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School as a Contested Territory for Citizenship: An Ethnographic Study of Illegal Occupation and Protest Processes at a Popular Vocational Education School in the Chilean October

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The sociopolitical crisis that flared up in Chile starting in October 2019 laid bare tensions in how different social groups understand citizenship and political mobilization. These tensions evinced clear generational differences coupled with the emergence of new forms of understanding and doing politics among youth. This article presents the results of an ethnographic study conducted at a vocational school in the marginalized suburbs of the Santiago metropolitan area, focused on analyzing how the practices and discourses that students deployed at the school challenge the definition of school and the citizen practices inside of it, and through these, make the school a public space. The results show that the situated response practices undertaken by the students served to contest and transform the school space, redefining the concept of citizenship, in the sense that student mobilization challenged the conceptualizations of citizenship prescribed by the curriculum, teachers, and the broader adult world. Accordingly, this article posits a reading of the school not only as an institution responsible for education and teaching but also as a place seen from the spatial perspective in a context of conflict, understanding that academic spaces are constantly produced via situated practices of appropriation, signification, and occupation, which are themselves not exempt from conflict.

Public Significance Statement

This case study analyzes the situated practices undertaken by low-income secondary students to contest and transform their school in a context of national sociopolitical crises and social mobilization. The spatial tactics deployed by students challenged the conceptualizations of citizenship prescribed by the curriculum, teachers, and the broader adult world, transformed the school as an institutional space, and made this space public. Accordingly, this article shows both (a) the contextual and socially defined nature of the school as space and institution and (b) the relevance of a contextualized, flexible, and evolving curriculum, in which the opportunities offered by social reality are taken to produce intergenerational dialogue and address citizenship through practice.

Keywords: place meaning, place attachment, school, citizenship, student movement

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The sociopolitical crisis that flared up in Chile starting in October 2019 laid bare tensions in how different social groups understand citizenship and political mobilization. On the one hand, the search for pathways out of the crisis led to the deployment of traditional strategies that aimed to institutionally channel citizen pressure from the logic of consultation and representation. On the other, new forms of political expression emerged, very much bound up with local spaces, reclaiming the role of emotions and daily practices in public discussion and lobbying for more participatory, assembly-based, and territory-driven democracy (Valenzuela, 2022). Generational differences in terms of understanding, expressing, and exercising political participation are evident in this tension.

Even before the newfound visibility and mainstreaming of these forms of civic engagement at the onset of the October 2019 crisis, high school and university students had been pioneering different forms of political mobilization and organization for more than a decade, aligned with a vision of democracy and citizenship that differed from views held in the adult world (Martínez et al., 2010). The horizontal nature of their organizations, their constant assemblies to conduct consultations for decision making, the absence of any single leader or representative, artistic expression as a method of taking back public spaces, and political mobilization, among other techniques, had already started to solidify as part of the earlier student movement (Martínez et al., 2010).

Besides these mobilizations in public spaces, schools, as institutional spaces, provide different conditions for students to engage in citizenship and political expression. Schools are a social institution with a specific focus—education—with extremely defined and hierarchical roles. Although it is understood that schools consist of educational communities, in practice, the role defined for students grants them less power than the power held by teachers, teaching assistants, and administrators when it comes to decision making, the activities that take place inside them, the schedules and rhythms of school, and teaching and learning processes. The exercise of student citizenship within the school is limited to forming student governments and participating and making decisions around extracurricular activities (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2014).

Nevertheless, at the same time, schools are a place of daily life and constant expression, appropriation, and redefinition. Both teachers and students develop place attachment to "their" schools in physical, social, and territorial terms. They are physically there, they cultivate social ties there, and they deploy strategies of control and appropriation (Rioux et al., 2017), combining affection, cognition, and behaviors (Purwanto & Rochma Harani, 2020). Alongside that, like any social institution, schools are defined and redefined on an ongoing basis in processes that are far from conflict-free. Schools educate students not only in formal knowledge but also in the traditions and behavior appropriate to society (Dewey, 2001), which are redefined as time passes.

Just as neighborhoods, universities, and workspaces became places for political mobilization against the backdrop of the October 2019 crisis, schools found themselves involved in the same process. People sought to mobilize from their daily living spaces and identities. The same was true for students, who not only went out to march in the streets but also sought to join the movement through their school lives. The foregoing deepened intergenerational tensions within schools, in terms of what constitutes the school space and what political citizenship means in this sphere.

