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# **Social Movements and Public Policy in Chile: An Analysis of the Student Movement of 2011 and the No+AFP Movement of 2016**

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## **Abstract**

Social movements have been studied for their possible influence within political systems. In the past 12 years, Chile has registered an increasing number of social movements that have played an important role in the political system. This article adopts a qualitative methodology with a comparative approach of a case, comparing the student movement of 2011 and the No+AFP movement of 2016 and the influence of each movement on the public policy process, their linkages with political parties and whether this connection contributes to the movement having a greater incidence in decision-making. For the development of the comparison, the responses of the political system to the movements will be used; the incidence of the social movements will be analyzed by the level of intervention in the stages of public policy; and finally, the influence of movements will be examined, distinguishing a reactive influence (refusing to accept any decision of the authority) from a proactive influence (participating in the decision-making process of policies).

**Keywords:** social movements, public policy, students, pensions, Chile.

## **Introduction**

Social movements play a leading role in the policy process in Chile, especially since the constitutional reforms of 2005 that began a new cycle in national politics, and this article analyzes the policy influence two such movements have had. The new post-transition political cycle brought changes in certain political areas, one of which was Michelle Bachelet becoming the first

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woman president in 2006.<sup>1</sup> In addition, political parties' behavior was revitalized, which was the case in the electoral pact between the center-left Concertación coalition formed by the Christian Democratic Party, the Party for Democracy, the Socialist Party and the Radical Social Democratic Party – which the Communist Party joined in 2009 to later form the New Majority coalition in 2014. The right came to power in two terms (2010-2014 and 2018-2022), which triggered changes in its structure. The right-wing coalition traditionally formed by two parties – Independent Democratic Union and National Renewal – received two new members – Political Evolution and the Independent Regionalist Party.

There are also elements of continuity in this new post-transition political cycle known as “transition enclaves.” These are the formal and informal institutions inherited by political actors that practice patronage, control by the elite to select candidates, electoral politics, the domination of the parties in politics, the formulation of elitist and extra-institutional policies, and the untouchability of the economic system, among others.<sup>2</sup> This reality is one of the main unifying elements among social movements, mainly the disapproval of how candidates are selected, the electoral system, the educational model, among other topics.<sup>3</sup>

The movements that have arisen since 2006 have influenced the political agenda, achieving concrete policy changes in some cases, while in others they only put certain topics on the agenda. When they understood that it is important to have influence in the political system, various movements organized to run in the elections, with the Democratic Revolution and the Autonomous Left achieving congressional representation in 2010. They later went on to create an electoral coalition with other parties and movements, forming the Broad Front left-wing coalition that groups 14 parties and movements.

This article uses a comparative qualitative case study analysis based on an analysis of secondary sources, media analysis and interviews with key participants to collect information, taking a comparative approach within each

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<sup>1</sup> We talk about a new cycle because “in Chile, where institutions have been historically stable, the ‘protected democracy’ of Pinochet was dismantled in 2005.” Steven Levitsky and María V. Murillo “Construyendo instituciones sobre cimientos débiles: lecciones desde América Latina,” *Politai*, 3, n°5 (2012): 17-44, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Siavelis, “Enclaves de la transición y democracia chilena,” *Revista de Ciencia Política (Santiago)* 29, n.º1 (2009): 3-21.

<sup>3</sup> Antoine Maillet and Adrián Albala, “Conflictos socioambientales en los proyectos eléctricos en Chile (2005-2016): Un análisis configuracional,” *América Latina Hoy*, n.º 79 (2018): 125-49; Rodrigo Medel and Nicolás Somma, “¿Marchas, ocupaciones o barricadas? Explorando los determinantes de las tácticas de la protesta en Chile,” *Política y Gobierno* 23, n.º 1 (2016): 163-99; Tokichen Tricot, “Movimiento de estudiantes en Chile: Repertorios de acción colectiva ¿algo nuevo?,” *Revista F@ro*, n.º 15 (2012), <http://www.revistafaro.cl/index.php/Faro/article/view/63>.

case. It is a small-N comparative analysis with similar cases, but different in its results regarding political influence.<sup>4</sup> This article analyzes two movements with different levels of influence in the public policy process: The student movement in 2011 and the No+AFP movement in 2016.

These movements were chosen because their collective actions managed the biggest capacity to convene mass participation since the return to democracy and until Chile's social outburst in October 2019.<sup>5</sup> Both managed to put pressure on the political system with original repertoires of collective action that placed their demands on the public agenda and forced governments to make public policy proposals. However, only one managed to achieve structural changes in its sector. As shall be shown, they are movements that obtained quite different results, despite using quite similar strategies. This work assumes that both movements had different impacts on public policy because they had different strategies and interactions with state actors in the political system. While the student movement took advantage of the political network it had been creating to achieve public policies that were in line with their demands (including the public policy on free tuition in Chilean higher education), the No+AFP movement lost momentum and the capacity to influence due to the decision not to relate with the political system's actors and institutions, thus only managing to put the situation of pensions on the agenda. To measure the impact, the influence strategy of each movement is analyzed, distinguishing between reactive influence – that is, when one refuses to acknowledge or abide by a given decision by the authority – and proactive influence, or when one participates in the policymaking decision process.<sup>6</sup>

This article will first review the scientific literature that investigates the relationship between social movements and their development in the political system and public policies. Secondly, it will analyze the social movements chosen and compare them through two schemes that relate their influence on sectoral policy processes (education and pensions). Finally, it concludes with the effects of the two movements on the Chilean political system.

## Social Movements and their Relationship to Public Policies

There is no consensus regarding social movements and their influence on political systems. We know that at a structural level, movements' potential political

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<sup>4</sup> Edwin Amenta et al., "The Political Consequences of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36, n.º 1 (2010): 287-307.

