FROM SCATTERED SPECTATORS TO NETWORKED MILITANTS:

SUBJECTIVITIES AND ACTIVISM IN THE #YOSOY132 STUDENT MOVEMENT

AN ABSTRACT

SUBMITTED ON THE 9TH DAY OF JUNE 2022

TO THE STONE CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

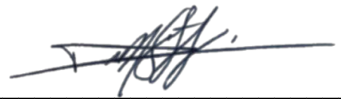
OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

OF TULANE UNIVERSITY

FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSPPHY

BY



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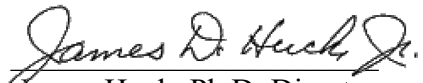
APPROVED: 

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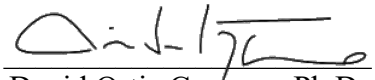

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AN ABSTRACT

The student social movement #YoSoy132 emerged in the context of the 2012 Mexican presidential elections. It reached national and international influence thanks to its new forms of organizing and creative public actions which were widely disseminated through internet media communications and their public confrontation towards more traditional media. The movement was initiated and led by youth, it started as a reaction towards the ways in which the Mexican state and the duopoly of mass media historically repressed and criminalized youth, social movements, and worked in collaboration to manipulate democratic processes such as the 2012 presidential election. This dissertation is focused on the process political activism, starting with the subjective activists' descriptions of how they engage for the first time in mobilization, frame their struggles, negotiate collective identity and movement organizing, and manage state repression. All primary data collection took place from the movement's inception in 2012 and continued through August of 2015, the research in secondary sources continued through the final stages of dissertation writing in 2022. The research design includes primary and secondary sources, media analysis, participant observation, and roughly 30 semi-structured interviews mostly with young activists but also with journalists, academics, and lawyers who were directly involved with this movement. This dissertation's focus contributes to understandings of political culture in the recent wave of anti-authoritarian social movements that highly rely on internet communications through the experiences of youth in Mexico. Further, this research advances a humanizing perspective of youth studies, presenting youth as agents of change by decentering the institutional or tangible outcomes of mobilization while also presenting youth's subjective complexities learning the new and unlearning the traditional power dynamics and political culture.

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A DISSERTATION

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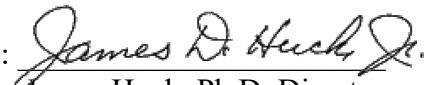
APPROVED: 

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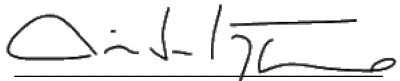

David Ortiz Canseco, Ph.D.

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I dedicate this dissertation to newer generations and those who believe in change and in social and environmental justice, including my interviewees and the enthusiasts of the #YoSoy132 and beyond. I'd also like to dedicate this effort to my two children and my father who didn't live to see this accomplishment.

I would like to thank those who have been by myside all of these years, starting with my families on the Mexican side of the border and on the U.S. side of the border, especially my mamá, my sister Myrna, and my spouse Matteo. I would also like to thank my teachers, those who have been with me in formal education, particularly Poncho Herrera Robles, Neil Harvey, Jimmy Huck, Allison Truitt, and David Ortiz Canseco. Equally, I want to thank my mentors who have been with me in the fieldwork for this dissertation and elsewhere, particularly, Benjamin Arditi, Guiomar Rovira Sancho, Rossana Reguillo, and John Gibler.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Youth are often stigmatized and criminalized or studied in academia through a lens of victimization or as a social problem. Until at least the second half of the twentieth century, studies focused on youth have presented them as change makers, especially in terms of political engagement in social movements. The visibility of youth in social movements has increased with the technological advances in communications. Since 2006, world protests have multiplied and there are many characteristics that they share (Ortiz et al. 2013). Social movement scholars observed intense use of media and, in particular, Internet communications and the overwhelming popular response to social movement calls for action in plazas or in public spaces. In Latin America, movements such as the Chilean penguins (since 2006) and the Movimiento LIBRE in Honduras (since 2009) show youth's leadership in national mobilizations which are part of the 2006 wave of protests along with the *Arab Spring* (2011) in Egypt and the *15M* (2011) in Spain. In 2012 in Mexico, what many people started calling the Mexican Spring (in reference to the 2011 Arab spring), was the #YoSoy132 student movement which disrupted with a counterhegemonic narrative in the context of a predictably disappointing democratic performance in Mexico's presidential elections that year. Thanks to the #YoSoy132 student movement, Mexican democracy was enacted in the streets with hope for the future while in institutional politics, the 81-year-old single party regime of the PRI (Party of the Institutional Revolution) was sure to return after 12 years of a different party rule.

While the #YoSoy132 did not stop the PRI's return to the office, it had constituents across the country and made international news with massive and creative manifestations. What made this movement unique, important, enduring, or worth fighting with for the youth of Mexico that year? In my research, I observed that most of its constituents were mobilizing for the first time in their lives and their level of political engagement and collective consciousness developed in the first weeks of mobilization. How can we understand these youths' trajectories of politization over time -from *scattered spectators to networked activists*? What was the context of youth for the #YoSoy132 generation? While the intense reliability on Internet communications was an obvious part of the answer, this dissertation centers the subjective processes of the #YoSoy132 activists themselves. Based on the activists' perspectives, this dissertation sustains that historical memory, horizontalism and inclusivity, pre-existing networks and relationship building, and the reclaiming of youth's identity as change makers were key in the effervescence and relevance of #YoSoy132 movement for these young activists.

Due to the above mentioned 2006 increased wave of protests, a deep well of theory has been dedicated to understanding these global trends and social movements' dynamics. The concepts of *repertoires of contention* (tactics that movements share and pass to one another across geographies and generations) and *framing theory* (how movements explain their existence) were extremely helpful for understanding the overall movement trajectories. The global trends of anti-authoritarian mobilization present a necessary dialogue with political philosophies concerned with *horizontalism* (as opposed to top-down power dynamics), *transversability* (across differences of identity), and *radical democracy* (of social movements), in particular through the lens of Latin

American theoreticians. For the youth-led mobilizations, I found global youth studies and intergenerational analyses of youths in Southeast Asia, Spain, and Latin America. Further, being in the field from the years of 2012 to 2015, I was able to interact with academics in Mexico who were writing from and about the #YoSoy132 as it was happening.

One of the people who has published the most about the #YoSoy132, anthropologist Rossana Reguillo, had focused her work on youth since the 1990s. Reguillo accompanied youth in the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York City and the chapter of #YoSoy132 in her hometown Guadalajara, Mexico. Her theories of *subjectivity* and *insurrection* are central to the overall theoretical framing of this dissertation. In her book, *Paisajes Insurrectos* (*translation* Insurrectionary Landscapes), she explains "insurrection" as:

> "raising the anchor from the dominating systemic experiences and perceptions subjectively normalized and internalized in order to bring or open room for other forms of what is possible; dissident subjectivities call on one another towards a different space, and from there, they articulate a different we/us" (Reguillo 2017) p. 86.

Indeed, the process through which the youth of #YoSoy132 tell their history as activists was a subjective realization of what they could do as a collective, of *what was possible.* The youth's desire to making an impact and changing the political culture in Mexico was an imperative need of *raising the anchor* and disrupt previously normalized criminalization of youth, they could also do so for the generations of media's complicity in pollical crimes against Mexican youth and human rights in general. This new collective consciousness and horizontal power relations would confront internal

challenges in addition to the challenges posed by state repression and attempted co-optation.

As noted above, many of the youth in this movement were experiencing mobilization and militancy for the first time in their lives. In regard to the challenge of acquiring a collective consciousness and horizontality, this was a process that had to be learned as the movement progressed and it evolved differently for different movement activists, especially but not only for first-time activists. Nonetheless, this form of organizing was a safer and more inclusive way for organizing across a very diverse mass of movement participants. Such was the request of the masses that followed the movement, arguing and defending themselves against the formation of heroes and the way the movement flowed into spontaneous marches and political performances in the streets from the movement's inception. This dissertation's focus on subjectivity allowed the recognition of youths' cognitive and embodied experiences of activism as individuals and in their transformation to the collective consciousness. In the interviews presented ahead, some activists had to put aside their political ideas and acquire those of the collectivity in order to move the agenda of the movement forward. The focus on subjectivity also allowed differentiating perspectives of gender and class in dynamics of leadership, exclusion and inclusion within social movements as they struggled to implement *horizontalism* and continue pursuing their objectives of being the young generation that would change the history and improve democracy in Mexico.

The student movement in Mexico had long been infiltrated, harassed, and repressed by the state and even by smaller institutions such as political parties or university administrations. The latter further demonstrates the thread that youth as agents

of change may pose to the status quo. #YoSoy132 was not the exception of this, the state attempted to burst the movement through co-optation of leaders, through the Internet, through limiting freedom of mobility in the public space, through under-cover agents, and through repression. Students who were mobilized by #YoSoy132 went from the heydays of the movement occupying plazas in unforgettable public demonstrations to confronting repression and making decisions that challenged pre-existing values around legality and illegality. In the words of some activists: "we understood that we had to respect different forms of struggle" from pacifist to "direct action"[1]. Some young activists were involved in the movement pursuing a pacifist agenda through the last manifestations in the month of December of that same year, but had to confront government infiltration and defend themselves legally and in the media to come forward for what was faire after the police brutality experienced on December 1st, 2012. Other youth asserted that they believed that *direct action* was the only way to make the news and send a clear message that their activism would keep the new administration accountable and challenged by public discontent; in the form of more public scrutiny of government actions or in the form of more violent manifestations. Despite this and many other differences and a lack of unified direction, the movement stood in solidarity for one another to free all the political prisoners.

Understanding the young activists' trajectories was possible through participant observation and in-person semi-structured interviews with participants. The data offers everyday life experience, factors in subjective perspective and decision making,

[1] *Direct action* was referred to, by movement participants, as more physical and tangible actions with an impact on property -private or public-. This could also be direct confrontations with police.

emotions, and political processes. Ten years after the disruption caused by #YoSoy132, there are no studies that present a similar perspective or the accumulation of perspectives collected through this study.

The three following chapters describe 1) a theoretical discussion about youth in context and in theory, 2) the enthusiastic effervescence of mobilization, also known as the #YoSoy132 *spark*, and 3) the democratic disenchantment, direct confrontations with the state, and police brutality. Overall, the collection of testimonies provides a description of the nuts and bolts of mobilization that resources to the Internet technologies but that is emphatic about youth as an identity, on-the-ground realities, historical memory, the awakening of collective consciousness, and mobilization that aspires to a deep transformation of political culture.

Similarly, this work has evolved into a challenge towards neutrality and objectivity of research. Some parts of this dissertation tell stories of fear and suspicion as they were also experienced by the researcher. Therefore, I will present a brief reflection of the research experience whereby the expectations of my research questions were met with realizations and discoveries about mobilization.

Concepts and Terms

In this section I will present a few concepts that are constantly used in the pages ahead. This is not an exhaustive list but it includes key concepts that will help introduce the reader to the overall project.

Spectators

The title of this dissertation uses the term “spectators” as a way to reflect the insights from several interviewees when asked the question “what were you doing on may 11th,

2012?" which is the day of the first student protest at Iberoamericana University. Consistently, the interviewees responded "Yo ya estaba politizado/a" (*translation* I was politicized) to express that their interests in politics pre-dated the #YoSoy132. Although the #YoSoy132 does not self-define itself as an artistic movement, art, performance, and aesthetics were a true accent for this movement which contributed to its visibility, popularity, and also brought up subjective creative processes in mobilization for the first time. That is how I came across the book *The Emancipated Spectator*, by French philosopher Jacques Ranciére. This book argues in favor of Bertolt Brecht's theater ideals of a type of theatrical community where spectation does not merely "prepare the gaze for illusion and passivity"(Rancière 2009). The spectator does not passively watch the theater; they rationalize, the look for unspoken meanings, they feel, and lastly, they change their actions based on what they *saw*. An example of this in this dissertation was the definition of "theorization", a word concept coined by an interviewee to explain how she could not conform herself with watching the news on TV, she had to search for more information on the internet and "theorize the truth" and see further, and this was her everyday practice before she engaged with mobilization. The emancipated spectator to me, also expresses the exhaustion of being told that the youth was "dormant", apathetic, or disengaged with politics or collective identity, instead and in their own words, they "were ready for something to happen" and many of them had been doing other things that speak to their political dissatisfaction.

Historical memory

In this dissertation I emphasize the role of historical consciousness for the student leaders in the #YoSoy132. As you will see in later pages, mainstream media told the history of

Mexico through the news and soap operas, they supported political campaigns, hid state sponsored violence, manipulated democratic processes, and worked together with the PRI to (mis)inform the public and preserve the legitimacy of the state. In exchange for that, concessions and policy favored the monopoly over media by one or two corporations. As mentioned above, the *spectators* of this (mis)information questioned the alliance between media and politics, they knew that history was manipulated by the regime and displayed by the media. Thus, these new activists searched for their own history and made this historical commitment to unveil the truth. This argument could live within the framework of *history of the subaltern* whereby *history* is constantly told by "the statemen" and the subalterns search for the history that is untold, for it is prohibited to the subalterns to connect with their past (Guha 2002). Nonetheless, *historical memory* is what the activists referred to in their speeches and in interviews. In this dissertation I will present an analysis of two movement actions that are specifically concerned with history: *La fiesta de la luz* and the words of the working table on *historical memory* in the general assembly of this student movement. In my analysis, I will go further with historical memory to say that this student movement will also have a historical role reclaiming their identity as politically empowered student leaders and rejecting the terms *porros, acarreados,* or *ninis.*

Porros, Acarreados, Ninis

These terms will be discussed in depth in this dissertation. For now, a brief definition is provided. *Porro* is a term that was used in the sixties to describe and criminalize a student movement participant whose interests are under covered and outside of the organization, it can also be understood as an infiltrator or a mercenary involved in paramilitary

activities for a pay. A *porro* will also be an agent provocateur whose goal is to increase the level of violence within peaceful protest/demonstrations. This term has been historically used in a derogatory way to insult student activists. *Acarreados*, this word translates to "herd-sheep" but it is a classist and derogatory term to describe those who participate in electoral campaigning for a monetary pay or even for a grab-and-go-meal. During electoral seasons in Mexico, some people are said to participate in many events of different political parties and thus, their allegiance with a political party is questionable or false as they do it just for the meal and/or money. The term NiNi was a term that was coined in the media during the PAN administration of Felipe Calderon; it was a short and derogatory way to say that a young person "ni estudia ni trabaja" (*translation* neither studies nor works). The term was used to blame the youth for as lazy for not holding official jobs and not being included in the education system.

General Context of Mexican Politics

The context where #YoSoy132 emerged will be analyzed in later sections in terms of youth-led mobilizations and in terms of the socio-political climate for the #YoSoy132 generation, in other words, in a more immediate historical, social, and cultural context. In this dissertation I argue that the latter would be the most appropriate way to find answers towards the main research questions in this dissertation concerned with activists' subjectivities. Nonetheless, the #YoSoy132 movement is also characterized for its focus on electoral politics, with emphasis on their opposition to the return of the PRI into office in 2012 and the historical influence of mainstream media in Mexico's institutional politics. Thus, this section aims at presenting a brief and more general context regarding the institutional politics in which the #YoSoy132 emerges. In this very concise section, I

will introduce the three major political parties, the PRI, the PAN, the PRD, the presidential candidacies of Andres Manuel López Obrador, and the #YoSoy132 main antagonist, the PRI 2012 presidential candidate, Enrique Peña-Nieto.

Many historians of Mexican politics would start narrating the history of Mexican politics of the twentieth century with the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Concretely, the Mexican Revolution opened the path for many structures of modern Mexican state. The Mexican revolution was launched by Fracisco I. Madero, under the slogan of "Sufragio Efectivo, No-Reelección" (*translation* the right to the Mexican people to effectively have elections and to prohibit reelection). Simultaneously, peasant leader Emiliano Zapata led and inspired grassroots revolutionaries to fight with the slogan "La Tierra es para quien la trabaja" (*translation* the land is for to those who work on it"). The years to follow the 1910 revolution were belligerent, the leaders that continued the so called "legacy" of the revolution were military caudillos who still provided structures such as the 1917 Mexican constitution which is still in effect. In 1929, the Party of the Institutional Revolution (known as PRI but first named National Revolutionary Party) was founded and governed Mexico with an uninterrupted single party regime for 71 years. General President Lázaro Cárdenas was the last military of the nineteenth century to take presidential office; in 1939 together with Mexican oil workers expropriated Mexico's oil industries from international interests and redistributed the land to the peasants with the *ejido* system (plots of land shared and inalienable by groups peasants, a newer version of communal land). The regime of this political party produced a successful corporatist model with a strong modernist agenda, an emerging middle class, national access to education and cultural institutions, state owned urban and transportation services, a national banking

system, autonomy for universities, and the effective withdrawal of the military regime from civil life within the first half of the twentieth century.

Thus, the PRI and its early leaders were able to reduce the likelihood of civil wars which had been recurrent throughout the ninetieth century and the first decades after the Mexican revolution. However, in this modernist PRI state and mostly in the second half of the twentieth century, there was also structural corruption, dirty wars, and exponential economic crises which worsened the livelihood for the Mexican people with the entrance of neoliberalism and Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s dramatically reducing social spending. These economic crises, impunity, and corruption necessary to sustain this hegemonic system, also denigrated into clientelism which allowed for exacerbated inequality gap –people in the elite would be able to become excessively wealthy through government favors while at least half of the country would still die hunger and lack basic health services-, exacerbated racism, classism, and terrifying crime (for instance, the highest numbers of feminicides and kidnapping) and displays of violence (spectacularly gore *narco* assassinations) (Gibler 2009) . Issues of state legitimacy and excessive violence went hand in hand with the rise of telecommunications and mass media. One media corporation, TELEVISA, enjoyed the monopoly of commercial television broadcasting for at least three decades before sharing a duopoly with TV AZTECA in the 1990s which continued until the beginnings of digital television. These media corporations grew to be some of the largest in the Americas (Televisa grew to be the largest in the entire continent in the early 2000s).

The people of Mexico responded to these issues and starting in the second half of the twentieth century, Mexico experienced increasing social unrest, with social

movements, guerrilla warfare, civic engagement, workers organizing, an also student mobilization. The PRI state was quick to repress social movements with the dirty war that started in the 1960s and enjoyed great impunity with weak judiciary institutions. One of the darkest moments of Mexican history was the 1968 student massacre of the Tlatelolco plaza which opened up a highly visible wound of political disenchantment with the PRI's Mexican state, something that will be further analyzed in later sections of this dissertation (Edmonds-Poli and Shirk 2012).

In terms of procedural democracy, state and local offices had been gained by the PAN in the mid-1940s and more significantly in the 1980s and 1990s and newer political parties followed through (Edmonds-Poli and Shirk 2012). In 1989, a progressive branch of the PRI split up to form the Party of the Democratic Revolution PRD. The PRD succeeded governing the national capital, Mexico City which has roughly 20-22 million people and confronts deep-rooted urban challenges. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano (son of president Lázaro Cárdenas), a part of the leftist group that split-up from the PRI campaigned for presidential office in 1988. It has been argued in multiple sources that the 1988 election was stolen by the PRI. The following years were plagued by political instability with the 1994 economic crisis and the political assassination of that year's PRI presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio in the same year. The entrance of Mexico in NAFTA (North American Trade Agreement) in 1994, was eclipsed by the Zapatista uprising in the southeast Mexico state of Chiapas, showing the entire world how the PRI's neoliberal agenda, dispossessed, displaced, and neglected the indigenous communities of Mexico.

The first 71 years of the PRI regime were only interrupted by 12 years of the christian democratic political party, National Action Party (PAN), which was in presidential office for two terms, the first one in year 2000 with Vicente Fox and the second one in 2006 with Felipe Calderon. The PAN's governance was characterized by extremely high violence rates, particularly, drug-related violence. The unscrupulous high levels of corruption, fragile macro-economics, and the complex deterioration of social fabric remained constant for both the PRI and the PAN terms but their institutional political power continued thanks to the collusion between the government, the judiciary, the legislature, and the mainstream media. In the decade from 2008 to 2018, "well over 120,000 people had been killed in Mexico, 30,000 forcibly disappeared, and more than 250,000 driven from their homes" (Pensado and Ochoa 2018). One of the founders of the PRD, Andres Manuel López Obrador, was a contender for presidential office in the years 2006, 2012, and eventually won the elections and took office in 2018, so far, the social spending has increased but the levels of violence continue. Despite the tumultuous conditions and setbacks for democratization, Mexico continues to be a popular democracy by design.