This article presents the results of an ethnographic study analyzing how the symbolic, material, and relational disputes that took place inside a vocational school in the context of the October 2019 sociopolitical crisis challenged the definition of school and citizenship, pushing forward to make this space public: a space for representation, formation, and contest (Iveson, 2017). The case study was conducted at a vocational school in a district located in Santiago's metropolitan region's lower income outskirts, which is to say, in a territorial and generational context widely known for its political disaffection (Disi, 2018). We propose, by contrast, that rather than disaffection, what can be observed is the emergence of more horizontal forms of mobilization in daily practices, in which commoning (following Holston, 2019, the sense of acting together from a commonly created space) and place attachment (following Di Masso, 2012, 2015) play a central role in the definition of the political and citizenship. These forms of mobilization contest the conceptualizations of citizenship and participation proposed in the official curriculum, and by teachers and the broader adult world, pushing the definition of the school space as public. Based on this, this work allows a dialogue with the critical citizenship framework, the role of the youth in social protests, and the definition of social institutions, such as the school.

Accordingly, this article posits a reading of the school not only as an institution responsible for education and teaching but also as a space in conflict, understanding that academic spaces are constantly produced via practices of appropriation and signification, which are not exempt from conflict. This way of analyzing the school opens the door to a novel perspective as to how this social space can be understood and reshaped in accordance with what is happening around it.

Space: Attachment, Appropriation, and Conflict

According to Lefebvre (1991), we can understand space as a process, to the extent that it undergoes constant production and transformation. These processes of production and transformation of space in daily life are not immune to disputes. Diverse practices overlap in these spaces, shaping their materiality and forms of inhabitation, deploying interpretations and forms of signification that are often diverse and contradictory.

These practices, materialities, and meanings are not applied to a space but rather constitute the space itself. From Lefebvre's (1974) perspective, it is possible to distinguish and recognize as part of a space the ideological representations developed around it by both academia and public policy, the practices that produce and reproduce it in day-to-day life, and the experiences of its inhabitants.

In this sense, it becomes possible to recognize in space the hegemonic practices and meanings that structure the space and which take action via the strategies deployed by the actors who dominate said space. Even so, there are also recognizable resistance tactics through which actors who do not hold power appropriate the space, resignifying and transforming it (De Certeau, 1999). These tactics are specific emerging tactics that challenge the hegemony of space (De Certeau, 1999), proposing counter-spaces (Soja, 1996), which result in dialectics of transformation.

It is interesting to note that the appropriation of the space entails both building significant place attachment as well as the production of place meaning, and associated with that, the deployment of practices (Berroeta et al., 2017) that turn the foregoing into the quotidian.

On the one hand, subjects develop an emotional attachment to the place, nourished by not only memories, knowledge, and images but also by the practices resulting from proximity to it (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). On the other, subjects produce discourses and meanings around the place, which in practice end up constituting the place and becoming symbolic processes of production and negotiation, which are not exempt from conflict (Di Masso et al., 2021). Finally, the subjects deploy daily practices that enact forms of seeing the space, defining who belongs to it or not, and what can happen there, which often entails resisting the underlying rules or institutionality (Di Masso, 2015; Di Masso et al., 2011), in processes of appropriation that may be exclusive of others or open to diversity (Wnuk & Oleksy, 2021). These practices and processes are based on—and contribute to—a sense of collective psychological ownership, which mixes both cognitive and emotional elements (Pierce & Jussila, 2011), resulting in a strong bond among the subjects and *their* space. In consequence, space, as well as the content of what we understand as "public" or "citizen," is defined on a daily basis through contested practices of spatial appropriation, which set the psychological processes of the subjects in relation to the normative and power structures of society (Di Masso et al., 2011).

Note that these kinds of processes might make space public. Subordinate groups can claim a (physical, relational, or mediated) space for formation, representation, and protest (Iveson, 2017). Making a space public—that is not usually associated with the idea of public—is itself an act of contestation, a counter public space, in which both the message and the practice of occupying the space as public have political content (Iveson, 2017). In this sense, the practice of occupation not only proposes a reorganization of the meanings, roles, and practices that hold everyday life in that space but also a reconsideration of the relational position of that space, understanding it as a part of a broader protest movement (Vasudevan, 2015). In consequence, occupation is related to the formation of new political subjects (Davidson & Iveson, 2014) and constitutes an "insurgent politics of citizenship when the sense of commoning and the dispositions of direct democracy challenge the entrenched powers of other forms of rule, including representative democracy" (Holston, 2019, p. 136).

Youth and Participation: Citizenship Practices at Schools

Citizenship is a concept that, at its foundation, is tied to social cohesion. Its genesis is found in the idea of civic friendship, which refers to the relationship between citizens that makes it possible to set common goals and for members of society to work together, thereby generating social cohesion (Cortina, 2008). In this way, citizenship, at its origin, is forged in relation to others and is an interdependent process existing among the members of a given society. Additionally, the modern vision of citizenship arises from Marshall (1950), who separates citizenship from economic status, pointing to the right to participation at its foundation, regardless of individual characteristics.