<sup>5</sup> See Melany Barragán et al., «América Latina 2019: Vuelta a la inestabilidad», *IBEROAMERICANA* 20, n.º 73 (2020): 205-41.

<sup>6</sup> Miguel López, "Los movimientos sociales y su influencia en el ciclo de las políticas públicas," *Región y sociedad* 24, n.º 55 (2012): 159-97.

consequences are the extension of democratic rights and practices and the formation of new political parties.<sup>7</sup> This is possible because social movements represent an alternative form of participation that defies the State, making issues that are not on the political agenda a priority. They are usually nonpartisan organizations that try to gain political influence to generate changes within society.<sup>8</sup>

The influence of social organizations, and therefore of social movements, may vary depending on the strategic options they focus their efforts on; that is, on tactics, the relationships among organizations, the number of members, their resources and their successes.<sup>9</sup> However, it should be considered that the impact and influence of social movements decreases as the public policy process progresses.<sup>10</sup> In general, the literature recognizes the idea of influence as a substitute for results, consequences, or impacts.<sup>11</sup>

Social movements contribute to improving democracy, generating opportunities for democratization of the political system.<sup>12</sup> Democratization means a broader space for the participation of political and social actors in the democratic system, enhancing interaction between these actors and those in the government.<sup>13</sup> The government must adapt to this reality, since governing is not a single-actor activity, but rather it is exercised through governance, which has a more complex relational logic.<sup>14</sup> Social movements criticize the problems of democracy, usually the lack of it or institutions' insufficient capacity to solve problems and address demands. To be heard, they seek to influence the public policy process in some way,<sup>15</sup> whether through their protests or their political action. They interact with public institutions to gain influence and raise awareness, generating conflict to negotiate with those in power. Once they make the problem visible, they can intervene in the political agenda.<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Amenta et al., "The Political Consequences of Social Movements."

<sup>8</sup> Paul Burstein, "Interest Organizations, Political Parties and the Study Democratic Politics," in *Social Movements and American Political Institutions*, ed. Anne N. Costain and Andrew S. McFarland (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Sofía Donoso and Mauro Basaure, "La política contenciosa en el mundo de hoy. Entrevista con Sidney Tarrow," Serie Documentos de Trabajo, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Amenta et al., "The Political Consequences of Social Movements."

<sup>11</sup> López, "Los movimientos sociales."

<sup>12</sup> Edwin Cruz, "Movimientos sociales y democracia: una reflexión a propósito del caso colombiano," *Diálogos de saberes: investigaciones y ciencias sociales*, n.º 37 (2012): 115-28.

<sup>13</sup> Ricardo Uvalle, "Condiciones, procesos y horizontes en la transformación institucional y organizacional del Estado contemporáneo," *Iztapalapa. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 25, n.º 56 (2004): 19-37.

<sup>14</sup> López, "Los movimientos sociales."

<sup>15</sup> Cruz, "Movimientos sociales y democracia."

<sup>16</sup> James Granada, "Acción colectiva y oportunidades políticas en escenarios de políticas públicas: el caso del desplazamiento forzado en Medellín," *Estudios Políticos* 40 (2012): 76-97.

political agenda is a set of issues composed of events such as marches, crimes, speeches, etc., all events in which a public decision-maker must respond.<sup>17</sup> In this article, the political agenda includes the government agenda of state decision-makers (bureaucrats or politicians).

Social movements interpret the reality where problems occur and build a perception around them, generating a discourse that points to the cause of the problem and the solution.<sup>18</sup> The problem must be controversial to be of a public nature.<sup>19</sup> When it becomes a public problem, the solution involves the execution of public policies. When studying public policies, it is necessary to consider that context plays an important role, as problems do not occur in isolation, but respond to a specific social, political, or economic process. Each context provides a dynamic to the policies and the rules that define them.<sup>20</sup> Public policies are a state intervention that can reconcile positions on a problem. That is, they solve problems. For this, they must always be quality policies to avoid negative externalities for the population. A public policy must include guidelines or content, but it must also have instruments or mechanisms to carry out actions and include definitions that allow the prediction of its results.<sup>21</sup>

Social movements have more influence on public policy when they are strongly organized. If their power is weak, their chance of influence will be lower. Following this logic, Giugni describes two paths of investigation.<sup>22</sup> One is the concern about the policy impact of several organizational variables that has led researchers to ask themselves whether social movements that are strongly organized are more successful than movements with a weaker organization. In the second, the literature observes violent and disruptive behavior in protests, asking whether the use of disruptive tactics means more chances to achieve a change in policy than a protest with moderate strategies. Because of this, the relationship with public opinion is decisive.<sup>23</sup> This work argues that social movements are stronger and more successful when they can connect with political parties, since parties can offer more networks and

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<sup>17</sup> Mauricio Cortez and Antoine Maillet, "Trayectoria multinivel de una coalición promotora e incidencia en la agenda política nacional. El caso del conflicto de Pascua Lama y la ley de glaciares en Chile," *Colombia Internacional* 94 (2018): 3-25.

<sup>18</sup> Granada, "Acción colectiva."

<sup>19</sup> López, "Los movimientos sociales."

<sup>20</sup> Giovanna Valentini and Ulises Flores, "Ciencias sociales y políticas públicas," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 71, n.º num. esp. (2009): 167-91.

<sup>21</sup> Eugenio Lahera, *Introducción a las políticas públicas* (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Marco Giugni, "Was It Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 371-93.

<sup>23</sup> Rodolfo Disi, "The Nearness of Youth: Spatial and Temporal Effects of Student Protests on Public Opinion in Chile," *Latin American Politics and Society*, Forthcoming.

contacts beyond the logic of unity, allowing the movement to attain multisector characteristics.

