

## Speeding up Collective Action. Theoretical Affinities between Conflict Studies and Acceleration Theory

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**Abstract.** Acceleration theory has emphasized the alienation that results from the speeding up of social life, but it has paid less attention to other emancipatory goals. Is it possible to consider collective action and conflicts as an acceleration motor? If so, is it a contingent-situated motivation or rather a structural condition? The paper's hypothesis is that conflicts are deemed a contingent or structural acceleration motor depending on the very basic theoretical starting-point: 1) if conflicts are considered as an "exception" or an "anomaly" to be solved in an assumed "normal" course of society (functionalism), there is no structural acceleration condition for them, but rather a contextual one. Conversely, 2) if conflicts are perceived as a constitutive part of modern capitalist society, they can also be understood as an acceleration motor underpinning social life with emancipatory potential.

**Keywords:** Acceleration; Conflicts; Collective Action; Social Change.

[es] Acelerar la acción colectiva. Afinidades teóricas entre estudios de conflictos y la teoría de la aceleración

**Resumen.** La teoría de la aceleración ha hecho hincapié en los efectos alienantes de la aceleración de la vida social, pero ha prestado menos atención a posibles objetivos emancipadores. ¿Es posible considerar la acción y los conflictos colectivos como un motor de aceleración? Si es así, ¿es una motivación contingente-situada o más bien una condición estructural? La hipótesis principal de este artículo es que los conflictos se consideran un motor de aceleración contingente o estructural dependiendo del punto de partida teórico que se adopte: 1) si los conflictos son una "excepción", como "anomalía" a resolver en un supuesto curso "normal" de la sociedad (perspectiva funcionalista), no existe una condición estructural de aceleración sobre ellos, sino más bien contextual. A la inversa, 2) si los conflictos se perciben como parte constitutiva de la sociedad moderna-capitalista también pueden entenderse como un motor acelerador que apuntala la vida social con potenciales emancipadores.

**Palabras clave:** aceleración; conflicto; acción colectiva; cambio social.

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### Introduction

Is acceleration a one-dimensional capitalist trend? More concretely, is acceleration a mere capitalist outcome? Conflicts worldwide demand different changes in several directions concerning climate change, feminism, and race. All these social movements demand both a cultural transformation as well as a structural, economic-based change. And they ask that these changes be sped up. Hence, collective action envelops a particular form of temporal claim that can potentially spark historical transformation at accelerated rates. Revolutions, revolts, and reforms

are examples of different paces of change. The latest "Chilean uprising" is an *avant-garde* case of speeding up politics: the social malaise spawned an accelerated referendum for a new constitution that has the chance to overturn the dictatorial legacy of the Pinochet regime –something that was impossible to achieve within 30 years. Acceleration theorists have emphasized the alienation that results from the speeding up of social life<sup>3</sup>, but they have paid less attention to other emancipatory goals. Is it possible to consider collective action and conflicts as an acceleration motor? If so, is it a contingent-situated motivation or rather a structural condition? I seek to offer a re-

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<sup>3</sup> R. Hassan, *Empires of Speed*, Leiden, Brill, 2008; H. Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality*, NSU Press, 2010.

sponse to these questions by connecting conflict studies and acceleration theory. My primary hypothesis is that conflicts are deemed a contingent or structural acceleration motor depending on the theoretical starting-point adopted: 1) if conflicts are an “exception” or an “anomaly” to be solved in an assumed “normal” course of society (functionalist perspective), there is no structural acceleration condition for them, but rather a contextual one. Conversely, 2) if conflicts are perceived as constitutive parts of modern, western capitalist society, i.e., as the very core of society, they can also be understood as an acceleration motor nurturing social life with emancipatory potential.

In this paper I will address the following thesis: the rise of “accelerated conflicts” can be conceived as an important factor of social speeding up, especially in political spheres. My intention here is to highlight a seemingly uncontested underpinning of the acceleration theory, namely that social acceleration is just an epiphenomenon of modern socio-economic complexity (i.e., capitalism). According to the “economic” acceleration thesis, speeding up is always a sort of iron cage without an exit, until its very motif—capitalism *dixit*—falls<sup>4</sup>. However, this thesis is under stress today when we take into account current manifestations of collective action worldwide. This is because the collective actions contest and even slow down some aspects of politics and economic fields (i.e., incessant economic growth), but, at the same time, they *speed up* several social processes, triggering accelerated political, economic, and even legal changes—as in the already mentioned referendum for a New Constitution in Chile. This example of triggering accelerated socio-political change by mobilizations is only one example among many worldwide current social struggles, such as Fridays for Future, Black Lives Matter, or Time’s Up.

The rising of “accelerated conflicts” worldwide can be conceived as an outcome of the inability of the political system to process *on time* the increasing social demands, hand-in-hand with functionalist or rather conflict theories mentioned above. Consequently, this paper seeks to shed light on the socio-political causes of the acceleration-collective action bond. As a preliminary definition, *accelerated conflicts* shall be understood in two ways: on the one hand, as escalations of unsolved past conflicts (indigenous demands, reforms to education, or pension systems, for example), and on the other hand, as the consolidation of present and future conflicts (gender equality or environmental care, for example). The rapid escalatory dynamic of conflicts cannot just be resolved by faster responses from the political system, but this dynamic also supposes the integration of selective-discriminatory mechanisms by which some demands may be solved quickly, as a priority, while others should be treated in slow-

er ways. Therefore, through the application of the acceleration theory to conflicts, it is possible to observe that there is a twofold relationship to the “speeding-up” phenomenon: on the one hand, 1) from a broader perspective, conflicts themselves are an outcome of social acceleration in tune with the pace of social changes. On the other hand, 2) they conversely spark the acceleration of social changes at different levels in various spheres, such as law (constitution), culture (values), or the economy (market trends). The basis of this paper is that if acceleration may be also conceived as result of collective action, then the argument will contest—or at least call into question—the common scholarly assumption that acceleration is “only” or “mainly” a pathological outcome of modern capitalist history. By considering the impact of protests and mobilizations, this paper seeks to add one usually underdeveloped speed-up aspect to the acceleration theory, namely, the role of collective action in sparking social acceleration. My claim is that collective action cannot be integrated into the three traditional acceleration theory motors (economic, technical, and cultural)<sup>5</sup> because it crosses the three levels. At the economic level, collective action contests the economic logic of incessant growth, and at the technical/cultural levels, it uses both aspects (technological innovations and the cultural claim for speeding up) as tools of mobilization. Moreover, collective action cannot be reduced to a technological aspect (as human activity), nor to cultural norms (since the collective action is not always in tune with speeding-up values), but rather it criticizes them.