Citizenship practices have been extensively studied in the school context, considering what happens both in and outside of the classroom. One way to distill such a broad concept as citizenship is to think in terms of citizen competencies, understood as civic knowledge, citizenship abilities and attitudes, and critical thinking or reflection (Rychen & Salganik, 2003; Ten Dam & Volman, 2003). By using this concept, it is possible to operationalize citizenship and observe it at a practical level. Inside the classroom, we assert that using dialogue and discussion during class time, as well as fostering an open classroom climate and contextualizing citizenship content, enables better learning and development of citizenship-related skills (Treviño et al., 2019). Furthermore, out-of-classroom interactions include volunteering, community service, service-learning projects, and participating in the student government, which encourage the development of citizenship abilities and attitudes, as well as reflection (Geboers et al., 2013; McFarland & Thomas, 2006). Nevertheless, international evidence shows that vocational education students perform worse on citizenship competencies than their peers in general education (Dijkstra et al., 2021). Additionally, the citizenship education that these students receive has less of a transformative approach (Ho, 2012), reproducing social differences rather than compensating for them (Nieuwelink et al., 2019). In the last few decades, the critical citizenship approach has gained momentum, even though it poses a crucial dilemma for schools: the need to have an obedient group of students, and the need to educate critical and creative people to participate in the world economy (DeJaeghere & Tudball, 2007).

Metz and Youniss (2005) have asserted that there are conventional and unconventional forms of participation, in which the former refers to volunteering, joining civic organizations, and getting involved in community organizations and activities. The latter would be something closer to activism, like boycotting brands or products or taking part in political campaigns. On the other hand, on the spectrum of unconventional forms of participation, there are collective radical actions, which would include actions that take place outside of social norms or may even be illegal, such as destroying public property, setting up barricades, or confronting law enforcement (Miranda & Castillo, 2021).

Citizenship research offers different typifications of citizens. One of the most relevant is the one presented by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), who established three kinds of citizens: a personally responsible one, focused on obedience and responsible action toward the community, a participatory citizen, who knows the system and participates in the community, and a justice-oriented citizen that not only knows and understands the system but takes action to change its injustice. These elements allow us to understand that citizenship is not a fixated concept to teach but a combination of competencies and behaviors that can occur in different measures and still be considered as an expression of citizenship.

Student Mobilization and Citizenship in the October Sociopolitical Crisis

The sociopolitical crisis that broke out in Chile in October 2019 has been described as both deep—to the extent that it directly challenged the nature of social bonds and the cohesive foundation of society (Araujo, 2019) and comprehensive—in the sense that it dealt with both economic and social dimensions, as well as political–institutional aspects (Avendaño, 2019), representing a break from the customary manner in which democracy is done and conceived of in our societies (Castells, 2019). The social unrest that began with high school students jumping the public transportation turnstiles in masse to avoid paying subway fares and passively occupying subway stations as a form of protest rapidly scaled up into widespread mobilization and protests in some of the most symbolic public spaces in Chilean cities, as well as the advent of myriad forms of contentious violence (Somma et al., 2021).

Even though Chile was one of the most stable economies in Latin America, its political class had become detached and elitist (Somma et al., 2021). This process was parallel to an economic model with great privileges to the private sector, which led to a deep segmentation of the healthcare and educational systems (Somma et al., 2021). All these things started to collide with people's expectations of social mobility, creating social discontent (Somma et al., 2021).

After several months of public authorities proving their detachment from regular people's lives, by underestimating the cost of living (Martuccelli, 2020), a group of experts from the Ministry of Transportation decided to raise the subway fare (Martuccelli, 2020; Somma et al., 2021). That was the last straw, and the students spoke up once again. High school students started to organize massive fare-dodging protests in subway stations, with a strong police response from the government (Somma et al., 2021). This led to people taking the streets on October 18th, 2019.

In the aftermath of the early days of the massive marches that filled streets up and down the country, the actions of local social organizations and collectives began to gain visibility, taking advantage of spaces and bonds of proximity, and cooperating around their own interests and priorities, to join together in the movement and criticism of the economic and institutional model (Ganter & Zarzuri, 2020). These forms of territorial organization, which are not typically recognized as political in their own right (Ganter & Zarzuri, 2020), took center stage in terms of the mobilization and visibility of their demands, as well as the politicization of daily practices and daily life. Both the prospects for these organizations—generally tied to some mainstream theme, like the environment, culture, feminisms, etc.—and their repertoires of political action—assemblies, working through daily practices, occupying spaces, performance—were far from what is typically recognized in the space of politics framed in traditional representative democracy.

