Youth Multi-Association Participation and Public Space: Evidence from the Chilean Case

Daniel Carmen
University of Madeira
Email: carmen44@gmail.com

Abstract

The objective of the article is to expose a set of reflections and empirical findings related to the phenomenon of youth associative participation and its relationship with the development of greater civility as a condition of democratic strengthening. Within this framework, a series of findings related to the phenomenon of "multi-adherence" is presented, establishing, in this way, its theoretical importance, its conceptualization, to advance in the exploration of its relationship with the development of civic behavior. In this way, it seeks to determine, first, if the multi-adherence phenomenon constitutes an instrument of social integration typical of the cultural model present in our societies; second, what kind of motivations encourage and/or discourage young people to participate in multiple ways; third, if an eventual multi-membership is a strategy of increasingly broad social and ideological experimentation; and, finally, what is the impact of a possible multi-membership on the civic life of young people and the consequences that it may have on public policies.

Keywords: *Social participation; Citizen participation; Public politics; Youth; Chili.*

– – – – – – – – – – ◆ – – – – – – – – – –

A. INTRODUCTION

The reflection on the transformations of the public space and on the multiple interconnections that we can appreciate between participation, citizenship and democracy continues to constitute a challenge of the first order for the whole of the social sciences. Said affirmation is based on the increasingly eloquent observation that the democratic system is currently exposed to great and profound paradoxes, one of the most important being the fact that this system, despite having managed to expand since a territorial point of view, which makes it the form of administration that today enjoys greater acceptance in the world, is experiencing a phenomenon of modification of what could be called "the global dimension of the public". Said modification implies, among other things, a displacement of public action from the space of "trust" to that of "distrust" as a filter of the attitude of individuals regarding the essential issues of society (Rosanvallon, 2006; Thezá , 2010).

The foregoing affects and reconfigures certain key aspects of the collective functioning of the social, such as, for example, the new expressions of collective action, the conception of the public-private dyad, the form of construction of the new citizen discourses, the modalities of political intermediation and, very specifically, the forms of organization and the value assigned to it (Garretón, 2001 and 2002; Hopenhayn, 2001, 2004 and 2005; Lechner, 2000). The concrete effects of this complex phenomenon are increasingly evident: on the one hand, there is a greater degree of distance and skepticism towards the traditional institutions of democracy; on the other, there is a

growing crisis of legitimacy in relation to the traditional forms of social and political representation. Finally, it is verified -from the electoral point of view- the growth of apathy, abstention and the protest vote. Added to the above is the exclusion and self-exclusion practiced by important sectors of society in relation to decision-making processes; processes that are frequently perceived as simple procedural rites devoid of meaning and effectiveness if they are observed from the prism of strictly individual interests and logic of action, or from the strict principle of self-realization (Bajoit, 2003 ; Lechner, 2004; Sandoval, 2001). Although these phenomena affect Western societies as a whole, the fact that they have a fairly direct impact on the specific behavior of young people as a segment cannot be indifferent. This is clearly seen in the Chilean case, where this sector of society has, for example, an extremely low electoral participation (Candia, 2004; Navia, 2004).

Added to the above is the fact that young people from vulnerable sectors participate and vote much less than young people from more affluent sectors, thus generating a significant socioeconomic bias and a profound phenomenon of political inequality. Both phenomena (decrease in electoral participation and political inequality) have been presenting a strong consolidation over time in the Chilean case (Thezá, 2004, 2009 and 2010). However, this is not only a problem that is limited to electoral participation, since it is also evident at the Latin American level -Chile being a paradigmatic case- the existence of a weakening in the general associative behavior of young people (CEPAL , 2003 and 2008). It is precisely antecedents of this nature that demonstrate the relevance of taking an interest in this type of problem from a Latin American perspective, reflecting on national cases such as the one that this document presents and analyzes. As is to be expected, the mentioned aspects cannot but produce complex effects from the institutional perspective, but they also show deep fractures in the field of cultural relations, since they affect the solidity and consistency of the idea of a " We" collective; pillar that is usually considered key to the proper functioning of democracy (Lechner, 2002 and 2004).

