THE PERFORMANCE OF *CUECA* DANCE: ABOUT BELONGING AND RESISTANCE DURING THE 2019-2020 PROTESTS IN CHILE

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Abstract. Over the past several decades, the neoliberal paradigm has dominated global economics and has marked a period of privatization, the supremacy of finance capital and the centrality of unaccountable global financial organizations. Since 2011, the world witnessed an increase in protests across the globe, as citizens have expressed their discontent with the political structures and policies that led to inequalities and the erosion of democratic institutions. Together with millions of people from Ecuador, Colombia, Lebanon, Brazil, Hong Kong or France, different groups of civilians also participated to mass-gatherings in Chile since October 2019 to nowadays. In this paper, I will try to elaborate on how protesters are answering to global challenges through local cultural resistance in order to build counter-identity. By tracing the history of Cueca, a traditional Chilean dance, this article aims to understand how the performance of these cultural practices had been submitted to various levels of re-constructions and re-appropriations of meanings, becoming both an instrument of politicization and a form of activism. Transversally, this analysis will examine how new political actions are shaping the dynamics of protests by different actors and instruments of propagation, specific to post neo-liberal societies: the dominant role of youth, the absence of political parties as main organizers and the widespread use of social media as means of political action.

Keywords: Chile, protests, cultural resistance, neoliberalism, social media

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, the first cases of Coronavirus have been confirmed in Chile, while mass protests were taking place on the streets of Santiago. The president Sebastián Piñera announced then a public

ban for events of more than 500 people, followed by a total lockdown of many districts of the capital[1].

For many civilians, the beginning of the quarantine represented an extension of the period of "social isolation" initiated five months prior. In fact, since October 2019, thousands of demonstrators gathered on the streets for expressing their anger against the structural inequality in Chilean society: rate increases for public electric and transportation services, but also for education, healthcare, housing and bare necessities[2]. What started as a strike against the raise of 3% of subway fares transformed, gradually, into massive protests.

Although different civil groups (including worker unions, high school student federations, university student associations, feminist organizations and cultural figures) have joined peaceful marches, some protests have also turned into riots. Destroyed properties, barricades and confrontations with the military, led to imposed curfews and the deployment of tanks and troops that use brutal force against the militants.

Nonetheless, those violent acts of protesting, intended to create confusion among the population, instigated the population to raise their voice against repression. In reality, the frustration and precarious existence, due to the inequality policies of the right-wing government, goes back to a neoliberal model that had been in place even before the last civic-military dictatorship of Pinochet, in 1974.

Due to the preservation of the old constitution and the perpetuation of painful memories regarding human rights violations, revoked by the military's acts of repressions, many protesters mobilized with their own resources: slogans, utensils, pots and pans, music and chants. Many artists and activists joined the protests and used cultural practices as a mean to draw attention on their vision of justice.

At the beginning of the demonstrations, I was also following the events remotely. Among other news, I visualized a video where a group of people were dancing Cueca[3], in Plaza Italia (historical

epicentre of protests in the capital of Chile, and symbol of rebellion).

Since I am myself passionate about national belonging and identity processes, I became very interested in understanding better the performance of this dance within this particular context. Initially, I found it very curious of how this dance, charged of meaning for its participants had a powerful visual impact and it had been transmitted virtually to millions of people in the world. While I was just a spectator to the scene, I couldn't help but empathize with their claims. I knew very little about Cueca, apart from being Chile's national dance, and the reproduction of it during demonstrations seemed to me an act of solidarity towards the current social struggle of protesters.

The fact is that contemporary movements are subjected to viral diffusions, and the phenomenon can be observed and engaged instantly thanks to social media. The activists are not only shaping the physical space, but also a "networked public"[4], where the observers can manifest solidarity with their expression of identity. This leads not only to the creation of a larger way of representation of symbols and practices, but also to the "ideoscape"[5] of those elements, subjected then to reinterpretations; this makes the dynamicity of social movements, as form of producing identity, even more complex and interesting to observe.