Among these emerging groups and organizations gaining visibility, high schools had a major role to play. Students are not merely the actors who set in motion the October protests: The crisis was preceded by a series of high school student protests related to defending and promoting public education (Ganter & Zarzuri, 2020).

In 2006, high school students led nationwide protests against the educational system. After months of illegal occupation of schools, and adolescent leaders in the media, the students accomplished a preferential fee in public transportation and scholarships for the lower classes to take the university entrance exam, alongside other changes in educational policy (Donoso, 2011).

Five years later, in 2011, the highschoolers had become university students who knew all the tricks of social protests (Rasse, 2022). University students promoted the social movement for education, with nationwide demonstrations, illegal occupation of schools, universities, and on occasion, public offices (Donoso & Somma, 2019).

These students' movements made visible forms of mobilization that contest space versus traditional forms of political exercise. They drew on horizontal organization and dynamic spokespersons, decisions made at assemblies, self-forming and self-management practices, social media, the occupation of spaces, performances, and other cultural activities. The young people who took part in the October 2019 uprising reclaimed, moreover, a place for their emotions, their own territory, and the notion that daily life is political (Zarzuri et al., 2021). In practice, both the content and methods these high school students used represent a different way of doing politics than seen in earlier generations (Zarzuri et al., 2021), contesting the meaning of democracy and political practices and redefining the space for social mobilization in the streets.

The objective of this work is to analyze the way in which these same elements—space, protest, citizenship, and participation—challenge the definition of a school and the citizenship practices inside of it, against the backdrop of a social mobilization that took place both in the streets as well as in spaces of daily life, including, among others, schools.

Method

This study is part of a larger qualitative exploratory research based on ethnographic techniques. Data gathering was conducted from August to December 2019 (before, during, and after the October social unrest) at two vocational education schools, located in a low-income district in the suburbs, south of the city of Santiago de Chile. In the larger study, the focus was placed on the citizenship practices that developed in the extracurricular spaces of schools. However, when the social unrest unraveled, one of the schools (from now on, CEB by its nominalization in Spanish: Colegio El Bosque) deployed specific participation actions that made it interesting to present its case by itself. As such, the findings presented in this work focus solely on one of the schools.

In Chile, education is severely economically segregated, generating vicious cycles of segregation in which students living in marginalized neighborhoods attend their nearby schools, which are highly socially homogeneous and produce the worst academic results, making it difficult for them to join the workforce or access higher education later on. Likewise, secondary-level education in Chile offers the choice between a scientific–humanistic track (internationally known as a general or academic path) and technical-professional education (vocational). Vocational education is the least desirable option in the Chilean educational system (Aldinucci et al., 2023), consisting primarily of students in the bottom two income quintiles (Larrañaga et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it accounts for nearly 40% of all secondary school enrollment in Chile (Centro de Estudios Mineduc, 2021).

With a public database from the Ministry of Education, the 292 vocational education schools in the Metropolitan Region of Chile were selected. According to the same data set, 117 schools were classified as low-class with public funding. It was decided to focus the selection of schools on the ones clustered in the low- and middle-class areas, distant from downtown, as they represent two exclusion situations that were considered relevant for the research: income and location in the city. In that group, there were 17 eligible schools. These schools were contacted via phone call and email to invite them to participate. Six schools were interested, and one of those schools was CEB. CEB asked for a meeting with the researcher, where they received all the details of this study. The chief of the technical pedagogical unit became the contact of the researcher in the school. After their acceptance, the principal signed the authorization, and the technical pedagogical unit chief allowed access to parents and legal guardians and students to explain to them the study. Students over 18 years old, parents, and legal guardians received the proper consent forms and the students under 18 years old the assent form. Only the students who had a signed consent and assent form were approached during fieldwork.

The analyzed school was a semiprivate institution with about 1,000 students from preschool, elementary, middle, and high school; around 200 students attended at the high school level. The school offered two vocational options: accounting and electronics. The school was located in a residential area, whose primary connection to the rest of the city was by bus, which took 45 min to get to the downtown area and 15 min to get to the nearest subway station.

The process included over 100 hr of participant observation of the playground and common spaces at the school and several informal conversations with students, teachers, and school administrators. Data were systematized in field notes, which were clearly identified with date and named according to the situation that they presented. The names of the field notes were given in the moment in which they were collected. During data gathering, the researcher participated in conversations with students, games in the playground, students' protest in the school, and observed their daily interactions. Interviews were only made when more formal and structured conversations were required. They were held with the authorities of the school and students during the occupation. The names of the schools, teachers, authorities, and students were changed for confidentiality purposes.