It is in 2012 that the #YoSoy132 student movement emerges, fed-up of political disenchantment as the televised Mexican history began to fail persuading the people, especially the newer generations.

Methods and analysis

My research with the #YoSoy132 will contribute to the interdisciplinary field of Latin American Studies by expanding on the interaction of space, politics, youth, social movements and the use of communication technologies. The variety of disciplinary

approaches with which I will work include the field of social movement theory along with the fields of politics, urban anthropology, communications, and cultural citizenship studies. This interdisciplinary approach and the focus on subjectivity are necessary for understanding the unfolding complexities of present-day activists and social movements which have been strongly transformed by the use of Internet communication technologies and *horizontalism*.

As opposed to writing a comprehensive chronological history of the movement, I undertake the temporal scope of my research as "data points" or particular moments of the #YoSoy132. These data points encompassed data from moments that date from the inception of the #YoSoy132 movement in May of 2012 and conclude with the actions taken during and as consequence of the repression of December 1st, 2012. My participant observation research data collected from 2012 to 2015 has been fundamental as it provides unique perspectives on the movement's history. I attended dozens of events with the #YoSoy132 in the Summer of 2012 including strategic meetings, marches, rallies, performative and political actions, as well as general and smaller assemblies where I observed long hours of discussion and learned about the diversity of perspectives within the #YoSoy132. Also in 2012, I attended a national social movements' forum which lasted three days in the emblematic town of *San Salvador Atenco*, Mexico. The gathering involved discussions in multiple working tables where hundreds of social movements representatives attended facing the question of creating a national assembly of social movements that would keep the new PRI regime accountable; this particular event provided me with greater perspective around the place of student mobilization in Mexico. I was also in touch with some #YoSoy132 groups that continued through 2013 and

carried sporadic actions related to journalism, communications, and energy. Even without the name #YoSoy132, movement participants continued networked and mobilized around issues of social justice through 2014 and 2015, I extended my participant observation through those years before I closed research activities in August, 2015.

Participant observation of #YoSoy132 and the following years of youth-led mobilization, helped me in the recruitment and implementation of semi-structured interviews with activists, academics, and journalists involved. In 2012 and 2013, I conducted approximately seven preliminary semi-structured with journalists, activists, and academics. In the second review of my research which began in 2014, I interviewed eighteen individuals and all these interviews vary from 1.5 to 4 hours each. These eighteen interviews include four professors, six activists who self-presented as women, and eight activists who self-presented as men.

In addition to these primary sources, I analyzed complementing key documentary research gathered since 2012; these includes official archival accounts of the case of arrested activists, newspapers data, and the analysis of Internet material through *Facebook* and *Twitter*. This research was qualitative focusing on large social and historical events while interacting with smaller groups and individuals. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation are primary sources of data while in the field.

As a study of subjectivity, perceptions and networks would naturally generate bias, especially for social movements research where power dynamics and political interests were highly present. To reduce the chances for skewed portrayal of the movement, I relied on mixed-methods for both data collection and treatment (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002). The different semi-structured interviews were

cross-referenced during data analysis in search for more nuance and corroborated explanations of events and perceptions. Thus, not all my interview material is included in this dissertation in order to avoid repetition.

Since repression made a big impact on the denouement of this student movement, I intentionally recruited former political prisoners of December 1st for interviews. For a variety of reasons, it was particularly challenging to recruit female identifying interviewees. Nonetheless, the analysis of these episode of the #YoSoy132 provided further insight on the research questions. This part of the research covered the question of *how do youth get involved in mobilization for the first time* and it also covered a subsequent question of *why do youth continue involved despite the trauma of experiencing police brutality and even incarceration*. Additionally, I was able to access legal documents regarding these detentions and the legal reform that followed the activism for the freedom of the December 1st political prisoners. Together with a few interviews already done during my preliminary research, I met my goal of conducting nearly 30 in-person, semi-structured interviews with snowball/network-based sampling. This kind of sampling is recommended for cases of hard-to-reach populations (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002) and it proved helpful during my research.

Finally, the reader will notice that the data analysis changes from the following two chapters to the last chapter (from chapters 2 and 3 to chapter 4). I was able to make direct citations for all my interviewees except for one of the interviewees who was formerly incarcerated and whose interview was used for Chapter 4. This changes the style in the narrative. The chapter about repression and incarnation of activists has almost no direct citations and the chapter reads as ethnographic despite the fact that I, the

researcher, was never inside the prisons with the activists.

Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation is about the subjectivity of the young activists of the movement #YoSoy132; through it, this research shreds light the process of engaging into political militancy for the first time and continuing in it. The subjective perspectives are intertwined in at least 5 main arguments through the following chapters: 1) How multiple generations understood mobilization and how this informs historical memory and consciousness in Mexico; 2) I will present youth as a category of analysis to help understand the relevance and uniqueness of this movement. 3) Mobilization within the frame of the new politics of horizontality or anti-authoritarian movements, wanting to be democratic while having to step up and exercise power; 4) Subjective reflections from the individual to the collective ethos; 5) Subjectivity and the role of the media; 6) Subjectivity and the role of state repression. In this section I summarize the way in which these arguments are present in the chapters.

What was the context of Mexican youth at the time when the #YoSoy132 movement emerged? How did these new activists frame their movement, their political engagement? What was enduring about the politics of #YoSoy132 that made so many people join them? The first chapter following this introduction (Chapter 2), will provide the political and historical context in which #YoSoy132 erupted as it affected the youth of Mexico and the world. How multiple generations understood mobilization and how this informs historical memory and consciousness in Mexico. The context is important as #YoSoy132 is part of a global wave of mobilization in which youth led social movements aided by the use of Internet communications produced great transformations in the ways

social movements spread and represent themselves politically and in terms of their identity (Arditi 2004; Gerbaudo 2012; Harvey 2012; Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Tarrow 2011; Melucci 1989). In chapter 2, the objective will be to present the ways in which being young was perceived by the public and how it was felt by youth themselves. Focusing on youth, I will describe the context of violence and criminalization of youth during the war on drugs as well as the criminalizing depictions of youth in the official discourse and the mainstream media calling youth of that period of time either *NiNis* (youth who neither studies, neither works) or *Porros/acarreados* (*translation* "thugs for hire" or "agent provocateurs" (Pensado 2013; definition on p. 2). This context met with the global wave of protests where people across the world, and young activists in particular, were organizing massive social movements and having an impact in the public's conscious awareness.

The claims that the Mexican youth was either replicating the Arab Spring or the Occupy Wall Street movement was often received with hesitancy in my fieldwork with the #YoSoy132. The activists that I interviewed as well as people I had personal conversations with, expressed a need to claim and own their actions. This does not mean that these students believed to be the firsts in mobilization, it actually alluded to the theme of historical memory which takes a great part of this chapter. The youth of the #YoSoy132 pronounces itself as the offspring of Mexican anti-authoritarian social movements of the past in several speeches. They want to reclaim their positioning in history as agents of change. Multiple generations of Mexican youth have been engaged in mobilization since at least the 1960s but their history has been hidden by the Mexican state and the media. The #YoSoy132 names these student mobilizations of the past in

their speeches and asserts to know their history. Further, the #YoSoy132 wants to bring this history to the forefront of their actions; an act that would make multiple generations connect and support the #YoSoy132.

Even if historical memory did have a strong influence in the collective identity of the movement, the global context provided a frame of the new politics of horizontality or anti-authoritarian movements. The #YoSoy132 youth do not deny the influence of other movements. Contemporary anti-authoritarian social movements of this wave often claimed non-partisanship, anti-authoritarianism, and horizontal power dynamics. The ways in which these influences are implemented and adapted are a process of cultural hybridization (Nilan and Feixa 2006). The approach of cultural hybridization validates the right of these activists to be the ones self-defining themselves. Understanding the historical ties between this generation of activists with historical memory and the need for self-definition revealed important collective values of this movement.

Owning their collective identity as a movement provided direction, purpose, tactics and the *framing* of the movement both during the moments of enthusiasm and during the moments of repression and redirection. Thanks to the focus on subjective perspectives, once in the interview process, the participants were very explicit about differentiating their perspectives before and after reaching a collective consciousness. To them, this was something new and something understood subjectively; this collective consciousness begins with the realizations regarding their positioning in the global and historical contexts but it is understood once appropriated and hybridized through experience in collectivity; for instance, some movement participants may have wanted to be democratic but they had to step up and exercise power. The following chapter will

explore this further.

Chapter 3 explains the #YoSoy132 *spark* from the perspective of youth's agency. How was it possible for this movement to resonate with such diverse population from its inception? What describes the enthusiasm (or *spark*) according to the movement activists? If not framed only through identity groups, what moved people to support and participate in this movement and how did movement activists experience power dynamics? These chapter answers these questions by describing the 'coming of age' in collective identity and the subjective interactions with the media.

Recent work analyzing the interactions of social movements and the use of internet show the cultural and personal significance of the availability of Internet communications producing also a qualitative impact on the ways in which individuals engage in interpersonal relations, politics, and collective action (Ostertag and Ortiz 2013). The latter argument can support the spread of horizontal politics across movements if, people had the same level of access to the Internet and if they had the same entry level of networks. Thus, the Internet might have influenced the spread of activism. In this chapter I will present testimonies of student activists describing their interactions with the networks and the media during the inception of #YoSoy132. However, my research also revealed ways in which movement participants had certain social status and influence both online and offline. If, indeed, perhaps bolstered by the internet, horizontality built a kind of radical democracy through access to information; to what extend did it constrain or integrated specific identities like those of the #YoSoy132's members who were not university students (i.e. indigenous groups, gender upper middle class non-university affiliated adults, *rechazados* or 'youth rejected from universities',

and even members who were university students from outside the metropolitan area)? The evidence presented in this chapter, supports the claim that the role of the Internet was undeniable and so was the role of pre-existing networks of friendship, class, and politics. In other words, the social networks are also a function of the "offline" power dynamics. Further, this chapter presents interview material that illustrates subjective processes in the making of the #YoSoy132 most memorable actions, and tell the story from the perspective of those who lived it.

The state's approach to the movement changed over time. Prior to the election, the government tried to infiltrate and co-opt the movement by using the media and undercover agents but not explicitly utilizing the force. After the election, the police presented itself increasingly repressive. In response, while still connected through the general assembly, the movement did scatter into groups, some were ready to engage in confrontation and many were against it. Chapter 4 undertakes subjectivity and the role of state repression by presenting on-the-ground conflicts with the state which escalated to repression, brutality, and illegal incarceration of activists. In the demonstration of December 1st, 2012, at least two groups were protesting simultaneously: one was organized in the #YoSoy132 traditional ways with a massive amount of walking demonstrators and the other one was a battlefield in front of the Senate. The second one was broadly televised in order discredit everyone in the movement.[2] How was the space between these two groups divided? Were these two groups completely separate or antagonistic? The chapter answers these questions with descriptions of agreements and

[2] To see the televised version of December 1st, 2012, access: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37NChvXiHbk

coordination between the two groups.

The purpose of this chapter, is to once again center the experience of the activists through the subjective analysis. The interviews that shred light over this part of the framing of #YoSoy132 describe the experience from within the spaces where protest, detention, processing, and post-incarceration occurred. I will explore the question about first-time militancy for a youth whose militancy goes from "owning the city" through peaceful protest and believing in a liberatory democracy of the people, of the youth, to "becoming a stranger" to the same city that once was theirs from the perspective of a post-incarcerated protestor. Although this chapter is heavily centered on the experience of repression and incarceration of activists, the findings will continue concerned with communications, relationships/networks, movement framing, youth's identity and agency.

At the end of these three chapters, I include a conclusions section. This will include a final overall arguments and realizations, brief reflexive considerations particularly around the theme of trust and fear, and future research questions.

Positionality as a researcher

I started this research in 2012, a year after having finished my master's thesis about the civil society's response towards the war on drugs fought in Mexico from 2008 to 2011. As a citizen of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico this *war on drugs* was a painful research experience with up to eight murders a day and cases of extra-judicial torture which was only possible to complete thanks to the presence of social movements. Social movements brought me hope even as the number of victims of the war on drugs continued growing. Thus, I decided to dedicate my doctoral research to social movements.

My first year doing preliminary research in Mexico City was the year of the #YoSoy132 inception. I was on the field to study social movements in Mexico City in the Summer of 2012 but I didn't know the great level of mobilization that #YoSoy132 had ongoing. The bulk of my participant observation notes come from data collection during this period. That year I thought I would come back to Mexico City the following year to conduct interviews to movement participants. In addition to doing that, I began observing that movement participants were managing different life trajectories in activism while experiencing increasing state repression. The latter also meant that my research would not be about the history of the movement but instead, it would be about the experience of the movement participants.

This doctoral research understands mobilization from the subjective perspectives of the activists. Utilizing semi-structured interviews, snowball sampling, and tenets of feminist research and pedagogy, helped me center the activists' voices. The interview process had the intentionality of seeing things the way participants saw them. One important realization was that the interviewees started telling their stories from two very distinct sources: the way they interpreted the bigger picture and the way they observed the different situations and the impacts of their own actions, their position of power and identity.

These process shred light over many complexities that this movement had and which had not been explored. The ideal of horizontality and collective consciousness was sometimes a challenge for all participants who wrestled with their own individual perspectives. Mobilization was disrupted by state repression which can be in the form of physical violence or in the form of infiltration and co-optation. I experienced some of

these processes too. In my first year of research, I might have idealized this movement and believed that their participation in violent actions was perhaps staged by the state repressing, infiltrating, and sabotaging the movement from within. Nonetheless, some of my interviews showed that there was a legitimate strategy to protest and use what some participants understood as “direct action” by attacking private and public property, by defending themselves in physical confrontations with the police. Some activists explained that, even if not participating in “direct action”, they respected and validated other people’s forms of struggle. For me, it was an invitation to detach from prejudice and learn more about my interviewees’ perspectives. These subjected processes oriented the way in which this dissertation has been built.

CHAPTER 2

The new politics of #YoSoy132: reclaiming the role of youth and memory

What was the context of Mexican youth at the time when the #YoSoy132 movement emerged? How did these new activists frame their movement, their political engagement? In this chapter I discuss the public perception of youth during the emergence of the movement nationally, globally, and historically. In other words, I will explain how multiple generations understood mobilization and how this informs historical memory and consciousness in Mexico. I then present a theoretical discussion which is more focused on the wave of social movements at the time. Youth in Mexico (and elsewhere) are at the forefront of social change and most often, endure in a counter-hegemonic role. This was also truth for Mexican youth at the time of #YoSoy132; I argue that at the beginning, there was a struggle for self-validation which was part of the reasons why youth across the country supported the first organizers in Mexico City, on YouTube.

Being in the field from the years 2012 to 2015, I was able to interact with academics in Mexico who were writing from and about the #YoSoy132 as it was happening in 2012. In the words of the student activists I interviewed, their "professors were interviewing [them] about the movement". Perhaps as a consequence of similar intersections of identify and positioning in the field, in this dissertation and particularly in this chapter, my theoretical discussions interact with brief ethnographic notes informing my own voice in the discussion. This was a natural situation throughout my field work, since the social movement activists were primarily students (from high school to graduate levels) and practitioners of the academy, our conversations would often touch on theory.

The movement defined itself as part of a wave of movements that relies not only in the power of the Internet for social movement organizing but also in the "new" politics of horizontality, radical democracy, freedom of media, historical responsibility, class, ethnicity, feminisms, and inclusion which were huge part of the everyday conversations. Both in the field experience and in the pages ahead, it has been important to understand the subjective processes of the activists unlearning and learning the values of these "new" politics and continue with their action-oriented agendas that made the movement unique and groundbreaking although its outcomes were mostly unmeasurable and subjective.

Youth in disenchantment: youth struggles in Mexican history (no nos llamen *nini*/ don't call us *nini*)

I used social media when approaching my first contact in the student movement #YoSoy132; it was someone I had seen on TV. I asked about their next public actions and if there was any way I could volunteer to participate on these. They responded with an invitation to a project for electoral monitoring, they said that they needed many volunteers to help type, document, and "to *Tweet* a lot" about the happenings of the electoral journey. I accepted and attended the planning session of the #YoSoy132 electoral monitoring action; the action was named "Cuarto de Paz" (*Peace Room*). It was in a student house with no particular decoration or propaganda, just functional spaces and a TV room. I met in person with other contacts in the movement. During the next six or seven hours, we shared food and lots of conversation and there was the TV.

While eating and waiting for more people to come by, and without paying much attention, we watched two shows that arose passionate comments: one was the TV show "La Rosa de Guadalupe" (*The Rose of Guadalupe*) and the other one was the news with images about the war in Syria. *La Rosa de Guadalupe* is a show produced by *Televisa*

(Mexican media corporation and the 5th largest in the Americas). In short stories, the featured characters of *La Rosa de Guadalupe* would have the chance to choose between their faith to the virgin or a very tragic destiny. A critique of this show was included in the frame of the #YoSoy132 protests with the chanting on the streets that said "que no te eduque *la rosa de Guadalupe*" (a clever rhyme that translates in English to *Don't let The Rose of Guadalupe educate you*). In this chanting, the student movement cries to their two main sources of indignation: the way in which *Televisa* (entertainment media corporation) has historically manipulated the information to cover up for state sponsored violence and the criminalization of youth. This is an example of how historical memory and consciousness in Mexico was manipulated by the media and the politicians. It is a also a reference to how #YoSoy132 understood mobilization and the need for a counterhegemonic narrative that could touch many generations.

In 2008, in a nightclub called "*New's Divine*", 12 people died; 9 of which were between 13 and 24 years old. In a police operation to find drugs and people of under-18-years who cannot legally be in these places that serve alcohol, police entered the overcrowded place arresting most of the people in the crowd. When the police ran out of transportation for more arrestees, they blocked the doors of the *News Divine.* Three policemen and women who stayed indoors kept pushing the crowd of 500 youth outwards while the air conditioning and the lights were off as part of the police protocol. Eventually, all-500 hundred people were left out of breath against a narrow staircase that conducted to the door that had been blocked from outside. Three police members and 9 other people died. Some people died inside and others breathed for the last time outside the nightclub with no help from the police. The tragedy was the result of police brutality

and negligence but the case –still on trial as of the end of 2016- has not been completely solved.

The Televisa TV show *La Rosa de Guadalupe* showed a fictional story where one teenager is punished by her mother and does not go into "*El Divan"(phonetically alluding to News Divine)* on the day of the tragedy. The teenager's mother prevented her from dying in the club thanks to her devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe. The show never mentioned that the police had blocked the doors. Other characters in the episode who were drinking or dancing and whose parents were not religious enough had to die. Journalist Daniela Rea documents the story and includes the testimonies of the victims' families and it also mentions this episode of *La Rosa de Guadalupe*. Rea's article "*Nadie les pidió perdón*" (Rea Gomez 2017) (*Nobody apologized to them*) shows how the criminalization of victims was a resource of impunity for those responsible of this human tragedy and a source of indignation for the families of the victims; Rea also shows how mainstream media collaborates with the government covering up for this. Objectively, the lack of devotion to the virgin, being young, going to a nightclub, dancing, or drinking was not the reason why these 12 people died. Nonetheless, the *Rosa de Guadalupe*'s representation of this tragedy did contribute to youth's perception as criminalized or unprotected by the public opinion as it is expressed in the #YoSoy132 chanting rejecting the show's narrative.

On October 30 of 2010 the Mexican Federal Police shot at students walking in a protest just outside of the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez campus. The college student Darío Alvarez was hospitalized with a bullet that impacted him from the back. Other students declared that they heard a total of three shots. The students identified the

patrol's plates and numbers. The identified Federal agents who shot reported that the gun accidentally went off.[1] This march occurred as part of the attempt to organize an academic conference against the violence that resulted from the war on drugs in Mexico. One of the objectives of that academic conference was to discuss the term *youthcide*.

