

# Geographies of violence: the Chilean police militarization and surveillance methods

Geografías de la violencia: la militarización policial chilena y los métodos de vigilancia

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## ABSTRACT

The direct targeting of protesters' eyes during the October 18, 2019, is an example of the systematic policy of violence carried out by the Chilean state against the protest. The abuses by the shock forces extend beyond causing blindness to the protesters and encompass a range of physical and psychological abuses. These abuses are a legacy of the institutional tools of the Chilean dictatorship, designed to depoliticize revolutionary movements. From a geographical, institutional, and anarchist perspective, the research sought to understand, through the analysis of data and content from over 3,000 files, the actions of the police from the period of 1973 to the present, which promote the dismantling of revolutionary movements, thus historically reproducing connected acts of violence in areas of popular conflict. This phenomenon is recognized as "violent geographies". The research revealed that institutions, organizations, and coercive agencies, through their process of militarization and politicization, employ various mechanisms of social control. On the one hand, there are tangible aspects, such as armament and the militarization of spaces, as well as confrontations. On the other hand, there are intangible factors, such as administrative vices, categorizations, and stigmatizations. These mechanisms contribute to discrediting organized groups and territories and foster both direct and indirect forms of violence, which can be more insidious and

Keywords: dispositive of control, militarization, protest's geographies, social dismantling, violent geographies.

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long-term. Nonetheless, within these violent geographies, “protest geographies” also emerge, representing collective actions of mutual support and cooperation. These actions keep the flame of the uprising alive continuously.

## RESUMEN

El ataque directo a los ojos de los manifestantes durante la revuelta del 18 de octubre de 2019 es una muestra de la sistemática política de violencia llevada a cabo por el Estado de Chile frente a la protesta. Los abusos de las fuerzas de choque no se limitaron a causar ceguera en los manifestantes, sino que además se insertaron en una serie de abusos físicos y psicológicos de diversa índole. Estos abusos son una herencia de las herramientas institucionales de la dictadura chilena, destinadas a despolitizar los movimientos revolucionarios. Desde una perspectiva geográfica, institucional y anarquista, la investigación buscó comprender, a través del análisis de datos y contenido de más de 3.000 archivos, el accionar de las policías entre el período de 1973 hasta hoy, que promueve la desarticulación de los movimientos revolucionarios, (re)produciendo violencias concatenadas históricamente sobre espacios de beligerancia popular, lo que será abordado como “geografías violentas”. La investigación dio cuenta de que las instituciones, organizaciones y agencias coercitivas, a través de su proceso de militarización y politización, emplean diversos mecanismos de control social. Por un lado, se encuentran los aspectos tangibles, como el armamento y la militarización de espacios, así como los enfrentamientos. Por otro lado, existen factores intangibles, como los vicios administrativos, las categorizaciones y las estigmatizaciones. Estos dispositivos contribuyen a desacreditar los grupos y territorios organizados y a fomentar violencias tanto directas como indirectas, que pueden ser más insidiosas y de largo plazo. Sin embargo, en estas geografías violentas también surgen “geografías de la protesta”, que representan acciones colectivas de apoyo mutuo y cooperativismo. Estas acciones mantienen viva la llama de la revuelta de manera constante.

Palabras clave:  
desmantelamiento social, dispositivos de control, geografías de la protesta, geografías violentas, militarización.

The direct attacks aimed at protester's eyes during the revolt on October 18, 2020, have been part of a systematically violent policy implemented by the Chilean state. Still, blinding demonstrators is just one example among a wide range of physical and psychological abuses carried out by the police forces. The successive acts of police abuse in Hong Kong, Minneapolis, Rio de Janeiro, Lima, and Santiago have revealed that this is a global situation, generated and reproduced by several institutional devices<sup>1</sup>. These instruments have a direct effect on the bodies of citizens through upfront physical violence, stemming from the victim/executioner, good/bad and friend/enemy dichotomies (Han, 2016). The state also engages in non-physical violence aimed at extinguishing revolutionary movements (Auyero & Berti, 2013). Strategies in this category respond to what Nixon (2011) calls 'slow violence,' a type of violence that is less evident but still persistent in time and rooted to a specific geographic area (Springer, 2011).

In this context, we suggest that there are tangible and intangible devices of police oppression, which Auyero (2011, p. 232), commenting on the work of Charles Tilly, qualified as "visible fists, clandestine kicks and invisible elbows" in his study on violence inflicted in marginal spaces. According to Álvarez & Auyero (2014), direct and slow forms of violence take place simultaneously, evidencing a correlation between structural and urban violence, which sustains power relationships over "those that dare to question the social structure" (García, 2017, p. 122). However, where systemic violence mechanisms are legitimized and justified by an oppressive estate, resistance will appear, in the form of libertarian and defensive responses (García, 2017).

Taking a metatheoretical approach to institutional geography and radical humanism, the present work aims at understanding how institutions, organizations and agencies which hold coercive power, and which are physically present or not in a determined area (Del Casino et al. 2000) contribute to the development of geographies of violence (Springer & Le Billon 2016) and geographies of protest (Auyero, 2002).

Methodologically, the research reviewed the production of over 3,000 documents spanning the last 40 years, originating from three dif-

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1 For a review on global police violence and blinding cases, visit <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/sep/02/police-shootings-less-lethal-eye-vision>.

ferent sources of information. Firstly, reports, studies, and complaints conducted by the National Institute of Human Rights. Secondly, press archives, primarily records from what is referred to as bourgeois and/or institutional press. To access these, the documentation center of the national newspaper *El Mercurio* was consulted. Thirdly, information from what is known as “cordel press” or anarchist dissemination press was accessed, with emphasis on the collection curated by the Archive of the *Revuelta*.

The sources were categorized by year of production and by themes. To recognize the distribution, frequency, and grouping of the categories, mixed methods were employed, including the data and content analysis method used by Ruiz-Tagle et al. (2021) through R software, and geospatial analysis carried out using ArcMap 10.8 software. That said, the categories identified revolve around the central concepts observable in the results: violence, strategies, police, military, force.

We studied the case of Chile, a pioneer in the instauration of neoliberalism, and focused on the period since its implementation in 1973, during Pinochet’s dictatorship, to the present.

The period under analysis spans 40 years and encompasses the phases of formation, development, and maturation of the neoliberal ideology (Harvey, 2007). This period is associated with the intensification of police action and its violent approaches (Galvani, 2016). It also coincides with decades of flourishing social unrest, marked by a prominent presence of anarchist ideas (Kalinov Most, 2020). Furthermore, it falls within the period when grassroots social, cultural, and environmental organizations emerged to resist foreign extractivism (Salazar, 2012). This convergence of forces gained national prominence on October 18, 2019.

The present article is structured in four sections. The first one introduces the problem statement, describing the causes and effects of the revolt, the responses of coercive institutions, and the evolution of the devices used to inflict violence on revolutionary movements. Then follows the theoretical discussion, which develops the institutional geography metatheory, useful to frame the analysis of social control devices employed by the armed forces and the police. Third, the results section shows the main evidence of police interference in dissolving

revolutionary movements and their use of tangible violence (arms, militarization of urban spaces, confrontation) and intangible violence (corruption, categorization, and stigmatization). In parallel, it presents the organization of resistance fronts based on mutual support and community union. They originate as a response to the historic spatial repression of revolutionary movements, keeping the fight for social change alive. Finally, the conclusions put forward the need to study coercive institutions from a radical and integral standpoint, identifying them as oppressive systems that enter the city and build a historic path of violence in marginal spaces.

