes

1. CONFECH, the Confederation of Students of Chile, is the country's largest student organisation, uniting federations from universities nationwide. Operating democratically, it has a three-decade history. It is pivotal in coordinating and mobilising the Chilean student movement, advocating for student interests and fostering collaboration on educational and social issues.
2. MANE emerged in 2011 in response to the higher education reform mandated by Law 30 of 1992 in Colombia. Students from diverse universities protested against the reform, fearing it would privatise education and increase student debt. Collective actions, including a month-long student strike and numerous marches, gained support from various organisations and unions. The government withdrew the reform bill from Congress in response to the protests.
3. The Indignados movement, also called the 15-M started in Spain in 2011 as a social and political protest. It grew due to widespread dissatisfaction with the economic crisis, high joblessness, political corruption, and lack of representation.

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