All of the data were analyzed using open and axial coding, using NVivo 12. The coding was based on the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). To do this, all the data were first open coded, phrase to phrase, to acknowledge the meaning of each element in the light of the subjects. The open coding was intended to allow the meanings of the school actors and interactions to surface from the data. Over 400 codes were created, as several codes were present in each fieldnote. Afterward, axial coding was done, integrating each open code as dimensions of different aspects of the participation and use of space of the students. This process allowed to identify dimensions concerning the participation practices of students, the use of the school as a participation space, and the school as a disputed territory by the different actors that compose the school. In the end, a selective coding was done, in which "space appropriation" was the central category. The analysis combined participant perspectives with researcher perspectives to highlight the aspects that the participants normalized about their school life (Hennick et al., 2011). The researchers obtained the necessary ethical approval to carry out this study.

Results

Before the October sociopolitical crisis, practices explicitly tied to political mobilization or the exercise of citizenship had not yet been observed inside schools. Although there was a formal student government, it had functioned on and off over the past 3 years, being highly dependent on the teacher advisor, with little participation in student life beyond taking part in organizing celebrations and recreational activities.

After the violent outbreak on October 18th and 19th, 2019, schools across the country closed their doors for several days, until it was possible for students to commute to school safely again. With that said, after 2 weeks of shut down (and with only1 month left in the school year), CEB welcomed back its students, with a shortened school day.

On the first day back, although the conversation among both teachers and students revolved around what was happening in the country and how everybody was participating in it, in practice, normal classes were held, and the school day was just cut short. Students felt uncertain and asked if there would be spaces available to talk; the teachers were divided in response to the administration's decision to hold normal classes in the classrooms, and the schedules were adjusted as a result of teachers' meetings to make decisions around this topic.

> Lorena said she disagrees with this because she thinks, and so do Susana and Carlos, who defended this idea at the meeting, that we should talk about this with the entire school. By going through each class separately, it seemed that they would only speak to students in 8th grade and above. She has a class with the 7th graders on Wednesday and is going to talk to them anyway. She is going to do the same today with her students and if they ask her something, she is going to state her opinion. (Fieldnote: Return to normalcy)

As the days went by, the tension between the teachers' attempt to normalize school schedules and spaces, and the pressure from students to create spaces as public, available for mobilization, intensified. This tension was expressed in three different processes that occurred in a somewhat parallel time: (a) the deployment of tactics to occupy spaces, aiming to transform the purely academic use of the school; (b) the attempt to make it compatible with high school students from the southern suburbs of the city to attend school and still participate in mobilization activities; and (c) the contrast between the adult vision of citizenship and political mobilization and the politicization practices enacted by students.

Resisting the Classroom: Student Tactics of Space Occupation and Resignification

Efforts to extend break times and ignore the bell for several minutes were a longstanding tactic seen at CEB, even before October 2019. Students would play around in the playground or courtyard for several minutes after classes began until a school administrator would come to tell them to go into the classroom. Yet, after October 2019, this practice was resignified as an act of protest: Students would agree on social media and through conversations with friends in the courtyard to resist entering the classroom after a break, staying in the courtyard. Even after school administrators would ask them to come inside, they would not respond or enter the classroom because they were protesting. Female students were the main leaders of these efforts and most of the followers. Their main leader was a member of the student council. However, the absence of the other members of the council highlights how her presence is not in her student council member role.

> They stay seated and start to sing protest songs and laugh. A few minutes later, the principal arrives.

Principal: *Guys, what's going on?*

Danielle: *We are protesting.*

Principal: *But you need to go to your classrooms.*

Danielle: *We are not going to our classrooms, we are protesting. (Fieldnote: Protest)*

This extension of recess or break times is agreed upon in advance on social media, and students attend with flags and banners or posters. As a result, recess or break times were extended and students would wander around the courtyard with flags; eventually, the groups would break up and there would be a few dozen students left outside who refused to go in. This scene repeated itself every day until the end of the school year. Control over scheduling and spaces, typically exercised by teachers and administrators, was therefore subverted by this student practice, which, despite its simplicity, is a statement unto itself: The school space is a space for mobilization and the exercise of citizenship. As discussed, the act of occupying itself creates the space as public and proposes a different way of understanding school.

This definition of the school as public, occupied, and mobilized always includes dialogue with teachers and administrators: The proposal is not for the school to be a space belonging only to the students but rather to the mobilized school community, redefining roles, meanings, and practices. Such a notion is clearly illustrated in two situations observed.

First, at one of the breaks when students were resisting going back into the classroom, the students leading the mobilization undertook a series of tactics that allowed a large number of students to stay outside of the classrooms. This led the teachers and administrators, who were trying to take back control of the school time-space, to start an improvised conversation, installing audio equipment and microphones to establish a dialogue with the school community. In this act, the students not only expressed the importance of mobilizing at the school to improve their own situation and that of their teachers but also showed appreciation to their teachers for the space and sought out joint mobilization actions at the school. In that sense, the protest, the highlight of the work of the teachers, and the importance of taking care of their spaces are all mixed in their day-to-day protest.