## Problem statement

The Chilean protests of October 2019 were treated by the international press as a “social outbreak”. However, in this way, the movement was reduced to a moment instead of a process. This article will refer to the Chilean social movement as an institutional, political and social process that seeks the complete elimination of the dogmas imposed by neoliberalism, having its turning point on October 18, 2019 (also called 18O). As suggested by Albertani (2007) reflecting on Camus’ work:

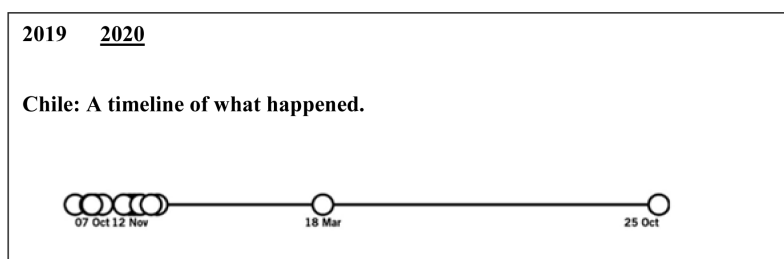
What is the revolt? -asks Camus. It is people’s rejection of being what they are, the negation of the absurd condition in which they are inserted. It is the ‘no’ that breaks the chains that confine us to an inevitable destiny. In other words, it is the engine of history, not seen as an abstraction or providence, but as the earthly, epic journey of flesh and blood women and men who struggle to build a better world. The ‘no’ that mentions Camus traverses’ humanity’s history beyond shape, ideology, time, and space. It is not just an expression, the negation of a negation. It is a concrete ‘no’ that breaks the prison of domination, proclaiming here and now the power of freedom. But it is also a ‘yes’ that expresses the most intimate foundations of the human condition: the desire to live a fulfilled life, without restrictions imposed by arbitrary powers. (p. 9)

A revolt, or fracture of power, is the cornerstone of a revolutionary process (Kropotkin, 1977). In the case of Chile, the revolt has been gestating for more than two decades (after the resignation of Pinochet and the return to democracy), appearing from time to time in local social movements (Salazar, 2012). There are five revolutionary moments es-

pecially memorable for their impact: 1) the numerous protests of the 80's against the dictatorship, 2) the 2006 student protests (or *Revolución Pingüina*) over the education system, 3) the local citizens' assemblies of 2011, 4) the feminist movement of 2018, and 5) the October 18, 2019, social protests. A common element in all these events was the deployment of punitive measures by institutions in charge of public order to stop the advance of social movements' demands.

What makes the October 18 (18O) social revolt different from the others is that, following Kalinov Most (2020), it “had no head, was self-assembled, chaotic and destructive” (p. 3). Additionally, it produced a clear and drastic disruption that shook down power structures. Similarly to the Yellow Vest movement in France, 18O protests did not have a leader. Protests were self-assembled, as it is not easy to determine which group was the first in making a call for the protests. They were also chaotic and destructive because their objective was to overthrow current institutions and all systems that resembled the dictatorship's regime.

The revolt sought to knock down three key areas: 1) The subsidiary state and political and institutional corruption, 2) socioeconomic inequality and the high cost of living, and 3) the absence of a social protection system. Overall, the movement's objective was to take down the ruling political model. The 18O revolt was a process of at least 6 months, with several sets of accumulated episodes, as portrayed in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Timeline of episodes of the revolt

Source: Extracted from <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/research/2020/10/eyes-on-chile-police-violence-at-protests/>.

One of the first episodes of the revolt was the fee evasion in Santiago's subway, the main transportation system of the city, on October 18, 2019. It was followed by the imposition of a state of emergency and

a curfew in the main cities of the country (October 19, 2019) and the biggest social demonstration seen in Chile (October 25, 2019). The process was characterized by several instances of confrontation and large numbers of people going to the streets. The number of participants of the first self-assembled protest was 2 million, a quarter of the Metropolitan Region's population. According to a study carried out by the Universidad de Chile, the social movement reached and approval of more than 85 % (Toledo-Campos, 2019).

Throughout the revolt, there were numerous denunciations of abuse and human rights violations towards protesters in the hands of state agents. One of the most emblematic cases of abuse, which characterized the police's methods, was the direct attack to protesters' faces. These attacks were carried out with teargas launchers and riot guns, which caused injuries in one or both eyes and could result in permanent blindness. The measure has a clear punitive connotation. Abuses also include murder, sexual violence, torture, homophobic and racial discrimination (Bermúdez, 2019), and destruction of infrastructure and urban equipment in an attempt to discredit the revolt.

It has been documented that police brutality and the criminalization of the social movement were not arbitrary. They are part of a historic tradition of state oppression against revolutionary movements. The origins of these practices go back to Pinochet's military dictatorship, from 1973 to 1990. In other words, the brutal acts performed by the police that left several protesters blind during the revolt are just one of the many institutional devices used by coercive forces (Zunino, 2002) to extinguish any attempt of social organization, especially anarchist ones that put the ruling system in danger.

According to Galvani (2016), state interventions are different depending on the group they want to control. In the case of "the anarchist figure, which represents the highest risk to social order" (p. 149), more severe measures are taken even at a legislative level, enacting legal instruments that allow a legitimate and justified reproduction of violence. An example of this is the creation in the 70's of the Anti-terrorist Law (No.18.314), later toughened in the 90's and 2000', and the Gun Control Law (No. 17.798). Another laws that were created in this context were the State Intelligence System Law (No. 19.974) in 2004, the Anti-barricade and Anti-looting Laws (N°21.208), and

the Critical Infrastructure Draft Law (N°21.542), created during the revolt.

The purpose of these laws was to end with “street disorder and segregate public order disturbers” (Rodríguez & Zappietro, 1999, p. 242). In other words, laws that both qualify as an offense any act against hegemonic power and strengthen the attributions of the police through a militarization process (Kraska, 2007). Militarization does not only refer to the assignation of tasks generally carried out by the police to the armed forces, but also to instilling the police with “the values, discipline, bureaucratic symbolism and other elements of the army” (Fernández, 1990, p. 17-18, cit. in Galvani, 2016, p. 167).

An example of this is the military strategic planning used by the police, based on strategy models (direct threats, direct pressure, successive actions, extended confrontation, and direct confrontation) and strategy modes (dissuasion, indirect modes and action) that chases, confronts, subdues and stigmatizes anarchist groups (Caimari, 2012; Sozzo, 2000) and indigenous peoples (specially the Mapuche people, the biggest indigenous community in Chile), treating them as criminals. Such stigmatization affects both individuals (and social groups) and their territories. Police forces select possible intervention areas and militarized them, creating ecologies of fear (Davis, 2001). One example of this is the public space used by protesters during the revolt, which became a confrontation front between demonstrators and the police every Friday.