In view of these reflections, I found myself questioning: how did "Cueca" become a symbol of Chilean resistance in this particular context?

I will try to answer to this question below, by tracing the history of this practice and understanding better the uses that various actors made of this dance, how it evolved and how its meaning changed according to the context.

Performing Cueca – Building National Identity

"La Cueca" represents a dynamic and hybrid dance, which meaning and representations changed in time, different actors being engaged

in the process of instrumentalization of it. As we will see below, defining the "national dance" occurred in specific, politicized contexts.

Cueca is known in Chile since 1824, and it is largely performed in squares, events and gatherings all around the country. Already considered "a crucial element of local culture and identity" in the 19th century, being later adopted as a "national dance"[6], the origins of the Chilean dance are not well established. It is believed that the practice has an arabic-andalucian background that assumes various social, musical, poetic and choreographic forms in the different southern Andean areas of South America (Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia).

It is also considered that "cueca" comes from the word "clueca", meaning a hen that is about to lay eggs. In fact, the dance represents symbolically the mating ritual between a rooster and a hen. A man in traditional clothing, or "huaso", approaches his female counterpart, or "china", and as she takes his arm, they walk around the dance floor. Facing one another, they start their movements in circles around one another, waving white handkerchiefs in the air. During the dance, it's important that partners maintain strong eye contact throughout the different steps[7].

The main characteristic of Cueca consists in its popularity among people. The performance had been transmitted orally through generations, making it available to everyone, regardless the status, gender or age. Its music can be applied to any lyrics and poetry, which made it achieve an important festive role within a community.

Pablo Garrido, in his book dedicated to this folkloric practice, considers Cueca a hybrid form of movements, a syncretism of influences, but with only one "identity":

> In its forge there is the influence of common features of colonial popular songbook (Western modal system, strophic forms detached from peninsular patterns), enriched by indigenous Amerindians and Afro-Asian factors, in the manner of innumerable cultural properties that are common heritage in the New World. But the identity of Cueca is one: Chilean. There were no cuecas

> or zamacuecas in Africa or in Spain, therefore it did not come from outside. It is therefore the purest symbol of our identity[8].

It is interesting to observe how the author acknowledges this dance to be "the purest symbol of Chilean identity" in 1943, only one century after its birth. Around that time, there were however multiple versions of Cueca, the most representatives being the Urban-style Cueca (or Cueca Brava) and the Peasant-style one, rooted on traditional repertory sung by female folk musicians.

From the 30s to the 90s, the two versions of this dance developed in parallel, and the uses of these practices transformed within the political and social context. During the first decades, the Peasant-like Cueca became widespread, hybridized, and mass produced, while the Urban Cueca became an invisible musical practice developed in several popular venues and places of Santiago and Valparaíso[9].

This process had been strictly connected to the development of the agrarian and forestry industry, highly important in the export of products such as wheat, wine or salmon. In fact, already during the 60s, neoliberal theories had been imported from the Chicago School, making space to the raise of an economic liberal market, way before becoming an authoritarian liberalism form of governance[10]. The growth of industrialization in the country led to a sort of mixed economy, with the establishment of many public enterprises, and public funds as primary source of productive investment[11]. Since rural territories were already hegemonized by haciendas (farms), oriented principally to the exports of wheat -to Lima and California, the 1960's agrarian reform attempted to modernize agriculture and to create an economically independent peasant class (with the expropriation of lands and transformation of farmers in direct producers)[12].

In addition, at the time of Salvador Allende's election in September 1970, the neoliberal theses had become known to the public domain. They were known, debated and appeared as one of the economic alternatives among others. The "Chilean path to

socialism" taken by the new president caused a strong political polarization and a hyper-mobilization of Chilean society, that was afraid of becoming "another Cuba"[13].