This article seeks to present a set of findings related to a new way of approaching the phenomena of participation and associativity based on the conviction that the transformations that operate in this field are not only due to political-institutional restrictions (Hunneus and Maldonado , 2003; UNDP, 2004), but also to profound cultural changes that drive them (Ba-joit, 2003). In this framework, reference will be made to the phenomenon that we call "multi-adherence"1. It seeks, from this perspective, to establish its theoretical importance, its conceptualization and also the formulation of a proposal aimed at specifying its magnitude as an object of study, exploring what its relationship would be with forms of civility that can precisely to face the institutional and cultural deficits of this social "We" described.

The reflections that this purpose will seek to articulate are part of a research carried out in Chile between 2012 and 2014, called "Effects of multi-adherence on the civic behavior of young people". This mixed-type (quanti-quali) research sought to answer the following general question: does the multiadherence to organizations by young people constitute a new socialization resource that generates effects on their

civic behavior? The objectives of the research were, therefore: a) to specify, from a theoretical and empirical point of view, the phenomenon of associative multi-adherence of young people in Chile, and b) to measure the impact of a possible associative multi-adherence on the civic behavior of this segment of society. The relevance of this approach lies in the fact that it makes it possible to alter a certain traditional perspective with which the processes of political socialization that oppose, in practice, the model of a citizen with a high level of socialization and strongly committed with the public dimension versus the apathetic citizen, weakly socialized and only submerged in concerns of a strictly personal nature (Johnston and Searing, 1994). From the Latin American perspective, the interest in this type of approach is based on the fact that this has not yet been an issue addressed, as is evident in the process of reviewing bibliographic sources that was part of the research. In this framework, what follows in this section will propose a theoretical journey related to issues of participation, associativity and civility, in addition to a methodological section that accounts for the data and the research techniques used, which correspond to descriptive, bivariate analyses. and multivariate.

Being Chile the framework in which the study in question was developed, references to the Chilean case will abound, which will not prevent us from specifying some reflections on phenomena that scientific evidence clarifies are of a more general scope. The second section will be dedicated to the presentation of data on multi-adherence and civility. For these purposes, an analysis work was carried out through indices that were tested in various types of youth organizations. Finally, a set of research conclusions is presented.

B. LITERATURE REVIEWS

As has already been anticipated, the growing distance of the citizenry in relation to the traditional institutions of democracy, in addition to a greater crisis of legitimacy around the traditional forms of political and social participation, together with the development of apathy and exclusion and self-exclusion from electoral processes are relevant phenomena that have been widely studied; in fact, there is an extensive and rich literature on the matter (e.g., Castells, 1996; Giddens, 1990; Habermas, 2000; Held, 2006; Touraine, 1999 and 2006). This phenomenon, despite the fact that it undeniably affects the whole of society, is even more radical in young people. In this way, and throughout latitude, young people, despite being more socially enabled to the uncertainty of change, are, at the same time, more pressured to direct these skills towards a more individualistic, more utilitarian and , in turn, more pragmatic. The foregoing is clearly translated when choosing their personal development strategies and the value given to what we usually call "the public" (Bajoit …[et al], 2000; Bajoit and Franssen, 1995). Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the functioning of Western societies shows a radical change in the practical experiences of life in common, but also a mutation of the imaginaries of this coexistence, especially in the case of young people.

If one thinks particularly of the Chilean situation -as has been extensively pointed out by UNDP studies-, said transformations have weakened the image of this "We" to which allusion has been made, and which in the past seems to have favored the construction of a picture of more interpersonal and institutional trust, of more social cooperation and of greater citizenship (Lechner, 2002). These changes show that there would be a profound transformation within the values of Chilean society. Given this context of changes, people would be looking for new interpretative codes of their lives that are difficult to find at the level of public space, politics, or the State. For this reason, in the absence of a collective system that generates meanings, each person becomes rather the conductor and architect of their own life. In this way, it seems that it is the same society that begins to produce groups of individuals that integrate into it in a differentiated way; namely, that they live and experience, materially and subjectively, their integration in different ways. Thus, it is possible to find duly "integrated" sectors, where the benefits of the development model and the expectations around it are consistent; “emerging” sectors where the relationship between benefits and expectations, not being fully consistent, is covered in a feeling that we will call projective optimism; and the “lagging” sectors, where said relationship is clearly conflictive.