To this point, it is also necessary to stress that the relationship between conflicts and social time is not a one-dimensional bond, but is rather multiple and diverse. However, social evidence unveiling a strong connection between social acceleration and collective action has increased in the past decades. Hence, this is the core intervention that this paper seeks to explore: to add collective action as another factor of social acceleration nurtures the theory with contemporary and often excluded agency processes. This type of critique is a call to look towards specific accelerations in concrete places, posing questions about where and how people encounter accelerations (as well as decelerations), what form they take, and what politics they entail. In the rest of the article, I will proceed in three steps: 1) I will explore the underestimated role of collective action in the acceleration theory; 2) I will analyze the Chilean protests case as an acceleratory logic of political change; and 3) I will observe the limits and possibilities of applying functionalism and critical theory to conflicts in order to evaluate their affinities with the role of collective action within the acceleration theory.

<sup>4</sup> R. Hassan, *Empires of Speed*, *op. cit.*; B. Aggen, *Speed Up Fast Capitalism: Cultures, Jobs, Families, Schools, Bodies*, London and New York, Routledge, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> H. Rosa, *Social Acceleration. A New Theory of Modernity*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2013.

## 1. Acceleration Theory

### 1.1. What does it mean to accelerate?

In the last few decades, social and cultural studies have been deeply concerned with the temporal patterns of modern life in general and with social change in particular<sup>6</sup>. On the one hand, theorists such as François Hartog have emphasized the plurality and diversity of times simultaneously present in the contemporary world, providing an overview of the modern experience, but from an angle that captures the variability of this experience under the concept of “presentism”<sup>7</sup>. In the same vein comes Johannes Fabian’s germinal work, which uses an anthropological perspective to indicate different areas that highlight how time is used to construct borders and cultural differences<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, social theorists have also produced macro-theoretical arguments to explain what has happened to temporality and its order with the onset of modernity. For instance, David Harvey<sup>9</sup> and Anthony Giddens<sup>10</sup> suggest the concept of “space-time compression” to explain what happens to structures and experiences in the modern world. Among these general theories of modern temporality emerges the acceleration thesis as one of the most comprehensive analyses of temporal experience in contemporary societies<sup>11</sup>. The social acceleration theory describes modernity as a long tendency towards the speed-up of societal changes, the rhythm of living, and cultural processes. According to Hartmut Rosa<sup>12</sup>, modern societies are marked by the problematic interconnection between three types of acceleration: the pace of life, societal change, and the technological speed-up. Rosa suggests that these three separate forms of social acceleration propel the others in a circuit: *technical acceleration* feeds into the *acceleration of social change* which in turn *accelerates the pace of living* which creates a demand for ever-increasing technical acceleration. Therefore, technical systems of various kinds are deeply interwoven in the conditions of modern temporalities. The multiple arrangements of industrial production, transportation, and communications have fundamentally changed the practical use of techniques and the experience of time<sup>13</sup>. In this regard, one of the most relevant aspects of contemporary societies is the frequency of cultural change and its underpinnings. Cultural change in

modern societies can be non-disruptive (such as innovations and reforms), or it can be more radical and disruptive, which in turn speeds up the social process (such as revolutions).

In this panorama, the acceleration theory emerges as a milestone of temporal studies. According to Hartmut Rosa, probably the most notorious scholar of this approach, in the testable dimension by the methods of quantitative empirical social research, social acceleration is defined as the increasing number of action episodes *per* unit of time<sup>14</sup>. This means that if we take one unit of time, a day for instance (24 hours), we will face a process of acceleration when, in the same amount of time, different people or groups develop more tasks or they have more things to do. To illustrate with two extreme but useful examples: a person who has the whole day for herself does not experience an accelerated pace of life, whereas a person who starts the day in the early morning and spends her day working two jobs, plus domestic work and family care, will face an accelerated pace of living. Based on empirical research, Southerton and Tomlinson associated social acceleration with the increasing number of activities in periods (hours, days, weeks) of collective life with special attention to the frequencies of ruptures, changes, and transformations<sup>15</sup>. In a more concrete fashion, people feel hurried on at least three levels. The first level is in relation to the volume of time required to complete sets of tasks regarded as “necessary” and in reference to the changing distribution of practices in time. This is a straightforward process identified in rational action theories of time use<sup>16</sup>, where, for example, long working hours reduce the amount of time available to spend on another set of tasks, such as domestic work, time with family and friends, or consumption and leisure. The second level is co-ordination, which refers to the difficulties of coordinating social practices with others in a society where collectively organised temporalities have been eroded. The third level refers to the “allocation” of practices within time. Rather than suggesting actual increases in the volume of practices, allocation refers to certain practices being located within temporal rhythms that create a sense of intensity in the conduct of those practices. Those situations will be related to the “lack” or “poverty of time” experience respectively. Therefore, according to Southerton and Tomlinson, acceleration is strongly tied to the frequencies

<sup>6</sup> More details on this matter can be found in F. Torres, *Temporal Regimes: Materiality, Politics, Technology*, London and New York, Routledge, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> F. Hartog, *Regimes de historicité, Présentisme et expériences du temps*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> J. Fabian, *Time and the Other. How anthropology makes its objects*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> D. Harvey, *Consciousness and the urban experience: studies in the history and theory of capitalist urbanization*, John Hopkins University Press, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> H. Blumenberg, *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit*. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1986; P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, New York, Semiotext(e), 1986; R. Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2000

<sup>12</sup> H. Rosa, *Social Acceleration...*, *op. cit.*, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> B. Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> H. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, *op. cit.*, 2013, p. 122.

<sup>15</sup> D. Southerton, and M. Tomlinson, “Pressed for time –the differential impacts of a «time squeeze»”, *The Sociological Review*, 2005, pp. 216-239.

<sup>16</sup> J. Beckert, *Imagined Futures. Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics*, Harvard University Press, 2016.

of change on a personal level as well as in collective life, and both of them are interwoven<sup>17</sup>.

## 1.2. Speeding up as fatalist condition

As I said above, in the last few decades social scientists and cultural theorists have stressed the accelerated condition of late modern societies<sup>18</sup>. More broadly, social acceleration refers to the frequencies of social change mirrored in superficial –innovations, novelties– or rather structural transformations –reforms, revolutions.