When Augusto Pinochet came to power in 1973, he would eventually take up the neoliberal model already in place, not only as economic policy, but as a whole new concept of society. In this internal power struggle, in order to legitimate his authoritarian regime, the dictator started to put less emphasis on having "rescued" the nation from communism, and more on having overseen its "modernization".

The installation of the new regime came therefore with the implementation of new economic reforms and restrictions on a political level, notably the establishment of a neoliberal agro-exporting model in Chile, based on the unequal redistribution of the land, weakening the political and economic position of peasant groups[14].

Within this context, the re-appropriation of "folklore" plays an important role in building [15]identity, as the policies of producing fast and foreign flows generated many anti-farms discourses that had to re-adapt to new social practices. Hence, cultural references are employed as a vestige that would materialize, in practice, to the "duty of being Chilean". When Chile's most famous folklorist, Victor Jara, was executed and tortured in Chile Stadium, the ruler established new societal and cultural rules. Cueca had been taken from the people and had been incorporated into his military parades, becoming a symbol of dictatorial power and oppression[16].

It is in a period of crisis, that "the return to the past meets a legitimate need of identity, but the approach is not without risk"[17]. The need of searching for roots is important because the past also represents a guarantee for the present. The concepts of "true", "authentic" and "traditions" are manipulated and delivered by the regime in the attempt to generate a sense of national pride among the country's citizens.

It is in these particular circumstances that Augusto Pinochet declared Cueca as being the National Dance of Chile on September

18, 1979, period when "the traditional music" would become the favorite music of the new government that comes to the rescue of such "tradition" and giving it the "right place"[18].

The institutionalization of this status had been supported by the production of satellite publications, with the intention of searching and providing "historical evidences to the origins of Cueca, from immemorial-temporal unknown to irrefutable roots"[19]. This phenomenon is very common in nationalist narratives that defend eternal value and seek for timeless aspirations towards a continuous reinvention of tradition[20]. In this sense, we can relate to Hobsbawm notion of "invention of tradition"[21], in claiming that a cultural and social practice is old and locally authentic, with the aim of promoting national unity.

The re-appropriation of a custom is an important factor in the creation of a collective memory, since it makes reference to "all memories, conscious or not, of a lived experience and/or mythologized by a living community, where its identity is related to the sense of the past. It is carried by living groups, open to all transformations, vulnerable to manipulation and unconscious of its successive deformations"[22]. In this context, the process of re-writing the history, engages also the creation of a feeling of diffidence and distrust against the "socialists", considered to be alienated and not to represent the needs of the population.

However, the importance of the Peasant-style Cueca changed at the end of the authoritarian regime, when a gradual process of revitalization of traditional and urban culture started, prompting a revival of the Urban Cueca[23]. During the 1990s, folk music repertories slowly started to change their focus, abandoning the conservative cultural policies that survived from the dictatorship, and gradually embracing different musical experiences and the use of new instruments: electric guitar and bass, drums or double bass, the fusion with different genres, the use of technology, or the creation of new types of lyrics. We can understand this style as a city-based genre, oral-focused, and performed in a shouting vocal

style, developed in Santiago de Chile, also known as Cueca Chilenera or Cueca Brava.

This phenomenon joins the revitalization of urban and pop culture, in a postdictatorial context. The liberation from the constraints of the dictatorship came with the idea of revitalizing marginal popular representations, especially by a middle-class young generation that found new ways of connecting the past and the present[24]. During the bicentennial celebrations in September 2000, the dance returned to the public attention, appropriated by new generations as an expression of nationalism, reframing what was once a vernacular practice.

After 2010, Urban Cueca transforms in a "Civilian Cueca" and continued to be an important cultural practice for the construction of the new Chilean identity.

We can conclude by observing that the performance of nowadays Cueca subscribes to a long heritage of conflict between various political expressions; its claims still refer to the manipulation meaning in the process of building identity, where the Peasant-style dance is associated with the repression, while the urban one with the idea of freedom.