By 2012, the year of #YoSoy132's inception, the hardline approach of Mexico's drug war left over 70,000 dead, most of them male between the ages 14-29 and this is why some academics were talking about the Mexican *youthcide*.[2] Over 90% of these deaths were labeled as "drug related crimes", attributing the involvement of the youth in organized crime as a consequence of the erosion of the social fabric. In that same context, youth were being marginalized with the term "NiNi". This term is a derogatory nickname to express that the young person "*Ni* estudia, *Ni* trabaja" (translated to English, *neither* studies, *nor* works). The term had such dissemination that in March 2011, the Governor of Chihuahua state Cesar Duarte proposed to the Federal Government a three-year mandatory military service to all the "NiNis" arguing that this measure would prevent "*NiNis"* from getting involved with organized crime.[3] Duarte's proposal did not make it too far but it was part of the official rhetoric naming approximately 7.3 million young people who at the time did not have a formal job or formal education, between the ages 14-29, mainly concentrated in the metropolitan areas of central Mexico.[4]

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[1] "Policías Federales Disparan contra Estudiantes en Juárez". Oct. 30, 2010. To access this information: http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/primera/35770.html

[2] UNICEF makes a case estimating that every day in Mexico, two children below 14 died in drug-related violence in Mexico. For more information: http://www.unicef.org/mexico/spanish/proteccion_6932.htm

[3] " El Gobernador de Chihuahua, César Duarte, propone tres años de servicio military para 'ninis'" (The Chihuahua Governor, César Duarte, suggests three years of military service for 'ninis') http://www.excelsior.com.mx/node/724961

[4] According to sources of the Mexican presidency in 2010 the population of those between 14 and 29 years represents 29.7 million. Concentrated in Mexico State and Mexico City, the economically active population was divided like this: 32% only work, 11.2% study and work, 32.7% only study: data obtained from Mexican Institute of Youth (IMJU) with National Institute for Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

During the electoral period of 2012, this constant criminalization of victims in Mexico's recent human crises and the highly violent death tolls were among the reasons for political disenchantment. As supported by the previous section, this criminalization is often disseminated by mainstream media. While I was in the preparation meeting for *cuarto de paz*, I heard the students' critical opinions about the TV programming. Random observance of *Televisa* channels inspired reactions of anger and sarcasm, especially towards *La Rosa de Guadalupe*. In the next program, the news about the war in Syria also arose several comments among the people present there… "that is some serious stuff" one of them said. I responded with a short question "do you think what you all are doing here is not as serious, some people say you are part of the global mobilizations currently happening?" He responded "we have been called the *Mexican Spring*; that is bullshit, this movement has nothing to do with what happens in the Middle East".[5] This comment was perhaps a subjective reflection assessing the images presented in the media about the war in Syria and the student movement in Mexico. Were the global movements in Egypt, Chile, or the United States a true inspiration for the Mexican youth? If yes, how could they relate and what did they borrow from them? If not, then what was it that made them take it to the streets and produce a movement with such unique characteristics?

What new politics would inspire new generations into public discourse?

In this section I introduce the argument of mobilization within the frame of the new politics of horizontality or anti-authoritarian movements. I will also set a base of how the focus on subjectivity can help explain the tensions between horizontal democratic values

[5] The student was referring to several publications of the time comparing the #YoSoy132 with the Arab Spring (Galindo Cáceres and González-Acosta 2013; Rovira 2012; Reguillo and Rea 2012).

and having to step up and exercise power. Since 2006, world protests have multiplied and there are many characteristics that they share (Ortiz et al. 2013). Social movement scholars observed intense use of Internet communications and the overwhelming popular response to their calls for action in plazas or in public spaces. For this reason, the #YoSoy132 was often compared with the 15M (May 15) of Spain, OWS (Occupy Wall Street) in the United States, the Egyptian Revolution, or the Chilean Student Movement (also known as "penguins"). Furthermore, some militants of these movements came to Mexico to learn from and to share experiences with the youth of #YoSoy132. For instance, Chilean activist Camila Vallejo visited Mexico City and talked to some #YoSoy132 activists, 15M activists from Spain wrote a report with recommendations for the #YoSoy132 ("Propuestas de UN #15M a los #YOSOY132" 2012). I was told in personal communications with #YoSoy132 activists that some had decided to attend the small meetings organized with these activists, but some people -even if invited- decided not to. According to one of my interviewees, this was in part because Camila Vallejo's visit was sponsored by a political party which was against the a-partisan foundation of #YoSoy132, but more so, because appearing in photos and newspapers with Camila Vallejo would help produce those personalistic leaders which they did not want to become because that was not the type of leadership they wanted to build with this movement. Indeed, these subjective perceptions around leadership reflect the characteristic of "decentralized, horizontally" based social movements which according to Stahler-Sholk et al., seek "the flattening out of relations of power that promote equity and equality within the society and the social movements" (Stahler-Sholk, Vanden, and Becker 2014).

Recent youth studies or *juvenólogos* (*translation,* youthologists) portend that youth have a hybrid or even dynamic approach to global influences (Nilan and Feixa 2006); their activism can be influenced by tactics coming from other parts of the world but rationalized and enacted in their own hybrid, subjective way. What the leadership of this movement decided must have had influence from the collective movement frame while also an adaptation to their own subjective perspectives, histories, and the celebration of their own differences and upbringings. This framework contrasts with that of other *youthologists* in other world regions who have argued about the exitance of a "global, non-localized perspective of mobilization of young people, changing existing structures, something that youth is capable of doing through the influence of and access to globalization as well as the possibilities of transcending cultural particularistic identities (i.e. religion)" (Jeffrey 2013, Pp. 145-146).

According to a more hybridized understanding, concepts such as *decentralized leadership* and *horizontality* might have been both a global influence and something that can emerge spontaneously. In this chapter I am arguing that horizontality was a tactical frame to help build a very diverse movement. In the next chapter I will problematize *horizontality* as a kind of politics that is hard to implement in everyday movement organizing experience and I will expand on a more critical perspective of the everyday struggle for horizontality, collective decision making, and various challenges of making a student movement that provides direct democracy among groups that had been previously fragmented by class, race, institutional affiliation, and the production of space.

Approaching subjectivity: How was the #YoSoy132 interpreted and what were the implications of such definition?

In my research, the definition of #YoSoy132 is still open; when I asked the interviewees to define the #YoSoy132 in retrospective, they described it to me as “an encounter” “a school for life” “something amorphous”, “something incredible”, “an abandonment from individuality and entering in collective identity”. My interviewee, Claudio clarified that “there would always be “artificial” definitions because the real, “more organic”, definitions would be given in the everyday”. Thus, some artificial definitions were about its organization, its tactics, its ideology, whether it was an anti-capitalist or anti-neoliberal movement. These things were usually defined in the first assemblies. This movement has been widely studied and multiple definitions of the movement are available for analysis. In this section I focus on at least two: one tackling the strategic use of Internet communications and one dedicated to the analysis of #YoSoy132’s internal politics.

One common way of defining and understanding the #YoSoy132 was to group it within the *vanguard* of the e-revolutions; scholars and media described the #YoSoy132 as an “Internet movement” or “semi-online movement”, a “net-movement”, but I argue that these descriptions rest importance from a very creative and complex organizing effort and even subjective framings such as historical memory. Furthermore, when I approached the students to ask if the Internet had done such difference in their activism, the answer was “of course, it helped but no, not really”. I repeatedly asked this question and this was a consistent answer. This does not take away from the fact that the use of Internet in mobilization facilitated discussion and sharing of ideas for participants and bystanders wide and abroad and it was also a repertoire of contention that #YoSoy132 sympathizers learned and continued to use. Manuel Castells’ 2015 book, *Networks of*

Outrage and Hope (Castells 2012) is a common reference in the analysis of these movements, here is one of the opening arguments:

> "There were first a few, who were joined by hundreds, then networked by thousands, then supported by millions with their voices and their internal quest for hope, as muddled as it was, that cut across ideology and hype to connect with the real concerns of the real people in the real human experience that had been reclaimed. It began in the Internet social networks as these are spaces of autonomy…" (p. 1-2).

Information does spread this way for most of those exposed to Internet communications and social networks. Applied to mainstream social movements' theory, this can also be explained through the concept of *diffusion repertoires* (Givan et al. 2010). *Diffusion repertoires* are "more than a simple matter of political contagion or imitation; rather, it is a creative and strategic process marked by political learning, adaptation, and innovation". This strategic, creative and cognitive process has a transformative reach when "there is a shift in the scale of contention that turns simple mirroring into a common cause for broad social movements and revolutions" (Tarrow 2010). Based on my interview material, I argue however that the Internet is not a "space of autonomy" [6] where "everything begins" and these movements do not emerge inside a vacuum, they come along with subjective references –social and personal of class, gender, race, etc.-, and are relational at multiple levels, including at the subjective and interpersonal level; in other words, pre-existing ("*offline"*) networks. Likewise, cognitive repertoires may also be spread through the Internet and other media but each person, each group, transmits and replicates in what my interviewee Claudio called 'organic' ways.

[6] Internet has brought a social dispute for what is public and private -such as in the case of whistle blowers or the government and corporate uses of personal data, etc. I will expand on this in chapters 4 and 5.

According to my research evidence, these will be organic to the subjects' prior experiences, organic to their networks of friendship or socialization, of common histories and also of differences, organic to the built environment, etc.

Youth wanted and needed to understand their role as participants of #YoSoy132, personally, collectively, and in the broader national and global contexts but this understanding had to come from within the movement and not from external definitions or labels. At the beginning, the students thought that defining themselves, their politics, before anybody else attempted to doing it would also have an impact in decision making. Nonetheless, various of these first-time social movement activists in the #YoSoy132 said that they had to compromise their beliefs as they encountered the multitude when they "realized something important was happening at the rally of the *Estela de la Luz* (Stele of Light)" when, unexpectantly, 14,000 people showed up" and, in the words of my interviewee Claudio, "not only did the 14,000 people arrive, they started a self-determined march, not only that, the march made itself and went where it wanted to", he added, "from that moment, the question of no-identified leaderships was obvious" and the #YoSoy132 became action-oriented. According to Claudio, when the subject becomes more aware of their collective ethos, more transformative changes may occur, not just at the individual level. Acquiring a collective identity implies a process and it can never be taken for granted (Arditi, 2013) and it could not have happened to all #YoSoy132 activists. This is because a subject's expanded agency as activists will be constantly challenged by the interactions with others and the conditions for these interactions which is a subjective political struggle in the day by day.

Activists in these organizations appeal to the public and not to the state because it

is not an individual-to-the-state relationship. Further, movements with collective leaderships and collective identities cannot be conformed when a single leader achieves recognition by the state or by the achievement of a legal battle. Instead, these horizontal organizers have a collective conscious and only a broader social transformation, a change in political culture, in the public perception, meets the goals of the collectivity. In this dissertation I argue that appealing to the *public* and not to the structures of the state alone may be one of the most important changes in anti-authoritarian movements today.

Like #YoSoy132, today's movements are defiant to the ways politics had been traditionally practiced both institutionally and within the organizations of the old "left". Paraphrasing writings from Michel Foucault on *anti-authoritarian movements* and Benjamin Arditi's elaborations on the concept of *insurgencies*, by avoiding the production of leaders, these mobilizations claim transverse identities and carry a strong commitment to horizontality. They do this through opposing and/or contesting identities and behaviors that had been socially constructed or imposed by the *status quo.* Thus, they identify themselves through names against restricting identity markers such as #YoSoy132 but also OWS or 15M. These movements' strategy is recognizing the need for inclusiveness in the construction of democracy from below. I would argue that this is a strategy against old-left ideological constraints and while it does not openly discuss equality and diversity its tactics are action-oriented which may build impactful mobilization.[7] They thrive from individual and collective empowerment without aiming to plan on an absolute new order or program. In the words of political philosopher

[7] In my future research, I will argue that while this is an effective social movement social movement tactic as it makes mobilization visible, it is not transformative in culturally inclusive terms, therefore it can be short-lived.

Benjamin Arditi: “insurgencies do not have a plan, they are the plan” (Arditi 2013).

According to Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis (2014), these movements follow the examples of horizontality and radical democracy of the *Zapatista* and the *Seattle* movements in the 1990s.[8] Like these movements, #Yosoy132 mobilized aspiring to organizing a different form of politics, something horizontal and accountable to the public, not to the state institutions alone. I will argue that horizontality and inclusivity was a formal public-facing aspect of the movement which, however, did not permeate every interaction among participants. It’s important to clarify that this was the ideal for most participants whom, in the long-term would continue searching for more profound and transformative activism. As an ideal, horizontality was implemented in mechanisms such as the expansion of the assembly system in direct democracy and the transparency and emphasis on free media which increased the diffusion of ideas and the overall participation in the movement. As Arditi argues, the existence of these movements is a means to remind us all that something different is possible. The assembly system allowed for certain degree of autonomy at the local level, which means, that not every local action had to be voted, only those actions that would have a national repercussion; this produced freedom for action and self-determination. With the values of horizontality and radical democracy and freedom to organize collective action were mechanisms that worked as a kind of synergy for multiple simultaneous actions produced every day in the heydays of #YoSoy132.

With emphasis on historical memory and non-partisan interest, the public

[8] The Zapatistas continue to be an icon of present-day dissidence; one of their conventions is the continuation of their struggle and their existence as an autonomous community without a secessionist plan or overthrowing the head of the state.

supported and joined the #YoSoy132 movement in order to start something new detached from political parties. This is also in reference to how multiple generations understood mobilization and how this informs historical memory and consciousness in Mexico. The state institutions had lost democratic legitimacy with the recent human rights crises experienced by younger generations such as that of the News Divine and the shooting of Dario and also those lived in previous years such as the student massacres of the 1960s and 1970s. The public had lost interest on partisan contestation and the youth-led social movement that represented more honesty and higher level of accountability. In the video that might have initiated the YoSoy132 phenomenon, entitled (translation) *Ibero students respond to Peña* after the initial protest at Iberoamericana University, the students claimed "nobody trained us and we are no *acarreados*". When they argue "nobody trained us and we are not *acarreados*" they are defending themselves from being stereotyped by the public as false militants, trained and paid by a political party or international interest which has been a partisan co-optation mechanism in Mexico for decades. At the foundation of the #YoSoy132, owning historical memory is as important as not endorsing political parties, the no production of leaders, and the struggle for freedom of media.

Historical memory and other encounters

What called and unified such diverse youth groups was often called "the spark" of the #YoSoy132 which will be the focus of the next chapter. In this chapter I am analyzing the politics and the grievances of youth in their context, as university students, as children of previous generations of activists, as a new student movement. In the previous section I analyzed horizontality and the hesitancy to appoint popular movement leaders. In this

section I will argue that the latter responds to the commitment to historical memory. For many of the interviewees, the most exciting part of the #YoSoy132 in the beginning was the encounter and union of university students from multiple political, cultural, and economic backgrounds. This encounter and union defied a historical pattern of division by school affiliation, by geographic location, ideological identification, stereotypes, and class divisions across the student population in the different schools.

Many analysts argue that this moment of encounter was possible because the first action was an initiative of upper middle-class students from a privately ran Jesuit university. This fact contested the mistaken stereotype that private university students would not be involved in counter-*status quo* protests. In fact, it had been argued that the decision of Enrique Peña's campaign team to visit *Ibero* -as opposed to other universities- was this same stereotype that would have allowed Enrique Peña for a quiet and smooth campus university visit. A more nuanced look at the history of Jesuit universities in Latin America would have consistently proven this stereotype wrong.[9]

This first action was a collective effort of upper-middle class students to show solidarity with groups of peasants and women whose grievances began in 2006 in the *Atenco* revolt. *Atenco* is near Mexico City; it is a town where peasants revolted in order to defend their land against government efforts to expropriate it and build a new airport. The revolt ended with strong repression; a 14-year-old peasant youth was killed and 45 women were arrested with dozens of them sexually abused by police officers.[10] This repression was authorized by the then-state-governor Enrique Peña Nieto. Back in 2006,

[9] This chapter considers part of that history in a later section.
[10] This case is documented in the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights: Report #158/11; Petition 512-08.

mainstream media failed to report these human rights violations and even supported the actions of the then-governor Enrique Peña Nieto. In 2012, Enrique Peña Nieto was announced as the presidential candidate of the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI). During a campus visit the, then PRI presidential candidate made to *Iberoamericana* University (a.k.a. *Ibero*) in May 11, 2012, hundreds of students organized a demonstration in solidarity with the people of *Atenco*. Peña-Nieto's campaign manager interacted with a media reporter who in an interview called these *Ibero* students *acarrados* (shepherded and herded people), doubting the legitimacy of their identity as students of *Ibero*. The students responded with the YouTube video "Students of *Ibero* respond to Peña Nieto" that went viral. In the next chapter of this dissertation, I present the students' perspectives on how these actions were enacted, who participated, how it was subjectively experienced. What is pertinent here is to present the role of Mexican youth and understand a little bit more about the class and cultural interactions between student activism and other Mexican political movements. At this point, the students of *Ibero* and other youth in the country had a common opposition, the PRI. In this section, I will explain why the PRI and Televisa have a historical (and not just contextual) antagonistic relationship with the Mexican youth.

This analysis of historical memory works to emphasize that the youth and the student movement in Mexico were not dormant. My conversations with young activists (students and not students) often tied to historical references of individuals' subjectivities in their schools, their families, their neighborhoods, in the national stories of collective indignation, and even in their future professional aspirations. I argue that the individuals' agency in this movement was strongly tied to previous student struggles and

mobilizations in Mexico City and in the country.

Political Student movements in Mexico (no nos llamen *porros*/don't call us *porros*)

As I was leaving the house to follow one of the #YoSoy132 march, my mother said: "Ten cuidado, hija, no les vayan a hacer otro Tlatelolcazo" (Be careful daughter, I hope they won't do another Tlatelolco).

--My mother before I went to student demonstration

June 30th of 2012 was the Saturday before presidential elections day and the #YoSoy132 called for what was named the *March of Silence*. The place people were told to meet at was the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* (Plaza of the Three Cultures) in the Tlatelolco neighborhood. This plaza is an emblematic place in Mexico's history. In this same place, in October 2nd 1968, government repression took the lives of hundreds of students who congregated there in peaceful demonstration. This event is referred to as the *October 2nd Massacre* or the *Matanza de Tlatelolco* (Tlatelolco killings). In 1985, this plaza also congregated an important neighborhoods' movement that came out of unpopular reconstruction plans the government had for this and other neighborhoods after the 1985 earthquake. *El 2 de Octubre no se olvida* (October 2nd should not be forgotten) is a cry I've heard through media and books since I was little. In fact, nobody forgets it. Every year, there's a commemorative march on October 2nd from *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* en *Tlatelolco* to *Zócalo* (main square). In my family, we are from province and my parents were not students in 1968, they read all the newspapers but never marched in a protest demonstration; nonetheless, all of us remember October 2nd.

This was going to be my first time following a march demonstration like this. All things considered, that day I felt no fear but excitement. With youth at the forefront of mobilization, this location shows #YoSoy132's contagious creativity and a sense of

historical responsibility. The messages on these walking banners were mainly anti-PRI and anti-*Televisa* (or anti-TV Azteca, the other one mainstream TV station in the country, together they made a duopoly in the 1990s). Along with this, there was an also recurrent message that reclaimed the agency of the Mexican youth in national politics. These two frames of protest have intertwined roots over decades of state repression, surveillance, censorship and stigmatization of dissident groups and, in particular, of the student movements and youth in Mexico.[11]

The PRI was in presidential office for 71 years until in year 2000 the National Action Party (PAN) took office for 12 years exiting with low levels of popularity in 2012. Despite the strong support that the third political party (Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD) had, since 2011 and throughout the presidential campaign period, preliminary polls and media presumed that the PRI would come back to office as the denouement of the presidential elections of July 2012. Intellectuals, public opinion, and the social media contemplated the possible outcomes of this election had the PRI returned; would it be a reformed PRI or would the PRI come back with its traditional governing style? In order to understand these anxieties, especially from the younger generations, it is necessary to analyze the antecedents of this political party's "traditional" governing style and its relation to student mobilizing.