As a response to the rise of individuals and social groups during the revolt, the state not only approved in record time the laws previously described, but also approved:

- 1) The purchase of new weapons “to control the demonstrations”<sup>2</sup>,
- 2) The declaration of “an exceptional and constitutional estate of emergency”<sup>3</sup>, which brought severe restrictions to individual freedom, such as a curfew and the prohibition to meet in groups. It

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2 Rodrigo Ubilla, the Presidential Advisor (former Deputy Secretary of the Interior), confirmed that the state spented approximately 15 million dollars on armoured fighting vehicles, cannon waters and transport vehicles.

3 The state of emergency was declared by 18 decrees that defined the areas affected along the country, with the objective of restoring public order as soon as possible.



also granted more power to punitive institutions, such as military surveillance teams, the control over critical infrastructure, among others. For Agamben (2004) quoted in Carvajal (2006), the state of emergency is:

(...) [A] land of no one, in between public law and politics, judicial order, and life. Here lies the aporia or paradox present in current theories. The aporia could be summarized as follows: “If exceptional procedures result from a political crisis they should be understood from the political and constitutional points of view, and not from a legal approach. Therefore, this is a paradox; this is a legal process that cannot be explained from a legal point of view; a legal instrument that has no legal basis. (p. 9-10)

Exceptional and constitutional estates of emergency have become more frequent in Latin America and other countries that go through social and health crisis. In Peru, the protests of 2020 over the pandemics management had a similar undertone than the Chilean social movement. Zizek (2020) points that estates of emergency will be still more recurrent in the current neoliberal crisis that affects the world, as it is becoming the only way for governments to maintain their power.

3) The creation of political agreements like the Agreement for Peace, that help “the groups that had threatened democracy to find a solution, once they are forced to channel public discontent through an institutional measure” (Núñez, 2020, paragraph 4).

Salazar (2019a) mentions that, historically, when processes that seek to change the dominant model with ideas generated by the community appear, the political class (right and left) unites to save the reigning system. This occurs because “traditional politics, based on old-fashioned political parties, is grounded on hierarchical structures that allow corruption, careerism and parasitism” (Quezada, 2014, p. 224), benefits that politicians do not want to risk.

The Agreement for Peace established the mandate of carrying out a constitutional referendum to decide if the 1980's constitution is to be changed. In this way, the referendum is a direct but unexpected result of the revolt. It is the response of the elites to the social situation, which forced the right wing sector of the government to accept the proposal.

Therefore, it was designed to:

(...) stop the turmoil of the revolt that was affecting the rule of law, the bourgeois order and the neoliberal status quo. The agreement for the drafting of a new constitution served as an escape valve for the pressure of the revolt that settled it down throughout the country. In the same way, the Agreement for Peace acted as a blank check to impose new repressive and criminalizing laws against the movement and its few supporters in the parliament, one of the most socially illegitimate bourgeois institutions, together with Piñera's government and the armed forces. (*Frente Anarquista Organizado*, 2020, p. 1)

As mentioned, this mechanism is legal from the point of view of bourgeois institutions, but it is not legitimate in social terms, as it betrays the people who fight for the decentralization of power, "a model in which decision taking conforms to voluntary association and radical democracy instead of the elite's coercive powers and non-representative apolitical voting processes" (Springer, 2016, p. 28).

## Violence

Salazar (2019b) points out that the Chilean army, together with the rest of the existing coercive institutions, have massacred their own people in 23 occasions. The revolt was no exception. The National Institute of Human Rights reported that, one year from 180, there are "2.499 lawsuits issued, from which: 2.329 are against the police forces; 126 against the armed forces; 22 against the Investigation Police; and 1 against correctional officers. From these, 169 lawsuits involve eye injuries" (*Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos, INDH*, 2020). Moreover, 350 people were victims of an eye injury or eye trauma, and 21 people lost an eye (Navarrete, 2019). Criminal rates inside the police and armed forces were so high, including cases of drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and corruption, that the government had to reform them (Fassin, 2019). Similarly to what happen with the "Black Lives Matter" movement, reforms to the police were implemented to protect their status.

However, "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1977). In the midst of the revolt, during the most critical months of 2019 and when the country was under the state of emergency and

governability had weakened, cooperation and mutual support actions sprouted from organized social groups.

There seems to be a sequential relation between tangible acts of violence from part of the police to dissuade demonstrations and less visible, covert devices used to dismantle organized groups. Coercive agents bring more problems, chaos and crimes than solutions to the geographies of protest, starting with the ineffectiveness of the police. This body has not been structured by the will of people, but instead, it is subordinated to political powers and economic dictatorships, only to protect their private property (Rodríguez, 2016). According to Agamben (1996), the police does not only have the administrative function of executing law as generally assumed, but it is the place which shows the closest relation between violence and law, characteristic of sovereign figures. Yet, the aim of the present article is not to present a pornography of violence (Bourgois, 2001) of the revolt, but to give evidence and examples of the link between direct and slow attacks, the appearance of cooperative spaces, and how these two have been historically intertwined, giving dynamism to geographies of violence (Springer, 2011).

## Theoretical discussion

### Institutional geography and social control devices

Several authors agree that one fundamental institutional practice is the construction of a “national collective” image, which is unified, homogenous and regular, in contrast with the “internal other” that concentrates disruptiveness and danger (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991; Briones, 2004; Brow, 1990; Foster, 1991). Not belonging to the “national collective” labels a group as a social problem, as happens with anarchists (Hall, 2003). This argument allows us to understand the role of the state in creating geographies of violence and geographies of protest, which result from decades-long conflict processes that imply, include and disguise social relations (Harvey, 1989, 1996, 2006; Lefebvre, 2001; Massey, 2005).

Taking the ideas exposed above into account and looking for a paradigm that analyses the relation between coercive institutions, geography, and anarchy, we selected an institutionalist and geographic approach that is not limited to seeing institutions as the rulers of society,

but implies an analysis of the effects that institutions have on individuals from different social and geographic realities and the spaces created by this process<sup>4</sup>. Institutional geography is a metatheory that integrates the functionalist, structuralist and radical humanist geographic paradigms. It helps us to understand how a series of institutions, agencies and organizations, that may or may not be physically located in an area, induce the conformation of a social space (Del Casino et al., 2000) through the use of diverse devices (Shore & Wright, 1997).

This institutional-geographic approach considers institutions as regularly intervening in the behavior and habits of the population. From an internal point of view, institutions are no more than mental models or shared solutions to recurrent social interaction problems found in people's minds (Mantzavinos et al., 2001, cit. in Caballero, 2009). Thus, social interactions become institutionalized when characteristic behavior patterns turn into models that are recognized by all, or at least most of society (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In this view, an institution is the collection of social interactions stereotyped as rules (Mackinnon, 2009).

The institutional-geographic perspective not only focuses on finding relations between space and organization and their implications. It also studies institutions' culture, or their institutional environment, considering formal and informal narratives that allow us to understand their continuity and institutional-spatial changes. This is why this article analyses the institutional environment in areas where social control mechanisms reproduce inequalities, but, at the same time, produce a confrontation between the configuration of space created from power mechanisms and the configuration created by people's daily live experiences (Harvey, 1996; Lefebvre, 2001).