CUECA SOLA AND URBAN CUECA AS CULTURAL RESISTANCE

The recent history of Cueca shows that the appropriation of a cultural practice, in the process of building "national identity", is rather complex and dynamic. Although it had been declared national dance under the Pinochet's regime, this folkloric dance, of various forms and variations, remains nowadays a tool of expressing a "Chilean identity". In order to understand better the place that this practice has within the current protests, we will see in the following lines how it became also a powerful symbol of opposition to the dictatorship.

In fact, when the General came to power in 1973, after a "coup d'état", his politics of suppression had seen thousands of left-wing

politicians, activists, intellectuals, and artists killed, kidnapped, or exiled by the army. During those times, it is estimated that more than 3,000 Chileans were "disappeared", while their fates were kept secret during his years in power.

Shut out of politics and commerce, based on a neoliberal model, many women whose husbands and sons were missing found in the cultural customs and folk dances a space for expressing their struggle. After gathering in committees, the performance of music and the arpillera[25] workshops, allowed them to produce tapestries that would not only provide an income for their families, but would have also become acts of subversion, for drawing attention to the human rights violations in their country. In finding new means of voicing protest and staging collective action through the making of political "crafts", the women of Chile also often utilized scraps of clothing left over from their disappeared loved ones.

Very soon, dancing Cueca took also the form of political protest. During gatherings and public celebrations, mothers, wives, and other relatives of kidnapped and disappeared Chileans, started to dance it alone, with a handkerchief in their hand. In fact, without their partners, their dance was illustrating the loss of their loved one, drawing attention to the repressions that occurred in their families[26]. Since the audience was very familiar with Cueca, it became collectively appreciated the irony of the act: the dance was supposed to represent the same nation that has deprived the performers of their children or spouse[27]. Moreover, the women who danced "*Cueca Sola*" (literally meaning *"alone"*) were often carrying photographs of their missing partners, in order to revoke their presence in the ritual.

These acts had a powerful visual effect on the audience and it created meaning around their "silent" protest, also because it engaged the use of the body to tell their stories. In fact, the aesthetics and visual aspects of this transmission produced emotional response that goes beyond the linguistic frontiers and contributed to building support communities and solidarity[28]. Furthermore, being associated with a form of "tradition", both in its vernacular form or commercial culture, the dance has a much better chance of reaching

a wider public as it speaks in a language that people already understand.

On 8 March 1978, for the International Women's Day, Cueca Sola was performed for the first time in public by the *Group of Detained Disappearees*. Within this occasion, a large group of women played and sang alone their interpretation of the new most popular vernacular version of the music[29]. Since many Chileans identified with the situation of the "desaparecidos", what began in a safe space of familiar exchange soon became a widely recognized symbol of courage and protests.

The impact of this style crossed borders and, in 1987, the British singer Sting paid tribute to this dance through the song "They Dance Alone":

> Why is there this sadness in their eyes?
> Why are the soldiers here
> Their faces fixed like stone?
> I can't see what it is that they despise
> They're dancing with the missing
> They're dancing with the dead
> They dance with the invisible ones
> Their anguish is unsaid
> They're dancing with their fathers
> They're dancing with their sons
> They're dancing with their husbands
> They dance alone, They dance alone

During his concert in 1990 "From Chile... an embrace of hope", more than twenty women performed along with the photo of their missing relatives. Few years later, the rock band U2's lead singer, Bono, also performed together with the mothers looking for their disappeared children on stage, during a memorable concert at the National Soccer Stadium in 1998.

Nowadays, remembering Cueca Sola, the rearticulation and recontextualization of this practice is performed mainly in curatorial projects and ethnographic writings; however, the translation of

experience is complicated by the actions of multiple subjectivities and political constrains, typical for the reconstructions of memories.