This disharmony between the dimension of the public and individual subjectivity has motivated the realization, during the last fifteen years, of various analyzes that have wanted to explore precisely the keys to the democratic culture of young people (CEPAL, 2008; see also Asún, 2004 ; Candia, 2004; Sandoval, 2001; Thezá, 2004). These analyzes have attempted to determine what cultural and institutional factors influence young people causing this weakening of civic behavior. These studies have mixed a set of classic analysis variables from political science and sociology related to the social and institutional conditions that favor political socialization and the formation of civic competencies (Joignant, 1997, 2002 and 2004). . Other analyzes have been more interested in reflecting on the social resources available for the exercise of citizenship (Hopenhayn, 2001; UNDP and INJUV, 2003). From an eminently cultural perspective, there are also important analyzes aimed at deciphering the transformations in Western societies, and particularly in the Chilean case, which place special emphasis on the processes of individualization and diversification of society as explanatory factors of a greater disinterest in the public dimension (Lechner, 2002). The general conclusions of these studies are in line with demonstrating that the construction of a discourse on public issues is, much more than before, inextricably linked to the construction of a self-image and personal experience, rather than to a collective narrative. . In this way, a certain specificity of the Chilean case would be given by the fact that young people would be faced with the coexistence of two fundamental tendencies that oppose each other: on the one hand, the discursive homogenization typical of democratic reconstruction2 (however , based on a fabric different from the one that existed at the time of the coup d'état3) versus the fragmentation of a new It is a symbolic offer on the cultural level.

Despite this background, although a certain degree of progress in academic research on young people in Chile is clear, there are still gaps that should be mentioned: the first is the decrease, starting in the year 2000, of studies on to the analysis of the condition of "being young" and of the identity processes that are their own (very important studies in the 1990s). Another phenomenon to highlight is the insistence on observing the processes of participation and associativity of young people through the filter of the image of traditional participation spaces, which leads to an idea of associativity seen in very exclusive and excluding terms. (e.g., they participate in political youth or in the neighborhood council, which is seen and analyzed in a dichotomous way). The foregoing already lights up warning lights as this is apparently contradictory to the simple perception that society, in its greatest diversity, should also offer greater possibilities of participation; participation that, at the same time, would turn out to be more eventual. Within this framework, the National Youth Survey of the National Youth Institute of Chile (INJUV)4, in its latest versions, provides valuable information regarding some transformations that youth participation has undergone in almost two decades; namely, the heterogeneity of participation and its reorientation towards non-traditional spaces. But, paradoxically, she does not delve into how these transformations have impacted the development of a sense of civility in young Chileans. Participation, associativeness and civility are not analyzed in an integrated way.

For the moment, what is known about research on youth in Chile is that the daily practices of young people seem to be extremely complex and they supposedly follow the path traced by the very complexity of society. The foregoing is exemplified, as has been stated, with the apparent emergence of a broader range of effective forms of participation. It is necessary to highlight that the practices to which allusion has been made occur in a context where the keys to individualization are already duly outlined by society itself. This implies greater self-awareness of oneself, a higher level of self-determination and, above all, a strong feeling of self-realization (Lechner, 2004). This cannot but negatively affect the youth disposition in the assessment of what is public, given the widespread idea that the life project depends on strictly personal factors, rather than on circumstances and/or factors resulting from an organizational effort. collective.