Considering that movements and parties can articulate about particular issue, the pressure on the political system and the government increases. According to Burstein,<sup>24</sup> this link can improve their political capacity, since movements would upgrade their position in the public policy process. This process is divided into six moments: (a) *Access*: Willingness of the authorities to listen to a movement's concerns and worries; (b) *Agenda*: The authority is willing to put the social movement's demands on the political agenda; (c) *Adaptation*: The policy is coherent with the social movement's demands; (d) *Results*: The policy is implemented according to the movement's requirements; (e) *Impact*: The degree in which the political system's actions reduce a social movement's problems; (f) *Structure*: Political structures are transformed.

Ibarra, Gomá and Martí i Puig<sup>25</sup> argue that social movements can have an impact on each stage of the public policy process. This complex relationship between institutions and social movements can be described in the following stages: (a) *Appearance*: The social movement makes demands visible (opening impact); (b) *Access*: The authorities agree to meet with members of the social movement (procedural impact); (c) *Agenda*: The social movement's proposal is administered by the State; (d) *Formulation*: Public policy is approved (procedural impact); (e) *Execution*: Public policy is implemented (substantial impact); (f) *Impact*: Consequences of the measures adopted (substantial impact); (g) *Structure*: The system changes and improves the social movement's possibilities to influence (systemic impact).

Complementing the above-mentioned visions, López<sup>26</sup> argues that influence can be reactive when the movement refuses to recognize or respect any decision from the authority and chooses a path without interacting with it. Conversely, influence can also be proactive by participating in the process of policy decision making. A social movement can change its influence at any time, from a *proactive* to a *reactive influence* and vice versa, depending on the context in which it develops and the political decisions it makes to accomplish the change. In addition to the different levels of influence a social movement can attain in the public policy process, they must all overcome the opening impact to become successful. Social movements, though similar in organization, can have different effects on the system. To show this, the contexts of the two movements in question and the demonstration of the generalized discontent

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<sup>24</sup> Burstein, "Interest Organizations."

<sup>25</sup> Pedro Ibarra, Ricard Gomá, and Salvador Martí i Puig, "Los nuevos movimientos sociales. El estado de la cuestión," in *Movimientos sociales y derecho a la ciudad: creadoras de democracia radical*, ed. Pedro Ibarra, Salvador Martí i Puig and Ricard Gomá, 9-22 (Barcelona: Icaria, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> López, "Los movimientos sociales."

through their protests will be analyzed. The intention of these organized groups was to move towards unconventional political participation and try to correct problems.<sup>27</sup> For this, they developed various mechanisms of action that will be analyzed in the following paragraphs.

## The Student Movement of 2011

The student movement – known in 2006 as the “penguin revolution”<sup>28</sup> – set a precedent on how the political agenda can be influenced by citizens through unconventional forms of participation. This movement managed to make problems that had been ignored by the government visible and while “the main demands were not fulfilled, though much progress was made in terms of the short-term agenda, and ending the system of for-profit education and municipalization of educational institutions were left pending.”<sup>29</sup> The great success of this movement was that it put educational issues on the political agenda. Its legacy was to demonstrate that it was possible to develop unconventional politics in Chile. Prior to this mobilization there had been protests and marches between 2008 and 2010 that attempted to make various issues visible, the most memorable being environmental and educational ones. Those related to education did not have the necessary strength, since the marches and protests did not obtain massive responses, students did not respond to the calls of the leaders, there were no proposals and there was not a consolidated relationship with the rest of the actors involved in education.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, 2009 was a key year for the student movement.<sup>31</sup> That year the National Congress of Education was held, during which all levels of education (secondary, university) and different actors (students, teachers, education assistants, officials of the Ministry of Education, among others) managed to converge. The objective was to generate a diagnosis and common

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<sup>27</sup> Germán Bidegain and Tokichen Tricot, “Political Opportunity Structure, Social Movements, and Malaise in Representation in Uruguay, 1985–2014,” en *Malaise in Representation in Latin American Countries. Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay*, ed. Alfredo Joignant, Mauricio Morales, and Claudio Fuentes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> The penguin revolution is the name given to the secondary school students protests in 2006. They were the first massive protests that put a government under pressure since the return to democracy. See: Bülow, Marisa von, and Germán Bidegain. “It Takes Two to Tango: Students, Political Parties, and Protest in Chile (2005–2013)”. In *Handbook of Social Movements across Latin America*, edited by Paul Almeida and Allen Cordero Ulate, 179-94 (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Karina Delfino, personal communication, April 14, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Julio Sarmiento, personal communication, April 17, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Tricot, “Movimiento de estudiantes en Chile”.



proposals, as they understood it could lead to demand the necessary transformations in educational matters.<sup>32</sup> The right-wing candidate Sebastián Piñera, who would later win the elections, disagreed with the proposed changes for education. His campaign was focused mainly on economic growth, fighting crime, and trying to charm an electorate that was disappointed in the previous ruling coalition.<sup>33</sup> However, the earthquake in February 2010 changed priorities for both Piñera and the student movement.<sup>34</sup> For its part, the student movement had to postpone the strategy designed in the National Congress of Education, as the actors agreed that, given the impact of the earthquake, a strategy to position their demands would not be welcomed. According to the interviewees, going out to protest and demand changes in education when there were more urgent needs, such as rebuilding the homes of thousands of families, would be nonsense and “at that immediate moment, the enthusiasm and motivations of the students themselves were focused on going to the aid of those affected. The entire first semester of 2010 involved in voluntary work processes.”<sup>35</sup>