Even though, the PRI remained in power until year 2000, scholars of Mexican politics (Edmonds-Poli and Shirk 2012) locate a change in Mexican political culture and the demise of the PRI with the student massacre of October 2nd, 1968. Some other

[11] http://kehuelga.net/diario/spip.php?article1412&lang=es

scholars argue that the hegemony of the regime was under threat long before this and multiple political incarcerations and assassinations back this information. A critical mass was in formation and the populist policies of the 1930s and early 1940s were already shifting to a more rigid regime with an increasingly hierarchical and controlling corporatist system of trade unions and institutions. According to historian, activist, and journalist Joel Ortega (2013), the corporatist system that was in place could not inhibit many labor leaders' desires to attain independent leadership for their unions. In the late 1950s, railway men had been strongly repressed by then president Adolfo Lopez Mateos who ordered a military occupation of the national railway headquarters *Ferrocarriles Nacionales de Mexico*. Thousands of railways worker organizers were incarcerated, including, communist leaders such as Valentin Campa and Demetrio Vallejo. Even the Mexican internationally acclaimed muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros was incarcerated for organizing and leading, along with journalist Filomeno Mata Alatorre, a Committee for the Freedom of trade union's political prisoners. The teachers' unions too, had been repressed in a similar way with the incarceration of leader Othon Salazar. In 1962, former supporter of populist President Lazaro Cardenas and agrarian organizer Ruben Jaramillo was murdered with his wife in the state of Morelos by the Mexican army. In 1965, organized medical workers were also repressed. These are not the only instances of discontent preceding the emergence of the emblematic student movement of 1968, labor and student uprisings occurred frequently in other parts of the country from the 1940s till the 1960s. Even though this is not an exhaustive review of that history, problematizing the supposed success of corporatism in the decades prior to the 1968 student massacre helps understand that the 1968 student movement was not a byproduct of student and

labor organizing in the 1968 global context alone. Instead of helping our analysis, this belief even served the government as a justification for the 1968 massacre and other actions conducted in the period known as “the dirty war”; basically, that communism was filtering from outside into Mexican society and that it was necessary to repress it.

On the other hand, the push for modernization and Mexico’s economic “miracle” of the 1940s and 1950s, derived in the great increment of student population. The construction of mega projects such as UNAM’s *Ciudad Universitaria* (Autonomous National University of Mexico –UNAM-’s *University City*) - one of the largest university campuses of Latin America-, within Mexico City and beyond, contributed to the configuration of the growing metropolis while congregating thousands of youth gaining higher education

degrees.

Given these conditions and because of the relevance of UNAM in Mexican student politics of all time, it is during these years that *youth* as a category for social analysis emerges with more relevance in relation to it’s role in politics and society at large than in relation to its apparent deviance in behavior. According to historian Javier Pensado (2012) to-date, student life bolds youth’s understandings regarding new cultures for politics. Thus, it is since the 1940s and 1950s, at least, that this new critical mass represented and continues to represent a wide range of political potentials.

In in the larger scale, the 1968 student demonstrations were part of a global student struggle (Pensado 2012); at the level of everyday politics or at the local level, the harassment and repression inflicted by the regime was felt with increasing number of school occupations by the police and the army, increasing cases of police brutality, and

provocateur infiltration. The impact of these surveillance and policing tactics and of the massacre of October 2nd, 1968, also mentioned by my interviewees, resonates in the consciousness of the generations to come. Here's a brief summary of the 1968 massacre:

> "On Wednesday, October 2 [1968], an estimated five thousand people gathered at the Plaza of Three Cultures in *Tlatelolco* [neighborhood] to discuss the appropriate measures students should take in the next stage of their movement… But as more people continued to arrive to the plaza, government-sponsored snipers opened fire with automatic weapons. Their bullets not only made their way to students peacefully demonstrating but also hit bystanders fleeing to the adjoining *Tlatelolco* housing project… Chaos rapidly unfolded, as the white gloved members of the Olympic battalion and with massive urban uprisings, fired indiscriminately, while a handful of armed students returned fire with pistols… undetermined number of people (in the hundreds) had been killed, thousands more injured or imprisoned" (Pensado 2012; p. 209)[12]

The tragic October 2nd occurred in the days before the 1968 Olympic Games celebrated in Mexico. Indignation rose when the Mexican government claimed that only between 40 and 50 people had died. To date, there is no complete account about the 1968 massacre. From the beginning, mainstream media supported the official narrative and the government archives were only declassified until 1998. Despite this and thanks to the work of independent journalists and former student activists documenting the case, the proportions of the massacre had always been presumed: the number of deaths were in the hundreds and not the few dozen as reported by then President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz and the mainstream media. The *Tlatelolco* massacre is one of the most, if not the most, emblematic sources of indignation for many Mexicans who recognize the historical liaison of corruption between the government (mainly of the PRI) and the mainstream media, as well we for people in universities.[13]

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[12] Olympic battalion refers to an armed guard that was deployed during *Olympic Games* of 1968 in Mexico.
[13] In the next chapter, see 'Fiesta de la Luz #YoSoy132' convocada en *Twitter* con el #Luz132'. Also, for more on this relationship between media and politics in the case of *Televisa* and the PRI, see my paper

According to Ortega (2013), despite the strong repression, student activism quickly reemerged in Mexico which shows the commitment of the student movement. After the 1968 student massacre, student activists would continue politically engaged through many forms of struggle, as academics, as writers and journalist, as sympathizers of new organizations, confronting the state from urban and/or rural guerrillas, among others. Nonetheless, Ortega also recognizes that, vestiges of social trauma and the search for the truth and memory about the 1968 massacre had been so impactful and produced such amount of literature that newer student mobilizations seemed overshadowed.

The impunity of these crimes and the ability of the authorities to keep the truth from the public, also contributed to the invisibility of general human rights violations in Mexico (Dutrénit Bielous, 2014). To some student activists, the only step forward was radicalization in the *guerrilla* struggle; hiding in the mountains or staying in the cities but further challenging the government (Walker 2013; Trevizo 2011). The government also hardened its approach by deploying a low intensity war known as the Mexican "Dirty War" of the 1960s and 1970s and even the 1980s. Throughout in the 1970s, hundreds of cases of forced disappearances went unpunished[14], the army had occupied several university campuses, and state surveillance increased with tactics such as the use of infiltrators and provocateurs, also known as *porros*. This is where the term *porro* becomes especially traumatic as it brings great indignation to student activists and

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presentation for LASA 2015 "Media, governments and social movements: negotiating media legislation in Mexico and Argentina" co-authored with Ivan Schuliaquer in 2015.

[14] Silvia Dutrénit Bielous (Dutrenit Bielous 2014) in "Rosendo Radilla v.The Mexican Government: Visibility and Invisibility of Crime and Its Reparation" comments the case of forced disappearance of 600 victims in the state of Guerrero, Mexico; a case that went unpunished and did not receive as much public attention. The case is emblematic due to its ruling against the government in 2009. The argument of the author centers invisibility in the impunity of the state and the great degree of secrecy with which these crimes against humanity went covert.

students in general. As the repression continued and expanded to broader sectors of the population, there was increasing discontent in the middle classes (Pensado, 2013). The middle class at the time was aligned with a variety of influences, these groups varied in ideology and orientation from the communist party to action-oriented catholic organizations (including those aligned with Jesuit and Liberation Theologians).

In June 10, 1970 in the area of *San Cosme* in Mexico City, not too far from Tlatelolco, students again protested in defense of their civil liberties constantly infringed by the state and in support of the labor movement. According to Ortega (2013), this mobilization started in the northern city of Monterrey, in the University of Nuevo Leon and later connected to student groups in Mexico City. In June 10th, 1971 more students were killed and forcibly disappeared in what became known as the *Massacre of Corpus Thursday* or the *Halconazo* (Falcon's deed). A paramilitary group with the name of *Halcones* (falcons) killed almost 120 people. This is another case of unjustified PRI-state violence against students that continues unpunished. To date, and in spite of judiciary attempts made as recent as 2009; a small group of judges in the Mexican National Supreme Court of Justice (SCJN for their name in Spanish) did not succeed to allege the accusation of Ex-President of Mexico Luis Echeverria Alvarez and Secretary of State Mario Moya y Palencia for genocide and forced disappearance in the *Massacre of Corpus Christy*.[15] One of my interviewees was a political prisoner who participates in every year's anniversary march of the *Halconazo/Massacre of Corpus Christy*. This part of our interview was off the recorder per his request. His story represents a double source of

[15] In Mexican law, the president and most high-rank public employees enjoy judiciary immunity for life unless appealed by the Supreme Court.

trauma as he was arrested for marching during this anniversary march in 2013[16].

Throughout the 1970s, the PRI went through strong lessening in legitimacy. Impunity and the use of violence became more visible affecting more sectors of the population. Discontent and upheaval was coming from both, conservatives and radicals and this included the middle class (Walker 2013). During this decade, the president in turn was Luis Echeverria Alvarez and while opposition continued to grow, it was very divided between radicals and moderates. Perhaps due to international pressures[17], this president intended to mend his role in order to enhance his relationship with the middle classes playing a double moral in public. It is since the 1940s and 1950s that universities like *Iberoamericana* were founded with deep commitment to social justice and action and according to the Jesuit values (Espinosa 2014).[18] According to historian Louise Walker (2013), this is why President Echeverria and other PRI representatives combined inhumane tactics of repression with amnesty to some political prisoners of the student movement and democratic openness in electoral politics. But the middle classes would continue affected by the inefficient public administration, corruption and the several economic crises that affected Mexico since 1976 to the present.

Another pivotal event in the 1980s was the devastating earthquake that ravaged

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[16] In my time doing this field work in Mexico City (2012-2015), I got to meet many protestors who had had been arrested. I will expand on this on chapter 4.

[17] In 1968, one of the first reactions was that of Mexican Nobel Prize Octavio Paz who resigned as Mexican Ambassador to India on October 3. Journalist and newspaper cartoonists in the United States, Canada, Europe and other Latin American countries condemned the actions taken by the Mexican government. In Copenhagen, Helsinki, Toronto, Hamburg, Grenoble, Caracas, Managua, Guayaquil, Bogota, Montevideo, the capitals of Guatemala and Panama activists organized protests demonstrations in public plazas and in front of Mexican embassies asking the public not to attend the Olympic Games in Mexico that year (Pensado, 2013; 210-212).

[18] For more information about *Iberoamericana*'s commitment to student groups' political resistance in Mexico, especially during the 1968 mobilization and post-massacre solidarity efforts, consult "Jesuit student groups, the Universidad *Iberoamericana*, and political resistance in Mexico, 1913-1979" by David Espinosa.

Mexico City in September. The (lack of) response of the state had the effect of further discrediting the Mexican government and PRI regime in a number of ways (Collier, 1992; Eckstein 2001). According to political scientist Ruth Berins Collier, the regime was questioned because there was an absence of public institutional response in the media, the destruction in some parts of the city was devastating in many cases due to corruption in public infrastructure, there was too a very slow response in terms of victims' rescue, furthermore, due to the presence of international agencies, all of this was often criticized and made public also at the international level. Civil society organized in order to respond to the emergency. Collier (1992) argues that this mobilization showed Mexico City dwellers their capacity to organize and act stronger than the state could. According to Collier (1992), this organization was "autonomous from the government and tutelage free".

Indignation with the federal government began with the rescuing efforts but it continued when the reconstruction policy was made public. *The Plaza de las Tres Culturas* (Plaza of the Three Cultures) –same place where the 1968 student massacre had occurred-, hosted a new movement in the aftermath of the 1985 earthquake. This time it was neighborhood organizations fed-up with indignation when the government published an initiative to demolish the apartment complexes surrounding this plaza. This post-earthquake mobilization would be the first most effective attempt to overthrow the PRI in the 1988 electoral contest. A new political party was formed out of this juncture, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Allegedly, the PRI committed fraud in the presidential elections to the PRD through a mysterious computer system failure (Collier 1992; Guillermoprieto 1995). The new PRI President was Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the

same character personalized in paper masks by the students of the *Ibero* protests in May 11, 2012.

The student movement also collaborated in the post-earthquake mobilizations that eventually led to the emergence of PRD. For instance, political scientist Kathleen Bruhn (2008) studies three groups strongly involved in this process: the *Asamblea the Barrios* (Neighborhood Assembly, AB), *Antorcha Popular* (Popular Torch), and the *Frente Popular Francisco Villa* (Popular Front Francisco Villa, FPFV). The latter being a student and neighborhood movement that began with the earthquake. Students of the school of political science allowed 3000 neighbors of UNAM's campus to stay and find refuge at their department building after the earthquake. The FPFV is an organization that continues to exist and was one of the groups that pre-dated #YoSoy132 and coexisted with the movement forming interesting relations that will be discussed later chapters.

In 1999, the UNAM president declared that tuition would be raised from $20 mx peso (about 1 dollar) to $150 dollars per semester. A student movement emerged with the CGH (*Consejo General de Huelga* or the General Strike Council). This movement declared that the students had been key part of the social revolutions of the 20th century and for that reason, they had the right to free tuition and political autonomy. Indeed, "Universidad Autónoma y gratuita" (*translation* Autonomous and cost-free University) is the most emblematic protest chanting of UNAM students. This mobilization resisted an almost yearlong student strike. Some of the members of #YoSoy132 came from this mobilization and were again mobilized in 2012. One of them described to me her role marching in one of the last marches (which were more repressed) with #YoSoy132 as follows:

> Marching, I could find my old friends from the CGH *(UNAM's Consejo General de Huelga/ translation: General Strike Council),* from 15 years ago, we would regroup and continue chatting…we stayed at the back end of the crowd, walking much slower because we wanted the families to go first, we could guess when the police would be coming… we knew all the signals… they were coming for the witch-hunt.

What's enduring in the politics of #YoSoy132?

Many of the student movements that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s continued and some of them were contemporary of #YoSoy132 in 2012, especially through graduate students or junior faculty who joined the movement after the first rally. It would be difficult for both #YoSoy131 students of *Ibero,* coming from middle and upper middle-class sectors to coincide or agree with students of UNAM and other public universities –and *vice versa*- who come from backgrounds of long-term moderate and radical left-wing organizing and social and economic differences. Dissent is a natural condition for these people to engage together in politics but dissent itself is the political condition.[19] Prejudgment and stereotyping was in everyday conversations; it was equally difficult for students across a fragmented city and student body to unlearn this. Without everybody's presence and the premise of horizontality and the avoidance of leadership, this movement would not have existed. On the other hand, this division among the #YoSoy132 and the groups that were formed in the "old left" or older student organizing along with the absence of leadership was often seeing as a challenge and even an obstacle for organizing efforts. Most groups decided to compromise at least during assemblies and actions in order to move forward with creativity, passion, and an action-oriented focus.

[19] This idea of dissent will be further analyzed in its relationship with the subjective paths through militancy as experienced by my interviewees in the next chapter.

The changes between the old and the new PRI would be minimal if we take into account the ways in which what has been called the "political class" of the PRI portrayed student demonstrations both in the 1960s and in May 2012. The nicknames, *revoltosos* (troublemakers) and *porros,* are words that mean "thugs for hire" or "agent provocateurs" (Pensado 2013; p. 2). Just like in May 11th, 2012, pejorative names such as *porros* and *acarreados* have been used by politicians as a way to repress dissent and stigmatize youth who oppose the status quo. According to Pensado (2013), even after the 1968 student massacre, the words *porro* and *acarreado* continued to justify state violence against youth led protestors. As we have seen, the terms *porros* and *acarreados* did not help control the situation for the PRI when applied to the students of the private Jesuit Iberoamericana University. Nonetheless, name calling continued to be used in the course of 2012 when images of members of the black bloc nick-named later by media as "*anarcos*" (pejorative word for anarchist) would serve the purpose of criminalization of protest and youth on December 1st, 2012. This will be one of the objectives of chapter four.

According to this historical analysis of the student movement in Mexico, divisions between students have been part of the student culture in the city since the 1960s or even before. These divisions are part of every individual's political *ethos* and identity.

Conclusion: How can the analysis of subjectivity help in the analysis of social movements?

What was the context of Mexican youth at the time when the #YoSoy132 movement emerged? How did these new activists frame their movement, their political engagement? Does *#YoSoy132* movement fit within the contemporary current of anti-authoritarian politics? What was the context of Mexican youth at the time when the #YoSoy132

movement emerged? How did these new activists frame their movement, their political engagement? In this chapter, I discussed the public perception of youth during the emergence of the movement nationally, globally, and historically. I then presented a theoretical discussion which is more focused on the wave of social movements at the time. In the process, I discovered that the public perception interacts with that of the interviewees self-perception. This realization couldn't have been possible without the methodology used during my fieldwork, a combination of participant-observation, documentary research, and semi-structured interviews.

What is well done and what is not is an interpretation of the subject-observer. This is why a subjective view regarding political agency is important. Mexican anthropologist and *youthologist* Rossana Reguillo, defines subjectivity as the ways in which the subject produces a vision or interpretation of a fact (Reguillo 1996). Thus, what grounds our knowledge and interpretations of reality will definitely affect our emotions. These are affections that will open new possibilities for action; this can be understood as an expansion of the individual's agency. According to philosopher Jacques Rancière (2009), subjective experiences include intricate processes of self-ownership and alienation, activity and passivity and an opposition between the collective and the individual.

The hardships of youth in my opening sentence "Youth in Mexico (and elsewhere) are at the forefront of social change and most often, endure in a counter-hegemonic role" Are not only in terms of the human rights crises presented as evidence of my arguments in this dissertation, it represents will be backed with more evidence in the following chapters. The point of this chapter was to locate youth in context for urban

Mexico, at least, and more so for Mexico City where I conducted most of my field work.

While maintaining the focus on the case of #YoSoy132, my strategy for the writing of this chapter is a flow between the context in the world of Mexican youth and the context in the world of global youth. For this global youth is constantly considered through the academic analysis and international media, therefore it had to be more present in the theoretical discussion. This is because so many academics and media sources believed that the #YoSoy132 was the Mexican Spring, an e-revolution, etc. As much as this is a meaningful part of the story, it was my priority to show how that was interpreted by the very movement participants, hence my persistence one the subjective experience.

There is an intergenerational analysis that I did not include in this chapter but will be touched on in the next one. However, it could explain the decision to include two parts of the contextual analysis of youth in Mexico: one that considers the very years of criminalization of youth experienced by #YoSoy132 activists during the war on drugs, the Atenco repression, and the role of the media covering up cases of extreme police brutality such as that of the *News Divine*. The latter helped to situate the commitments made by the students in #YoSoy132 but wouldn't have supported the dimension that this movement took by involving hundreds of thousands of students across the country. With this chapter, I argue that the huge dimension that this movement achieved was, of course helped by the communication technologies but more, at the subjective level by evoking historic memory which was also at the core of the initial grievance directly against the *Ibero* students when they were called *porros* by PRI politicians and mainstream media. I marked this two moments of analysis with the attack against youth's identity by the

government officials, the terms *nini* and *porro*.

Based on the analysis made so far, if there are no plans like Arditi argues (2013), we can locate this movement in an era of post-hegemony where ideology is not as relevant. This is yet, another reason why the lack of definition of the movement was not an impediment for it to exist. Political philosopher John Beasley-Murray argues that ideologies had never been relevant and hegemony has never exited (Beasley-Murray and Rodríguez 2010). Nonetheless, my argument is not that ideology does not exist; it exists because it matters to people. However, it is a relative choice because the actors' political *ethe* and the actions taken upon vary in hybrid subjective understandings and based on what is practical according to the circumstances. In a more hybridized understanding, concepts such as *decentralized leadership* and *horizontality* might have been both a global influence and something that can emerge spontaneously. They are both challenging and helpful in connecting people across differences.

CHAPTER 3: Youth empowerment and creativity
Si no ardemos juntos, quién iluminará esta obscuridad? (If we don't burn together, who will bring light to this darkness?)

Introduction:

In the previous chapter I analyzed youth agency in the city and in the process of fighting over political subjectivities with a historical rival, the government represented by the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI). In this chapter, I took subjective perspectives from my interview data to look at the characteristics that made #YoSoy132 a unique mobilization, a mobilization that continues to be impossible to ignore; I argue that these characteristics are creativity and innovation, which will also be some of the #YoSo132's legacies. #YoSoy132 surprised and penetrated the public imaginary with renewed forms of mobilization, it influenced a generation and the meanings of 'Mexican youth', it also propagated enthusiasm for mobilization and the belief that Mexican *history could be changed,* that the youth (subjectively and collectively) could change history. These new forms of mobilization include a renovated public life for citizens -particularly, voters and young people-,[1] and the emergence of a networked youth that extends across class and the across the great Mexico City[2] plus other cities and countries. It was, a new critical

[1] As explained in Chapter 2, YoSoy132's gains happened mainly in the realm of cultural citizenship and not in the realm of procedural democracy. I will explain why this is a relevant clarification in the study of movements such us #YoSoy132, #15M, #OccupyWallStreet, etc.
[2] This dissertation considers the production of space -social practices and material conditions, see (Dutrenit Bielous 2014) in Mexico City through the perspectives of the activists before and after the movement #YoSoy132. Students marched and engaged in political organizing sometimes despite long and costly commutes; the eruption of this movement broke away with a deep-rooted divide between private and public universities whose thousands of students engaged in a social movement, effectively, for at least three months.

mass or a new *public*[3] to incorporate the creative youth's agency (the youth's sense of freedom and independence materialized in creative projects that I will describe later in this chapter) in the media; this type of agency and political engagement was enacted in person -in a *peace room*, in the streets, or the *plazas* and was also represented in the media. It created repertoires of contention that would expand throughout Latin America and in other parts of the world.