> Estrella: I am grateful to the pedagogical chief because she was always there. She encouraged them to speak, to share their opinions, and to say what they needed to say.
>
> Darlin spoke up again and said that just as Estrella was grateful to the pedagogical chief, she was grateful to Miss Solange for her work on the garden. Daniel took the microphone and said thank you for her work and to the teachers who have helped and advised them. (Fieldnote: Protest)

These declarations reveal both the nature of the attachment to school and the understanding of the psychological ownership of this space. On one side, it is interesting that the students' collective psychological ownership of the school is not closed to them but open to a different group: teachers. The school is a space to transform all together. On the other, the political claims are on the same level as the concern about the care of the gardens, which reveals the complex mix of power, cognitive, and affective elements in the relationships among the students and the space.

After diverse types of protests, the students illegally occupied the school. This led to a second moment when the students occupied the school but did not prevent teachers or administrators from entering. However, they did prevent them from teaching classes, meaning that the students sought to change the use and meaning of the space, but not appropriate it exclusively. Again, the occupation is itself enough.

In opposition to this vision of the school as a space for mobilization, the administrators and teachers always sought to return the school to its normal spaces and schedules, associated with a focus on both education and protecting the students. Teachers use these spaces for conversation and reflection driven by the students as formative and shaping spaces. Even in the context of the occupation, they still prioritized safeguarding and protection, designating two night-watch guards to care for the facility, in agreement with the students.

> They have told me that they are doing night shifts and are very tired, but they're doing fine. They take shifts, supported by the night-watch people. I asked why there were night-watchers, and Natalia said they assigned them to take care of everyone and there are like six of them. Before the occupation, there were no night-watchers. (Fieldnote: School under occupation)

Accordingly, although there is an evident contest over the definition of the school space, at the same time, both sets of actors understand the school as a shared space and build specific consensuses to resolve the tension so as not to exclude the other party. Here, the emotional dimension of place attachment is revealed: The existence of an emotional bond between the students and the school space and the close relationships of trust with teachers and administrators plays an essential role.

> Pat and Danielle go and water the gardens that Miss Solange worked on. Pat goes to the farther-away garden, and talks to Mr. Juan Carlos, and Danielle stays close by.
>
> Miss Solange: Make sure you take care of them for me.
>
> Danielle: Of course, it was for your sake that we included that demand in the petition.
>
> A teacher I do not know walks up to one of the students.
>
> - Have you guys eaten yet?
> - Of course, we have, Miss.
> - You guys have to take care of the school.
> - Of course, that's why we've been cleaning up.
>
> Mary tells me quietly that yesterday, the group admonished a student who knocked over a table. (Fieldnote: School under occupation)

Joining in: The Political Mobilization of High School Students in the Southern Suburbs of Santiago

Besides laying on the pressure by extending their recesses, on occasion, students would push for the school day to end earlier so that they could take part in some of the mobilizations along with other schools in the southern suburbs of the city. The students from this school took part in a myriad of political mobilization practices and looting as part of the sociopolitical crisis that began in October. They have both directly witnessed and experienced contentious police violence. Accordingly, their striving for greater spaces for political reflection and mobilization starting at school is bound up in the experiences they are living in their own territories and in which they take part by mobilizing and through social media activity.

These mobilization processes mainly occurred at the local or district level, or between neighboring districts, due to how difficult it was to commute around the city during the political crisis and to the destruction of a significant portion of the transportation system. Even though students have heard stories about the students at the school participating in the social movement for education in 2011, there seems to be no real connection to that history. Instead, attachment to others arose from the local level and their unique position as marginalized students: students of the periphery. They contacted other schools in their district via social media, followed the local news, and agreed on joint actions.

> They checked Instagram, but they only found a march at 4 p.m., although Danielle was sure she saw one earlier. They asked me to share Internet with them and I turned on my cellphone hotspot. Danielle logged on to Instagram and started to talk to another student from the school who did not attend class, but who might be at the march and could send people to pick them up. (Fieldnote: Pick us up)

With that said, the students understood each other and their school as part of a network of mobilized high school students and created strategies to make their participation visible (flags in the courtyards, sharing photographs with posters or banners on social media, marching together, etc.) but also joined forces to pressure for time to participate in these joint mobilizations. To do so, once again they deployed space control tactics to leave the school before the scheduled end of the day: refusing to enter the classroom, group pressure at the school entrances, and pressure from outside.