An unintended effect of volunteering was that the different student federations managed to consolidate themselves. The saturation point quickly identified by interviewees was that the emergence of the 2011 student movement was, in part, a consequence of the role that the federations had played in helping the earthquake victims, because an organizational structure was created that allowed the students of different levels to participate. This gave federations the opportunity to rebuild their convening capacity, to form local leaders and, therefore, to be in a better position and disposition to convene and activate the student movement. For example, Ballesteros points out that “the earthquake influenced both the government’s agenda and the strengthening of student federations. We mobilized more than three thousand students for volunteer work; that was good for our federation and the relationship with the students.”<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, the earthquake gave student organizations the context to add new demands. Now the government was asked for more resources for the universities that had been affected by the catastrophe. This demand, like most of the movement’s demands, came from the Chilean Student Confederation (CONFECH). CONFECH acted as a space where the movement’s strategic decisions were made and was composed of various social organizations and university student federations.<sup>37</sup> The central role of this confederation can be

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<sup>32</sup> Pablo Moyano, personal communication, April 16, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Toro, Sergio and Juan Pablo Luna “The Chilean Elections of December 2009 and January 2010,” *Electoral Studies* 30, n° 30 (2011): 226-230.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Funk and Pedro Figueroa, “Coyunturas críticas de un desastre: El caso del 27F.,” *Estado, Gobierno y Gestión Pública* 15-16 (2010): 69-93.

<sup>35</sup> Pablo Moyano, personal communication, April 16, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Personal communication, April 20, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Germán Bidegain, “Leading the Social Movement: Dilemmas, Internal Competition and Strategy in the 2011 Chilean Student Movement,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* (2020): 1 -22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08263663.2020.1776575>.

interpreted as a consequence of the work to find common ground for the unification of political positions in the mobilizing strategy that the federations of the three most important universities in the Metropolitan Region had developed over the previous two years.

Another important fact to consider is the relationship between the federations and university presidents. The joint work was consolidated in 2011 and allowed students and their university authorities to make joint demands. This was unprecedented since, until then, students had had a tense relationship with university presidents, who were “an enemy to the student movement when the proposals had to do with helping students internally. Thus, they understood that they had a common enemy, which was the Ministry of Education and its privatizing policy, allowing them to reconcile positions and question this agenda, becoming much more transversal.”<sup>38</sup>

A key date of the student movement was 26 April 2011, when the CONFECH presented a petition in which it demanded recognition of the crisis that the educational system was experiencing in Chile and then called a march, which around eight thousand people participated in. The Minister of Education at the time, Joaquín Lavín, had to face the start of the student movement in 2011 and, being unable to lower the intensity of the protests, left the cabinet two months later. In the company of the new minister, Felipe Bulnes, and at the inauguration of a new headquarters for the DUOC-UC Technical Training Center, President Piñera expressed one of his most popular phrases: “Education fulfills a dual purpose: it is a good, it means knowing more, understanding better, and having more culture, but education also has an investment component.”<sup>39</sup>

Piñera’s statement prompted an immediate reaction from the student movement. On the one hand, the students demanded a change in the educational system, they wanted the state to guarantee that the access to education was understood as a right, the President proposed the complete opposite. This episode opened the way for a busy 2011, one of the years with the largest number of marches and protests.<sup>40</sup> The student movement analyzed the educational situation and presented a set of demands regarding access to quality free higher education through marches, strikes and cultural interventions.<sup>41</sup> They also used mechanisms to legitimize their interventions. Among them, the National Plebiscite for Education stands out, which 1,480,119 people

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<sup>38</sup> Julio Sarmiento, personal communication, April 17, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> “Presidente Piñera: La educación es un bien de consumo”, *Radio Cooperativa*, July 19, 2011, <https://www.cooperativa.cl/noticias/pais/educacion/proyectos/presidente-pinera-la-educacion-es-un-bien-de-consumo/2011-07-19/134829.html>.

<sup>40</sup> For an analysis of the 2011 protests, see Segovia, Carolina, and Ricardo Gamboa. “Chile: el año en que salimos a la calle,” *Revista de Ciencia Política (Santiago)* 32, n.º 1 (2012): 65-85.

<sup>41</sup> Carmen Silva et al., “Empoderamiento en el movimiento estudiantil durante 2011 y 2012 en Chile,” *Universitas Psychologica*, 14, n.º 4 (2015): 1299-1310.

participated in, and 2,896 polling stations were constituted. The results of this plebiscite were remarkable: over 90% of those consulted were in favor of free and quality education and of incorporating the binding plebiscite as a mechanism for solving national problems.<sup>42</sup>

Together with these actions and supported by public opinion, the movement's leaders developed ties with political parties. At the beginning of the movement, there was a relationship between student leaders and some of the traditional parties on the left wing (mainly the Communist Party and the Socialist Party), mostly since several student leaders were already members of these parties. Other leaders also belonged to emerging political movements, such as the New University Action (NAU), the Libertarian Student Front (FEL) and the Autonomous Left.<sup>43</sup> According to the interviewees, two types of bonds were visible. On the one hand, students and leaders were members of political parties (traditional or emerging) and political movements, hence there was a relationship beyond investiture of those who conducted the federations or were CONFECH spokespeople. Also, there was a relationship with institutional actors from the political system (party leaders and legislators). Two interviewees stated:

“having a meeting with leaders of political parties and also with legislators at a time when different topics were being discussed or voted, such as, for example, the Budget Law.”<sup>44</sup>

“at some point in 2011, during the most critical mobilizations, we understood that we would not obtain much from Piñera and a right wing so tough that until then had not given in. We knew that the little we could achieve through the institutional route would be reached by having the opposition on our side.”<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, there were some groups that rejected any sort of connection with institutional actors – opposition parties, legislators, party leaders and even the government.<sup>46</sup> In mid-2011, the results of university federation elections brought a change in leadership<sup>47</sup> where student leaders without relations to

<sup>42</sup> Mesa Nacional por la Educación, “Plebiscito por la educación,” <http://plebiscitoporlaeducacion.blogspot.com/>, 11 de octubre de 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Marcelo Mella, Héctor Ríos and Ricardo Rivera, “Condiciones orgánicas y correlaciones de fuerza del movimiento estudiantil chileno: Una aproximación desde la Confech (2011-2015),” *Izquierdas*, n.º 27 (2016): 134-60.