Given the importance that this dissertation gives to youth as a social category, this chapter includes a very brief analysis of the field of *youth studies* and how youth movements like #YoSoy132 have changed this field of Latin American scholarship. This field is strongly based on analysis of the 'youth' as a social category and as agents of social change. Youth is commonly analyzed from the perspective of precarity (or negative agency) and, more recently, from the perspective of social change or positive agency[4]. To illustrate how this *positive agency* evolved with #YoSoy132, I follow with a section of interview data and field work from key moments in the history of this movement, particularly, the moments of enthusiasm. I identify this period in these youths

[3] Rity Lukose (Lukose 2009) studies youth from perspectives of gender, globalization, nationalism, colonialism and consumption in everyday life India, particularly in the Indian state of Kerala. Lukose explores "political public" facing youth groups necessarily excluding other youth groups, in this case, young women. The YoSoy132, on the other hand, is known as proponent or *vanguard* in politics of inclusion and radical democracy -which was a sincere structural commitment, temporarily and somewhat successful, still present in the bountiful manifestations of art and journalistic and activist work made by its members everywhere in the country. Nonetheless, my fieldwork showed nuances of sexism and urban-to-rural exclusions, often exacerbated by inaccessibility to the structures of the movement, lack of economic resources and transportation, and different political and social perspectives in everyday interactions between individuals and groups of activists. The latter, ultimately confirmed the need to rely on the *youth studies'* framework and I attempt to explain why in this chapter.

[4] Nonetheless and according to Rossana Reguillo (Reguillo Cruz 2017), this divide in the academic analysis of youth is artificial as her research with youth involved in organized crime shows, young people can move *from precarity to empowerment* in the everyday life.

as the period of expansion of political agency, and further, a liberation of the subjective and the collective levels in *public life* and even in cultural expressions of citizenship.

Youth had been stereotyped as "disengaged" spectators[5] of political life and, here, I attempt to illustrate their positioning as defiant political actors, strategists, or even "insurgents".[6] [7] In order to do that, this chapter analyzes key moments of political engagement and what was called by many #YoSoy132 members as "the spark" (*la chispa YoSoy132*). For this chapter, I intentionally stop the analysis in the moment of the electoral loss which represents a change in the direction or *framing* of the movement and which will be analyzed in future chapters. At the end of this chapter, I will draw final conclusions on the above-mentioned legacies of #YoSoy132.

"The spark" was often defined by the students with examples or stories behind some of the master actions of #YoSoy132, memorable situations that they orchestrated, enacted, witnessed, emotions that they experienced, and how these were also internalized by movement members and supporters. Interviews, the media, and participant

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[5] In the Introduction and in Chapter 2, the term of spectator was also analyzed through the work of French philosopher Jaques Ranciére. Basically, spectator is not necessarily passive receptor of information. The spectator's biases and body experience are critical at processing the information they receive.

[6] "Insurgent" is a term that I had attempted to define in the context of these movements. Rossana Reguillo's 2017 book (Op. Cit.) presents a working definition of "insurrectionary subjectivities". Although, Reguillo's definition relies on the situationalist approach, it adheres strongly to the Mexican youth reality. For Reguillo, insurrectionary subjectivities are "…raising the anchor from the dominating systemic experiences and perceptions subjectively normalized and internalized in order to bring or open room for other forms of what is possible; dissident subjectivities call on other towards a different space, and from there, it articulates a different we/us" p. 86.

[7] In future analyses of my research, I will present newspaper data as evidence of how the Mexican media and many politicians portrayed the youth as apolitical or even as unemployed, school-deserters with the infamous term "*nini*". In this dissertation, the term *porro* explains the eruption of #YoSoy132 but falls behind to explain the overall unease in young Mexican people resulting from their denigration in public discourse, which in many cases justified criminalization and extreme violence against young bodies in Mexico.

observation notes show how #YoSoy132's actions were 'well' perceived across a broad social spectrum. The marches and public acts were often joined by people of different ages, diversely body-abled, educational and non-educational institutions and groups, many artists and performers, peasant activist groups and also a few workers' unions[8]. As a researcher, I perceived general [and personal] joy to march with the #YoSoy132. As one of my interviewees put it "those marches were a celebration/una fiesta", everywhere one could look, the eyes and the imagination found clever homemade signs, painted cloth banners that needed to be held by a dozen people due to their dimensions, people in costumes, poets, walking street theater, musicians, etc., and everything, with a political commentary and even political satire. #YoSoy132's actions of the presidential debate and electoral monitoring were massive in scope and demonstrated a "yes, we can do it" of concrete impactful actions to their constituents and several publics involved.

Nonetheless, even today, the #YoSoy132 has been interpreted as an Internet movement and some would even say that the Internet was that *spark*. Because the actions analyzed in this chapter were strongly supported by Internet technology, it is necessary to also analyze the relationship between the empowered subject and this newer current of activism without centering mobilization or political engagement around a delusional idea about the "power" of the Internet. The Internet is a tool for [i.e. social movement] spreading of ideas and the communication of actions, it is also a repository of social movement activity and an incredible research resource. I argue, however, that it does not

[8] Although at the surface, this movement promoted connection, collaboration, and participatory processes across difference and intersections of identity, further critical analysis needs to be done about relationships among groups of students across gender, class, and ethnicity. The student movement privileged young students' voices; for instance, workers unions and indigenous groups often had presence in marches and sometimes in major assemblies but had no vote in the YoSoy132 assembly system.

replace the lived experience, the in-person networks, the ritualistic experience of social movement or collective action, further explained with the idea of "the bodies occupying the plaza" which characterizes most social movements since the Arab Spring (2011); additionally, a gullible use of the internet could also be counterproductive for social movements. The Internet has turned into another contested space for human rights advocacy defending privacy and the security of the individual.

In this chapter, I talk about an expansion of agency in the student activist whereby the Internet helped as a *public* facing space for appropriation, liberation, independence; but this liberation happens in the physical space first with bodies in the plazas, in the streets, and also with interpersonal relationships; from my experience seeing these activists at work, I believe that the *spark* is a kind of ideological infatuation along the lines of social movement theories of *framing* whereby a collectivity engages cognitively in diagnosis, prognosis, and motivational frames for action (Noakes and Johnston 2005). Furthermore, it is the enactment of subversion or the enactment of movement objectives that makes the Internet reporting of events liberating (not Facebook, nor Twitter *per se*).[9] My interviewees recognized the importance of the Internet but also expressed reservations about the social networks, told stories about challenges they encountered, and there is plenty of scholarship that argues against utilizing the social networks without caution (Morozov 2011).[10] The #YoSoy132 activists learned this the hard way as they

[9] An argument can be made that movements like the YoSoy132 cannot be disassociated from communication theory and this is due to the irrefutable preponderance of communications in contemporary life (Rovira, n.d.; Reguillo Cruz 2017; Reguillo 2012). Nonetheless, my analysis is more concerned with the subjective lived experience (be this online and/or offline) of the activist which is the focus of this dissertation not too much emphasis of what happens in the cyberspace.
[10] For future analysis, theorist Michele Foucault (Foucault 1982) analyzed different types of "technologies," classifying them as technologies of production, technologies of sign systems, technologies of power, and technologies of the self. Foucault argues that these technologies

faced police infiltration, harassment through their social networks with cases of extra-judiciary arrests, and even their websites were often hacked. I found numerous ways in which activists of this particular movement dynamically and creatively opted in-and-out or "interfaced" the Internet communications for the purpose of disseminating ideas and organizing and/or for internal coordination while maintaining the their most strategic collective actions in person (or offline).

In sum, I argue that the success of #YoSoy132 was an action-centered mobilization that allowed for more creative, dynamic use of communications and performativity among a wide and dynamic network of liberated, new -and young- political agents motivated *with transformative ideals* of crossing political, socio-economic and cultural barriers-constraints and changing a century of Mexican history.

Juvenólogos (Hispanic youth analysts)[11]: contemporary analyses of the young political subject in Latin America.

How did #YoSoy132 create such impact, how did it succeed at influencing popular political engagement? Conceptually, why and how does a young person become militantly political? During the time I conducted fieldwork, I encountered a field of study

almost never function separately. The individual may use the Internet as a "technology of the self" affecting their own means of movement and behavior. However, these technologies are also technologies of power through which individuals are exposed to domination and objectification.

[11] My emphasis on the *juvenólogos* ("youthologists") is intentional and strategic; intentional because I owe part of this research and dissertation to their work which guided me during my fieldwork and during the longer writing period of this dissertation, it is also intentional as it complies with the expectations of my doctoral field of seeking local knowledge and scholarship. It is worth noting that, the naming and the collaborations of the juvenólogos can be traced, at least, back 1998 through a position paper entitled Entre-Vistas: la juventud de los juvenólogos (*transl.* "Inter-Views: the youth of the youthologists") which defines a group of Latin American and Iberian authors born in the 50s and 60s who have dedicated their careers to writing about and with the Latin American youth by centering oral histories with "personal, social, political, academic, and institutional contexts" of youth (Feixa and Urteaga n.d.).

that I had not found in the United States, *estudios de juventud* or *youth studies*.[12] The most prominent authors of this field in México, most of them cultural anthropologists, sociologists, or political philosophers, were not just doing research in the subject, they were also highly involved as scholar-activists with the student groups that created the #YoSoy132. I was able to study with most of them during my fieldwork, they helped me understand the concept of youth from their perspective; they tended to describe #YoSoy132 as an example of the conflation of energy and context and believed that the youth are a central force of change in public life -although youth are often oppressed, harassed, and living in conditions of precarity.

This field informs my dissertation because it explores *youth* as a social condition and from a cultural perspective, it seeks to redeem the role of young persons as agents of change, and not only as vulnerable to social changes. What happened in Mexico City and in the rest of the country during the time of YoSoy132 renewed public perspectives of youth and transformed subjective notions about being young. In this section, I aim at

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[12] Not necessarily contained or translated into the interdisciplinary field of *aging studies*, youth Studies has also been a popular area of studies in Southeast Asia and South Asia. For instance, Indian-American Anthropologist Ritty Lukose wrote *Liberalization's Children: Gender, Youth and Consumer Citizenship in Globalizing India* (Lukose 2009); in it, Lukose explores youth's self-fashioning and the influence of Globalization in the inter-generational struggle. The author explores the concept of *public*, something that I also analyze in this dissertation. Based in Australia, human geographer Craig Jeffrey conducts youth studies in the context of globalization and new forms of protest (Jeffrey 2013). For Jeffrey, the 2010 and 2011 student protests in Middle East demonstrate that (often unemployed) youth are not "ineffective political actors". Jeffrey analyzes youth activism and contributes to contesting the notion that youth do not pursue effective politics; this is another argument I analyzed in Chapter 2. From Jeffrey's discipline, the movement of people (human geography) consists in a non-localized perspective and changing existing structures, something that youth is capable of doing through the influence of and access to globalization as well as the possibilities of transcending cultural particularistic identities (i.e. religion) (Pp. 145-146). I argue that this is especially relevant in the present era of intense Internet communication.

responding to the afore mentioned questions (what made this movement unique and what made it successful?) through my learning of the theoretical approximations of *youth studies* and see how these apply to data I gathered in the field with #YoSoy132.

I will start by offering a few of the most salient premises of youth studies. For example, cultural anthropologist Alfredo Nateras, makes a distinction between youth, a category, and the youth, the individuals; the first is referring to a historical construction located in time and the second refers to different forms of appropriating the concept of youth. In one of his articles, Nateras illustrates this with a linguistic formulation and says "for example, there's the troublesome youth and there's the youth of a country" (Nateras Domínguez 2004). Youth studies draws a line with the Birmingham school for cultural studies, moving away from the idea of youth subcultures as a form of resistance and arguing that local-knowledge must be valued with non-western perspectives of transcultural youth practices (Nilan and Feixa 2006).

Of course, not all the *juvenólogos* published works about #YoSoy132 but most of them had opinions about its emergence. Since the 1990s, these scholars had been analyzing groups of youth such as the Honduran Maras or MS13 (anthropologist Alfredo Nateras since the 1990s), *cholos* (gangs) and U.S.-Mexico border graffiti (sociologist Manuel Valenzuela also in the 1990s), the Latin American and Catalan punk and migrant-gang scenes (anthropologist, Carles Feixa 1998) , and political agency of disenchantment -with the state, with society- (anthropologist Rossana Reguillo 2012 and 2017). In personal communication with Rossana Reguillo, she often argued about #YoSoy132, that "the youth did not awake from their "sleep" -like the media argued-, that they had always been aware of their position in this country [Mexico]". Having

worked many youth groups in the entire country and as a senior scholar, Reguillo is always concerned about the young victims of feminicide, about the young victims of drug related violence, about the young unemployed, the youth who don't have access to education, the youth who are criminalized, young activists who go missing, etc. Reguillo is, perhaps, one of the most dedicated scholars of this field to analyze the #YoSoy132.

Carles Feixa's *De Jóvenes, Bandas, y Tribus* (Feixa 1998) (translation: *Of Youth, Gangs, and Tribes*), is an iconic book in Hispanic literature of youth studies, its analysis draws a line in the field by differentiating between youth groups that respond to the juncture of their times and those who influence the juncture of their times. This dissertation is a case of youths who may have started as a rapid response but quickly turned into an influence of their time. To clarify, the youths in this movement were not simply mirroring the status quo, not even, other contemporary movements such as Occupy, the Arab Spring, or the Chilean penguins; YoSoy#132's aim was to change the democratic life of their country and to *reclaim* the role of youths as agents of change, hence, their emphasis in historical responsibility. Especially seen in retrospective, Yosoy132 continues to be regularly featured in the newspapers, almost ten years after their first appearance. This movement's influence in electoral politics is irrefutable and the expectations of citizens' political engagement today are very different from before because #YoSoy132 broke with many stereotypes and social divisions and turned this breakout process into something public through the social networks and through their work in collective action.

According to Carles Feixa, the classification and fragmentation of groups in modernity is a strategy of social control (Feixa 1998). Thus, the fragmentation of young

bodies into different schools in different neighborhoods, with different social class, race, ethnicity, gender, fashion, political affiliation, hobbies, sports' teams, and even different levels of academic performance (or intellectuality) in a city of 20 million people, might have been a way to keep them away from agency and from organizing around youth related issues.[13] At the core of these multiple fragmentations is Feixa's idea of *dependability* and *agency*. According to Feixa, the longer young people depend on living to the expectations and parameters of the "adult world", the longer they will be dependent and controlled. Moving away from these expectations promotes thinking outside the box and increased agency.[14]

Patricia Oliart and Carles Feixa (Oliart and Feixa 2012) argue that the youth have been the target of deep economic and social crises of the 1980s as well as increasing urban violence. Mostly, violence and repression impacted the ways in which the youth practiced citizenship; a phenomenon that has been called 'negative agency'. Similarly, these authors define the effects of tactics of social control over the young population. According to these authors, soft and hard approaches of social control are imposed through tactics that vary from media restrictions and manipulative information to state violence and repression. Oliart and Feixa (2012) point out that the latest perspectives on

[13] Additionally, difference is not necessarily division or rivalry (Alvarez and Escobar 1998).
[14] Was (*or Is)* social media [in 2012] a realm where young people found independence, separate from the "adult world"? I will get back to this idea in a later part of my analysis. It is possible that the feeling of independence in the social networks played a similar role to the feeling of independence taking responsibility for the history of their country, out in the streets, fighting the police, the institutions of the government, fighting corruption, etc. Clearly, trespassing the stereotype and in some cases, stigma, of being young in Mexico.

youth studies focus less on negative vulnerabilities of youth and more on "the creative energy, critical practices and alternative lifestyles fostered by young people" (p. 130). [15]

One more aspect in which youth positioned themselves as effective political actors is through their visibility in the public. The social networks did help providing visibility to protests while affective empathy in the broader public was produced by the first months of the movement's actions. #YoSoy132 touched the feelings of many Mexicans that Spring and Summer of 2012 in the public space through marches, creative protest paraphernalia and street performance as well as through community-based projects (often referred to by students of public universities as "brigadas"[16]). Thus, the youth reached enormous visibility in the streets, in the physical space. I would reiterate that the YoSoy132 movement did not start with a viral YouTube video but instead, with a school protest that made the PRI presidential candidate hide in the bathroom, publicly on camera[17]. What came after was an appropriation of space in the media but it did not come before the reclaiming of the physical space. It was a counter-discourse, a rejection to the common description of youth

[15] In the conclusions of this dissertation, I would like to return to this analysis to express that it may not be possible to separate perspectives between negative agency and "creative" agency or independence. As we will explore through this dissertation about subjectivities in youth activism in the #YoSoy132, the interviewees experienced both the vulnerabilities of being young in systemic injustice, vulnerability of being the target of state violence, and the autonomy, creative agency of political ownership and self-affirmation.

[16] Community outreach brigades or *brigadeos*, better explained as canvassing with information about #YoSoy132 and other community related projects including but not limited to, solar panels and rain barrels. These projects often responded to localized immediate realities of the students and their relationship with the neighborhoods where their campuses are located. Not all #Yosoy132 members engaged in *brigadeos* but some of the students in public universities who also came from old school traditions of student mobilization organized and practiced *brigadeos*.

[17] As mentioned in previous chapters: The YouTube Video that everyone refers to when talking about this movement was by 131 Iberoamericana University students who held their school IDs on a video saying that they were "not porros" and that nobody paid them to be in the protest against Enrique Peña-Nieto. This video was the response to the PRI's allegations that the protestors were not *Iberoamericana* students.

protestors as rebels without a cause, or in this case, not as legitimate *Ibero* students, but as *porros*.[18] In this chapter I will explain another example of how this movement gained visibility in the physical space and before the social networks, which was the improvised march of May 24th in Reforma Avenue in Mexico City; where a rally had been planned with no more that 1500 people and 15,000 showed up making the multitude flow into the streets, marching towards the TV station, Televisa, whose media defamed them as *porros, revoltosos* (thugs for hire, troublesome*), apathetic, politically disengaged* (nini).

#YoSoy132 started its demise arguably in the Summer (two to three months after its inception) or later in the winter of 2012 (after a small fraction of the movement produced and promoted a telecommunications reform at the legislature). Would this demise be due to the influence of "experts" or "adults" from the political left fragmenting the struggle and moving it away from its initial *spark*? Is it due to a rather shallow or ephemeral unity or even fake relationships among participants? As we will see in later chapters, #YoSoy132 scattered over again in the face of loss of the presidential election and the toughening of state repression. However short its life span, #YoSoy132's visibility, its impacts on other young people, and its reclaimed identity, would change pre-existing dynamics of youth's sociability, even at the generational level, transcending individualistic subjectivities of the globalized paradigm (as we will see in the interviews that inform this chapter)[19]. In more concrete terms, the movement #YoSoy132 moved

[18] As explained in chapter 2, the term "*porro*" was used by the political campaign manager of the then presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto as a means for damage control following the protest event at Iberoamericana University. This term is historically charged with stigma, criminalization, and violence against youth at least since the dirty wars of the 1960s in Mexico (Pensado 2013).

[19] I had the pleasure of attending a 10-day training or working group with Alina Peña and Rossana Reguillo in Santiago, Chile 2016 around the concept of *interruption*, where, even if it's for short

away from historical structural social fragmentations by showing what creative youth could do in collectivity and produced a critical mass, a generation that continues to thrive into changing the national history -but with limitations, because a structural democratic or social transformation was not achieved.[20]

The #YoSoy132 youth includes but excludes, they made a statement of openness and coming together to defend themselves as youth in horizontal power dynamics. But there were people who believed in traditional notions of leadership; "leaders" in the many groups involved convened but remained separate. I argue that this was at the core of this movement's disintegration.[21]

How did it happen?

Now I will focus on presenting evidence that can support the analysis above. In the following section, I present key moments of collective enthusiasm across political, socio-economic and cultural barriers in which the interviewees contextualize their own subjective empowerment. The key points illustrated in this section are: a) *Where were*

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periods of time, people engage in unprecedented struggles or artistic projects that defy the status quo. For more, see *situationists* perspectives.