First, it is necessary to understand the mechanisms used by institutions, agencies and organizations that shape the geographic landscape with their decisions and interventions, generating behavior patterns (Philo & Parr, 2000). In order to do this, we need to consider Foucault's

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4 Neoclassical theory assumes that individuals know what they want and take rational decisions in accordance. However, the analysis of different historical and contemporaneous experiences shows that this is not so simple, as elements such as ideology, culture and beliefs must be incorporated to analyze human behavior inside an institutional framework.

perspective on the concept “dispositive”, which aligns with the analysis done by institutional geography and its study of environments in which violence is produced and reproduced. According to Foucault (1984), a dispositive is:

(...) a decidedly heterogeneous set, that comprises speeches, institutions, architectural installations, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic proposals; all in all, the elements of the dispositive belong to the said and to the non-said. The dispositive is the network established among these elements. (p. 129)

Dispositives are not limited to discursive practices. As Foucault (1984) mentions, a dispositive also refers to non-discursive practices that are interrelated and articulated. For the author, statements become practice when they are integrated by individuals. In this manner, dispositives mold individuals, inculcating in them a way of being. But not any way of being: “What they imprint in their bodies is a set of practices, knowledge and institutions that aim at managing, governing, controlling, guiding and giving a sense of meaning that is assumedly useful for the behavior, gestures and thoughts of individuals” (García, 2011, p. 2).

A dispositive is not something abstract, as it is historically located--exists in space and time--and its origin always responds to an event that changes or has the possibility to change power relations. What defines a dispositive are the net of relations between power and knowledge in which institutions are immersed through the dialogue of their elements. A dispositive builds social and spatial hierarchies. Agamben (2011) points that “it would not be mistaken to say that the extreme phase of capitalist development in which we are living was created by a gigantic accumulation and proliferation of dispositives” (p. 7). The author also argues that there is not a minute in the life of an individual that has not been modeled, contaminated, or controlled by a dispositive, a scenario studied in depth by Han (2014).

Each mechanism used by the estate and its institutions that constrict individual, collective or spatial freedoms “shape them according to the economic order in place, and express concern over anarchist ideas” (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 99). In this sense, the use of Fou-

Foucault's dispositive concept is useful to detect the abuses committed by coercive institutions when constructing spaces of violence, taking into account that:

(...) Foucault's ideas (1987) are not detached from the anarchist discourse, as he focuses on the problems of freedom, surveillance, control and power (as central points of his reflection) and establishes a seldom discussed but inseparable link with anarchist logic, or, at least, understands the crisis of freedom under power holding agents. (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 98)

### Attribute exchange between police and armed forces

Growing militarization of the police around the world is based on the idea that citizens are potential threats (Cortés, 2020). After several days of demonstrations and confrontations, images of violent encounters have reappeared, and debate over police control models is getting stronger. "Police teams with military garments and equipment regularly using less lethal weapons such as tear gas and riot guns" (Cortés, 2020, paragraph 2) have brought back memories of historic police repression against people.

There are two types of police organizations: civil police (in the U.S and the U.K, for example) and military police (such as the Spanish Civil Guard, the French *Gendarmerie*, and the Chilean Police Forces or *Carabineros*) (Contreras et al., 2020). In Chile, the 1990 Constitutional Organic Law of the Police Forces (No. 18.691) defines the Chilean police in article 1 as a military and technical institution with military and technical faculties (Cortés, 2020). Maldonado (1996) argues that, even though the Chilean constitution did not define what public force meant before the 70's, and it also did not specifically mentioned the police forces, with the passing of time this institution was conceived as an armed body that guards the safe use of public spaces, and the right to peace for all people. This is different from the "attributions assumed by the armed forces, designed for war and used in defending the borders and the external security of the country" (Maldonado, 1996, p.1).

But the differentiation between the police and armed forces is only administrative, as each has appropriated functions of the other, resulting in police forces behaving as armed forces and armed forces behav-

ing as the police (Jímenez & Turizo, 2011). The armed forces have been employed (...) in police repression tasks against the civil population and the police has been intervened by military instruction in areas such as hierarchical structures, organization, and power display (Maldonado, 1996, p. 1).

According to Cortés (2020), both the civil and military police forces may express at some extent characteristics of military institutions. Thus, it is useful to recognize two phenomena when analyzing coercive institutions. On the one hand, the notion of police militarization, which is the intrusion of military operation tactics and weapons into the practice of the police, which “can happen at different stages, showing a continuum from less militarized to more militarized police forces” (Cortés, 2020, paragraph 6). On the other hand, the armed forces take up attributions of the police when “the army performs functions of control and restoration of the public order internally, with close contact with the civil population” (Jímenez & Turizo, 2011, p. 113).

Zaffaroni (2014) says that this involves a process of selection, training and institutional conditioning for the armed forces. Also, Bertonha (2012) mentions the idea that if the armed forces were employed as police forces it would be beneficial for citizens, as they would cost less to the state. However, that transformation is inconceivable. An alternative would be getting rid of institutions inside the army that cannot be adapted for public security functions (such as armored and aerial defense units), favoring troops that can be used to watch the streets.

## Results

### The Chilean police: evidence of its role in social disturbance

Many authors (Auyero, 2002; Auyero & Berti, 2013; Lunecke & Ruiz, 2007; Lunecke, 2004, 2016) have questioned the actions of the police and their role of social disruption in structurally poor neighborhoods. This concern aligns with the institutional theory described above, that seeks to confirm that social problems, or the so called urban pathologies found in marginal neighborhoods, are not the responsibility of their residents, but rather the result of the intervening role of institutions, specially order agents.

The Chilean police forces date back to the XIX century, but their militarization, use of intelligence for surveillance purposes and their politicized allegiance developed only because of the reforms and new attributions given during Pinochet's dictatorship and after. The dictatorship ended in 1990, but several reforms to the police forces were made in the following 30 years, during democracy's comeback. These reforms focused on punitive measures, such as higher sanctions, the penalization of several offences, giving more attributions to the police, persecution of political parties, among others. Regarding police practices, and particularly political persecution, Auyero (2011), citing the work of Charles Tilly, makes the following classification:

- 1) Visible fists: frequent and informal use of lethal force in protest contexts.
- 2) Clandestine kicks: less public actions of the state that create special force teams to intimidate and displace people, in an attempt at "cleaning the city". These special forces use illegal deprivation methods operating under a grey zone of clandestine relations, in which power holding agents and agents that perpetuate collective violence engage with each other (Dewey, 2015).
- 3) Invisible elbows: less violent actions of social control related to administrative and bureaucratic devices used by institutions.

Each of these is acknowledged as a tangible or intangible dispositive used by the state to inflict violence. The visible fists, which refer to direct violence, have been widely documented and will be developed in the following section on tangible violence, which reveals actions committed by the police during the revolt and their spatial consequences. Clandestine kicks and invisible elbows represent intangible violence, which is more difficult to evidence and understand. Labbé (2018) documented the existence of a selection process for police officers who were known to act corruptly to send them to marginal territories. The author mentions that, instead of being dismissed, these police officers are sent to vulnerable neighborhoods as a way of punishment when they commit an offence or abuse. This has two implications:

- 1) The police forces include officers who have committed crimes and who generate networks with criminal groups to determine free zones (Dewey, 2015) for drug and arms trafficking.