At the end of the dictatorship, the revitalization of Urban Cueca, that resisted as vernacular reality in the past years started to spread. Its lyrics create an imaginary of utopia for the Chilean society transforming the sadness of the lost community into a desire for "belonging to," and for "being with". It is the sense of loss that transforms into a new "geography of sociability," a new sense of locality, and engaged the need of reconstructing the city, of "our places"[30].

While in the past years, this developed as a marginal cultural and social practice, the various performances contributed to the development of an urban memory. Through the process of music mapping, the redefinition of memory is elaborated both by preserving old lyrics and by imagining simultaneously a "new world", where real and fictional places of the city connect local urban memories with an integrative idea of "locality". This idea aims to redefine the public space and to create a "claimed community" that develops everyday life networks, where past and present mix. The music becomes a pathway of rebuilding urban landscapes and new rituals for the civic living, by cultivating socially recognized symbolic and material relationships developed within a delimited space[31].

In a moment of criticism of progress and globalization in Chile, Urban Cuecas produce local meanings that are geographically, socially and historically meaningful for audiences, and create also a city shaped by a sense of locality and community.

We can see how, once again, dancing Cueca represents an important tool for creating a "Chilean identity". Far from being just the perpetuation of a "traditional dance", its performance, its re-appropriation and re-transformation of meaning denote an instrument of politicization that perpetuated in time and adopted different expressions. While it suffers different levels of re-constructions by various organs of governance, vernacular groups or civic society, it also demonstrates how relying on art could

become a form of activism that denounces social and political constraints.

The art of protesting and the Civilian Cueca

As I claimed in the introduction of this article, my interest in studying the history of this dance began with the visualization of a video taken during the latest protests, in November 2019.

In that video, the National Folkloric Ballet performed in front of the Theatre of the University of Chile, in Plaza Italia, for the "right of living in peace", engaging with the audience and inviting them to dance Cueca to celebrate that "they are Chileans"[32]. I immediately started to question: to what extent protesters identify themselves as belonging to a national identity and how dancing Cueca represents part of this process? In fact, who are the Chileans within this context, and who are they opposing during the latest protests?

We could see above, within the evolution of Cueca Sola as political performance, that what used to be an art system organized around state institutions, has managed to find a new site of legitimacy: remembrance of desaparecidos and activism. On the other hand, Urban Cueca represented a restoration of social interaction within a delimited space that becomes then "a simultaneously real and imaginary place, present and virtual, a structured agency and individual and collective experience"[33]. Cueca, together with other forms of arts, evolved and perpetuated in the collective consciousness, as belonging to the people, and during the latest protests, Cueca dance is coming back to people, finding in the streets of Santiago the new space for giving voice to their claims.

The performance of the National Folkloric Ballet in Plaza Italia delineates the "specialization" of the dance within a public space that materializes the memory of the social conviviality of popular places, but also of a historical location for protesting. This pacific protest that invites the public to participate through music

reproduces the model of a "Civilian Cueca", a derived-style from the Urban Cueca that became popular after the years 2000s, among youth generation. The world that the protesters propose, is an imagined world where the population has the right "of living in peace" and to celebrate their belonging to a "Chilean identity". In this context, the engaging performance aims to conceptualize the transition from the "lost community" to the "claimed community", constructing this way a new form of collective memory and rebuilding a counter discourse that criticizes the notion of progress or what could be named the "Chilean way to global capitalism".

However, recreating a feeling of belonging to a national identity, if such would be possible, would imply a complex process, based on more than one collective experience; therefore, the question to ask is not how the actors tried to create a sense of adhesion to the practice, but rather how do various, fragmented symbols, practices and actions take part to the creation of "collectiveness" that fight for common claims? Who it legitimated to take part to this process?

In general, mass social mobilizations aim to be sustainable collectively, and to engage actively a large number of supporters, where a common framework of identification plays an important role. As a result, for identifying themselves with a specific socio-political cause, performing Civilian Cueca facilitates mutual trust and they are more incline to engage in fights for freedom and rights. As all collective actions that develop during social movements are based on "otherness", it is essential to remember that the key element is the differentiation between "we" vs. "them". Those concepts are, however, to be approached as a dynamic pattern, where its concrete form depends on the set of relations at a given moment[34].