For this reason, today it seems that we are facing the evidence that in diverse societies it is necessary to analyze the participation processes not only thinking that the associative affiliations are exclusive and/or excluding, but also that a possible phenomenon of adhesion of the "type" multiple" can become an increasingly frequent reality. This, given this characteristic of greater heterogeneity of the social, and greater subjectivity as a trigger for the effective will to associate. What has been described reveals that the norm of an identity linked to an exclusive belonging to a specific community or to the defense of a particular ideology is increasingly weak. Strictly speaking, being a member of an association is, more often than not, an option; therefore, it would not be objectively constituted as the result of social relations that could be called a priori "natural" in young people, but neither in adults. Previously,

it had been specified that "multiple membership" meant the accumulation of more than one affiliation or associative membership, regardless of the nature or instrumental purpose that these associations have. Now, given the logic of our argument, it should not only be of interest to know if there is "multi-adherence", but also to know if this eventual "multi-adherence", when it occurs, is a source of development of a new type of civility that modifies or enhance that which has been traditionally known and characterized; namely, the one where the demand for rights and respect for obligations tried to maintain a balance and coherence. This implies transforming the point of view of the phenomenon of youth participation, not only observing the processes that influence the behavior of young people, but also the "strategies" used by them to express themselves civically.

Within this framework of academic concern some investigations have sought to determine if a possible multi-adherence strategy constitutes a new instrument of social integration typical of our cultural model, and if this multi-adherence strategy is testimony to a new type of social experimentation, which seems to be the case in some countries in Europe (Bréchon and Tchernia, 2009). These investigations, in effect, have allowed and favored theorizing about this phenomenon. As noted above, it is well known that in recent times the processes of reconciliation and articulation between the individual and the community have caused an important deployment of social research. Part of this research has been based on the fact that the essential dilemma to establish in terms of participation is normally a dilemma of citizenship; namely, that the fundamental challenge that society must face is the ability to manage collective representations that, by their nature, transcend the individual interest of each member of the community. This is how the idea of a feeling of common belonging, or of a “We”, is traditionally reaffirmed, as we have wanted to present sequentially in this article. It should be noted that a complex element of the analyzes related to the problem of participation stems from the fact that there is objectively a borderline that is not always defined between belonging to any community and feeling an active and participating part of said community.

For this reason, the interest in broadening empirical knowledge in relation to the modalities of civic behavior is based on the fact that what was traditionally called “belonging” can be in permanent competition with the concrete life of individuals. This is the case of young people for whom a greater variety of social affiliations establishes a kind of identity translation game in which “strategic choices” seem to operate between the different social belongings linked to specific dimensions. For this reason, it is not strange to note that, in what is generally called participation, vital, functional or simply motivational dimensions can coexist that install the young person in an associative space. The foregoing explains why the current academic agenda is gradually becoming interested in establishing how this process of “strategic choices” operates and, strictly speaking, on what type(s) of strategy(ies) it rests.

Within the framework of the reflection on "the multi-associative" it is fundamental to dwell on the hypothesis of Bréchon (2003; see also Bréchon and Tchernia, 2009), who affirms that the ability to belong to multiple associative spaces

would be constituting today the true index of civic commitment and militancy; key parameters in the past. In a similar vein, Ion (1997) has supported the thesis that young people prefer less demanding and freer forms of association, and that although the number of associations grows, their ideals and forms of exercise are continually changing. It is in this context that other forms of associative action appear and develop (Norris, 2003 and 2009). Often, all these forms of participation tend to be included under the label of culturalist or protest actions, which implies that there would be a new form of political socialization that would explain, for example, the reason for greater recourse to social protest and a greater appreciation of the "institutional alter". Thus, in the Chilean case, one of the greatest complexities to observe and measure this phenomenon is the tendency precisely to its simplification, which often leads us to conclusions more interested in explaining the percentage weight of old and new forms of participation. than in describing the globality of what it represents in terms of orientation, strategies and social effects. For this reason, this article is particularly interested in proposing a way of observing the phenomenon in question (multi-adherence), as well as the dimensioning of the relationship that it has with what is traditionally called civility; which is linked -as will be seen later- to mechanisms and conventional forms of political participation such as identification, electoral participation and certain attitudes favorable to democracy.