2) Police officers carry different equipment according to the area they are going. If they go to a vulnerable neighborhood, they equip with warlike weapons, which clearly constitutes an offense against the dignity of residents.

To summarize, Table 1 shows the connections between the military strategy used by coercive forces during protests, control dispositives and types of violence observed.

Table 1  
*Military strategic planning and control devices*

Criteria	Direct Threat	Direct Confrontation	Successive Actions	Direct Pressure	Extended Confrontation
Purpose	To completely stop resistance with only one action.	To impose control.	To advance slowly and wear down demonstrations.	To divide organized groups.	To wear down and demoralize organized groups.
Strategy	High power concentration focused on an attack to the core of the movement.	High power concentration that ends confrontation in just one blow.	Combination of threat and direct pressure strategies.	Employs other control measures avoiding armed conflicts.	Long confrontation.
Control Devices	Use of warlike tactics.	Use of warlike tactics.	Use of warlike tactics and intangible violence devices.	Zone categorization, infiltration of agents into the protests or into organized groups, use of institutions' internal rules and laws	Introduction of drugs, corruption, stigmatization, criminalization
Type of Violence	Direct violence	Direct violence	Direct and slow violence	Slow violence	Slow violence

Source: Authors' elaboration.

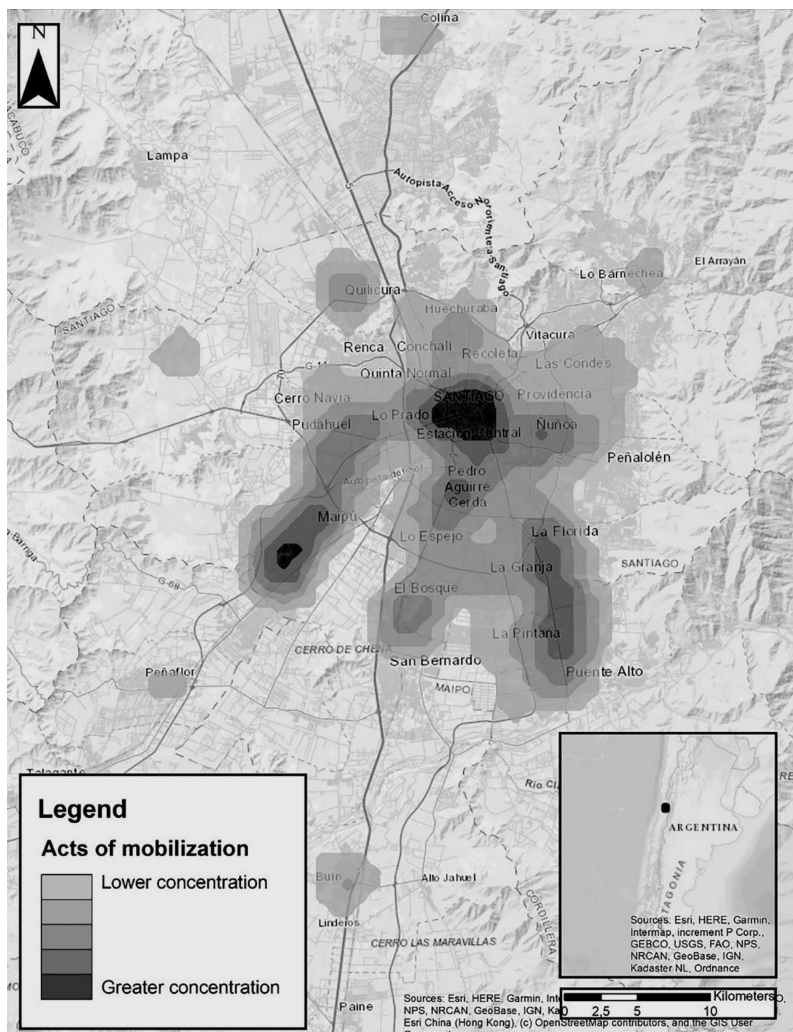
## Tangible violence

From the beginning of the revolt on October 18, 2019, to March 31, 2020, there were more than 4 000 demonstrations and 6 000 events of public disorder<sup>5</sup> (Figure 2). These demonstrations produced concerning numbers of injured people due to police abuses. Emergency ser-

5 Extracted from <https://www.pauta.cl/nacional/resumen-transformaciones-provocadas-18-octubre-estallido-social-chile>.

vices in the country attended 11 564 people injured in the demonstrations from October 18 to November 22. From these, more than 1 100 people presented moderate to serious injuries<sup>6</sup>.

Figure 2. Demonstrations map



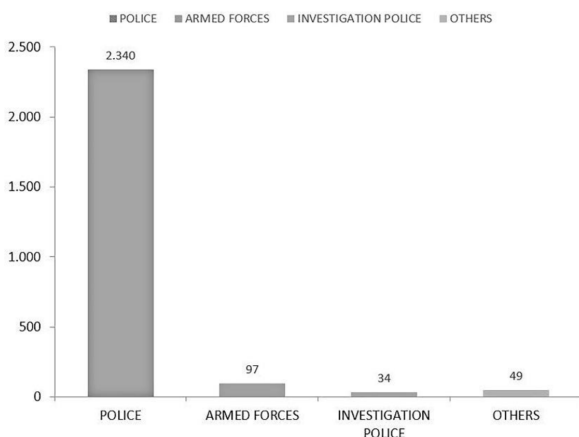
Source: Own elaboration based on the critical geography collaborative map <https://www.geografiacritica.cl/2019/10/20/mapa-protastas/>.

6 Extracted from <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2019/11/26/chile-llamado-urgente-una-reforma-policial-tras-las-protastas>.

A month after the beginning of the social revolt, the ONG Human Rights Watch had a meeting with the Chilean president and delivered a report, including evidence of excessive use of force against protesters and bystanders during protests. The report detailed that some victims were hurt by air gun pellets or by the impact of teargas canisters fired with riot guns and others suffered abuses from the police in the streets or at police stations (Human Rights Watch, 2019). While direct attacks to people's eyes was the principal and most unexpected tactic of the police, there were countless reports of other torture methods: "police officers also savagely beat protesters, shot them with bean bag rounds (small cloth bag with lead pellets inside) or teargas canisters thrown directly at demonstrators, and run over them with official cars and motorbikes" (Human Rights Watch 2019, paragraph 8).

The Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos (INDH) registered a total of 2 499 lawsuits filed, among which: 2 329 were against the police forces; 126 against the armed forces; 22 against the Investigation Police, and 1 against correctional officers. From these, 169 were lawsuits over eye injuries (INDH, 2019)<sup>7</sup>. In a nutshell, 97 % of the lawsuits were against the police forces, and the rest against other coercive institutions of the state (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of lawsuits over violence at the national level



Source: Own elaboration based on INDH information.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.indh.cl/balance-indh-a-11-meses-del-18-o-2499-querellas-y-28-causas-formalizadas/>.