Since its appearance in the germinal works of Hans Blumenberg<sup>19</sup> and Reinhart Koselleck<sup>20</sup>, the acceleration thesis has been applied to several fields, among them politics<sup>21</sup>, culture<sup>22</sup>, technology<sup>23</sup>, and even academia<sup>24</sup>. In this blooming field, acceleration is mainly seen as a fatalist modern condition imposing a 24/7 temporal regime of working, connectivity and functioning<sup>25</sup>, affecting sleeping hours, attention, and care time<sup>26</sup>. Likely the most comprehensive work on the alienating outcomes of acceleratory logic is Hartmut Rosa's book *Alienation and Acceleration*, where the author examines the internal link between alienation and the incessant modern speed-up. According to Rosa, "[a]lienation... can be preliminarily defined as a state in which subjects pursue ends or follow practices which, on the one hand, are not enforced upon them by external actors of factors –there are workable alternative options– but which, on the other hand, they do not «really» want or support"<sup>27</sup>. To the level of speed, "social acceleration creates greater mobility and disengagement from physical space, but it also furthers alienation from our physical or material surrounding"<sup>28</sup>. Thus, acceleration creates the alienation of space, things, and others through the "lack of appropriation of our own actions and experiences", which in turn "cannot but lead to more rather than less severe forms of self-alienation"<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, to accelerate in late-modernity is, following Rosa, one of the most fatalistic conditions

of current society. Now, is this the only way to consider acceleration? Apparently, there is no room for positive acceleration processes in normative terms in Rosa's approach. Social struggles, for instance, are barely considered as speeding-up motors, but instead are only treated as marginal outcomes of a self-propelling acceleration circle among technical, cultural, and economic propulsors<sup>30</sup>.

Moreover, under cultural acceleration, scholars have pointed out the recurrence of novel social lifestyles and groups as well as the increasingly intergenerational gap facilitated by technology and digitization. However, the theory of social acceleration has paid less attention to more current forms of cultural speed-up motors, such as social movements and conflicts. The theory's focus has been located in the dynamics of innovation and identity change facilitated by the cultural industry in music, fashion, and films, but it has insufficiently thematised the impact of social media platforms (for coordinating demonstrations), imaginaries about the future (for mobilising collective action) and the emergence of counter-suburban cultures as a series of processes that facilitate the increasing rate of conflicts and social change in contemporary societies<sup>31</sup>. In the next part of the article, I will address this gap by analysing the cultural change in light of the Chilean conflicts over the last two decades (2000-2020), particularly during the 2019 October uprising<sup>32</sup>. My leading questions here are: Does collective action encompass a temporal form of speeding-up social processes? What are the forms in which time and conflicts interact? Or more specifically, do social struggles envelop a particular acceleration of collective processes? In order to clarify these questions, I will start by delineating a procedural definition of acceleration, stressing the limits of the acceleration thesis when confronted with social struggles factors, and then I will apply both theoretical approaches to a recent case –the Chilean 2019 protests and the subsequent discussion about a New Constitution– as an example of empirical outcomes

<sup>17</sup> D. Southerton, and M. Tomlinson, "Pressed for time", *op.cit.*, 2005, pp. 216-218; cf. also D. Montero and F. Torres, "Acceleration, Alienation, and Resonance. Reconstructing Hartmut Rosa's Theory of Modernity", *Revista Pléyade* 25, 2020, pp. 155-181.

<sup>18</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, *op. cit.*, 1986; H. Rosa, "Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a Desynchronized High-Speed Society", *Constellations* Vol. 10, n°1, 2003, pp. 3-33; S. Glezos, *The Politics of Speed*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> H. Blumenberg, *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit*, *op. cit.*, 1986.

<sup>20</sup> R. Koselleck, *Zeitschichten*, *op. cit.*, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> R. Hassan, *Empires of Speed*, *op. cit.*, 2008; S. Glezos, *The Politics of Speed*, *op.cit.*, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> J. Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed*, Nottingham, Trent University, 2007; S. Sharma, *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics*, Duke, Duke University Press, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> J. Wajzman, *Pressed for time: The acceleration of life in digital capitalism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> F. Vostal, *Accelerating Academia. The Changing Structure of Academic Time*, London, Palgrave, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> R. Hassan and R. Purser, *24/7. Time and Temporality in the Network Society*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> H. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, *op. cit.*, 2013. Especially Chapter 7 "Acceleration and Growth: External Drivers of Social Acceleration".

<sup>27</sup> H. Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration*, p. 82.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 85.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 95.

<sup>30</sup> H. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, *op. cit.*, 2013. Especially Chapter 6 "The Speeding Up of Society as a Self-Propelling Process: The Circle of Acceleration".

<sup>31</sup> J. Faget (ed.), *Mediation in Political Conflicts. Soft Power or Counter Culture?*, Hart Publishing, 2011

<sup>32</sup> There are two reasons for focusing on this period. The first is that the available data are significantly higher within those years because of the foundation of the Center of Research on Social Protests and Demonstrations started monitoring them (COES 2005). The second is that the registered evidence was steadily sustained by civil-NGO and state institutions, as well as by media coverage, from 2004 onwards.

applied to the acceleration and collective action link. After that, I elaborate on the descriptions of social struggles in two sociological theories that have developed approaches to conflicts, namely, functionalism and critical theory, concluding by pointing out some possibilities and limits of the proposed analysis.

## 2. The Chilean uprising case. Acceleration via collective action

Given the increasing number of diverse conflicts in Chilean society, scholars have developed different explanations for their reasons and consequences. Some scholars have pointed out the malaise with the economic model (privatization, individual response to social problems); others have stressed the lack of political response (political distancing, under representation), and others, the structural inequalities of Chilean society (exclusion, patriarchy). However, they have paid less attention to the temporal dimension involved in the conflicts, particularly the pace of other social processes, such as cultural change with regard to new technologies or innovations. Yet the social sciences and humanities have developed different approaches to the study of temporal structures in society, as mentioned above. From the study of rhythms, frequencies, or durations in social life, social scientists have provided analytical tools to study the temporal patterns of social life in terms of space-time compression, desynchrony, or the co-existence of multiple social times. Among them, the acceleration of social processes has been implicated in alienating outcomes within the social and individual spheres. Now, in this section, I seek to shed light on the link between acceleration and collective action, through the example of the conflicts sparked by the 2019 Chilean protests.

