

LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES



Call for Manuscripts for a Thematic Issue of *Latin American Perspectives*

Protest and Participatory Democracy in Chile

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This thematic issue seeks to open debates on replacing classic and post-dictatorial institutional democracy, as those forms have developed under precarious social, political and cultural conditions, especially the historical level of inequality which began with the dictatorship and deepened with increasing levels of impoverishment and social precariousness even after the return to elected government. Despite being considered a “good student” of the Chicago school of economics by foreign investors and conservative forces and supposedly exhibiting exemplary economic progress in Latin America, for decades Chile has maintained a historical level of inequality which has led to mass demands for fundamental democratic reform.

We seek to open broad discussions, from Marxist and postmarxist perspectives to Fung and Olin Wright (2003, 2010); from feminist critiques of the social contract (Carol Pateman, Nancy Fraser, et al.) to intersectional gender perspectives (K. Oyarzún, 2021); as well as Latin American debates about new constitutions and plurinationality (Fernando Pairican and Salvador Millaleo, among others). Ruiz Encina (2021), Vergara (2020), and others, highlight experiences of participatory governments with decision-making power, based on massive social movements, in order to overcome both traditional electoral participation and merely consultative plebiscites. One of the main questions to be addressed by this LAP issue deals with unfolding aspects of the contradictions between Chile’s advanced stage of neoliberalism and the country’s present potential as a key laboratory of “Popular Democracy”. It also aims to generate debate on interdisciplinary aspects of Chilean popular democracy such as: Do student, feminist, and massive, general protest movements point to short or long term neoliberal cycles? How do they reflect and shape the nature of advanced late capitalist transformation in Chile? How deep is the current crisis?

Popular, participatory democracy strengthens deliberation, gender equality, intercultural and binding dimensions as an alternative to neoliberal democracy, technobureaucratic and authoritarian tendencies. The October 2019 *estallido social* (popular revolt), landmarked at the onset by students who jumped the subway turnstiles, was followed by the most massive ongoing protest and a general strike, demonstrating that social upheaval was ongoing. President Piñera declared a state of emergency, and the armed forces were mobilized along with Chilean police. Militarization further fueled the movement, which spread massively throughout most regions in the country. No social

coalition or political party could be identified in a leadership position (Somma et al, 2020; Lepe-Carrión, 2020), as the movement displayed unity unseen since the Popular Unity years. Sectors included, the Social Coordinator (Mesa Social), the CUT (Central Workers Confederation), dock workers, teachers and miners, and Coordinadora 8M, a massive feminist coalition, among key, decentralized movements. The repressive response involved at least 20,000 arrested, 3,000 injured, over 500 protesters blinded, and 34 people killed.

The popular rebellions have opened possibilities for structural postdictatorial transformations. There are clear signs of new, popular, grassroots, decentralized imaginaries and political actors. The destituent and confrontational character of the protest succeeded in establishing the need for discussion of a new Constitution and in opening up a new political period. However the conditions for democratic change face obstacles and setbacks that are far from resolved. For the first time, in a referéndum in October 2020, people were able to democratically vote in favor of changing the constitution through a constituent assembly and this assembly was elected in May 2021 with a significant representation of non-traditional actors and the left, an apparent advance for democracy. Similarly, in the December 2021 presidential election Gabriel Boric, a former student movement leader from the non-traditional left (Ruiz y Caviedes, 2022) was elected President of the Republic, defeating the candidate of the far right and supporting the constitutional reform process. But in a disconcerting reversal, the resulting constitutional draft was overwhelmingly rejected in a September 2022 plebiscite, demonstrating the difficulty of translating the destituent power and democratic potential of the rebellion into new, more participatory institutions. Currently, the Boric government faces the difficulty of meeting multiple citizen demands for political renewal and social change, but also for reimposing order, while lacking a parliamentary majority and with the consolidation of a growing far right sector of the opposition. The non-linearity of change and the sinuous nature of the process is exemplified by the paradox that, after the rejection of the reforms proposed by the first Constituent Assembly, when delegates were elected to a second assembly, the far right that defends the dictatorship's Constitution formed the largest bloc. Although during the period of revolt in the streets, the Chilean citizenry check mated the political economic hegemony of the "transition", the prospects for transcending neoliberalism and creating a participatory democracy are still uncertain,

Articles can be submitted in English, Spanish and Portuguese that address but are not limited to the following topics:

- Democratic theories and practice in the context of Chile's current social and political crisis of representation and decentralized movements
- Chile and new Latin American constitutional movements, and participatory, communal democracies.
- Unveiling the contradiction between "good economic indicators" and dissatisfaction with neoliberalism, inequality and key institutions including the executive power, Congress, political parties, armed forces, and the police
- Social rights: public health, pension policies, and public education as major causes of protest and demands for reform
- Origins, current and future development of the new constitution in Chile
- Current debates on the nature of the state: the actual neoliberal state and alternatives

- Participatory democracy and indigenous peoples; repression in Mapuche territories, the question of intercultural development and conceptions of the plurinational state
- Role of classic trade unions and other workers in the rebellions and protest
- Limits and new challenges of gender politics: current growth in the struggle for recognition and new identities; feminist and LGTBQ+ social movements.
- Human rights violations under post-dictatorial democracy; repression, states of emergency, and corruption; role of the armed forces and police in the current crisis and future constructions of democracy
- Artistic interventions in Chilean social and political movements (students, women, etc.); the anesthetization of neoliberal politics; aesthetics in the Feminist Revolt of 2018, and the October 2019 social and political movements.
- Participatory democracy at the local and national levels and within organizations

SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS

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Subject Line: Author name – Manuscript for Chile Protest and Participatory Democracy

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