<sup>44</sup> Camilo Ballesteros, personal communication, April 20, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Laura Palma, personal communication, April 23, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> The relation with political parties is a topic that usually confronts student movements in Latin America to a strategic dilemma. See Germán Bidegain y Marisa von Bülow, “Student Movements in Latin America,” en *Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Latin America*, ed. Xóchitl Bada y Liliana Rivera Sánchez (published online: Oxford University Press, 2020).; Rodolfo Disi, “Policies, Parties, and Protests: Explaining Student Protest Events in Latin America,” *Social Movement Studies* 19, n.º 2 (2020): 183-200; Rodolfo Disi, “Sentenced to Debt: Explaining Student Mobilization in Chile,” *Latin American Research Review* 53, n.º 3 (2018): 448-465.

<sup>47</sup> Octavio Avendaño, “Fracturas y representación política en el movimiento estudiantil: Chile 2011.”, *Última Década* 41 (2014): 41-68.

traditional political parties won, leading the movement, and deepening its autonomization process. The movement started to lose their capacity to create institutional bonds and, consequently, started losing influence in public opinion. However, the effects of the student movement were far-reaching, as several of its young leaders obtained seats in Congress: Karol Cariola and Camila Vallejo (Communist Party); Giorgio Jackson (Democratic Revolution); and Gabriel Boric (Autonomous Left)—demonstrating the student movement's influence on the Chilean political system. These results contrast with the opinion of the interviewees and the revised bibliography, in the case of Chile, but it opens an interesting line for future research.

In addition to the above, Table 1 presents the main effects of the student movement on public policy. The table considers the political system's responses to the student movement's demands, beyond the repercussion of the different and dynamic interventions in each of the stages of the cycle of public policies. In general, it is argued that the student movement attained a significant impact on the political system because of its strategy of internal organization and association with external actors. This mobilization demonstrated that social movements are a mechanism of strength to intervene in the public policy development process and aim it in the opposite direction of what had been thought.

While students have not organized mobilizations in recent years, they have in fact been crucial actors in other processes, such as the Feminist Strike in 2018 and the citizen protests in October 2019. In both cases, education is still a pillar of the organization. In general, education has become an important issue on the political agenda. Student leaders are important in the political system and many of those who led the process in 2011 are in their second terms as deputies. Either due to their action as politicians or their influence as students, this movement has, over the course of time, managed to get public policies implemented that are close to their initial demands. The most important of these is Law No. 21,091 establishing higher education as a right that must be within reach of all people. For this, a system has been developed that allows the lowest-income sectors to study with free tuition. The concept of viewing education as a right is the maximum expression of the student movement's structural influence.

### No+AFP Social Movement

Until now, there is practically no research about this movement, except for the study by Rozas & Maillet.<sup>48</sup> This movement came in a different context from that of the student movement. First, the right was not in power; the

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<sup>48</sup> Joaquín Rozas and Antoine Maillet, "Entre marchas, plebiscitos e iniciativas de ley: innovación en el repertorio de estrategias del movimiento No Más AFP en Chile (2014-2018)," *Izquierdas* 48 (2019): 1-22.

movement developed during Bachelet's second term (2014-2018).<sup>49</sup> Second, the movement developed two years after the start of the Bachelet administration, when the political class in general and the government in particular were increasingly delegitimized. For example, in 2016 the president received the highest disapproval rating since the return of democracy.<sup>50</sup> This means that the No+AFP Coordinating Board did not have the direct participation of the parties that have traditionally defended this type of demands.

It is important to consider a long-term factor in the debate on the pension system, as it is also a critical reflection on the economic model. The Chilean economic system has been decisive in generating citizen discontent based on low pensions, since there is, allegedly, "an oligopolistic market economy."<sup>51</sup> The Chilean pension system was implemented in 1980, during the dictatorship, under Legal Decree No. 3500, which established that in Chile there would be a new individually funded pension system.<sup>52</sup> Since then, the pension system has been privately administered through Pension Fund Administrators (AFP), companies created to provide their affiliates with pensions and other benefits that are stipulated by law, charging a variable commission that is a direct profit for the AFP.<sup>53</sup>

From a short-term perspective, a fact that prompted criticism and increased discomfort with the pension system occurred in early 2016. The National Audit Office published information according to which there were former Gendarmerie (Chilean Prison Service) employees who received exceedingly high pensions thanks to an unjustified increase in their salaries just before they retired.<sup>54</sup>

The discontent with the AFPs caused the No+AFP Coordinating Board to join with professionals, academics, and foundations to investigate social rights.

<sup>49</sup> Sergio Toro and Macarena Valenzuela, "Chile 2017: ambiciones, estrategias y expectativas en el estreno de las nuevas reglas electorales," *Revista de Ciencia Política (Santiago)* 38, n.º 2 (2018): 207-232.

<sup>50</sup> Ignacio Arana, "Chile 2016: ¿El nadir de la legitimidad democrática?," *Revista de Ciencia Política (Santiago)* 37, n.º 2 (2017): 305-33.

<sup>51</sup> Andrés Solimano, "Llama la atención que habiendo un Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión el proyecto (de pensiones) se entregue a Hacienda," *El Pulso*, 7 de junio de 2016, <http://www.pulso.cl/economia-dinero/andres-solimano-llama-la-atencion-habiendo-ministerio-del-trabajo-prevision-proyecto-pensiones-se-entregue-hacienda>.