Chile is facing various types of conflicts, many of which have been dragging on for at least several decades. Evidence shows that from 2004 onwards protests and mobilizations have been increasing<sup>33</sup>. The literature from the social sciences also corroborates that these conflicts are fundamental motors for social change and that the speed of change is directly connected to the emergence of collective movements and demands<sup>34</sup>. These changes are produced by multiple factors. Among them, the existing literature highlights factors such as action towards greater political participation<sup>35</sup>, the response to the lack of solutions in the current institutional and legal framework<sup>36</sup>, or the proposals for improvements and gradual (or radical)

changes to overcoming existing social conditions<sup>37</sup>, incorporating in a tangential way the time factor in the framework of conflict analysis. Under this scenario it is possible to recognize that conflict studies have paid little attention to the temporal dimension involved in these events, even though it is possible to analyze different temporal factors influencing them. Social conflicts involve various temporal dimensions ranging from the criticism of an accelerated life in tune with an economy based on unceasing growth, to new demands for sustainable development that respects nature's cycles, to the frequencies of social mobilizations mentioned above. This also leads us to one question about the synchronization between current politics and its capacity to address, and to contest, the acceleration of change and conflict in today's societies. In this context, how can a theory of social change, from the point of view of the acceleration of social processes, say anything about the dynamics of current Chilean conflicts? To answer this question, it seems justified to first establish a dialogue between studies of social conflict and the theory of acceleration. The theory of acceleration emphasizes new lifestyles and social groups, as well as the growing intergenerational gap facilitated by technology and digitization, as drivers of social acceleration<sup>38</sup>. Through the application of the theory of acceleration of social processes, it is possible to observe that conflicts have a dual character considering their temporality: on the one hand, the conflicts themselves experience an acceleration of their frequencies simultaneously with the greater rhythm of change in current societies, while, on the other hand, they trigger the acceleration of social changes at different levels (especially legal and political), all of which leads to problematic frameworks of institutional and political projection. Therefore, the frequency of conflicts may correlate with the general acceleration of the pace of transformations within societies, while, in turn, conflicts through collective action trigger social changes in other spheres (legal, political) with different intensities and which can be understood as processes of social acceleration. However, this theory has barely taken into account more recent drivers of cultural acceleration, such as social media platforms (to coordinate demonstrations), forecasts about the future (to mobilize protests) and the emergence of suburban cultures as an example of processes that facilitate the organization and eruption of collective action. All these elements are present in the conditions of the Chilean protests.

<sup>33</sup> R. Medel and N. Somma, "Shifting Relationships Between Social Movements and Institutional Politics" in S. Donoso and von Bülow (eds.), *Social Movements in Chile*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2017, pp. 29-61.

<sup>34</sup> R. Dahrendorf, "Toward a Theory of Social Conflict", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 2 n°2, 1958, pp. 170-183; Ch. Tilly, *Social Movements 1768-2012*, London, Routledge, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> A. Joignant, *Acting Politics: A Critical Sociology of the Political Field*, London, Routledge, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> C. Heiss, "Legitimacy crisis and the constitutional problem in Chile: A legacy of authoritarianism", *Constellations* 24(3), 2017, pp. 470-479; R. Cordero, "Giving society a form: Constituent moments and the force of concepts", *Constellations* 26, 2019, pp. 194-207.

<sup>37</sup> E. Barozet and V. Espinoza, "Current Issues on the Political Representation of Middle Classes in Chile". *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 8 (3) 2016, pp. 95-123.

<sup>38</sup> J. Wajcman, *Pressed for Time*, *op. cit.*, 2015.

In last two decades, the frequency and overall number of conflicts in Chile has increased. The main finding is that protests have been growing steadily from at least 2004 onwards<sup>39</sup>. These increasing social struggles have as a milestone the social uprising in October 2019, followed by the current crisis of the pension system in 2020, as well as the continuing conflicts in education<sup>40</sup>, the Mapuche vindication, the economic collusion cases, and the current feminist and environmental movements<sup>41</sup>. The relevance of the Chilean conflicts relies on two main reasons. The first is that Chile has been named the so-called “neoliberal laboratory”<sup>42</sup> since the Pinochet dictatorship instituted an economic revolution against the former social reforms of the Allende’s *Unidad Popular* government. Since Chile was one of the first countries (if not *the* first) in the world to implement an orthodox neoliberal political economy, the current social struggles deserve to be studied in order to gain a better understanding of the social impact of *imposing* a neoliberal economy. Secondly, the Chilean case may be of interest regarding the bond between collective action and the acceleration of the socio-political change since the protests have been steadily increasing in the country with a turning point in the social outburst of October 2019. Then, if we consider an acceleration of social conflicts, concentrated from 2011 until today, it is possible to grasp a causality between the current socio-political crisis and the accelerated social change expressed in the referendum for a new Constitution in October 2020 (exactly one year after the social outburst)<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, the Chilean case shows that collective action deserves to be considered as an acceleration motor that triggers social change in unprecedented ways. Although the results of this bond cannot be directly generalised to other contexts, it feeds an empirically-based theorization that may potentially be applicable to other cases. Thus, analysing social struggles may shed light on the socio-political outcomes of a revolutionary socio-economic-based process regarding neoliberalism, as well as furnishing a theoretical approach to acceleration and conflicts.

In addition, Chile is facing a twofold socio-political crisis, from the aforementioned multifactori-

al outburst in October 2019 to the current crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both have marked a transition from conflicts oriented to structural demands (summed up as a general criticism of the economic model and its inequalities) to a broader malaise with the government and the elites as a whole because of either their poor or absent decision-making<sup>44</sup>. In this context, the absence of an institutional response to a new constitution emerges paradigmatically. The possibility to agree on a new *magna carta* provides the chance to adjust a legal framework in several areas, including pensions, education, and political representation, and not least, the material and symbolic re-foundation of the dictatorship’s legacy.

Having this background in mind, it becomes necessary to resituate the socio-temporal frame of these conflicts. Given the accelerating decline in indicators of conventional participation (in voting or party membership in particular) and the increase of social movements and protests in numerous countries, especially middle-income ones<sup>45</sup>, the conflicts are embedded within temporal frames. In fact, Chile is a middle-income country that has undergone an accelerated process of “modernization” over the last three decades<sup>46</sup>. This means that the first relevant aspect of the temporal frame of conflicts relates to the frequency in which they occur. As stated above, Somma and Medel<sup>47</sup> have demonstrated with empirical evidence that social conflicts have sped up in Chile since at least 2004 onwards. Therefore, it is possible to observe that the process of “modernization” identified by Castillo et al.<sup>48</sup> has not been accompanied by a consequent synchronization between political institutions and social demands<sup>49</sup>, constituting one of the multiple causes for the increasing malaise concluded as paramount within the “social outburst” of 2019. Hence, *accelerated conflicts* are, conversely, outcomes of decelerated, “*not-on-time*” political responses to social demands. A more empowered citizenship also requests novel institutional adaptations. And this claim can be translated into faster responses to old and rising social problems. Verba et al.<sup>50</sup> develop a model of political conflict anticipation based on the concept of “resources”, which has three components: time, money, and civic skills. Considering the

<sup>39</sup> R. Medel and N. Somma, “Demonstrations, occupations or roadblocks? Exploring the determinants of protest tactics in Chile”, *Política y Gobierno* Vol. XXIII (1), 2016, pp. 159-194.