Concerning the spatial distribution of police actions, it is directly related to geographies of protest or “areas were expressions of popular hostility become a collective practice, which is structured, and at the same time, structures space” (Auyero, 2002, p. 3). Most of these situations occurred in the central region of the country, specifically in the Metropolitan Region (Figure 4).

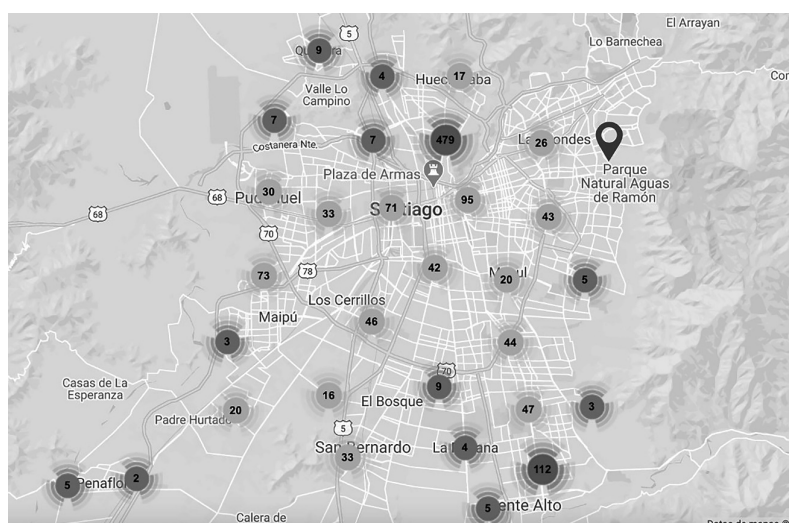
Figure 4. Violent events in Chile



Source: <https://mapaviolacionesddhh.indh.cl/#>.

The image shows the spatial distribution of violent events occurring along the country and where the highest number of confrontations at regional scale can be observed. Figure 5 reveals that the highest concentration of violent events is in the center of Santiago, particularly at the epicenter of the revolt (Dignidad Square, former General Manuel Baquedano Square). Still, police confrontations also spread to the outskirts of the city, especially over marginal neighborhoods that had been previously recognized as spaces of demonstrations, popular organization and regular police intervention.

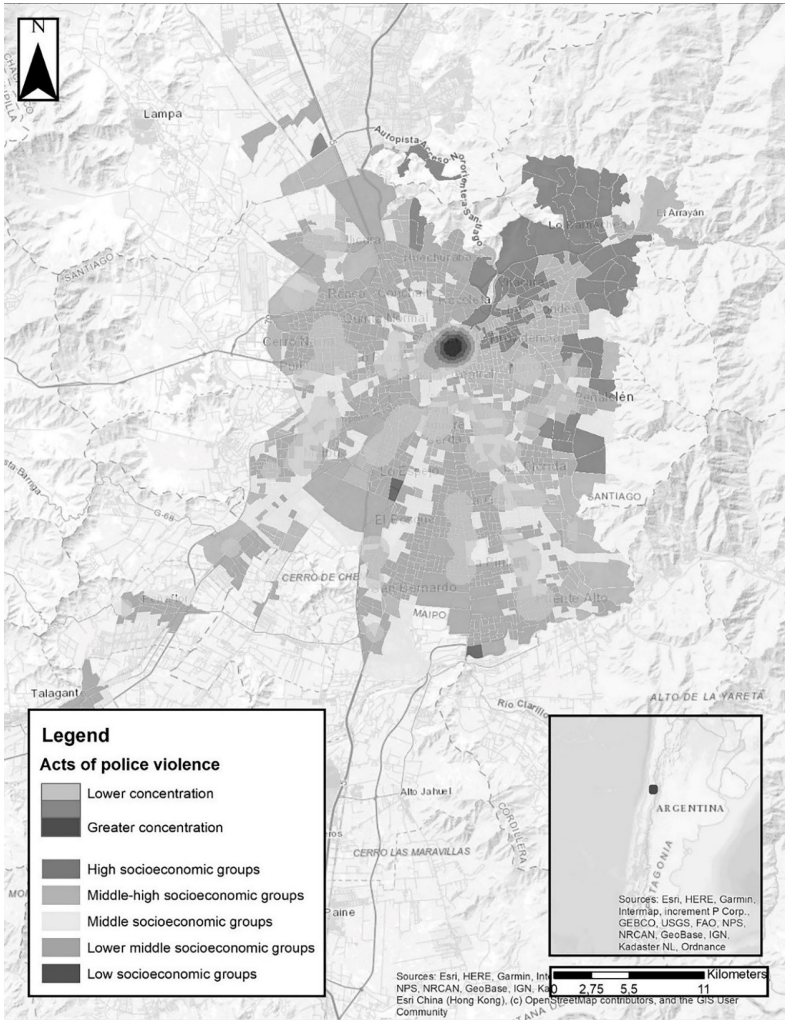
Figure 5. Violent events in Santiago



Source: <https://mapaviolacionesddhh.indh.cl/>.

A revealing fact shown in Figure 6 below is the lack of violent events in the areas of the city that concentrate higher socioeconomic groups. Thus, police abuses against demonstrators are focused on areas of fewer resources. Institutional abuse is directly linked to certain spaces, which demonstrates the existence of an important historical component, as these are the same areas that protested against the dictatorship and where new methods were introduced to destabilize and depoliticize the residents.

Figure 6. Police violence and socioeconomic groups



Source: own elaboration based on the critical geography collaborative map <https://www.geografiacritica.cl/2019/10/20/mapa-protestas/>.

### Intangible violence

Chile saw the biggest institutional and political breakdown of the 20th century in 1973, when Pinochet staged a *coup d'état* against the socialist and popular government of Salvador Allende. During this period, institutions, organizations and agencies in charge of maintaining pu-

blic order had a fundamental role in the persecutions, torture, kidnapping and murdering of members of any political party, movement, organization, or just any individual who promoted or spread left wing, libertarian and anti-authoritarian propaganda.

The state was dismantled and reorganized “applying severe restrictions to freedom of speech and association, at the same time that forced a thorough implementation of the neoliberalist ideology” (Muñoz, 2013, p. 3). Social services were privatized and a harsh extractivism of natural resources was promoted. Organized anarchist movements (the Libertarian Union Movement and the Chilean Libertarian Federation) that opposed to Salvador Allende’s government at the beginning of the 70’s, and who promoted an “anti-authoritarian and libertarian socialism and distrusted the turn that socialism was taking in Chile” (Godoy, 2013, paragraph 2) had to disperse. However, they kept acting “as small groups or individually away from the resistance and regrouped in organizations related to human rights, unions, feminism, environmentalism and cooperativism (Godoy, 2013, paragraph 5).

Regarding abuses suffered during the dictatorship, constant analysis has focused on the narratives of police abuse as a dispositive used to depoliticize the movement (Aguilera-Insunza, 2017). These mainly refer to physical violence (Foucault, 2002). Certainly, this type of violence is the most evidently perceived by the public. However, one of the most effective strategies to disarticulate political resistance, once coercive powers could no longer justify their violent behavior, was to break revolutionary movements from the inside, especially in vulnerable areas, by distributing drugs. Osses & Henríquez (2005) acknowledge that the dictatorship promoted the eradication of the revolutionary ideals, the dissolution of communities and individualism through the use of institutional violence and the introduction of coca paste:

In fact, the fast spread of coca paste brought profound consequences to the daily lives, the sense of community and the social reality that had been established in the population of Santiago from the middle of the 20th century to 1980. Solidarity and communitarism were succeeded by extreme violence, isolation and confrontations caused by the massive consume of this drug, especially by young people. Also, drug trafficking inside neighborhoods produced a clear process of impoverishment (p. 6).