The term of "vernacular music" had been used here to indicate a cultural practice which survived to other forms of representation, implemented within an "official frame". In fact, we can see in all mentioned cases that the "we" represents the "people", that develop cultural actions as activism against "them", the "political class", although the actors, the space and claims are different, and they

depend on the historical context. Nowadays intent of the actors to liberalize the practice from its dictatorial political meaning, aims to redefine it as a symbol of resistance against Piñera's neoliberal government. This folkloric practice is shaped again by a new intent of creating national identity, deprived of past political constraints.

Sebastian Piñera's political agenda followed the economic path of the former regime. Although the neoliberal model brought high levels of economic growth, technology adoption and low level of corruption, disparities in terms of income and other factors remain important elements in nowadays Chile. The process of economic modernization made also inequality less acceptable in the face of public opinion. For example, in 1990, only 16% of Chileans completely agreed with the statement: "Incomes should be made more equal", and by the year 2000, that proportion grew to 33.5%. Moreover, younger citizens militate for a better quality of education, protection of the environment and social integration of minorities[35].

In addition to keeping government policy within the general "free market" framework imposed by the dictatorship, other political, social and cultural limits impacted Chile's "democratic" transition. The privatization of pension system, the cheap labor and the restriction of the social welfare benefits to the very poor (often stigmatized), together with the preservation of the dictatorship's 1980 constitution, that guarantees military independence from the government, contributed to the feeling of austerity perpetuated during the transition and after the restoration of civilian rule.

When in 2010, the newly elected and ultra-conservative president Sebastian Piñera re-inaugurated the bicentennial celebrations by performing the still official Peasant-style Cueca, it resurrected also the nationalist meaning that Pinochet associated with this practice.

The politicized appropriation of the "National Cueca" that makes reference to a past connected to dictatorship instigates the development of counter cultural movements such as the Civilian Cueca.

It is clear that the continuance of cultural activism through music and dance, in front of global and national policies that civilians

cannot change, represents a way of redefinition of a "Chilean identity" that represents better their desire of belonging to a community. However, we can ask ourselves how within the lasts protests this renegotiation takes place? What ruptures and continuities can we identify compared to the past claims? Who are the new actors and what instruments are nowadays adopted in this process?

Nowadays manifestations have been preceded by past protests, mostly the ones in 2011 which were massively supported by the student movement, in proportion of 79%. In fact, high school and college students have been the most vocal, channeling on the streets and online the public's discontent over the free-market policies of Chile, educational policies and the environment[36].

Since protesting and reshaping identity engages always the reconstruction of historical memory, the instruments and claims that are adopted in the new context are shaped by the new actors involved. Young students belong to the so-called "Fearless Generation" and are inspired by a shared post-memory of stories heard about the fight against injustice to Chile during the dictatorship and about the historical left prior to Pinochet. Moreover, they are collectively willing to mobilize in social movements due to their lack of lived experience of the repressive regime[37].

While the issues linked to neoliberalism have led to street protests in the past, latest manifestations represented a new phenomenon, both for their success and their use of social media.[38] Chile is one of the countries in the region where digital technologies have been taken advantage of more intensely usage among the population. Having grown up with digital media, young people may be especially drawn to different collective experiences and means of expression, approaching therefore differently, the new forms of citizenship they entail[39].

In addition to that, social media can also promote the construction of an individual and collective identity, which represents an important element in building political behavior. By

allowing multiple channels for interpersonal feedback and/or reinforcement of social norms, the various sites operate as information hubs, where different communities and networks intersect their set of expectations, beliefs and values (*Idem*). The displacement of opinion expression from the physical space to the virtual space facilitates in fact the both the exchange of knowledge but also interpretive frameworks that help to process the information. According to several researchers, a "networked public" that is engaged in political talks or public affairs, are more likely to mobilize in political activities, and therefore to develop a protest behavior[40].