<sup>52</sup> Florencia Larraín, "El Sistema privado de pensiones en Chile y sus resguardos constitucionales," *Revista chilena de Derecho* 39, n.º 2 (2012): 541-51.

<sup>53</sup> Tomás Bril-Mascarenhas and Antoine Maillet, "How to Build and Wield Business Power: The Political Economy of Pension Regulation in Chile, 1990–2018," *Latin American Politics and Society*, 61, n.º1 (2019): 101–125.

<sup>54</sup> EMOL, "El Mercedes Benz de José Piñera a la reforma del Gobierno," *El Mercurio (on line)*, 24 de julio de 2017, <http://www.emol.com/noticias/Economia/2017/07/24/868156/Desde-el-Mercedez-Benz-de-Jose-Pinera-a-la-reforma-del-Gobierno-A-un-ano-de-la-primera-marcha-masiva-de-NoAFP.html>.

Most of these actors lacked ties to political parties. No+AFP defines itself as a group of citizens united with the aim of expressing discontent with the prevailing pension system in Chile, under the slogan “a system of solidarity, tripartite distribution and administered by the State.”<sup>55</sup> As the organizers did not belong to any political party, the movement always presented itself as a citizen cause.<sup>56</sup> This allowed the development of links with other organizations in various cities, mainly composed of workers, and with the aim of ending the AFP system.<sup>57</sup>

The first march was called on 24 July 2016 and it surprised with its massiveness. According to analysts, the significant response to the march was because “the funds are managed by private companies that are controlled by large economic groups (...) that obtain very high returns from the administration of funds that are equivalent to almost half of the country's GDP.”<sup>58</sup> On the occasion, Luis Mesina, leader of the Coordinating Board, noted that “Chile woke up, got tired of corruption, got tired of over 40 years of sustained, systematic abuse. Chile no longer wants this shameful, unfair, immoral pension system.”<sup>59</sup> The pillar of the movement was the proposal of a pension system that was solidary, tripartite, and administered by the State. This mobilization had a national character, thousands of people gathered throughout Chile, becoming a starting point for the debate as it demonstrated the accumulated discontent with the pensions that the system generates.<sup>60</sup>

Important political figures spoke out in response to the people's demands and grievances. Although there were many more, we present two statements that account for the political positions on the demands. On the one hand, after the first march, President Bachelet stated that “we face a huge challenge; to ensure that pensions are fair and recognize people's dignity.”<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, José Piñera, a former minister of Augusto Pinochet's, creator of the AFP system, and President Sebastián Piñera's brother, spoke in defense of the current system in several interviews. One of his controversial phrases was the

<sup>55</sup> Recaredo Gálvez, personal communication, April 17, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> Rozas and Maillet, “Entre marchas, plebiscitos e iniciativas.”

<sup>57</sup> Recaredo Gálvez, personal communication, April 17, 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Cristián Parker, “Chile: La sociedad civil en movimiento frente al modelo neoliberal,” CETRI. El sur en movimiento., 27 de octubre de 2017, <https://www.cetri.be/Chile-la-sociedad-civil-en?lang=fr>.

<sup>59</sup> EMOL, “El Mercedes Benz de José Piñera a la reforma del Gobierno.” <https://www.emol.com/noticias/Economia/2017/07/24/868156/Desde-el-Mercedez-Benz-de-Jose-Pinera-a-la-reforma-del-Gobierno-A-un-ano-de-la-primera-marcha-masiva-de-No-AFP.html>

<sup>60</sup> Arana, “Chile 2016: ¿El nadir de la legitimidad democrática?.”

<sup>61</sup> “Presidenta Bachelet por AFP: La ciudadanía nos ha recordado que tenemos un desafío enorme” (Santiago, 25 de julio de 2016), <https://www.24horas.cl/nacional/presidenta-bachelet-por-afp-la-ciudadania-nos-ha-recordado-que-tenemos-un-desafio-enorme-2085030>.

comparison between the pension system and a Mercedes Benz: “The system is like a Mercedes Benz; it is a sophisticated car, well made, full of security. But even a Mercedes Benz needs gasoline to run. The Mercedes Benz that works without gasoline has not been discovered yet. So, what is the gasoline here? The monthly contribution.”<sup>62</sup> His comments were rejected by the NO+AFP Coordinating Board, which criticized the statements by the creator of the system, noting that “Piñera will continue to make a fanatical defense of his failed model that has led hundreds of thousands of retirees to have miserable pensions after paying into them for a lifetime.”<sup>63</sup>

The second mobilization convened by the Coordinating Board sought to question the AFPs, calling on contributors to switch their resources to a safer fund, maintaining the position of changing the system from its base. However, the day before this demonstration, the president revealed the government’s proposal for a new pension system in a media simulcast, stating that this was a challenge for everyone to face together. The government convened a commission of experts with different visions to review the current system and seek solutions for the short- and medium-term. This response served to aid in the diagnosis:

“Probably the most concrete thing done by the Bachelet government was to increase the basic solidarity pension payment. Regarding the pension advisory commission that that government convened, we can say that it served as a contribution to diagnosing of the situation, even though it did not really contribute to solving the conflict.”<sup>64</sup>

Despite the No+AFP movement’s critical view of the government’s responses, the Government made progress with the new Collective Savings System. On 10 August 2017, Bachelet submitted three bills to the National Congress to create this new mixed pension system. They aimed for a constitutional reform to create an administrator—an autonomous body called the Collective Savings Council—and a new collective savings of 5% of the contribution. It also sought to pass a law to modify and improve the regulatory framework governing AFPs.<sup>65</sup>

This movement generated significant public support during the Bachelet administration. An important part of its legitimacy was that, in addition to using

<sup>62</sup> José Piñera: “El sistema de pensiones es un Mercedes Benz, es un auto extraordinario” (Santiago, 4 agosto de 2016), <https://www.latercera.com/noticia/jose-pinera-el-sistema-de-pensiones-es-un-mercedes-benz-es-un-auto-extraordinario/>.