> Even though they try to contact more people from outside, nobody answers. The classmate that they thought was in a demonstration, is at home and said that at 1 pm she'll go to a protest and can go pick them up with more people. The inspector suggest that they go to the seniors building to talk. He says that if they wanted to go to a protest than they shouldn't have come to school. When the students start to move to the seniors building, someone yells "to the gates!" and some run behind one of the stairs in that direction. Some teachers caught them in time. It's break time and the students walk around the yard with flags, walking around going nowhere. Suddenly, a group runs towards the school gates and after a couple of pushes, it opens. About 10 students get to escape. There were more, but a couple of teachers catch them and pull them back inside. The students get agitated, as they didn't think it would be so easy to open the gates. (Fieldnote: Pick us up)

Although the teachers and administrators sought to foreground the safeguarding and protection of the school, the constant pressure exerted by the students did end up interrupting schedules for classes, breaks, and lunchtime and led to modified departure times. Thus, through different practices, the occupation of the school was a way to get involved in the broader social movement.

"This Isn't the Way": Opposing Visions of the Practices and Meanings of Political Mobilization

The student mobilization at the school revealed that students and teachers held opposing visions regarding the practices and meanings of mobilization. In this sense, it was possible to identify three critical nodes in the school during the protests—as three axial codes: mobilization spaces, the meaning of the mobilization, and the role of representation.

The teachers constantly questioned the students as to the utility of protesting at school, where nobody could see them. From that adult vision, the understanding is that the place for political mobilization is the public space, where demands can be presented to others and given visibility. Nevertheless, the students were acting from another logic. They were making their space public and doing politics to transform their daily lives, using their own bodies and practices. Accordingly, mobilizing at school holds a value in and of itself, to the extent that it transforms the school and school experience from within, and makes them part of a broader movement.

> They talk about the protest scheduled for tomorrow. They try to organize themselves to go as a school. Some say that they should go with their school uniform, like other schools do. However, others say that is better to go with regular clothes, so it would be easier to run. Danielle says that going to protests is hard, because if you get caught by the police, they hit you, so they have to go as a group so they can protect each other. She tells them that last week she got caught and ended up with a very big bruise in her backside, and she wasn't able to sit. They laugh, but they agree. They say that they'll need to take water with baking soda and lemons tomorrow. (Fieldnote: Protest)

This is tied to the second point: While teachers said that the mobilization should be linked to some concrete motivation, for the students, mobilizing held meaning insofar as it made them part of the student mobilization. For them, being able to answer that they were not attending class because they were mobilizing due to the country-wide situation was enough: They felt directly affected by the violence that took place during the crisis, on top of the structural inequality at its root. The sense of feeling affected and feeling a part of something greater was enough for the students to state that they were mobilizing, even without the need for any specific petition beyond adhering to the social movement's main ideas.

> Eventually, another student goes to the front, Estrella. "All right, guys, this is pretty much because right now, because we are protesting, because we are all together, because we are here for a better education, so that tomorrow our children will not go through what we are going through now, so that tomorrow our teachers will earn decent salaries, so that tomorrow there will no longer be exploitation. For example, we have Miss Jacinta here, running from class to class, putting in hours she does not have to put in, putting in our time so she could meet the needs of the 12th-graders, the 11th-graders, and that, that should not be happening here. The next issue is poor management, the fact that we have to resort to this so that they listen to us." (Fieldnote: Protest)

Finally, the teachers constantly sought out leaders or representatives with whom to establish a dialogue and "organize" the mobilization. However, the students rotated through their spokespersons and representatives, preferring to come to conversations as a group, wary of one-on-one spaces. Likewise, they relied on their personal relationships and relationships of trust to coordinate their actions and engage in conversations with teachers and administrators, drawing on practices removed from traditional figures of representation.

> Natalia said that the principal called her to a meeting now. Just her alone. And she asked her peers for help to figure out what to say. They told her to say that she wouldn't go alone, that she would only go with the same representatives from the day before, or that there would be no meeting at all. (Interview: Student during school occupation)

Although teachers did question the students regarding their mobilization tactics, teachers still felt that students should be educated in this sphere, seeing these moments as opportunities for education as to what they viewed as legitimate forms of mobilization and the exercise of citizenship. They use it as a moment to also share their own experience protesting.

> The teacher told them that she studied at the 'glorious USACH' (university with a tradition of student protests), so she knows about

> protesting, which is why she told them they need to put together a petition, or the protest won't go anywhere. The students remarked that it isn't about the school, it's due to the national situation, but she insisted that they needed to draw up a petition. (Fieldnote: Pick us up)

> And afterward we all receive the benefits. "Do you remember when we participated?" And I told them "Yes, I remember we had a lot of fun," because it was so much fun, and they say that this time we should go to at least one protest. (Interview: Chief of Technical and Pedagogical Unit)

The foregoing reveals the tensions that arose between two generations with different visions regarding ways of doing politics and political meaning. It moreover shows how through daily postcrisis practices, students have managed to interrogate the prevailing definition of the school space and political mobilization in this environment.