Social media represents also a platform that provide mobilization information and real-time news that are not available in other channels of communication, facilitating this way the coordination of demonstrations, the creation of possibilities to exchange opinions or to join different social and political causes. The diffusion of post materialist values that promote self-expression and elite-challenging behavior promotes also the production of ideological discourses exercised by members of particular communities, which are organized in a variety of cultural institutions or associations[41].

It is within this particular context that cultural resistance and the performance of Cueca founds new ways of claiming rights and reshaping a "Chilean identity".

During the latest protests, different civil groups, including worker unions, high school student federations, university student associations, feminist organizations and cultural figures have initially joined peaceful gatherings and demonstrations.

In contrast, some transgressive actions became "disruptive" and "violent". Civil disobedience, labor or student strikes, taking over or occupying buildings and blocking routes, lighting fire and destroying vehicles, properties or buildings, barricades and confrontations with the military, led to imposed curfews and the deployment of tanks and troops that use brutal force against the militants. In claimed in the introduction, the military's acts of repressions revoked painful memories from the dictatorship times, regarding human rights

violations. Due to the fear of living again under political constraints, civilians reacted promptly, by using different domestic and artistic instruments: slogans, utensils, pots and pans, music and chants. Many artists and activists joined the protests and used cultural practices as a mean to draw attention on their vision of justice. According to Sierralta, cultural strategies "reflect an evident intention to symbolize or represent some element of the collective cause through artistic or graphic media, or through a more sophisticated coordination of actions of those present than the habitual" (Sierralta 2016, 163).

Since the collective identity during social movements emerge from shared concepts, convictions and emotions of people actively engaged, the implementation of social and political changes passes through the collective interpretation of the traits, life experiences and social relations in which they take part (della Porta 2009, 102). The performance of Civilian Cueca during the nowadays manifestations represents not only a continuity of resistance and opposition to a regime that does not embody the needs of the people, but also a claim for freedom.

Thus, must have been aware that cultural meanings are always being actualized in the course of culturally contextualized acts of encoding and decoding. Cultural manifestations derive from the interpretation and ideological explanation that characterizes a particular moment, therefore in was important to "sort out the structures of signification" (Geertz 1973, 20), as Geertz would declare. The uses of cultural practices within political claims can have a powerful effect because they tend to encourage unity, to offer a framework for commitment and self-recognition, to build group identity and to undermine control of authorities.

It is clear that nowadays manifestations in Chile express a neoliberalism crisis. Mass-gatherings exploded in October 2019, and different groups of civilians participated for protesting against inequality, although their political outcome is indeterminate. We could observe a valorization of the revolt without necessarily a political translation, where new challenges are taking over traditional

forms of political and trade union mobilization. These are movements that escape institutional logics and traditional ideological patterns. The answer to the failure of economic implementations represents, as Monod is naming it, "a crisis in recent democracies (Monod 2019). The passage from a political dominance to a democracy increased the gap between liberalism and state, and the vision of the economy relates to a social and ecological degradation. In fact, as we could see also in this analysis, the characteristics of political action in these societies are determined by the dominant role of youth, the absence of political parties as the main organizers and the wide spread use of social media as means of political action.

Conclusion

The evolution of Cueca dance as cultural resistance had been strictly linked to the process of building a "Chilean Identity", in opposition to political and economic constraints of the ruling government. Passing by the Peasant-style Cueca, to the Urban and the Civilian Cueca, and Cueca Sola, the performance had been submitted to various levels of re-constructions and re-appropriations of meaning, becoming both an instrument of politicization and a form of activism.

During latest protests, the persistence of inequalities due to Sebastian Piñera's political agenda that followed the economic path of the former regime and encouraged the raise of a privileged elite, led to mass-gatherings all over the country.