[20] In my educational philosophy and following the thought of the juvenólogos, to believe that youth are apathetic, disengaged spectators of reality, is a necessary biased assumption to make people believe that changing the world or the above-mentioned social fragmentations are or have never been indissoluble.

[21] Jaque al Rey -14 de abril 2016- Francia, ¿una nueva primavera? El movimiento #NuitDebout. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXw08-EXrfg Rompeviento TV, April 14th, 2016. YoSoy132 activist and professor Sergio Moissen argued in a TV show about the French #Nuit Debout: "en Mexico, tuvimos el YoSoy132, los jóvenes opinaban que los trabajadores no eran un sujeto… por venir de un sector más de clase media, no se identificaban como jóvenes precarios, trabajadores" (In Mexico, we had the YoSoy132, the youth thought that workers were not a subject… because they were coming from the middle classes, the youth did not identify themselves as precarious, workers). It was interesting to watch this political commentary show; the academic-activists also mentioned that these *plazas movements* should not find refuge in "the aesthetics of failure and the impossibility of tangible objectives". Many social movement theorists also focus on the outcomes of social movements. These are all very pertinent questions regarding YoSoy132 and other social movements but do not always offer a cultural analysis.

you May 11; b) The 'viralization' of the first video; c) The first meetings of the 'Coordinadora' and other groups; d) The first public demonstrations and *feeling* the need to participate; e) Encountering multitude organizing in the meeting of *Las Islas*; f) *La Fiesta de la Luz* (The Celebration of Light); g) *The Presidential Debate*: the first and only organized in a *public* and democratic fashion; h) *Electoral monitoring*: last moments of enthusiasm. This list of key moments tells stories of agency and complex organizing with which #YoSoy132 will contribute to understanding flows of affections in the analyses of *movements of the plazas*.

First key moment*: The May 11th protest at Iberoamericana University, the students and their contexts before #YoSoy132.*

Within students' territory: Esteban[22] was student of communications at *Ibero*, and talks about the planning of Peña's black Friday, he said that *"Peña's security team was checking students, faculty, and staff's car trunks at the school entrance. This team had relieved the university's security which was against the protocol. They were examining backpacks, talking on radios, looking at students with face of "sospechosismo""*[23]According to Esteban, who had always worked with digital marketing, "*a compañera and friend from school had created a fakebook event called 'Visita de los Presidenciales'* (The Presidentials' visits) *where she once said that we should be confronting them because we were chavos* (slang for youth), *because we can, and because it's fun",* this Facebook post "*became a mantra"*, added Esteban. According

[22] I'm using fake names to maintain confidentiality and privacy of my interviewees.
[23] "Sospechosismo" or suspicion-ism. I define this recurrent, made-up word as a relative of conspiracy theories; *sospechosismo* worked as a movement deterrent during my three years in this research project. Sospechosismo can be simply defined as the belief that someone is working as a spy to someone else.

to Esteban, there were three major groups who organized the *Ibero* protest: the communications students who printed former PRI president Salinas's facemasks for everyone to wear; the history students who wrote and printed papers and made DVD's documenting the history of the PRI. Another group were students from the departments of political science and international relations who dyed a fountain that decorates *Ibero*'s main quad in color red to symbolize Peña's violent repression in Atenco. One of the most noticeable signs read "we do not forget". Esteban added that these groups made about thirty students and that the other 150-200 students who showed up were just supporters. Esteban added that due to this protest "I recovered faith in a lot of my compañeros (colleagues) and I was extremely excited!"

Within Iberoamericana University or (Ibero), *there were expectations and surprises*, Gilberto, an academic activist who was teaching at *Ibero* and very involved with the students, said that the morning of May 11th, 2012 was a little tense before Peña's arrival. His first clarification was that "what happened at *Ibero* was not a surprise for the people who were organizing the action, what was a surprise was its expansive scope. "Some of us knew about a few who were organizing but did not know how many there were; even Peña knew that students were preparing something… and the even Salinas masks were cut-out print outs [used during the *Ibero* protest] downloadable from Twitter". The event turned out to be dramatic because it was planned for Peña to have dialogue with the students, and according to Gilberto, the students were planning to *rebuke* ("increparlo") him about his repression to the Atenco peasants during his time as governor in Mexico State. According to Gilberto, not all the students were against Peña, some groups were pro-Peña and had been planning to wear wigs with similar hair style to

that of the candidate. However, Peña infuriated the bigger group of pro-Atenco students when, towards the end of the event, he used an old-school PRI comment saying that he "would again use the force of the state to restore peace"[24] and this made the masses flow into (and not out of) the auditorium, making Peña's security and logistics plan fail to the point of making Peña flee through the University President's office, cross campus behind scenes and momentarily hide in the restrooms near the exit's parking lot. The YouTube videos showing these events rapidly, went viral.

It was *a day like any other* for Dante, who had graduated from a private college-university and was studying a master's degree while teaching some classes at a private high school. To tell us how and where he was on May 11th, he said: "Well, it was a weird thing. During some of the time before the #YoSoy132 happened, we -my roommates and I- were very worried about what was happening in the country because the elections were approaching, etc. And somehow, we were looking forward to doing something. We were very well informed about everything related to the elections, the day when things happened at *Ibero University* (May 11th, 2012), I was teaching classes at a high school and the other teachers who were in the social networks started commenting, and that's how I got into it…"

"I was at school during Peña's Black Friday"- said 'Sonia' who was a college student majoring in media production at the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM, the most important university in Mexico and a public institution, also geographically distanced from *Ibero*). What happened that day did change Sonia's career

[24] It worth noting that former Mexican President Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz made a very similar comment after the Tlatelolco student massacre of 1968. This student massacre continues to be a source of collective trauma.

decisions, her relationship with the *public*, and her professional and personal purposes. She said to have experienced surprise and that she reacted with something she called "theorization". *Theorization,* according to Sonia, refers to *theorizing online,* a need for most people who no longer believe what television says, to find out the truth because "everyone knows that the TV doesn't tell the whole truth" -Sonia clarified. Sonia argued, by connecting to different people and seeing different accounts of what the TV says, people are able to *theorize* the truth. The candidates did not go to every university campus to present their campaigns, "remember that Peña felt safer at a private university like *Ibero*" she added. Thus, everyone who saw the video of Peña, the PRI presidential candidate, hiding in the bathroom on campus [*Ibero* students' territory] and fleeing in apparent fear because the students' voices cornered him with claims of social justice was in itself a heroic act and many would have liked to be there -Sonia added.

Nonetheless it is important to note that, from the perspective of the activists, Peña's black Friday was not the beginning of #YoSoy132. It was the coming together of a collectivity that felt directly interpellated by misinformation and the stereotyping of *youth* what created an impulse to take action and get organized to reclaim their identity as legitimate students. Thinking again about *framing theory* of social movements, it is safe to argue that these situations and the impacts they had in the emotions and rationale of the Mexican youth, made the *motivational frame* that gives a collective an emotionally loaded reason to get organized.[25]

[25] Antonio Melucci (as cited in the Social Movements Handbook of Sociology of Emotions by Goodwin and Jasper 2006) defined the concept of "emotional investment" to say that *no cognition can happen without feeling*. This concept influenced the development of framing theory which originally was meant to assess rhetorical processes

Second key moment: Interpellation to the mainstream media, being heard, and positive agency.

In this section I am analyzing the YouTube video "131 Alumnos de la Ibero responden" (*transl.* 131 Students from Ibero respond), which had 1,259,021 views by May 14, 2012.[26]

Three days after Peña's "Black Friday" is when the above-mentioned video got published and went viral. The video was clever evidence of the falsity of mainstream media and PRI politicians' interpretations about student protestors as *porros;* the video denounced that this defamation was the result of politicians and mainstream media working together to minimize and criminalize dissent. Revealing that truth and owning it was the first moment of common purpose and solidarity that created the #YoSoy132 movement. This video opened things up from *Ibero* to everyone else and a new *young political subjectivity* starts here with the empowerment brought by active discovery, *theorizing*, and taking personal ownership. The video worked as a mirror for anybody who could see themselves in defense against the PRI and mainstream media's defamations. It also showed that it was possible to take ownership of the national political moment by taking over the presidential election; in the words of some people I interviewed "these elections were boring and depressing until the #YoSoy132 came". #YoSoy132 emerged as a creative, unique, and transformative mobilization that inspired Mexican citizens for the years to come. At this point the students didn't know that they were organizing a movement but they knew that they were shaking things up. How did

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by which frames resonated; with a renewed interest in emotions, frames could also be divided by three: diagnostic, prognostic and motivational.

[26] (*ALUMNOS DE LA IBERO LE RESPONDEN A PEÑA NIETO Y AL PRI* 2012)

they come up with the idea of organizing within *Ibero* and posting a YouTube video? Was it through the advice of an "adult" political or scholarly leader? Was it something that emerged in the social networks or was it an idea of a few student leaders? My interviewee, Esteban was one of the two *Ibero* students who organized, edited, and published the video.

In Esteban's words, there were *mixed emotions and right guesses*. Esteban's excitement about the protest at his school turned into anger when he decided to run a media coverage report of the event which, he said, showed to be partial and defamating towards the students. Esteban found that the most popular newspapers' headlights read "Success by Peña despite orchestrated boycott" (see Rincon 2015). Esteban was particularly disappointed when, that same day, he listened to a radio interview with a self-identified PRI supporter *Ibero* professor (keeping this name and title confidential) who said that those who protested had been "trained in all the Atenquista techniques". "Atenquista techniques!"[27], Esteban repeated this during the interview with emphasized disappointment. How could this *Ibero* professor demerit his own students while misidentifying the Atenco activists? - Esteban added. Later that day, Esteban recounts that there was a *tweet* that said something like "I'm proud of my *compañeros* (colleagues/classmates), and I am not *acarreado*"[28] which was retweeted and became popular among his network. Two days after that *tweet*, came to Esteban the idea of

[27] "Atenquista" is a made-up word or adjective. It would label something or someone as coming from Atenco, from the flower peasants who were beat-up, murdered, and violated by police brutality ordered by Enrique Peña Nieto while he was Governor of Mexico State. Atenco activists are non-violent but showed up in public demonstrations holding long peasant machetes stained with red paint as a way of provoking the public and bring the attention to their grievances. However, it is not the Atenco activists who self-describe their practices as "Atenquista techniques".

[28] Heard and paid by a political party, see also definition in Introduction.

making the video which he produced and edited with his girlfriend. They didn't know how this was going to evolve but the title of the video was "131 alumnos de la Ibero responden" (131 students from Ibero respond) and they had been debating whether or not to include the number "131". Esteban clarified that "actually, there were 132 students but someone asked to be taken out due to fear". Paraphrasing Rossana Reguillo, the youth's subjective experience is capable of swinging in and out of risk and vulnerability (Reguillo Cruz 2017). However, this video and its consequences brought more than risk to this youth, it brought them to a new subjectivity with positive agency, to a new perspective, and to ignite a major social movement. The students clicked "publish" by 11am and an hour later it was a national and then global trend. Nobody expected this consequence which might have made the student participants nervous. Esteban added that the script of the video demands the right to reply which, according to him, helped video participants' confidence and this was "another right guess".

Creativity in the Internet proliferated. Soon, dozens of YouTube solidarity-video-endorsements emerged sharing their identities as students, celebrities, etc. with statements against the PRI. As explained above, the opposition to the PRI existed prior to all of this and people had been "theorizing" for a while but nothing had *disrupted* the public like the *Ibero* protest and videos. According to Esteban, they had to behave in a functional way and stay focused when even their "professors who were also journalists were asking for interviews".

***Third key moment*:** The first meetings of the 'Coordinadora' and other groups;

The first assembly at *Ibero* happened by may 15th (four days after Peña's black Friday) and was organized by a couple of students from the International Relations and Political

Science program (not by the students who created the video). The *Ibero* students continued organizing and assembling, having meetings in classrooms after classes with the question, *now what do we do?* They thought of a more public action: they organized a walk out on May 23rd and this brought in a few students from other public and private universities. "Luis", an UNAM student of journalism came from Ecatepec, marched and met in person with some of the students who were on the video and also with those who organized the march.[29] "We walked together, it was friendly and calm, they brought water bottles, we talked a lot" Luis told me and named a few names of students whom he thought I should interview. "I went because I wanted to be part of that history", Luis told me. Perhaps a couple hundred showed up. The walkout happened in *Ibero*'s area, the students marched on the sidewalks and they sang the national anthem. This event showed them that they needed to organize more marches, get more students involved.

One of my interviewees was organizing marches anti-Peña before the Black Friday at Ibero and before he joined the #YoSoy132. There had been a few of these marches going from the monument *Angel de la Independencia* (Independence Angel), built on Sept 16th, 1910, to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Mexico's independence, to the Zócalo (Mexico-Tenochtitlán's main square). This group, however, had no cohesiveness and anybody could participate whether they were PAN supporters or Lopez-Obrador's supporters, or just anti-Peña. They had organized a march after the

[29] I should mention here that not having a car and intending to go to Iberoamericana University *(Ibero*) can take up to three hours each way. During my fieldwork, I visited *Ibero* at least twenty times and each time, I had to invest a full day to travel by metro, bus, and taxi at a low cost (about $2 US dollars each way), and be able to spend up to four hours on campus. My usual point of departure was just three blocks away from a Metro station and much closer to *Ibero* than UNAM. The latter is an attestation that *Ibero* is a university, mostly, for people who have cars and that students like "Luis" must have had a strong commitment to *being part of that history* and go to *Ibero* for a calm and friendly student walkout.

video was published and during that march, many were already holding banners that expressed the solidarity idea of "I am too, 131" which refers to the 131 *Ibero* students who made the first viral video above mentioned.

During those same one to two weeks, my interviewees talked about mobilizing in everyday meetings with members of a few other universities, informally and formally. These meetings happened at *Ibero* and at Parque México (Mexico Park located in the center-southwest of Mexico City) in the days after the video was published. These are the origins of the *coordinadora* which, according to my interviewees, called on the mobilization that created #YoSoy132. Once the #YoSoy132 had started, the *coordinadora* tried to continue to guide the entire movement, but it failed. The *coordinadora* was dissolved during the second General Inter-University Assembly. Most members of the *coordinadora* joined what they called @MasDe131 (after 131 students of Ibero who created the first video) and this group would later be the origins of the journalistic research website #Masde131. The greater student meetings, from now on known as the Asamblea General Inter-Universitaria or "AGI" (General Inter-University Assembly), adopted the traditional student organizing assembly system of UNAM and Politécnico which was created against hierarchies and with radical-democratic participatory processes but consisted of exhausting 12-36 hour-meetings where only those with most physical (and social) resistance could last. Despite these #YoSoy132 efforts to continue in an "inclusive" organizing model, one of my interviewees, Helena, said that the *coordinadora* was "like a ghost among [the]"; meaning that it was always present with political power even if it didn't have a representation in the AGI.

Dante was one of the *non-Ibero* students who joined the *coordinadora*. He had been studying political philosophy and he had been following the news and attended a couple of marches but he said that "this was politics not just in a theoretical sense, a lot of us were politizados (politicized) before the movement, that is one thing, and something very different is the behavior of people in collectivity… eventually, you have to be more humble in the sense of believing that you might always have the truth to then realize that, the problem is not having the truth but finding the means to make your political diagnosis more effective… to know how to make that truth have strength and power within the movement". According to Dante, some of the people in the *coordinadora* did not have the social skills to organize in collectivity, thinking that the multitude would march for protest and stay within a line, etc. "the people from political science at UNAM had that kind of experience but they were not a majority in the *coordinadora* and therefore this group always ended up being, not conservative, just naïve". Dante continued to say that "it is not possible to control the collective and even less possible is to judge as an outsider, believing that all of them are mistaken because they are not following the plan that you thought would be the more intelligent or logical".

From my fieldnotes and during my time in AGIs, I concluded that anybody could make an assembly, but the power of this assembly would depend on its networks and the ways of doing politics of those who attended and debated. By networks of an assembly, I mean whether or not its members were university or college or graduate level students; if they were not, they could have voice at the beginning of each AGI but they did not have vote. If they were students, political leadership would depend on the size and history of that assembly which can lead to the analysis about the ways of doing politics by assembly

members. I conclude the latter after attending many AGIs and small college assemblies. The #YoSoy132 tried to train students into the procedural aspects of making an assembly which eventually empowered student mobilization broadly. But the success or failure of these assemblies depended on the power struggle, the performativity of their members and the ways in which they negotiated their perspectives and objectives. One example of this would be the fact that AGIs lasted up to 36 hours. In their execution of radical democracy, delayed voting processes and discussions weakened the number, the diversity, and the energy of the voting members who had begun their meetings at 9am and continued voting by 1 or 2 am.

Fourth key moment: The first public demonstrations and *feeling* the need to participate;

> We organized #YoSoy132 in Spain… It's not about nationalism, nor about citizenship -or maybe a word like that? It's a type of sensitivity to believe that wherever I am, I am contributing with something. I get the sense that the power is ours. Get the sense that the people in the government are paid by us. We get the sense that *this* is ours.
>
> Alicia, member of YoSoy132 Global.

Removed from the context of the city and the nation state as an international student in Spain, my interviewee from #YoSoy132 Global explains in this quote what moved her to organize the *YoSoy132 Global*. Through her testimony, she understands this impulse as "a sensitivity" or conscious awareness that one's actions are valuable and will "contribute" to the greater good or for that which "belongs" to us. In other words, doing something that has an impact and contributes to a cause, may provide ownership and responsibility of that cause, and can also be understood as power. This is the focus of this section.

According to this interviewee, once the sense of ownership is present, people need to agree to the terms in which they need to care for that ownership. This kind of

collective power should not be manipulated by a few leaders. The experience of UNAM mobilizations was shared with YoSoy132 that social movements were easily co-opted and broken down by individual's interests and internal division. This is how #YoSoy132 agreed to creating accountability measures that fit within a model of horizontal relationships. Something valuable involves the product of working together as a team, friendship, trust, getting along, moments of "honest fiesta" or distress which are bonding experiences that cannot emerge within non-horizontal structures, said Alicia.

In Mexico City, Dante learned that there were political struggles happening both in the streets and in the assemblies; that it was not just about winning a debate during the assemblies but about dealing with the political struggles behind the debate. As Dante puts it, "it requires compromises". To Claudio, coming to the streets and talking to the multitude was "a detachment from individuality" and a new person which becomes "us".

Most of the above-mentioned subjective processes begun on May 23rd, during the March of the Estela de la Luz (transl. the [*cosmic*] tail of light). This monument located on Reform Avenue, was built by the government of former president Felipe Calderon. But the #YoSoy132 reappropriated and resignified it. The newspaper *La Jornada* wrote the next day that the students defined it as "the monument to corruption and opacity"(Poy and Garcia 2012) . This is an iconic collective action, not because it was the first highly attended event but because of what it said about the subjectivity of the multitude.

The *coordinadora* students had called for a "mitin" (transl. rally) to exchange books and listen to a few intellectual speakers who had been called by the *coordinadora*. All of my interviewees who had been part of the *coordinadora* said that they had expected, at most, 1,500 people but according to the above-mentioned article, the local

government estimated 14,000. There is a general consensus across my interviews that the march of the Estela de la Luz signaled the beginning of a major mobilization, and a major mobilization without top-down leaders. Claudio was part of the *coordinadora* as well. He added that "if the rocket had not been built by us, it would have built itself" not just because of the amount of people but because it was a self-made march". The crowd overflowed the plaza surrounding the monument, to the extent that the crowd itself started going to the Televisa TV station. In this collective subjectivity, says Claudio, "your individual self does not decide the next action, it is a series of circumstances that escape out of one's hands" and that is the moment of decision: whether to stay or to come along.

I was not in Mexico City at the time of this march, but I experienced a similar collective dynamic in subsequent YoSoy132 marches. It is, definitely, an oral tradition, a sort of *mic-check*[30] but while walking. One person tells the group behind them and someone else in that group tells it to the group behind them and so it continues. In this particular occasion, the *coordinadora* had not planned for this outcome so it was not the organizers who guided the crowd to march and to march to the Televisa TV station. In the above-mentioned newspaper article, the reporters mention the announced presence of Peña at 11pm that same evening and the idea that the students could rebuke him again at the doors of the TV Station. Nonetheless, the TV host that was to interview Peña published on Twitter that the interview had been pre-recorded.