<sup>40</sup> C. Bellei and C. Cabalin, “Chilean Student Movements: Sustained Struggle to Transform a Market-oriented Educational System” *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15 (2), 2013, pp. 108-123.

<sup>41</sup> R. Medel and N. Somma, “Demonstrations, occupations or roadblocks?” *op. cit.* 2016.

<sup>42</sup> F. Gaudichaud, “La vía chilena al neoliberalismo. Miradas cruzadas sobre un país laboratorio”, *Revista Divergencia* 6, 2016, pp. 13-28.

<sup>43</sup> Initially, the referendum was scheduled for April 2020. Due to the COVID pandemic, it finally took place in October 2020 when the “approval” option (for a New Constitution) overwhelmingly won the referendum (78%).

<sup>44</sup> E. Barozet, V. Espinoza, and V. Ulloa, “Elite parlamentaria e instituciones informales en Chile. Nepotismo y clientelismo como formas de sustento del poder”, *Revista Española de Sociología*, 29 (3), 2020, pp. 595-611.

<sup>45</sup> J.C. Castillo, D. Palacios, A. Joignant, and M. Tham, “Inequality, Distributive Justice and Political Participation: An Analysis of the Case of Chile”. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 34, 2015, p. 497.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>47</sup> N. Somma and R. Medel, “Shifting Relationships...”, *op. cit.*, 2017, pp. 29-61.

<sup>48</sup> J.C. Castillo, D. Palacios, A. Joignant, and M. Tham, “Inequality, Distributive...”, *op. cit.*, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> M. Basaure, Sánchez, B. and Vera, C., “Desigualdad como Tiranía del Tiempo. Una indagación teórica y empírica del caso chileno”, *Documento de Trabajo COES* N° 32, 2018, pp. 1-49.

<sup>50</sup> S. Verba, Scholzman, K. L. and Brady, H. E., *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Boston, Harvard University Press, 1995.

time component, we can state that established forms of political participation (elections, voting, parties) as well as more informal ones (activism, protest, demonstration) envelop two temporal frames that deserve further investigation. First, the political system is made up of procedures (legal forms) and protocols (decision-making), while, second, the social movements' time is defined by its intempestive nature: the movements operate with surprise, disruption, and haste. These two temporalities confront each other since both respond to different organizational objectives: while institutions pursue stability over time, collective action fosters a breakthrough.

Nonetheless, conflicts do not just trigger the acceleration of social processes, they can also be factors in slowing them down. According to Faure<sup>51</sup>, through numerous and diverse protests, both in their objects, demands and in their forms –including composition and repertoires of action– Chilean social mobilizations have triggered conflicts over time that were developed through their temporalities. In other words, the uses of time in collective actions have assisted in the slowing down and the inertia of the Chilean *momentum*, in place since the civic-military dictatorship, and prolonged by the civic-political elites of the post-dictatorial pact. However, slowing down the dictatorship *continuum* was also accompanied by the speeding up of other social changes. As an example, one of the more rapid outcomes of the social uprising of October 2019 in Chile was the reduction in working hours. As Faure states, before the October outburst, the claim to legally reduce working time to 40 hours was the subject of much debate among experts<sup>52</sup>, while after the beginning of social protests, the reduction was the first measure on the social agenda approved in the Chamber of Deputies on October 24, 2019. Although it was already underway when the Chilean conflict arose, “the legislative process was accelerated afterward and the proposal has now been in the Senate since November 9, 2019, where the process has slowed down again conversely”<sup>53</sup>. To be sure, conflicts do not produce only speeding up processes, but they can also slow down the social pace –another example is the social organizations against “extractivism” in Latin America<sup>54</sup>. However, in this paper I stress the speeding-up motor that the conflicts have given to the discussion and development of a new Constitution in Chile. The consistent political acceleration sparked by the social uprising

makes it unavoidable to study the status of collective action in the acceleration theory, especially when this thesis is applied to non-European or Global North-based cases<sup>55</sup>. Having in mind the evidence that conflicts speed up social processes, the question now is: do they spark acceleration as an intrinsic motor or rather as a situational one? To put it differently: are conflicts a structural acceleration factor or are they a contingent one? In order to respond these questions, I will make use of two radically different sociological approaches about the role of conflicts in society. Thus, having made the link between acceleration and conflicts with a specific case, I will observe in the next section how conflicts have a functional role or, conversely, a social change motor within sociological theory. By considering sociological conflict theories and acceleration theory I propose some connections between collective action and the speeding-up of social spheres.

### 3. Conflicts in sociological theory

Conflict has been defined as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources, in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals<sup>56</sup>.

According to Collins, “[f]or conflict theory, the basic insight is that human beings are sociable but conflict-prone animals. Why is there conflict? Above all else, there is conflict because violent coercion is always a potential resource”<sup>57</sup>. In this view, there is conflict because there is a power asymmetry, and this asymmetry triggers uneven social struggles. Applied to the Chilean case, there is a lived coercion perceived by the mobilized people who, in turn, rise up, aiming to bring about change in economic, political, and legal institutions. In this section I will address two sociological perspectives that analytically deal with conflicts: functionalism and critical theory. Why these two sociological theories? For two reasons: on the one hand, they are two theoretical approaches that have dealt strongly with conflict issues and, on the other hand, they have two radically different, even opposed, theoretical stances toward social struggles. By considering both we will get a nuanced overview on how sociology thematizes conflicts in two relevant and strongly opposed social theories<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> A. Faure, “¿Se politizó el tiempo? Ensayo sobre las batallas cronopolíticas del octubre chileno”, *Universum* 35, 2020, pp. 46-73.

<sup>52</sup> R. López and J. Petersen, “El proyecto de las 40 horas y los efectos de reducir la jornada laboral en Chile”, *Ciper Chile*, Opinión, 11 May, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2Xzmo8f.2017> Accessed 18 Sept 2021.

<sup>53</sup> This delay may be also in no less proportion due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A. Faure, “¿Se politizó el tiempo?...”, *op.cit.*, 2020, p. 56.

<sup>54</sup> Torres, F. and A. Gros, “Slowing Down Society? Theoretical Reflections on Social Deceleration in Pandemic Times (and Beyond)”, *Theory Culture & Society*, (Forthcoming).