.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As noted above, the main objective of this paper is to evaluate the phenomenon of multiadherence from the case of Chilean youth, analyzing its magnitude and the relationship it has with civic behavior, whose variables will be operationalized. For this, it was decided to work with the youth surveys carried out in Chile in the period 2000-2012 by the INJUV. As a first approach to the problem, a difference will be made between "non-adherents", that is, those who do not declare any type of participation; "Uniadherentes", who participate exclusively in an organization; "pluriadherentes", who regularly participate in two organizations; and "multi-adherents", who participate in three or more organizations. Based on the data from the national youth survey, the magnitude of the phenomenon to be observed will be specified. For this purpose -as was anticipated- the surveys of the years 2000, 2006 and 2012 were used. The population of the three surveys corresponds to young people between 15 and 29 years of age from urban and rural areas of all regions of Chile. Sampling is stratified by conglomerates and multistage First, we worked with descriptive analyzes and statistical models based on logistic regressions. Subsequently, we worked with civility indices that have been tested with Cronbach's α for the observations on which we work. Based on these indices, differences in civility between the types of adherence to organizations were explored. In a second instance, the difference between participation by type of organization was explored, focused mainly on organizations that by their nature suppose, a priori, a representative type of participation6, versus

others that have a character that, within the framework of this article are classified as hedonistic7 (satisfaction from recreation, activities of the juvenile vital period, etc.). In this subsection we work with descriptive, bivariate analyzes and an exploratory analysis (principal component analysis). Remember that the selected organizations respond to those -and only those- that allow a longitudinal analysis over time. The data from the National Youth Survey show that the multi-adherence phenomenon -as it has been defined- is, in general terms, minority in comparison to the other categories. Observing the background, it is evident that, strictly speaking, a considerable majority does not manifest affiliation to any type of organization.

For the purposes of the analysis, it is very relevant that these percentages have not had significant variations over time, fundamentally the year 2012. This since the sample for this survey was taken in a year in which the social mobilization processes experienced by society Chilean government produced the feeling that the country was facing significant growth in participation at all levels, in a kind of resurgence of the value of participation. To be precise, the impact of social mobilization can be seen more when working with logistic regression models where the dependent variable would be precisely multi-adherence. Table 3 presents three models with different sociodemographic variables, ideological identification, attitudes related to civility and participation in mobilizations for the year 2012. As can be seen in Table 3, the logit models show that the phenomenon of multiadherence, such as has been conceptualized, it is rather associated with the younger sector of the youth population, namely, 15 to 18 years old9. This also shows that this phenomenon is more relevant in the case of men. It should be noted that in the most robust analysis model it is seen that belonging to the most vulnerable sectors is an obstacle to multi-associative participation. This aspect is consistent with the elements described in the reference framework and that allude to the set of diagnoses carried out on political inequality, which show that the difference in terms of intensity of participation is increasing (in a broad sense). depending on the socioeconomic origin of the people, especially in the case of young people. It is possible to affirm, therefore, as a first general idea to highlight, that when speaking of "multi-adherence" in the Chilean case, it is referring, strictly speaking, to a small "microcosm" of young people. This, if one thinks that half of them do not participate habitually, as could be seen in Table 2. After having elucidated this phenomenon in terms of general magnitude -phenomenon that is equivalent to the small microcosm referred to-, it is now necessary to decipher with more in detail what their contours and characteristics are. As a second step of this analysis, it is necessary to clarify which indicators can be used to begin the construction of the indices with which the relationship of multi-adherence will be evaluated with a more precise element that is part of the general concern of the study: the youth civics. The option for these three actions is, by the way, determined by aspects of a normative order that are coherent with a logic of duties towards the collective "We" already described. This option is also determined by the effective possibilities granted by the national youth survey in terms of availability of variables. From the methodological perspective, this option had a precise consequence: for the

analyzes a subset of the population consisting of people between 18 and 25 years of age was taken; that is to say, only people who can vote in the elections were included and the most adult members of the young population were excluded. For the purpose of measuring the relationship of multiadherence with the civic behavior of young people, two indices were created. The first of them (of an additive order) was structured under the premise that the three actions described (voting, supporting democracy and having a political preference) have exactly the same practical value. Therefore, for this index all three stocks have the same weighting.