<sup>63</sup> Coordinadora NO+AFP, “José Piñera se burla de los chilenos que salieron a marchar exigiendo No+AFP,” No más AFP, 23 de febrero de 2017, <http://www.nomasafp.cl/inicio/?p=566>.

<sup>64</sup> Recaredo Gálvez, personal communication, April 17, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Subsecretaría de Previsión Social, “Ahorro colectivo,” *Previsión social*, 2017, <https://www.previsionsocial.gob.cl/sps/nuevo-ahorro-colectivo/>.

protest as a mobilization, it also called for pot-banging demonstrations and even a plebiscite in order to demand a favorable response to its demands. The No+AFP Coordinating Board, like the student movement, used the latter recourse between 29 September and 1 October through in-person and electronic voting. A total of 993,475 people participated and 96.76% of these votes were in favor of ending the AFP.<sup>66</sup>

Though the movement has not been able to materialize its initial objectives, it has had an impact on the political agenda, as the government had to prioritize this issue and come up with alternative solutions, submitting three bills to try to respond to the demands. As the responses were not what the movement expected, the organization remained active during the second Piñera administration (2018-2022), although with less capacity for action. The movement's ability to set the agenda was high during the second Bachelet government, but it was drastically low during the second Piñera term. Despite Piñera's antagonistic attitude toward the movement's demands, it has not been able to mobilize citizens again. The quality of the movement's influence is declining, and this can be partly explained by the unwillingness to articulate with other actors beyond it.

The parties that supported Bachelet, despite now being in the opposition, have not adhered to this movement and it started to lose visibility. This can be explained by the fact that the movement is constantly reiterating its autonomy. Mesina is decisive when expressing the movement's position regarding traditional political parties, accusing them of being discredited and detached from the citizens.<sup>67</sup> It has yet to be determined whether the loss of influence is momentary or whether political parties have prioritized the demands of other social causes, such as the feminist movement or the struggle for constitutional change that came out in the October 2019 protests.<sup>68</sup> Table 2 below summarizes their influence.

The No+AFP movement managed to put the consequences of the pension system on the public agenda and organized itself as a massive social movement, obtaining the authorities' acknowledgment as a counterpart. Nevertheless, we argue that this type of position does not achieve a structural impact, since the Bachelet government opted for public policies with a logic that differed from the movement's and the Piñera government seeks to improve the current system. All in all, the movement is a topic for future investigations, like that of

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<sup>66</sup> Coordinadora NO+AFP, "Resultado Plebiscito No+AFP con 90% mesas escrutadas," *No más AFP*, 5 de octubre de 2017, <https://bit.ly/2KNyd2l>.

<sup>67</sup> "Entrevista con el secretario general de la Confederación de Sindicato Bancarios de Chile," *Resumen*, 2016, <https://resumen.cl/articulos/entrevista-con-el-secretario-general-de-la-confederacion-de-trabajadores-bancarios-luis-mesina>.

<sup>68</sup> Melany Barragán et al., "América Latina 2019: Vuelta a la inestabilidad," *Iberoamericana* 20, n.º 73 (2020): 205-41.



Rozas & Maillet<sup>69</sup> for example. Their work focuses on the structure of opportunities and maintains that part of the new topics is linked to the political context and their internal definitions, particularly the concern for movements' autonomy from political parties.

## Analysis and Discussion

Both movements have influence to put issues on the public agenda, albeit at different levels. While the student movement managed to have a systemic influence, the No+AFP movement lost power, its protests became less massive and it has progressively disappeared from the agenda, probably due to its repeated cycles of protest.

Both movements decided to get involved in institutional decision-making, participating in meetings with the political authorities, including the president and Congress, where their proposals were presented to both houses. The strategic relationship with parties allows movements to obtain support at different levels, without excluding actors that are part of their cause. In the case of the student movement, this helped to materialize their main demand: free education. On the other hand, the No+AFP movement differentiates the citizenry from political parties, which made the movement inhibit the possibilities of dialogue and consensus, losing part of its capacity to influence. This shows that, in the absence of relationships or a roadmap, it is difficult for any proposals to have a structural impact on the system or policies.

Both movements turned to traditional actions, but they were also innovative in creating new forms of protest,<sup>70</sup> with both of them using direct democracy legitimization strategies. These tools are not part of the institutional repertoire in Chile and have become mobilizing events. These unconventional forms may be the object of future analysis, since, in the context of the current Chilean political system and its problems of legitimacy in institutional representation, they could become a reliable alternative to improve institutional performance. The set of repertoires and actions is helpful to increasing a movement's visibility.

Based on the proposal by López,<sup>71</sup> there is a distinction between reactive influence, and when one fails to acknowledge or abide by a given decision by the authorities, and proactive influence, which is when one participates in the

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<sup>69</sup> Rozas and Maillet, "Entre marchas, plebiscitos e iniciativas."

<sup>70</sup> Maillet and Albala, "Conflictos socioambientales en los proyectos"; Cortez and Maillet, "Trayectoria multinivel de una coalición"; Rozas and Maillet, "Entre marchas, plebiscitos e iniciativas"; Tricot, "Movimiento de estudiantes en Chile".

<sup>71</sup> López, "Los movimientos sociales."

policy decision-making process. The influence of both movements is interpreted as follows:

*Reactive influence:* Both movements rejected the proposals by the political authorities. In the case of students, they scuttled the higher education reform of Piñera's first government. Then, during the second Bachelet administration the student movement, with new leaders, they attempted to influence legislative debate and achieved partial success: free tuition in higher education and defining education as a social right. However, they did not manage to eliminate the for-profit educational system. In the case of the No+AFP movement, there was no influence on public policy, but it obtained support in emerging sectors of the political system, as the Broad Front.