<sup>55</sup> In this respect, see the long study of Hassan Poorsafir on the acceleration process triggered by the Iranian revolution in the 70s. H. Poorsafir, *Soziale Beschleunigung in nicht-westlichen Gesellschaften. Eine Fallstudie zum Iran*, Bielefeld, Transcript, 2019.

<sup>56</sup> L. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, London and New York, Routledge, 1998.

<sup>57</sup> R. Collins, *Conflict Sociology, A Sociological Classic Updated*, London, Paradigm Publishers, 2009, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup> I work here with schematic ideas of both theories. There are, of course, several nuances about the opposition of these two approaches. It is possible to find several works which use both perspectives. Cf. for instance, R. Collins, *Conflict Sociology*, *op. cit.* 2009; L. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, *op. cit.*, 1998; R. Dahrendorf, *The Modern Social Conflict: An Essay on the Politics of Liberty*, Berkeley, University of California Press,

### 3.1. Functionalist and Critical approaches to conflicts

From a functionalist viewpoint, in the perspective of one of its most prominent scholars, Talcott Parsons, social conflicts serve as an evolutive social process. In his view, a conflict “is not talking about social progress which must be judged in terms of the values of the observer, but about social evolution, which is a matter of whether generalized adaptive capacity has increased or not”<sup>59</sup>. Hence, functionalism studies social conflicts from an integrative position. Their *explanandum* works over an “anomaly/normality” dialectic distinction: conflicts result from unsolved social problems that ought to be resolved by an integrative politics that can solve the problem within the systemic logics of any given (liberal, western) society. In Robert Merton’s classical adaptive classification, conflicts may be part of the “rebellion” and “innovation” clusters. In the first case, they stabilize “new goals” by “new means”, while in the second case there are “new goals” by “institutional means”<sup>60</sup>. In both instances, Merton’s approach represents an improvement from Parsons’s reductionism, avoiding the action system theory pitfalls by complicating and balancing a naïve evolutionist approach to conflicts. However, Merton’s theory of conflicts still measures the social struggles with an “adaptive” standard, considering as deviant the “non-adapted” behavior<sup>61</sup>. One of the major problems with this sort of analysis is to state a normative claim under a descriptive one, i.e., to define the conflict as an “anomaly” in an assumed, non-deviating course of society. Yet social change is recognized as an outcome of social struggles by Merton. This aspect is closer to a critical approach but adheres to the “integrative-adaptive” functionalist jargon at the end. In short, in the functionalist approach, conflict is not considered a structural condition in society (or societies) but rather it is exceptional, making the speeding up of social process via collective action into a secondary or, better, contingent phenomenon. Conflicts are an exceptional course within the emergent social order. In other words, from a traditional functionalist perspective, conflicts must be understood as a contingent deviance from a “normal” emergent social order and, therefore, when applied to acceleration theory, conflicts will be considered as a situational speeding-up motor.

A critical approach to acceleration for conflicts points out a radical other scholarship interpretation.

By a critical theory approach to conflicts, I mean a theoretical starting point according to which social struggles are at the core of contemporary societies. Unlike a functionalist approach where conflicts are a “disease” or “anomaly” in the regular course of a society<sup>62</sup>, a critical stance considers the constitution of society as intrinsically marked by struggles. This is relevant for an acceleration theory since Rosa himself situates his work several times in the critical theory tradition<sup>63</sup>. However, a certain ambivalence or, at least, bifocal position in Rosa’s work, can be identified regarding the temporal potential of mobilization. On the one hand, Rosa stresses the *dynamic stabilization* that characterizes the contemporary coordination among, and within, social spheres –i.e., economy, politics, art, religion, science– as a temporal logic of acceleration in order to maintain the systemic sync. On the other hand, there are disruptive political actions that have the potential to spark escalatory speeding-up processes, but in a direction that does not follow the stabilization of social spheres. The conflicts are, in this sense, an acceleratory motor if we consider Rosa’s definition in *Social Acceleration*, according to which we face an acceleration phenomenon when the rate of change increases. More precisely “the experience of an acceleration of the pace of life in modernity encompasses both an increase of the *speed of action* and a structurally *induced alteration of the experience of time* in everyday life”<sup>64</sup>. And those changes can be measured. The notion of acceleration is founded in the very idea of frequencies. Following Reinhart Koselleck’s description “[t] here would be an acceleration when, in the compared series, there were fewer and fewer repetitions and, instead, more and more innovations appeared that dismissed the old previous structures”<sup>65</sup>. According to Rosa, in the dimension testable by the methods of quantitative empirical social research, the thesis of an acceleration of the pace of life postulates a heightening of the number of episodes of action and/or experience per unit of time<sup>66</sup>. This means that if we take one unit of time, a year for instance, we will be facing a process of acceleration when in the same amount of time (a comparative year) different people or groups advance more actions. In short, speeding up occurs when social movement activity is expressed in the frequency of demonstrations, protests, or manifestations –as evidenced above by Medel and Somma<sup>67</sup>.

In a broader historical fashion, according to Hartmut Rosa, the emancipatory potential of human

1988.

<sup>59</sup> T. Parsons, *Evolution of Societies*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice 1977, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> R. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York, Free Press, 1968.

<sup>61</sup> R. Merton, “Anomie, Anomia, and social interaction”, in M. Clinard (ed) *Anomia and Deviant Behaviour*, IL, Free Press, 1964.

<sup>62</sup> L. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, *op. cit.*, 1998, p. 21.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. H. Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration*, *op. cit.*, 2010; also, H. Rosa “Acceleration and Resonance: An Interview with Hartmut Rosa”, interviewed by Björn Schiermer, *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 4, 2017, pp. 374-82.

<sup>64</sup> H. Rosa, *Social Acceleration...*, *op. cit.*, p. 80. My italics.