[30] *Mic-check* was an OccupyWallStreet collective action repertoire whereby people communicate in large crowds without the use of sound amplifiers. One person starts saying a message out-loud, the next person who heard it repeats it and it continues until everyone in the crowd knows the message.

I would argue that the journalists from *La Jornada* might have misinterpreted the #YoSoy132 movement. The crowd wanted to rebuke Televisa Networks. #YoSoy132 was a movement whose demand was a democratic election where the media duopoly of Televisa and TV Azteca could not manipulate the people's vote and the people's minds. *Democratization of media* was a demand that developed during those first few days saying that the air through which Televisa and TV Azteca transmit their programming was property of the people (bien de la nación) and should not be a duopoly. The students also demanded the end of false reporting working together with corrupted politicians.

Fifth key moment: Organizing in multitude in the National Assembly of *Las Islas*

On May 26th, a "national assembly" was created to discuss the framing of the new movement. The agenda included topics such as the incorporation of students, non-students, and the inclusion of the public universities, particularly UNAM. A semi-public space, UNAM Islas (islands), hosted the gathering with a few tents and an AV system. Las Islas is a green esplanade with spheric rock monuments between the schools of Law and Philosophy (Villarreal 2012). The space is big enough to host thousands of people and that day it was the first time that some of my interviewees would interact with such great and diverse group of people. There is no record of all the groups represented but my interviewee mentioned groups including political parties' representatives, academics, media, and mostly, students.

Helena was supporting the logistics during the event at Las Islas. She was floating from table to table and "was impressed with the complexity of discussions, it was around 6pm when we were attempting to have all working tables wrap up and come to a few consensual agreements. But at the end, it was a list of demands."

According to Claudio, the meeting at Las Islas did not have a project for resolution. They made working tables but these tables did not materialize onto anything after this day. Claudio told me "the plan was to describe the problems but not to solve them". Helena continued to express what she remembered the most about that day and, not surprisingly, it was the table self-denominated as *Of Memory and Consciousness*. This table reported to the entire assembly with the speech below. The text was fully recited by a young speaker whose passion came through with loud, encouraging intonations and tears; people also broke into tears. This speech was referenced by many interviewees as one of the most unforgettable moments in the history of this movement and it contributes to one of the arguments made in this dissertation that the youth in the movement assumed a historical responsibility. The video of this speech also went viral and appeared in the media as front cover in some newspapers.

Helena clarified that this speech has been repeated in many platforms and often known as the "movement's manifesto" but it was referencing to a number of causes with which #YoSoy132 youth identified "because we were young, we were children of that history, and we knew that history".

> Like Bertolt Brecht said "a country who forgets its history is condemned to repeat it". This is why, us, in representation of Table 14 of Historical Memory and Consciousness, have brought here by unanimous consensus, the historical justification of this movement. The state has told us their story, silence keeps us in oblivion, today we break that silence to recover history, our history, the history of all Mexicans, that history of which we are all participants, heirs, and continuity. We don't forget the efforts and struggles of the labor and peasant movements, Magonismo, Villismo, Zapatismo, the railway workers movement and the medical movement. We don't forget the transcending movements of our history, the oil expropriation, the Vasconcelismo, the struggle for autonomy at the university, the social armed insurrection of the 1960s. We don't forget the student processes, the defense of the shelters in Instituto Politécnico Nacional in 1958! The student movements of Tlatelolco in 1968!, and the Corpus Thursday in 1971! We don't

> forget either the dirty war and its missing people!, We don't forget the political prisoners!, the student strikes of 1986 and 1999!
> Mexico, we, your children, are telling you this, we are the heirs of electoral frauds of 1988 and 2006; of the economic crisis of '82, of '96, and 2008. We are the heirs of the armed Zapatista uprising! Of the Massacre in Acteal! Of the impunity of feminicides in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua! And, especially in the State of Mexico! We are to raise our voice in this moment. And yes! We are the heirs of the violent repression in Atenco and in Oaxaca in 2006! Yes, partners, we are the 132 movement, we are the manifestation of the fury of the dead children in the ABC Daycare facility! We are Wirikuta! We are Cherán in Michoacán! We are Copala! We are the indignation facing the brutal violence of the state! We are the indignation facing the drug war and its more that seventy thousand deaths! We are all of this history! Justice, we ask! Justice, we ask! Because this is our movement and we will fight for it, justice, justice, justice!
> We vindicate all of this history today and we are reviving it, we revive it in the gale of this movement, today we decide and we proclaim to be 132, to be history and to be the Mexican consciousness, we don't forget and we reiterate our consciousness! Today and always, we are 132![31]
> Authored by Mesa 14, Memoria y Conciencia (table 14, Memory and Consciousness)

Helena also mentioned that the resolution of *Las Islas* was to create the Inter-University General Assembly (AGI) "because what had happened at *Las Islas* had been too complicated".

Sixth key moment: *La Fiesta de la Luz* (The Celebration of Light), the Musicians, and the march of silence

These three action-events were among the most iconic in the history of the movement. Loaded with emotions and culturally fruitful, transformational, unforgettable. It was the appropriation of the city, the interruption and resignification of private space, of sound, of ways of walking and discovery, of developing "like a little light in a black box" television and media broadcasting culture of at least 60 years, a truly unforgettable disruption by the art of young people at work and about one hundred thousand individuals marching to rejoice in symbolic freedom.

[31] Text copied from the internet and translated by me.

In 1985, the book *Televisa: el quinto poder* (Televisa: the fifth power) which contained an edited volume of articles documenting the role of Televisa television network in Mexico's undemocratic life. The monopolistic (or duopolistic, depending on what decade) corporation grew as one of the strongest communications companies in the world during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The *factory of dreams* as they self-described, played an important role in the public and private lives of Mexicans (and internationally because their programming was exported to dozens of countries). For many decades before the Internet era, the average time that a Mexican family watched Televisa programming was 8 hours a day -one of the highest in the world. In the public space, in Mexico City, Televisa occupies several buildings with their *factories of dreams*. One of these buildings is near downtown; it has four tall walls painted in light yellow color. The front facing wall of this building, was one of the #YoSoy132's most iconic protest destinations.

In June 13th, 2012, during the action named **La Fiesta de la Luz (the celebration of light**), the so-called *factory of dreams* was (literally) projected as major player in Mexico's most painful human crises of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. The students came in with speakers and a projector to show a video on the walls of that building, the video starts with the question "what's manipulated behind these walls?", it denounces Televisa's manipulation of information with footage and testimonies of the Tlatelolco student massacre, three other examples of state violence, electoral fraud, and inhumane abuse of power; truths downplayed by this media

network.[32]The video goes on for almost 5 minutes, some of the captions on it say "for decades, it has been convenient to the PRI for you to be apathetic, an apathetic does not make questions, an apathetic looks away, an apathetic doesn't vote…", these claims are followed by a call to join the movement with the phrase "turn off the TV, turn on the truth", to close, the video shows the phrase "if we don't burn together, who will bring light to this darkness?". This action, followed by speeches was peaceful, it defied the boundaries between public and private space, it disrupted the public image of a major power player in Mexico's media and politics. With its take ownership of Mexican history and alter the production of space.

Los músicos/the musicians

The movement captured the attention of many artists. They formed the "MúsicosconYoSoy132" (Musicians with YoSoy132) created its own YoSoy132 chapter. On June 16th, a free massive music festival was organized in Zócalo (the main square) lasting more than a dozen hours of nationally and internationally acclaimed musicians. Song writer and singer Natalia Lafourcade wrote Un Derecho de Nacimiento (A right by birth). She played this song with an ukulele and recorded it along with other artists with Sony Music, posting the video on YouTube video on June 26th, 2012. The video shows a group of the artists involved in the song standing in a circle at the esplanade of the Monument to the Revolution in Mexico City. This is important because this monument

[32] For more on La Fiesta de la Luz, please look at La fiesta de la luz; it is important to watch the videos to understand how it was perceived by other on the streets Villareal 2012, what the students actualy projected on the walls of Televisa https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQh4CmjLG10&t=22s and what academics such as Rossana Reguillo have said about this particular YoSoy132 action http://www.hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/es/e-misferica-102/reguillo

hosted Acampada Revolución (Revolution Camp site) for many months and, since then, has become a symbol of radical vanguard within social movements in Mexico City[33]. The sign of #YoSoy132 is seen in the background.

Here's a fragment of the 4:30 minute-long single:

Yo no nací Sin causa
Yo no nací sin fe,
Mi corazón pega fuerte
Para gritar a los que no sienten
Y así perseguir a la felicidad
Es un derecho de nacimiento
Es el motor de nuestro movimiento
Porque reclamo libertad de pensamiento
Si no la pido es porque estoy muriendo
Es un derecho de nacimiento
Mirar los frutos que dejan los sueños
En una sola voz, un sentimiento
Y que este grito limpie nuestro viento
I wasn't born without a cause;
I wasn't born without faith

My heart beats strong,
to scream on those who do not have feelings
and that way [it] pursuits happiness
It's a right by birth, it's the engine of our movement,
Why demanding my freedom of thought?
I don't request it because I am dying.
It's a right by birth, to watch the fruits of our dreams
In one voice, one feeling
And may this scream clean our air

The song was written with much of what #YoSoy132 believed in. The obvious chorus "I wasn't born without a cause; I wasn't born without faith" clearly reclaim the place where youth stand in the public perspective before and after this movement, some

[33] In chapter 4, I will briefly talk more about Acampada Revolución. How it functioned organically within the movement and how it played a key role in the organizing of direct action on December 1st, 2012.

of what the juvenólogos tell us about political agency. The unrest of YoSoy132 is portrayed as "a heartbeat that screams, that demands" "because I am dying" which talks to the violence that youth have been experiencing and also, to the need to engage in direct action. The youth then reclaimed the right to exist and the right to dream. The verses about "freedom of thought" and "cleaning the air" are a metaphor of the demand for democratic media, truth, and the air.

The #YoSoy132 youth believed that the air was national patrimony (as stated by the Mexican constitution) and therefore the Internet and all antenna media communications (connecting in the air) must be a citizens' right and should not be alienated by private interests. The air needs to be cleaned up because this youth no longer believed the lies told by mainstream media which hid historical violence against youth and criminalized them to deter them from organizing. [34] This would be the focus of the second phase of this movement; once the electoral campaign ended, an important faction of the movement would advocate and draft a telecommunications reform in January 2013.

La marcha del silencio/the march of silence. For many, if political protest had a sound, it would be that of chanting, declamation, drums and music, but this march was completely silent. How can a group of people manifest without sound? It was a sort of walking discourse. Young people gathered energy on the Tlatelolco esplanade rehearsing their chants and their musical instruments, joining their collectives, finishing their protest art, assembling floats, it was a festive ambiance in the location where hundreds of

[34] This is based on public and not private rights to the air and telecommunications as written in the constitution.

students had been massacred in 1968. I stayed through the end, as participants had fun jumping over a large puddle to start the march. There was plenty of daylight. As we progressed, more people joined the walk and a lot of people were standing on the sidewalks. Some people said that we were a hundred thousand demonstrators.

The sunset had begun, we walked by Televisa to protest like in the first #YoSoy132 march. I was able to walk fast back and forward along the marchers to collect stories from different parts of it. When we walked by Televisa, the television station building was surrounded by police on one side and on the other side of the street, hundreds of people had been waiting to salute the marchers with welcoming banners. The student leaders at the very front of the march, held megaphones and guided the people not to walk too close to the police. There, I picked up a homemade bumper sticker from a bystander supporter which reads: "I too am #132, join the movement for a better Mexico and the wellbeing of your children". Everywhere I looked I saw performances and art and people of all ages. We continued walking, the Atenco representatives (most of them adult farmer organizers) were at the forefront of the march as we walked by Televisa, accompanied by YoSoy132 student leaders.

It was dark, by the monument of Bucareli St., the marchers lit and held torches and declared it to be the quiet zone as we kept marching. The silence signified the closing of the electoral season. We were quiet from there to Zócalo (the main square at least ten blocks away). The entrance to Zócalo was memorable. The sound of the multitude in the already crowded esplanade felt like an embrace decorated with candle lights and banners that read "thank you, Mexican youth"; the YoSoy132 leaders had a podium where they read the principles of the movement, calling on all citizens to trust and protect the

democratic exercise of the election two nights later. Peacefully and calm, the crowds cleared the Zócalo by midnight.

Seventh key moment: *The Presidential Debate*: the first and only organized in a *public* and democratic fashion;

> "I was feeling discouraged, I was telling my dad that this was not going anywhere, etc, and what my father told me was a reminder about his story: I was in the student movement [in a northern state], I was very enthusiastic, we managed to change [things] in the government and even met with then President Díaz Ordáz, then me and my family were threated and told to work for the government…later I escaped to South America until I was able to return to Mexico to become a [commercial] magazine editor… how could I leave the struggle for freedom and for our rights? But now that I see you, son, doing all of this, I realized that I had never abandoned the struggle, that the struggle for justice and equality is not one generation's thing, it's something that came before me and that continues after me and by giving you the education I gave you and given you the books I gave you, I was continuing with it… and you, don't worry, you are not going to finish it and you'll get very depressed but you are indeed continuing the struggle"…

This was one of the stories I was given by one of my interviewees in his attempt to clarify his role in Mexico's struggle for social justice and equity. This is a generational perspective and is evidence of the subjective shift brought by the culture of student mobilization in Mexico. Esteban remembers that day and tells me with certainty that "something was actually happening… once you are in a situation like this; there is a public commitment."

> "Yes, YoSoy132, in that moment was a symbol that put those in power to tremble, maybe I don't know if all of them in power but yes, the PRI. That's why they [the PRI] decided not to go [to the debate]. It would have meant to expose themselves much more, but in the long term, they exposed themselves even more for not being there." Interview with Marcos.

The YoSoy132 grew very fast in the public imaginary. The other three presidential candidates tried to find momentum and went to visit *Ibero,* and the students used the opportunity. The third candidate to visit *Ibero* was Josefina Vazquez-Mota who was the

candidate of the right-wing party PAN (National Action Party). The *Ibero* students now had decided to call themselves YoSoy131 in order to make their own decisions and distinguish themselves while continuing to work alongside the YoSoy132 and being part of the national assembly system. The YoSoy131 again used cameras and microphones to challenge the PAN candidate to attend a presidential debate organized by and for the youth. Without many alternatives and in the public, Josefina Vazquez-Mota accepted and soon the other candidates accepted publicly, except for the PRI candidate -Peña. Marcos, was a design student at Ibero during the time and talked to me about the semi-improvised or abrupt idea of organizing a presidential debate. After the interaction with Josefina Vazquez-Mota, the proposal was brought to and approved by the national assembly and they, too, had to accept. After this idea was passed by the assembly, the planning of the debate became an intense project.

The students had to organize both form and substance. The debate was transmitted on YouTube to reject the dependency on Televisa or TV Azteca (the other major TV station in Mexico) and embrace democratization of media. According to two of my informants, the debate was made possible through increased Internet bandwidth for broadcasting plus borrowed equipment, an arrangement that came out of networks between one of the YoSoy132 activists and an American multinational technology company that specializes in Internet-related services where one of the movement participants was a local employee. This is a conclusive finding for one of my theses regarding the Internet. There are offline relationships prior to and post internet communication which make a difference in the way a social movement evolves because, as stated before, the Internet is not as democratic as people might have believed.

Additionally, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) had to approve the debate, which they did with the only requirement that it would be nationally broadcasted. This was something that not many people knew but the debate was recorded into video that was also broadcasted via radio.

According to Marcos, the *Ibero* communications students were highly dedicated to video production and took on the challenge. Other groups were on the search for best presidential debate practices, they started consulting international debates and made it as neutral as possible. The equipment and the venue were borrowed. This was the third debate of the electoral season; it was June 19 in the auditorium of Mexico City's Human Rights Commission (CNDHDF). And the YoSoy132 students arranged five chairs with no podiums, the symbol of the YoSoy132 on the background. They intentionally placed an empty chair to make Peña's absence more visible. Marcos added "in that moment, it was a joy, a triumph, which it's very hard for social movements to see triumphs…and yes, in that moment it felt like we were at the same level if not higher in power, with more force." Marcos also mentioned that they had not just the capacity to call on a million viewers but they also had the "freshness" that the candidates didn't have. Claudio talked to me about this position to be the face and voice of the public in front of the camera. Claudio was a college student at a private university, he was asked by his assembly first and then by the National Assembly to participate in the debate as a moderator. Claudio defined his first interaction with the public as his transformation from an individual to a collective entity. The students in the National assembly had trusted him with the entire process which included organizing the discussion and the selection and coordination of those who would be making the questions. He had three days to be as

representative and democratic as possible. On the side of the spectator, which was my side, the students had a randomized system of selection for questions and there were students making the questions to the candidates from many parts of Mexico. It was a show of what legality, neutrality, professionalism could look like in a presidential debate. Marcos said, thanks to the borrowed equipment and venue, the cost of the production of this presidential debate was one hundred pesos for copies (5 US dollars).

Eighth key moment: *Electoral monitoring: keeping the fight*

I'll start by introducing my own notes from this #YoSoy132 action. In the following paragraphs, I describe how I came across the level of commitment that the students had with the movement. I realized that it was not just performativity, nor some kind of white savior (or upper-class savior) complex. These students were thinking about their futures - personal and collective. It was quite remarkable and surprising to me that my first day of fieldwork with the #YoSoy132 was in their headquarters, in their *room for* peace. Without knowing them, I introduced myself to the movement by sending a message to someone I had seen on TV, a leader from one of the private schools (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, ITAM transl. "Technological Autonomous Institute of Mexico"). The young college student responded by inviting me to join a preparatory meeting for another action. I traveled by metro and taxi to arrive to the closed doors of ITAM. There was one other young person seated on the curve side. I sat next to him and we chatted for a while to realize that we were expecting the same people; this new acquaintance became a reliable research colleague of mine for years. About an hour later, a group of two or three youth -one of them was my original contact- came over by taxi. My contact said "we realized that we need more space than we can offer here at the

school and we are going to a place we now call Cuarto de Paz (*room for peace)*; are you coming?". My new acquaintance and I got into the taxi and rode for 5 minutes with them to arrive at a private student housing unit.

All the activists in the car went into the house and about five of us went into a room with a big television and about twenty seats. I tried to be transparent from the beginning, I said to my contact: "Can you please tell everyone that I am here doing research and that I come from Tulane University and I am just going to take written notes?"; my contact announced this and everyone said it was ok -that made me feel a little more comfortable, despite the strange situation. I was also more comfortable to speak to the larger group. As in my own college years, we collected some cash to get some food delivered and we watch the news on television. I tried to chat with people seated around me, which wasn't too hard to do because they were coming and going and not really doing much but talking about politics, especially, analyzing the television contents from the movement's perspective[35].

People were tired, sleep deprived, worried; but their faces were very serious, they were talking about the election coming three days later. Their conversations were purposeful and careful, strategic and, to cite the *juvenóloga* Rossana Reguillo, they were youth collectively *positioned in an insurrectionary subjectivity*[36]. In this context, the students were inside what they called *a room for peace* (the opposite of war room) and in the next few hours, they were planning to call all the youth in the country to action. They

[35] Another conversation from this day was included in chapter two regarding the TV show "La Rosa de Guadalupe"

[36] See the concept above cited for insurgency "…raising the anchor from the dominating systemic experiences and perceptions subjectively normalized and internalized in order to bring or open room for other forms of what is possible; dissident subjectivities call on other towards a different space, and from there, it articulates a different we/us" (2017, p. 86).

were collectively minded, at least two of the people were talking to me about the energy that everyone had been putting into the movement, that they slept just a few hours a day since it all started in May 11th (this is two months later) but that this did not matter because everyone was really busy together. It was clear to me that they *knew* that the youth would listen and that their effort was worth it.

My initial contact was in another room but he was very loud, enough to let everyone know what he was doing. At some point, we heard a phone call, he announced a couple names to the rest of the students (these names I must maintain confidential, but one belongs to a young activist in #YoSoy132 and the other is a famous senior scholar). Then, he said that the *room for peace* would happen and that the next step would be a press conference. My acquaintance was well connected with journalists (himself a current college student of journalism) and within a couple hours, they had secured media coverage and the logistics of the press conference without having any details about the electoral monitoring journey itself. The press conference would be at the iconic Journalists Club of Mexico (Club de Periodistas de México A.C.). My new acquaintance had his own data base of national media contacts which he started calling one by one and they were responding.