This first index shows that, in general terms, the civic-mindedness of young people is fundamentally of low intensity for the data set and the time series analyzed (Table 4), an issue that is again consistent with all the diagnoses that speak of a general weakening of feeling part of a more collective effort to build. Differently from the previous one, the second index is structured rather under the logic that voting is more important than simply having a political preference or supporting democracy (thus, voting has a value of 2, while having a political preference and supporting democracy each have a value of The results of the application of this index can be seen

D. CONLUSION

The focus was placed on this phenomenon since a group of European studies have argued that multi-associative strategies would be replacing traditional sources of socialization, structured on the basis of permanent adherence over time and exclusive fidelity to other organizations. . In this context, multi-associativity would imply a new way of "experiencing", socially and politically.

In the Chilean case, the antecedents analyzed show that this phenomenon corresponds to a very limited "microcosm" in the world of the young people who participate; world where the general rule is either not to participate (for half of young people), or to participate in only one particular organization (traditional model). However, it has been established that, for those who participate in a multi-associative manner, this attitude positively predisposes them to produce a greater civic density, in accordance with the indices that were proposed for these effects, namely, one of the additive type and another of the additive type. normative, built from three key variables: support democracy, have a political preference and vote. From this perspective, it is not trivial, for the purpose of reinforcing a We, the development and appreciation of a multi-associative spirit that allows preparing, through experimentation, a better exercise of citizenship. However, it is important to consider that representative-type organizations It goes, which are precisely those that enjoy less practical adherence today, end up producing more civic density than the purely hedonistic ones. Hence the importance of their revaluation, their support, and the interest that they should arouse, fundamentally thinking about public policies to promote participation. It should be noted that many of these policies, due to a safeguard of neutrality, end up supporting forms of participation or association of a more cultural type, which do not produce the desired effect of strengthening a collective.

REFERENCES

1. Asún, Rodrigo (2004), "A contracorriente: la participación política juvenil en los tiempos de la despolitización", in Revista Observatorio de Juventud, N° 4, pp. 13-19.
2. Bajoit, Guy (2003), Social change: a sociological approach to contemporary Western societies, Brussels, Éditions de Boeck Université.
3. Bajoit, Guy; Digneffe, Francoise; Nollet de Brauwere, Quentin; y Jaspard, Jean-Marie
4. (2000), Youth and society: the socialization of young people in a changing world, Brussels, De Boeck University.
5. Bajoit, Guy y Franssen, Abraham (1995), Young people in cultural competition, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
6. Bréchon, Pierre (2003), "Trust in others and sociability: comparative European analysis", in International Review of Comparative Politics, Vol. 10 No. 3, p. 397-414.
7. Bréchon, Pierre y Tchernia, Jean-Françoise (2009), France through its values, Paris, Armand Colin.
8. Candia, Eduardo (2004), "El movimiento político sin voto de los jóvenes en Chile", in Revista Observatorio de Juventud, N° 4, pp. 6-12.
9. Castells, Manuel (1996), The Rise of the Network Society, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.
10. CEPAL (2003), Youth and social inclusion in Iberoamerica, Santiago, CEPAL.
11. _____ (2008), Juventud y social cohesion en Iberoamérica: un modelo para armar, Santiago, CEPAL.
12. Garretón, Manuel Antonio (2001), "Cambios sociales, actores y acción colectiva en América Latina", Santiago, CEPAL (Serie Políticas Sociales; Nº 56).
13. _____ (2002), "La transformation de la acción colectiva en América Latina", in Revista de la CEPAL, Nº 76, p. 7-24.
14. Giddens, Anthony (1990), The Consequences of Modernity, Cambridge, Polity Press; Blackwell Publishing.
15. Habermas, Jürgen (2000), After the Nation-State: A New Political Constellation, Paris, Fayard.
16. Held, David (2006), Models of Democracy, Cambridge, Polity Press.