<sup>65</sup> R. Koselleck, “Estructuras de repetición en el lenguaje y en la historia,” *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, no. 134, 2006, pp. 17-34, aquí p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> H. Rosa, *Social Acceleration...*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>67</sup> N. Somma and R. Medel, “Shifting Relationships...”, *op. cit.*, 2017, pp. 29-61.



agency is what constituted early-modernity. This argument also paved the way for a reconsideration of the changing potentials of collective action. The belief that the course of history could be changed by human means was decisive for the acceleration of social processes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Alexandra Lianeri said, the temporality of human agency "... is a temporality not of continuity and discontinuity, but of «recovery» and «conflict»; not of autonomous discourses, but of discourses through which actors bring forth a long-term perspective by identifying the past as lost and in need of finding it anew or by fighting against its survival and seeking to expel it from the present"<sup>68</sup>. The conflict thus produces a rupture moment. And I would add: it is a "recovery" and "conflictive" temporality, as well as a "discontinuous" but also "continuous" one: without a minimum continuity it would not be possible to identify any temporal regime at all<sup>69</sup>. In the same vein, the philosopher of history Lucian Hölscher developed the "human agency" idea before Rosa in his 1999 book *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft* (The Discovery of the Future)<sup>70</sup>. There, he advances the thesis of a speeding-up process of modern times thanks to a dominant conception of the future. The sociopolitical movements from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century in Europe and the Americas paved the way for the futurization of time in the western world. From the Haitian, French, and US revolutions, to the Latin American independence movements, a future horizon was stabilized as a political domain. However, in late modernity, the collective forces speeding up social changes have been neutralized by what Rosa calls "dynamic stabilization" in descriptive terms and "frenetic standstill" in a normative register. Both notions point out the standardized logic of late modernity according to which the capitalist dynamics are a self-propelling force, autonomized from the civic base which supports them. The acceleration in these societies is not oriented by emancipatory means, but rather by the auto-logic of economic, technical, and cultural domains mirrored in discourses of growth, innovation, and time-efficiency. Nonetheless, collective action has gained momentum in recent years through different feminist, anti-racist, and environmental movements. These collective forces reinvigorate the capacity to alter the stagnating forces identified in Virilio's *polar inertia* and Rosa's *frenetic standstill*. Furthermore, conflicts also represent a form of crisis when they erupt. The sudden expression of collective ac-

tion in their appearance is what constitutes conflict's fundamental character. Yet it would be too simplistic to say that acceleration of conflicts addresses social change directly –historical conflicts among different communities broadly shows perhaps the contrary. My claim here is not to define the character of conflicts in a one-sided definition –we certainly can find examples of conflicts with evolutive-adaptive outcomes such as the Colombian process of pacification<sup>71</sup>– or rather disruptive radical change. In doing so, we would evaluate the conflict only by their results. My query is different: the conflicts' speed-up sparks political and economic processes, whether radical or superficial, and in doing so, we should face whether conflicts can be considered as a structural or rather contingent motor of speed-up within the acceleration theory. An easy way to solve this query is to say that since there is not only one sort of acceleration theorist, it is feasible to distinguish between critical acceleration theorists who will see conflicts as a structural acceleration motor, while functionalist theorists of acceleration will emphasize conflicts' conjunctural accelerative character. In sum, the rationale of studying conflicts and acceleration theory is not to clarify whether functionalism and critical theory may be integrated, but rather to observe that they address the notion of "conflict" in separate ways. One relevant point regarding critical theory is that the main difference with a "conflict theory" as such relies on the fact that critical theory does not consider conflict as the central structure of society, but rather as an ultimate manifestation of social pathologies. In other words, there is no claim for a "natural" tendency for conflict in human societies (à la Weber), but rather a societal organization that tolerates inequality. To be sure, the criticism of critical theory is not against conflicts, but the social structures that support domination.

### 3.2. Speeding up collective action

Conflicts are a crucial factor in social change<sup>72</sup>. Normally they erupt in an untimely manner, but they are not necessarily manifestations of violence. According to the sociologist of conflict Michel Wieviorka, peace is not the flipside of violence, but it is rather the flipside of conflict, which exposes the problems of society by stressing differences within the social sphere<sup>73</sup>. Beyond the Chilean case discussed here, in the last few years several conflicts have arisen in

<sup>68</sup> A. Lianeri, "A Regime of Untranslatables: Temporalities of Translation and Conceptual History", *History and Theory* 53, 2014, pp. 473-497, aquí p. 482.

<sup>69</sup> F. Torres, *Temporal Regimes*, *op.cit.*, 2021.

<sup>70</sup> L. Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2016.

<sup>71</sup> For a really suggestive text on social acceleration and the Colombian "pacificación" process cf.: S. Ríos, "Peace processes and social acceleration. The case of Colombia", in N. Mueller-Hirth and S. Ríos (eds.), *Time and Temporality in Transitional and Post-Conflict Societies*, London and New York, Routledge 2018, pp. 50-64.

<sup>72</sup> R. Dahrendorf, "Toward a Theory of Social Conflict", *op. cit.*, 1958.

<sup>73</sup> N. Angelcos and F. Torres, "Subjetividad, violencia y política. Entrevista a Michel Wieviorka", *Revista de Humanidades* 34, 2016, pp. 279-280; cf. also, M. Wieviorka, "Social conflict", *Current Sociology* 61, 5-6, 2013, pp. 696-713.

different global contexts. In addition to international feminist demands, we can list the already-mentioned *Fridays for Future* concerning climate change, the *Black Lives Matter* movement against racism, or the *Gilets Jaunes* claiming greater social rights. Through these movements, civil society has manifested its malaise with diverse social problems affecting a political system that is unable to respond to them properly. Therefore, several authors have pointed out that these conflicts are in no small part the results of a desynchronicity between the rush of social demands and the time that the political system takes to process them<sup>74</sup>. According to this thesis, conflicts are rising worldwide at an accelerated rate because the timing of the political system is not in tune with political participation, both formally and informally. This desynchronicity between the pressure of social demands and the time of governments and political institutions to respond to them produces an aggregation of energy that bursts out in unexpected protests and demonstrations<sup>75</sup>. As a consequence, conflicts gain a higher frequency, while their escalatory speed goes faster precisely because the former demands have not been solved and those forthcoming demands put further stress on the already-cracked social order. In a nutshell, conflicts are thus a consequence of desynchronization between the time of demands and the time of politics, as well as a motor for social change. As an example, going back to Chile, the steadily increasing social protests against police violence have been connected with other unresolved social conflicts, such as the state violence in the Chilean Araucanía region<sup>76</sup>. It is possible to postulate that the regular protests reach a pace that matches the dizzying pace of institutional politics (i.e., parliament), where hundreds of demands are processed every day, many of which are resolved quickly or slowly depending on their severity. This match can also be understood as a synchrony between the pace of institutional politics and social protests, which in turn sets the conditions for productive cultural and institutional discussion.

Even though this meaning of conflicts applies to most of the traditional literature on conflict studies, it limits their temporal understanding. Therefore,

by conflict I mean a struggle over temporal patterns toward social rhythms in terms of persistence or change. In this regard, a conflict is accelerated when it promotes change, even when the change seeks to return to an “earlier” social stage, as in the case of “nostalgic” or “romantic” claims for a “better” past. However, it is necessary to stress that conflicts by themselves do not spark social transformation. As evidence shows, in several processes, such as democratization<sup>77</sup>, education<sup>78</sup>, or political participation<sup>79</sup>, conflicts are commanded by collective action, but also by hidden societal logics. From pacific demonstrations and proposals from civil society, to more abrupt protest and revolt, collective action unleashes claims that reshape the social pace without dominating all the variables. Nonetheless, the relevant point here is that conflicts unleash social forces that would remain paralyzed without their disruptive presence.