*Proactive influence:* The student movement had access to institutional decision-making channels and influenced the political agenda, winning, for example, free tuition in higher education. The movement rejected Piñera's public policies and only during Bachelet's government did they see their demands partially included in public policy. Some of the leaders of the movement in 2011 are currently deputies (Cariola, Vallejo, Jackson and Boric), which helped keep the topic alive in Congress, trying to work with the new leaders. In the case of No+AFP, the movement also had access to institutional decision-making channels, but despite holding dialogue with institutional authorities, they rejected Bachelet's proposal.

The problems in higher education and pensions would not be part of the political agenda in Chile without these movements. The student movement managed to get the presidential candidate Bachelet to include free education in her program. In the following election, the No+AFP movement met with the presidential candidates Alejandro Guillier (government) and Beatriz Sánchez (Broad Front), though it was unable to agree with the former. On the other hand, the candidate Sánchez took the movement's pension proposal as a basis and incorporated the end of individual capitalization and the return to a pay-as-you-go system. Despite the fact that both movements had reactive stages in the decision-making process, the one with the most proactive influence has been the student movement because it managed to obtain support for its demands from different actors in the political system. A possibility to consider is that the movement had a previous story in 2006, another cycle in 2011 and a reform in 2015, involving three governments, unlike the No+AFP movement, which has only acted during two.

## Conclusions

To increase knowledge of social movements, it is necessary to study them in depth, identifying their impact to determine to what extent the changes that

occur in the political system are caused by their action. In other words, it is necessary to demonstrate that the demands concerning the State would not have reached the public policy agenda without the social movement. However, it is already known that the increase in mobilizations has helped to bring changes in the Chilean political system. Some examples between 2014 and 2018 are the reform of the electoral system (to a proportional one), the change in the logic of coalition-forming and the reordering of the party system, with new actors grouped into new coalitions.

The context forces governments to change their political agendas, which is not new for a case as stable as that of Chile. What is new for a country that is unused to demonstrations is that the cause of the change comes from the pressure of social movements (protest had been lost as a form of political action under the dictatorship and for almost 15 years thereafter). In this sense, it is necessary to further investigate these movements in aspects such as levels of internal democracy, links with political parties and the ruling coalition, relations between the movement and institutional actors, in addition to comparing collective action mechanisms and satisfaction levels when a demand has been accepted.

The student movement partially managed to implement its demands through public policy during Bachelet's second term when a reform to the educational system was proposed. In contrast, the No+AFP movement has not yet managed to materialize a public policy in accordance with its demands, due in great part to its refusal to participate in an institutional space to influence policy decision-making processes.

Both movements had chances to influence the public policy process through meetings with authorities. The proposals they presented originated from the needs of the movements' participants and both used direct democracy to reaffirm citizen support. Regarding the relationship with political parties, the student movement showed greater connection and dialogue with them, mainly those belonging to the New Majority, unlike the No+AFP movement, which defined itself as autonomous from political parties, despite the fact that they were later related to emerging political parties and coalitions such as the Broad Front. Dialoguing with parties endows a social movement's cause with political capacity and therefore enhances its possibilities of influencing the public policymaking process.

Lastly, for future research, the effects of protest cycles on movement's social learning processes could be incorporated, as Maillet and Bidegain<sup>72</sup> have already done. This is necessary to know how temporality influences the

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<sup>72</sup> Antoine Maillet and Germán Bidegain, "Movimientos sociales, instituciones políticas y reforma educativa en Uruguay y Chile" (XXXVI International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Barcelona, 2018).

performance of movements, since it might be an element that, for example, goes against the No+AFP movement, which is still in a first cycle of development, unlike the student movement, which after three cycles of protests, has seen solutions to its demands and has put the issue of education on the permanent public agenda. Similarly, the new system of political parties should be analyzed and how social movements develop their relationships with them. For example, the Broad Front has been in tune with and supported the demands of the No+AFP movement, making it possible for the relationship between this type of social movement and political parties to change.

## Annexes

**Table 1: Responsiveness and intervention of the student social movement in 2011**

Access	SM makes the problems of higher education visible on the political agenda. Formal meetings with public authorities take place.
Agenda	Piñera proposes the Great National Agreement for Education (Gran Acuerdo Nacional por Educación-GANE) and receives representatives of the SM (students, teachers and university presidents)
Formulation	SM presents Piñera a 12-point proposal to reform Higher Education system.
Policy	Piñera does not adopt the SM proposal.
Result	The second Bachelet government announces and implements public policies in Higher Education.
Execution	Creation of several state universities outside of Santiago (2015); Access to free education as part of the budget law (2016); Universal Free Tuition Law (2018)
Impact	Public policy sees no changes during Piñera's term. Bachelet accepts main demand: Free education (2016: 113,393 students; 2017: 143,637 students).
Structure	Change in the political system. New candidates and new topics. Society accepts the public policies implemented.

Source: Elaborated by authors.

**Table 2: Responsiveness and intervention of the No+AFP social movement**

Access	SM makes the problems of the pension system visible on the political agenda. Political figures invite leaders to formal meetings.
Agenda	Bachelet meets the No+AFP Coordinating Board and, afterwards, announces three bills for a new Collective Savings System.
Formulation	SM does not accept the proposed the New Collective Savings System.
Policy	SM wants to end the AFP system.
Result	Bachelet sends the New Collective Savings bill to Congress.
Execution	The "New Collective Savings" bill is pending in the Congress. There is still no public policy linked to the demands of the movement.
Impact	There are no policies in accordance with the No+AFP movement and the bills do not meet its demands.
Structure	Low capacity for mobilization during Piñera's second term of. No structural changes.

Source: Elaborated by authors.