Tapia (2018) and Vergara (2015) have records showing that the ones who introduced coca paste to marginal neighborhoods, were revolutionary movements are reproduced, were the police forces, who sought and succeeded in the dissolution of libertarian movements. Kalinov Most (2017) says that:

(...) during the dictatorship, the increase of coca paste consumption in the most rebellious neighborhoods was, without doubt, a strong dissuasive tool; its effects lasted and deepened even after the transition to democracy (p. 32).

Among other effects, coca paste turned organized citizens, especially low-income residents of the outskirts, into “state patients” (Auyero, 2012), that is, inhabitant’s dependent of the state (Salazar, 2018). These areas also changed from areas of protest to areas of settled drug trafficking and stigmatization. As Kalinov Most argues (2017):

In Santiago, the commemoration of the deaths of young revolutionary protesters during the dictatorship in the Simón Bolívar neighborhood was often followed by burning barricades, confrontations against the police and the active participation of anti-authoritarian groups. However, in recent years it has been interrupted by drug dealer shootings against the demonstrations. Again, the objective was to dissolve the protests, but this time because they could risk their business. (p. 32)

This is because the coca paste market not only brought by a high number of consumers due to its highly addictive nature, but also “entrepreneurs” (Sousa Santos, 2020), poor people who found no place in the job market (Bourgeois, 2010). In this view, it is impossible to understand the phenomenon of drug outside its capitalist role as merchandise:

(...) and this is how, because of its illegal condition, it develops in a specific space of the international market, characterized by the most violent rhythm of globalized capitalism, involving brutal exploitation along its production chain. (Kalinov Most, 2017, p. 30)

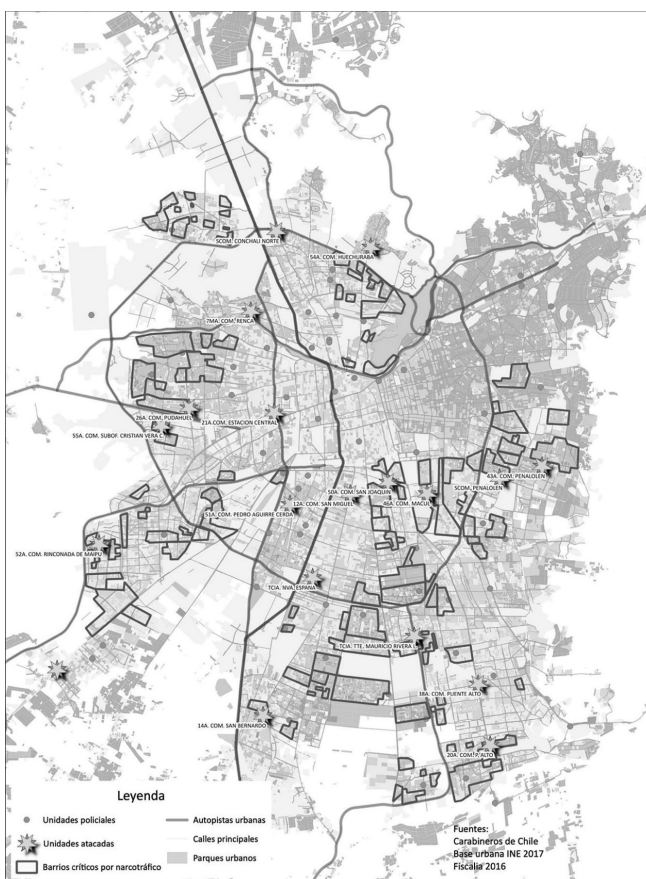
Violence caused by the drug market should not only be understood as “an endogenous relation between drug dealers and power representatives, who cooperate for the sake of their business and for maintaining control, but at the same time produce conflicts with the state for



the monopoly of this control” (Kalinov Most 2017, p. 30). It also should be seen as the wide dominance power of drugs, used by the police as a dispositive of social control.

Figure 7 shows the relation between critical neighborhoods under the dominance of drug trafficking and police units attacked during the revolt of October 18. The image also shows the location of socioeconomic groups, showing a deep contrast between the east of the capital, an area that concentrates wealth and which shows neither critical neighborhoods nor confrontations, and the outskirts that concentrate the protests.

Figure 7. Critical neighborhoods and socioeconomic groups



Source: Chilean Association of Municipalities. Retrieved from <https://media.elmostrador.cl/2020/05/El-Territorio-Habla.pdf>.

## Popular belligerent actions

The second part of the results of this article accounts for the description of deeply rooted actions of popular belligerence with two arguments: 1) during the revolt an “order without authority (Quezada, 2014) appears, which is not biased by class and does not follow any particular interests, and 2) the apparition of social initiatives of cooperation and mutual support. Both elements “keep alive violence against power agents, which becomes the main tool to shatter all what has been imposed by these institutions that used to condemn violence” (Kalinov Most, 2020, p.1). Table 2 shows some of the measures that were taken by protesters during the revolt.

Table 2  
*Implicit actions taken during the revolt*

Action	Description
Prohibition of attacking small businesses	Small grocery stores or corner stores are not to be looted or destroyed.
No alcohol drinking during demonstrations	A call for all protesters to avoid drinking alcohol in order to take care of themselves and be alert against police repression.
No confrontations between soccer club fans	Soccer club fans leave their differences aside while they participate in the protests.
Implementation of a “front line” of defense against the police	During massive protests, young people organized defense fronts to keep the police at bay and allow the rest of protesters to remain in the demonstration.
Prohibition of taking pictures or recording front line protesters	Request for the press and protesters to avoid taking pictures of demonstrators in the front line, as they would suffer more police persecution.
Independent organization of health professionals in health teams	Health professionals organize health teams on their own to deliver first aid for protesters who have suffered from police abuse. These teams are in turn protected by protesters.
Official press journalists are excluded from the protests	Because of the sensationalist and stigmatizing focus on material damage and destruction, journalists working for TV stations are not welcomed in the protests.
Support to independent press	Request to support independent and libertarian press that registers police abuses and spreads anarchist ideas.

Source: own elaboration.

First, the table shows that attacks to small stores were unacceptable and condemned by protesters. A TV station that tried to undermine the

protests interviewed the owner of a small corner store, a 70-year-old man. However, he mentioned that the social demands were legitimate and that protesters had protected him during the demonstrations; the ones he feared were the police forces. Also, there is a manifest call to stay sober during the protests and while being in public spaces. This was for the safety of protesters, as they would need to be in the best shape to escape from police attacks.