## Conclusions

Considering the fundamental character of conflict for speeding up social processes, another status for them within the acceleration theory is demanded, as this paper has demonstrated. As I have shown following an empirical study of the Chilean uprising, collective action triggered the acceleration of socio-political process toward concrete social goals mirrored in a new constitution. However, it is important not to extrapolate this correlation to every case without observing the factual conditions. For instance, in the Colombian “*pacificación*” case, the “political” institutional time accelerates the “social” processes, since the *pacificación* committees worked out precise goals and schedules, while the social forces were often inorganic and unstructured<sup>80</sup>.

It should be highlighted that the paper does not defend an accelerationist perspective here. In this sense, it is important to mention that akin to other perspectives encouraging society to speed up, the “collective action-acceleration” link is not in tune with the technical and economical acceleration promoted by Williams and Srnicek<sup>81</sup>. This emancipatory

<sup>74</sup> W. Scheuerman, *Liberal Democracy and the Social Acceleration*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 2004; H. Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, *op. cit.*, 2013, especially Chapter 11: “Situational Politics: Paradoxical Time Horizons Between Desynchronization and Disintegration”.

<sup>75</sup> W. Scheuerman, *Civil Disobedience*, Polity Press, 2018; G. Gonzalez Vaillant and M. Schwartz, “Student Movements and the Power of Disruption”, *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, Vol. 12, n. 1, 2019, pp. 112-141.

<sup>76</sup> Demonstrations occurred following the murder of the young Mapuche Camilo Catrillanca, which occurred in the commune of Ercilla on Wednesday, November 14, 2018, at the hands of the “Comando Jungla” of Carabineros. For the first time in the capital, Chilean society –massively and disruptively– demonstrated against the state police repression perpetuated against the Mapuche people on November 18, 2018. In this context, a cycle of protests was unleashed with massive marches in different cities during the month and a half remaining in the year. The protests began disruptively that same night in Quidico, a town in the Tirúa region, and spread from there to the close regional capitals –Temuco and Concepción– and also to other, more distant cities like Iquique and Santiago, the Chilean capital.

<sup>77</sup> S. Donoso, “When Social Movements Become a Democratizing Force: The Political Impact of the Student Movement in Chile”, *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Vol. 39, 2016, pp. 167-196.

<sup>78</sup> C. Bellei and C. Cabalin, “Chilean Student Movements...”, *op. cit.*, 2013.

<sup>79</sup> E. Barozet and V. Espinoza, “Current Issues on the Political Representation...”, *op. cit.*, 2016.

<sup>80</sup> “The temporality of the social peace process might be slower than the temporality of the negotiating table, which responds to deadlines imposed by international collaborators, national pressures subdued to local and national elections, as well as the risk to damage a vulnerable peace agreement when visible reforms do not occur. The process by which the temporality of political peace processes tries to influence the temporality of social peace processes can be understood in terms of social acceleration”. S. Ríos, “Peace processes and social acceleration...” *op. cit.* p. 52.

<sup>81</sup> A. Williams and N. Srnicek, “Accelerate Manifesto. For an Accelerationist Politics”, in A. Avenessian and R. Mackay (eds), *#Accelerate: The*

claim based in acceleration may align with those who think we have not gone fast enough politically. Instead of rejecting the increasing *tempo* of capitalist production, they argue that we should embrace and accelerate it<sup>82</sup>. This is the case with the accelerationist movement. The accelerationist scholarship supports the speeding-up processes from a technological and class-grounded point of view. Here, the conflicts may actually be understood as the real historical motor, since the only chance to achieve real transformations is when the marginalized strata of society mobilize against coercion. Far from the speeding-up claim of the accelerationists, this paper has stressed the potential of political struggles within the acceleration theory. In other words, it is not an argument for speeding up society, but rather it nuances existing scholarship to highlight the alienating character of acceleration.

Another aspect that was not heavily addressed in this paper is the state role in legitimating or, conversely, blocking collective action. In this regard, the state is always an ambiguous reality. One cannot be satisfied by saying that the state is only an instrument of the dominators. Undoubtedly, the state is not completely neutral, nor completely independent of the dominators, but it has a self-nomination which is greater insofar as it is older, stronger, as it has engraved the most important social conquests in its structures. The state is the place of conflict –for example, between the ministries of finance and the ministries in charge of social spending<sup>83</sup>. This conception of the state as a potentially autonomous *locus* from conflicts is by itself problematic since it assumes that the state is not an intrinsically conflictive entity. It is possible to say that the state is actually the paramount manifestation of social conflicts –with more or less legitimate domination depending on the case<sup>84</sup>. Going back to the Chilean case, it is also pos-

sible to briefly highlight at least three potential aspects that facilitate the speeding up of conflicts: the *technological* dimension that articulates the protests via social media, the *cultural* dimension based on increasing rates of social change which in turn demand faster solutions, and the *social imaginary* of an open and better future that can be attained by collective action forcing social change. Collective future thought, like collective memory, can influence collective action in ways beyond pure fidelity to the facts: how people imagine the world to be, or how they want it to be, can influence their understandings of actions<sup>85</sup>. Therefore, collectives can also engage in future thought as a group, producing an imagined future that can be contentiously discussed. Finally, it deserves to be pointed out that collective action does not refer only to “hard” expressions such as protests or riots, but also “softer”, democratically legitimated interventions such as marches, strikes, and even aesthetic street performances. This is why collective action becomes so gravitating for mobilizing society: it envelops an intellectual level (i.e., reflection on identifying a social struggle), a practical dimension (coordinating people or places accordingly), and also a creative sphere (artistic intervention-oriented).

Finally, the acceleration theory can only be developed further when the scholarship complicates and criticizes its own premises. In this sense, this paper does not deny the traditional motors of acceleration, but it adds another factor to acceleration studies, nuancing the accepted thesis of acceleration as a one-sided alienating phenomenon. We can certainly still pinpoint the harmful challenges that an accelerated society imposes, while at the same time we have to query the instances in which speeding up might imply a more promising scenario.

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<sup>82</sup> B. Noys, *Malign Velocities: Speed & Capitalism*, Zero Books, 2014.

<sup>83</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Firing Back. Against the Tyranny of the Market 2*, The New Press, 2003.

<sup>84</sup> N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, London, Verso & NLB, 1980.

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