Within this context, neo-democratic countries[42], such as Chile, confronts with a crisis of governability, that is translated in political action which are determined by the dominant role of youth, the absence of political parties as the main organizers and the wide spread use of social media as means of political action.

The notion of contestation, along with youth resistance, had been extensively theorized and it is commonly understood as all

forms of protest against ideologies, values and institutions of the dominant culture. The adoption of cultural practices as method of demonstration denotes an intention to symbolize and represent the collective cause, in opposition to a restrictive form of governance, ruled by neoliberal economies and the lack of a tradition in democratic politics. In fact, as we could do in the example above, cultural practices of contestation consist both in the rejection and negation of some aspects of the totality of the dominant ideology on the one hand, and in the affirmation of an oppositional ideology on the other hand.

As we could see, the performance of Cueca dance represents in fact a symbol of resistance and an expression of freedom, with deep rooted historical connections, against the oppression of authoritarian regimes.

NOTES

1. https://www.gob.cl/coronavirus/plandeaccion/.
2. Garces, 2019.
3. *Cueca* is considered to be one of the traditional cultural practices in Chile, and also the National dance, as we will see in this article.
4. Mizuko Ito introduces the notion of networked publics to "reference a linked set of social, cultural, and technological developments that have accompanied the growing engagement with digitally networked media" (Ito 2008, 2).
5. *Ideoscape* is a term introduced by Appadurai to represent one of the five contemporary global cultural flows and indicates the circulation of images and ideas within the global cultural flow. By developing his five dimensions: *ethnoscape*, *technoscape*, *financescape*, *mediascape*, and *ideoscape*, he sought to demonstrate how globalization is not homogenous, but rather dynamic and iteractive (Appadurai 1996).
6. Spencer 2007.
7. Barrios 1948; Dannemman 2007; Vega 1947.
8. Garrido 1943, 102-103.
9. Spencer 2016.
10. Legroux 2018; Campos 2013.
11. Gavilan 2013.
12. Cid Aguayo 2015.

13. Legroux 2018.
14. Cid Aguayo 2015.
15. Sotoconil 2009.
16. Radio U Chile, transmission of Pilar León about Cueca, from 8th February 2019.
17. Boursier 2010, 12.
18. Sotoconil 2009.
19. Sotoconil 2009.
20. Gingrich, Banks 2006, 2.
21. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, 1.
22. Pierre Nora 1978, 398.
23. Spencer 2016.
24. Torres 2010, 119.
25. "Arpilleras" in the Chilean tradition represents an old regional pictorial appliqué technique from Isla Negra on the coast of the country, whereby rags were used to create images and then embroidered on large pieces of cloth (Bacic 2009).
26. https://theculturetrip.com/south-america/chile/articles/the-complicated-past-of-chiles-national-dance-la-cueca/.
27. Agosine M, Abzung B 1995.
28. Chodak 2006.
29. Olivares & Gomoll 2016, 162-163.
30. Spencer 2016.
31. *Idem*.
32. Hermosa manifestación junto a la Cueca que se tomó Plaza Baquedano https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFDBbl8ybfg.
33. Soja 2008, 40 *in* Espinosa 2016.
34. Melucci 1996, 76.
35. Gil de Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela, 2012.
36. Valenzuela 2012.
37. Hirsh 2008.
38. Planas 2011.
39. Gil de Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela 2012.
40. Huckfeldt & Sprague 1995; Schmitt-Beck 2008.
41. Gil de Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela 2012.
42. Huntington coined the term of "Third Wave Democracy" to defined the transition from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occurred in several regions in the world: in 1974 (Carnation Revolution, Portugal), in Latin America in the 1980s, in Asia Pacific countries (Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan) from 1986 to 1988, Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and sub-Saharan Africa beginning in 1989 (Huntington

1991). I found it, however, more appropriate to use the notion of "new-democracy" for indicating the democratization of countries after the 90s.

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