Discussion

The analysis described here allows for a discussion in three areas: First, the redefinition of the school in the framework of contested student mobilization practices; second, the redefinition of the position of the school in the movement; and third, the redefinition of the citizenship practices inside the school, in the framework of an intergenerational conflict.

By challenging the activities, scheduling, and forms of attachment planned and defined for the school space, student mobilization inside the school led to the redefinition of what the school is and what it means, via spatial (De Certeau, 1999) or micropolitical (Di Masso, 2015) tactics. Students, by deploying a certain way of being students, contested and transformed the school space. Here, it is salient to note that it is specifically the occupation of the space and usage of the body as a form of resistance and protest that conveys the transformation of the school space: It is not only a discursive operation but also a material practice. Through occupation, students create their daily life space as public, becoming part of the broader social movement, and proposing a different way to signify school. Although this has been described before for public spaces (Di Masso, 2012) or universities (Vasudevan, 2015), this case study reveals how these processes operate in more regulated institutional spaces that are not associated with political participation, such as schools.

It is important to note that students' practices not only reorganize meanings, roles, and activities inside the school but also associate their school with all other urban spaces in which social protests are happening. The school began to be part of a movement that originated in public spaces near specific urban centralities. However, it transforms into a wider movement when different social actors—like students—do not look for participation from urban centers or visible spaces, but from their own territories.

All these processes of occupying and resignifying the school are mediated by place appropriation, psychological ownership, and place attachment. Occupation is possible because of appropriation: Students are able to occupy, transform, and make school public because it is *theirs*. And they decide to protest from the school—and through it—because the school is part of who they are: students. Place attachment is a key element to the understanding of a type of protest that is local, quotidian, and situated. The processes of marking associated to collective psychological ownership are central to the understanding of the redefinition of all groups involved (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2017); in this case, the conflict about controlling space and time inside the school, as well as the dispute about which forms of protest are valid in the school context, led to the redefinition of the identity and roles of both students and teachers.

Throughout all these resignifying processes, conflicts may arise around the notion of citizenship. The reach of the school, as an institution charged with passing on knowledge, also extends to shaping its students as citizens. Nevertheless, citizenship is not only a matter of curricular content or a piece of mainstream classroom lessons but rather an experience that is enacted in daily relations with other people. Participatory practices are not circumscribed to the space inside of the classroom but rather extend across the entire school, and even into all of student life. The political mobilization of the students in the courtyard and the forms and meanings of citizenship revealed a justice-oriented citizen, engaged in collective action and oriented to social change, in contrast with the forms and content of citizenship as understood in classroom teaching, which emphasizes individual responsibility and participation in a representative democracy scheme. Against everything their teachers understood as citizen participation, the students rose up together without the intermediation of any formal organization, with multiple voices and spokespersons, without the need for any petition, binding the political to the playful and the expressive, creating public space in a frame of commoning (Holston, 2019), and transforming the school. Both notions point to the contextual and socially defined nature of the school as a space and institution. Even as the current circumstances continue to evolve, the continued existence of the school cannot entail paralysis. Research demonstrates that content contextualized to the current reality enables a better grasp of citizenship (Treviño et al., 2019). The analyzed case moreover shows how social reality can offer opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, where citizenship can be addressed through practice, conceiving the school space as public.

In that sense, the findings of this work allow a new reading of the findings established by Rasse (2022). As that work shows, the sociopolitical crises experienced by Chile in 2019 changed the way in which the students participated in their school, reflecting on the role that they should take part in, and if the school should be part of the protest or not. This article takes a step beyond; through the concepts of place appropriation, psychological ownership, and place attachment, it shows how students try to redefine the school itself, as well as the practices and meanings of citizenship inside of it. Then, space (and sociospatial processes) take a main role in the participation practices as well as in the redefinition of school as institution. This article presents an exploratory research that focuses on an exceptional situation: a wide social and political break in Chilean society. In consequence, the concepts and relations here stated must be studied with a closer look in the framework of sociopolitical situations that are more similar to everyday life. Nonetheless, this study has been conducted in an area that is usually associated with less participation: low-income youths who attend vocational education high schools in the disadvantaged urban periphery. Therefore, these findings may appear more strongly in other contexts, such as middle-class groups, downtown areas with a higher socioeconomic mixture, and general education high schools. In that sense, we consider that these findings open the door for a research agenda on different ways of territorial politics linked to the school and the school space that could promote a better comprehension of both (a) the types of participation, citizenship, and politics that happen in the school space and (b) the ways politics play out in the local and quotidian space, as well as in the neighborhood and the school.

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