There is a truce between soccer club fans, as mentioned by the newspaper article's heading: "Chilean football club fans stopped fighting against each other thanks to the social revolt". Soccer matches in South America are dangerous events because of the fights against fans. Still, fans of different clubs met at the main venues of demonstrations (Dignidad Square) and cooperated in several ways. According to Fernández (2020), soccer club fans do not adhere to anarchist or libertarian ideologies but support collective, cooperative, self-organized and anti-capitalist actions. At the same time, they participate in social and political causes.

The front line appears as a wall of defense against the police. Following Claude (2020), this front line is constituted by "people from 25 to 30 years of age, service sector workers who do not have any political allegiance" (paragraph, 1). Many roles can be taken in the front lines: "shielders, projectile throwers, tear gas defenders or crisis put out teams<sup>8</sup>, slingshot throwers, laser pointers, water carriers and projectile miners" (Claude, 2020, paragraph, 5). Members of the front line were the most affected by police violence.

Also, self-organized health teams of volunteer health professionals assist the protests. These teams seek to cover the need for first care for protesters injured by the police. Health teams were located at the side of the protests. At the beginning, health teams were improvised and used medical resources brought by each member. Later, they organized and even developed a shift system. They had a fundamental role for the survival of the movement, as most injured protesters did not want to go to the hospital fearing they could be detained there. The prohibition to take pictures or record front line protesters made viral on social me-

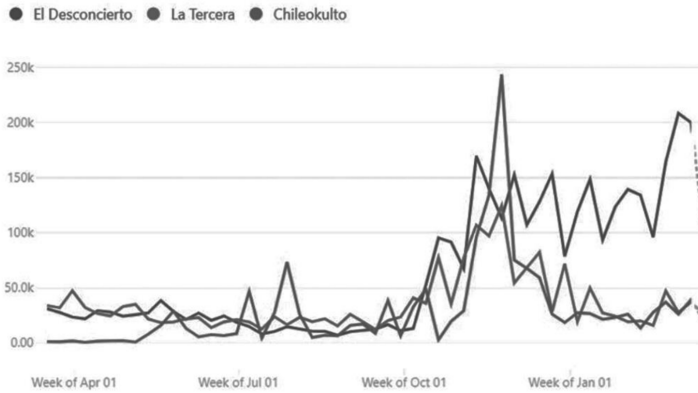
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8 Protesters who put out tear gas bombs thrown by the police.

dia also tried to protect protesters from political persecution. Sharing a picture of members of the front line in social media could have led to their detention or allow the intelligence service to store information on their identities.

In relation to this, protesters take out of the demonstration journalists or staff members from the official press, as their publications focused on material damage, criminalizing the social movement. The opposite happened with the independent press, which was supported and protected. Finally, there were also press management efforts in place. There is academic evidence that the media showcased contentious events but covered the acts of the police and omitted reports on police abuse in support of established power structures. Therefore, one of the most relevant initiatives of the revolt was to support free press. Figure 8 shows (highest point reached) how an independent press outlet reached a higher audience than traditional press.

Figure 8. Traditional and independent press’ audience



Source: <https://chileokulto.com>.

### Proudhon and the revolt

Each of the actions described above take us to consider Proudhon’s proposal, described in Abufom (2013), of a “collective force” or “community in action”. This refers to the convergence and simultaneity of individual efforts which develop into a stronger organized capacity. This

explains why the 18O revolts and the relentless protests from the 70's are still alive. The creative and emancipatory productivity proper of collective work and rooted to spatial reality keep them current. Although the work that Proudhon carried out in the analytical framework of collective force focused on economic production, it can be applied to any type of production.

A ship's crew, limited partnerships, the academy, an orchestra, the army, a workshop, all of these are examples of collectivities in which members unite their skills to produce a unique and special power, stronger in quality and energy than the addition of each individual strength (Mckay, 2011, p. 655).

Revisiting collective force is a good introspective exercise to understand geographies of protest, as it allows to:

- 1) Understand that relations of cooperation are manifested (Abufom, 2013) through the value that collective actions gain and that it is impossible to create that value, or product, without the collective effort of individuals.
- 2) The strength accumulated along years of revolts is generationally and spatially transmitted to social seeds that will keep movements alive. They will conform what the author denominates as social power, like the concept of popular power (Salazar, 2011), that refers to a political and social construct of direct confrontation, mixing revolutionary vanguard and popular movements. This social ground is indispensable for the revolutionary struggle to consolidate a popular uprising that creates a fair society.
- 3) Lastly, social and popular power is loaded with collective knowledge (Proudhon cit. in Abufom, 2013), that is, ideas that emerge from the execution of direct actions which are not mediated by any dominant institution.
- 4) Thus, two types of relation are observed in confrontational spaces; first, cooperative relations among individuals, that result in a collective product (Proudhon, 1906), and commutative relations between groups, that result in social order and operate through the voluntary and mutual exchange of products and the coordination of functions. Examples of these products can be seen in Table 2.

## Conclusion

The present article attempted to define, from the standpoint of institutional geography, the effects generated by institutions that intervene in popular belligerence organizations and spaces. According to the historical and geographic trajectory analyzed, from 1973 until today, the oppressive state has been constantly developing a process of self-preservation against demonstrations, taking advantage of legal frameworks, institutional settings and political agreements (with right and left parties) to sustain violent acts against individuals, groups and spaces of revolution.

The theoretical framework suggests that the binary characterization of military and non-military police should be abandoned, as it does not “allow us to understand how police forces of a military character, such as the Chilean police, can become more militarized” (Cortés, 2020, paragraph 11). It is also emphasized that the exchange of attributes between the armed forces and the police goes against human rights. Both bodies are constituted by “poor, working-class people who, in exchange for a salary paid by their same neighbors, maintain the status quo for the dominant class and protect their privileges” (Molino, 2014, paragraph 5).

Coercive institutions are oppressive apparatus in themselves. As Molino (2014) points out, if there is an attempt to change the current system and improve it, the police will be there to oppress; if free, self-organized social centers appear, or if empty buildings are used to relocate homeless people, there will be the police to kick them out; if there are comments on social media that question the established order, there will be the police to detain and intimidate.

This article corroborated the existence of institutional devices or dispositives of control used by coercive forces. These dispositives range from warlike weapons, spatial categorization, infiltration of agents in the protests, corruption, stigmatization, criminalization, and the introduction of drugs. According to the type of violence they inflict, dispositives can be classified in direct and tangible violence and slow and intangible violence. Each of them has a negative impact on geographies of protest, disorganizing, and corrupting confrontational spaces. Thus, it was useful to find evidence of them and understand their relations with institutions and space.

On the other hand, collective actions of mutual support were identified, which were originated by the revolt and include strategies for individual and collective safeguard. These actions can be framed by Proudhon's concepts of collective strength, social power and collective knowledge "which point to the fact that instances of collective action, particularly society, are not a simple sum of individual elements but substantial and specific realities" (Abufom, 2013, p. 22). The article focused on the presentation of popular confrontation during the revolt. However, it opens the opportunity to analyze in depth the spaces of demonstration settled in the 70's. During this time, several cooperative strategies could also be found, such as popular education at independent schools, local assemblies, community soup kitchens and community gardens, among others. Each of these strategies served to the common objective of escaping from the chains of coercion and exploitation of the state (Springer & Carvajal, 2020).

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