After this, a handful of more activists showed up to share their information, how they were going to do the monitoring, with what organizations, in what city areas, and their communications strategies. I did not know most of the people that circulated through the room while I was there but within a few days, I recognized their faces in the media and in the history of the movement.

The next day, a couple dozen journalists showed up. The press conference was professionally equipped. About five of the students sat behind a long table explaining the monitoring. A #tecache132 ("hashtag I caught you 132") had been created and the press conference served as a training for young people to document illegalities in the election. The activists also announced that there would be at least three "peace rooms" coordinating efforts from Mexico City to the rest of the country. The press conference ended within an hour. I was invited to join one of the coordinating peace rooms. The students had concerns about safety so few people had the address until the next day. The task was to vote as early as possible that Sunday July 2nd, 2012 and then, go to the peace room with our computer gadgets where we would be for at least 18 hours.[37] I opened a Twitter account that Saturday afternoon and at least two of my interviewees opened their accounts because of the movement.

The movement was not just a series of protest events. There was a strong and intentional level of electoral engagement. One of the movements' bases was to ensure

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[37] What was the experience of being in the *room for peace*? What was the atmosphere like? This concept has been widely used since 2012 in Mexico. The closest I've come across to explaining this concept is through Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove* famous scene of the *"*room for war". YoSoy132 tried to reverse the concept by using the word "peace" instead of "war"; the latter was an actual statement in the press conference that preceded election day. The situation was somewhat similar: people seated around a table, coordinating with many agents far away through dozens of communication gadgets, screens and maps around the room, a few personalities that led conflict resolution, some surprise characters showed up, and a little drama waiting for the last call. However helpful to describe the atmosphere of what happened in YoSoy132's *Cuarto de Paz*, this organizing effort was not a farce (as opposed to the one in the film), there was diversity in the room (as oppose to Kubrick's film where only white men were part of it), and the participants were promoting democracy, peace, and justice rather-than-warfare. As a participant observer, the most outstanding hallmark was *feeling* that the situation was a matter of life or death for those involved and for the broader public.

democratic elections and there are very specific ways to do this; traditional democratic practices such as the candidates debates and independent monitoring. From my experience being there, I would argue that Sofía's concept of "theorizing" and also producing media on the internet were some of the tactics at *Cuarto de Paz*; we received hundreds of twitters documenting anomalies with photos from the specific locations. Our next step was to consult with local media (often less biased than national mainstream media), add this to a data base, do more research on the instance, reach out to local journalists, reach out to human rights organizations in the locality, support those who reported from their site -some of them risking their lives and getting beaten up-, repeat several times in YoSoy132 media, maintain documentation. The house where we were was full of activists and journalists. The other major task of *cuartos de paz* was for the spokespersons present there to come up with a message to give to the media because the entire country was expecting what YoSoy132 had to say about the elections. Yes, there were thousands of instances of illegal electoral cheating and even violence. All *the cuartos de paz* gathered dozens of boxes with physical documents, ready to be brought to the Federal Electoral Institute for a formal lawsuit which, although successful, didn't produce any outcomes except for fines to the political parties.

Not a moment but a process: Realignment after the fraud had occurred, a democratic *disenchantment*

Thus, the students had to realign their purpose for struggle. Could the leadership push for a movement realignment or would the collective drive the course? Inside the Cuarto de Paz where I was, there was silence as people started arriving from other city areas. The leadership of the movement waited a few hours to give an official statement. I would

argue that most people in the room were not surprised, if anything, they looked extremely disappointed. People seated, hands on their faces, picking up stuff. It was past midnight and someone said it was time to eat something as the family hosting the event had prepared a large meal for everyone present. I realized that it was not very convenient to remain in that house, taking space as a participant observer. My research with all of these people continued but in different places and at different periods of time.

Conclusions of this chapter

In this chapter there are three major elements: the #YoSoy132 'spark', the analysis of the youth as a social category, and the framing of the movement. Macro and micro political and cultural analysis are possible by presenting subjective experiences of the participants and connecting those with the overall cultural and political meanings which made the #YoSoy132 so unique and relevant.

I do not offer a chronicle of the #YoSoy132 movement inception, or the what some people called the *spark,* that has been done before (Galindo Cáceres and González-Acosta 2013; Rovira, n.d.; Villareal 2012). Instead, I aim to provide a critical analysis of the substance of that *spark.* This required the learning from the previous chapter that #YoSoy132's impact was in the realm of cultural citizenship and not in the realm of procedural democracy. Thus, I decided to subjectively understand *the spark* that ignited political activism for hundreds of thousands of youths in the effervescence of the #YoSoy132 movement. My strategy was to depart from their human condition as youth during key moments of subjective empowerment. Their perspectives were contextualized with the first question I asked which was to describe their own situation when this movement "surprised them" and how this movement "transformed" them politically and

subjectively over time. At times, the interviews -done in retrospective, provided realizations of personal transformation of both individual and collective understanding.

Through my analysis in the pages above, I concluded that the *spark* is a kind of ideological infatuation along the lines of social movement theories of *framing* whereby a collectivity engages cognitively in diagnosis, prognosis, and motivational frames for action (Noakes and Johnston 2005). The interviewees explain these "frames" individually, before they encounter the collectivity. My interviewees said that at the beginning, it felt like they just "could do it" and as the movement grew, it felt like they had "a responsibility" to continue motivating the Mexican youth. From the beginning, the youth saw the need to define their identity, their history, their political agency, and even their ownership over public space. In doing that, the visibility of their actions, provided increasing agency as we see in each key moment analyzed in this chapter.

With regards to the study of youth, the body of literature presented in this chapter provides a discussion between Latin American and Hispanic authors who are the main representatives of this youth studies in Latin America although this field of study is widely studied in South East Asia with foci on socio-economic, global, and intersectional analysis. Historically, the field of youth studies provides arguments against the association of youth with deviancy. The Hispanic "youthologists" or "juvenólogos" start by arguing that youth are agents of change; the youthologists understand a difference between positive and negative agency not as a binary, they understand that youth move in and out of risk, precarity, empowerment, creativity, etc. In that sense, #YoSoy132 provides a case of youth's positionality with regards to political power and ownership of Mexican history. Not only for their precarity, "risky" behaviors, the uncertain prospects

for social security and survival (what largely defines negative agency of youth), more so for their capacity to make an impact in the public life and leaving a strong footprint in the political culture of present and future Mexican youths.

This chapter illustrates the enthusiasm experienced by youth who engaged with political power for the first time. The stories told by activists and the field notes provide on the ground descriptions of contemporary social movement making and power dynamics. At the individual level, in the first moment with the description of "theorization", a concept elaborated by one of the interviewees when she tried to explain the necessary task of seeking the truth on the Internet. The Internet also provided amplified dimension to students' visibility although, the social movement actions were performed in the public (offline) and taking it to the streets. The extent to which mobilization has been aided by Internet communication technologies is irrefutable and varies but I conclude that the Internet does not make mobilization, as much as it does help with visibility and dissemination.

The long-term effects of the youth who lived the #YoSoy132 movement are cultural and this period of enthusiasm illustrates this youth's amplified political power particularly in the public space and in their popular support. The experiences of mixed emotions and right guesses make us reflect on Antonio Melucci's phrase that "there is no cognition without emotion". To name a few, the #YoSoy132 youth talk about subjectively negotiating one's individual beliefs and passions with the collective in order to move forward with their common causes. Equally, they talk to us about feelings of triumph, believing that they were at the same level if not higher in power and with more force than the mainstream media corporations and the presidential candidates and their

political parties that year. Finally, the youth reinterpret their subjectivity as part of a collective not only within the movement but also within the Mexican history.

With regard to movement realignment, in the *Cuarto de Paz*, the youth struggled to realign their mobilization frame but could not quit mobilization. Leonardo was a PhD student who is also a long-time student activist at UNAM and works professionally as a labor organizer. His arguments further corroborate my thesis about the realignment of #YoSoy132. In our interview he says that "[the electoral journey] brought disappointment to thousands of people who thought that [defending electoral legality] was the method but this brought a great demobilization. After the elections, came a second moment where, alongside with those who believed in electoral democracy…and the electoral court, came those who wanted to prepare to unify all social sectors of the struggle. [As an example of this shift,] at the beginning, there were closed assemblies where students had to present their student IDs to enter the room." The former was the case of Alicia who was still in Spain at the time, she said that there was still "a need to reveal the fraud and this is what was left after realizing the incapability to stop the fraud". On the other hand, Claudio explained to me that from his point of view "the YoSoy132 was many movements with the same name…" and that there were people who had the objective to prevent the return of the PRI and "those were all defeated, but for those whose main objective was to transform this country, those people have not been defeated because their spectrum of values gives enough room for a structural solution, not so much to measure its outcomes". This may explain the first quote in this chapter, *Si no ardemos juntos, quién iluminará esta obscuridad?* (If we don't burn together, who will bring light to this darkness?)

In general, the movement faced many challenges moving forward; there were mistakes and not as many more "good guesses". Nonetheless, the YoSoy132 took it to the streets for at least five more months. The purpose of these marches was to express a genuine *disenchantment*[38] with the democratic process and a more scattered but direct intention to rebuke *de facto* powers. The students continued the process with the electoral court over fraud, they became more inclusive and worked closely with different indigenous and workers groups, they organized at least two national assemblies outside Mexico City, they conducted environmental brigades (community engagement in their neighborhoods), etc. The government too, entered a different approach towards the students, to become more repressive and this will be the focus of the next chapter.

[38] I use the word disenchantment because of Rossana Reguillo's book entitled *Culturas Juveniles and Political Forms of Disenchantment* (Reguillo 2012).

C H A P T E R 4:

On the ground violent realities and deeper engagement with militancy

Introduction to the chapter:

In this dissertation I have presented evidence about activists' paths through militancy within the student movement #YoSoy132. As explained above this movement's main objectives were the no-imposition of the PRI's presidential candidate Enrique Peña-Nieto and the democratization of media. It was also important for this movement to use the values of a transversal movement aspiring for a horizontal organization. In this chapter I will explore subjectivity and the role of state repression, a phase of #YoSoy132 where activists must undergo violent confrontations. It is pertinent to remind the reader about one more characteristic of this movement: that within its cross-cultural and cross-class constituency this movement brought together a group of student-activists who had never engaged in militancy before. In other words, some of them went from never having protested on the streets or rallied on the plaza to directly fighting the police in defence of their right to protest, some of them were arrested accused of rioting, and others participated on activism for the defence of political prisoners.

Also analysed in chapter 4, the electoral victory of Enrique Peña-Nieto represented a breakdown for the movement manifested in further internal divisions. In chapter 3 we learned about this movement's efforts to ensure legality in the elections and how the activists gathered evidence showing many forms of electoral fraud during the electoral journey throughout the country. This, I argue, was a key moment of disenchantment with the institutions of the state:

At the end of elections day, just past 11pm, a small TV had been installed in the middle of the patio of the house that hosted the *Cuarto de Paz* (Peace Room, explained in chapter 3). One of the leaders looks down while holding the analog antenna that gave signal to the TV. I was among the group of about 40 people assembled around it on the bare patio, some people were standing, and others were seated on the floor. The Federal Electoral Institute gave the official announcement that "thanks to the clean and peaceful elections Enrique Peña-Nieto had been elected as the new president". Most people there present covered their faces with their hands for a moment, then, slowly went back inside the house. Instead of gathering around the large working table as they had been gathered all day, almost every person looked for a lonely spot while others started to pick up their belongings. For a moment, I sat next to a person whom I interviewed three years later; he was alone at a smaller table. He looked at me, without knowing me and softly said: "how is the movement going to overcome the electoral juncture?" Others, less quietly expressed a sense of urgency, they said that the people were waiting to see what the 132 had to say, that everybody needed to congregate and think about it thoroughly. Someone announced that the family of one of the students had prepared dinner for all the volunteers; this bought us some time to linger. Many activists started to arrive from other parts of the city where electoral monitoring had been happening. They assembled and started talking; planning the following actions.

Unlike in their earlier stages, the movement members were experiencing something different than historical responsibility or enthusiastic empowerment; this was a lived experience of disenchantment with the federal electoral institutions and little hope for change. This disenchantment would determine the course of action for the following

months in the history of the movement. From now on, the movement shifted from electoral optimism, civic engagement, and peaceful forms of protests to telling their version of the electoral process, accusing the Federal Electoral Institute of covering-up for electoral illegality, a collective desire for an escalation in direct action, and finally, confronting state repression, in the forms of police brutality, criminalization through mainstream media, and incarceration.

Analysed in chapter 3, these emotions produced a reconfiguration of the movement. Some sociologists call this *framing realignment;* it is a sense that the direction of the movement needs to change. An interdisciplinary challenge rises when proponents of framing realignment center the decisions of such realignment on the leadership of the movement. As much as this does not apply to movements that aspire to horizontality and the fact that there were many possible leaders in the movement, my data demonstrates that this leadership tried to fight what could have been the most radical realignment of this movement: a change from a pacifist mobilization to a confrontational approach but the movement was already overtaken by the electoral juncture.

In this chapter I present evidence that this change was in many cases emanating from subjective processes involving peoples' perceptions of reality. Recalling Diana Taylor's argument, these subjective perceptions, although felt individually at first, are put into motion through the body, then shared and turned into a collective desire and into the course of action. In this new phase, further internal division emerged between pacifist and confrontational proponents. Such division had created many tensions in the assemblies but had not been put into 'motion' until December 1st, 2012. Two years in retrospective, an interviewee reflected around the happenings of December 2012:

> "I do not know if this was a movement or 'an energy'. It's clear to me that until the elections, we could speak about a movement because we [had] postponed lots of conversations; this made it possible for us to do things together and this is very important. But at the moment when we lost cohesiveness, when we lost the short-term perspective; the only thing we had left was our differences" [1]

As expressed to me by some activists, this new phase in the movement would be one if the most important lessons for the activists as individual militants for the following reasons: 1) The movement had to confront and challenge a new regime with a repressive state that until then had coexisted with the movement without much public display of force; 2) The activists had to overcome their own differences especially regarding preexisting views of direct action and different forms of mobilization beyond institutional boundaries of legality and illegality and subjective preconceptions about pacifist mobilization and confrontational direct actions; 3) A third possible lesson is that the movement, at the end, existed only as an electoral mobilization and this would be the last action for any of these militants under the name of #YoSoy132.

Part of this chapter will analyze what happened on December 1st, 2012 labeled by the movement as 1Dmx (sometimes also preceded by a *hashtag* symbol as #1Dmx), a day of violent confrontations and repression that ended up with the arbitrary detention of more than 100 and the incarceration of 11 women and 59 men as political prisoners. How can we understand the subjective impulse to challenge the state in direct violent confrontations? Furthermore, how do social justice activists understand the state and democracy after being incarcerated and mistreated in the Mexican penitentiary institutions? Even though, incarceration and repression are meant to deter dissent, many

[1] All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

of my interviewees –some of them former #1Dmx political prisoners- decided to continue in the struggle. The concluding goal of this chapter is to understand these subjective changes and the continued engagement in mobilization despite of the difficulties hardships of militancy.

From subjective voices to public ears

In continued dissatisfaction with the results of the 2012 presidential election, thousands of people took to the streets of Mexico City on the day of the new president's inauguration, December 1st, 2012. It is unclear how many people protested that day. The multiple groups marched from different points of the city, many people came from out of town, and there were more than three possible spaces for crowd concentrations: one was with the sympathizers of the loosing political party, and the other two were with the #YoSoy132. If not all the people went out to protest in support of the #YoSoy132, many took to the streets to protest against the incoming administration. This was thought by some people as the last opportunity to show dissatisfaction with the electoral process and maybe revoke the election; after this, dissent would be manifested against the new president and its government. Public demonstrations included peaceful marches but also rioting and violent confrontations with the police. At the close of the day, mainstream media reported on the vandalism done in the city while human rights observers reported that more than 100 men and women had been arbitrarily detained and 70 of them were unlawfully confined as political prisoners.

This event marked the beginning of a pattern of state repression for social movements and journalists that would continue in the following years in Mexico (Frente por la libertad de expresión y la protesta social en México, 2014). All the detainees of

December 1st were accused of committing "attacks against social peace" which, according to the penal code at the time, could have kept them in confinement from 5 to 30 years. They were released after 27 days thanks to a mobilization in defence of the political prisoners of December 1st. This movement defended all political prisoners of the day based on lack of evidence and police brutality, they utilized a lawsuit that grants the right to request an appeal from a Mexican judge (this is known as *amparo lawsuit*) and finally, pushed legislators to change the penal code so other political prisoners could have better chances for reduced sentences.

However, these prisoners' experience of living in the Mexican prisons and navigating through the state's justice system offered realizations that challenged mainstream notions about politics, justice, media, freedom and a new regime where the city would became a further contested space. In order to denounce human rights violations committed against them by the authorities of the state and regain their freedom of mobility, these political prisoners and their advocates not only fought a legal battle against the state but also had to fight stigma and criminalization; this was a battle for life and freedom. This subjective form of struggle, seeks a type of justice that is progressive, opening questions, and imaginaries about something beyond the particular goal of freedom from a penitentiary institution (Faulk and Brunnegger 2016). In the everyday life, being criminalized is not something that ends when one's legal process ends, it continues in the recuperation of one's life after incarceration and the incorporation of new interpretations of reality.

The role of media at this point was once again impactful in these activists' paths through militancy. In the case of the political prisoners of 1Dmx, the political elements of

their confinement came along with issues of public perception as the media (from a wide range of the political spectrum) widely exposed their processes and their identities. These political prisoners understood the need for others to hear and recognize their notion of justice and reality. These prisoners demanded awareness and support from the broader *public.*

The media and the perception of public opinion also had a strong impact on the final decision of the jury and on the prisoners' motivation throughout the process. Much of the evidence incriminating the activist-prisoners came from media sources; even their families and friends had to grapple with their public condemnation on mainstream national TV and in newspapers.

For themselves and their supporters, guilt or innocence of a crime was not at the center of the struggle. Due process might not have proceeded had it not been for the preexisting social movements and support networks that demanded their freedom and provided evidence and an activist-defense. The latter refers to the process through which their judiciary process was socialized and turned into a campaign demanding their freedom and a political statement shared by many people, later turned into the movement for the freedom of political prisoners: Collective 1Dmx.

From the beginning of the process, the prisoners and their advocates were convinced that the judiciary power and the penitentiary institutions lacked the mechanisms to grant them justice. Labeled as political prisoners, their problems were not to be treated in the field of the law but in the political realm. In the words of one of their lawyers, the legal struggle had at least three realms "the political, the judiciary-political, and the judiciary" (Interview with lawyer, 2014).

Indeed, most interviews from former political prisoners emphasize the fact that their unfair arrest was due to political reasons, because they also had political reasons to be out in the public space defending *just* and *fair* elections and democracy, because the media and its audience criminalized them with no legal grounds in the first days after their incarceration, and because of the everyday life politics and sociability necessary to survive inside the prison and recover ownership of one's life after being released from prison. The political prisoners and their supporters learned that prisons are not fixed or closed containers of order and discipline. Instead, they are systems that present porous boundaries of sociability for prisoners, personnel, and others involved from outside, like friends and families and the public opinion. These boundaries are certainly physical in what refers as prisons as a technology of the state but they are also experienced through extralegal domination and power relations in the everyday experience. Defeating these boundaries can mean subtle but impactful differences in the interpretation of legality or illegality and the mechanism of survival to hold on to *all possible forms of life*. Through my interviews with former political prisoners, I analyzed changes in the subjectivities of prisoners while confronting the many ways they are criminalized during and after imprisonment further emphasized in the political subjectivities of political prisoners and their decision to continue engaged in activism.

The YoSoy132 involvement in the struggle for freedom of the political prisoners of 1Dmx

Many of my interviewees said that the police operation whereby they were arrested was somewhat prepared. Although most of #YoSoy132's mobilizations from May 11th, 2012 through December 1st had been peaceful, the city 's administration prepared for what looked like a state of siege. The Senate and surrounding buildings, including residential

areas, were enclosed by two iron fences approximately 6ft high a week before the presidential inauguration. This caused tension and discontent between neighborhood residents and the police. The internal divisions in the #YoSoy132 were exacerbated by these tensions imposed with the fencing of the senate. The movement ended up splitting into two groups and coordinating two different plans of action.

On the days before inauguration, many students held meetings to decide whether or not to go out in the streets even though the rumors of repression and confrontation were being confirmed. The two groups called themselves either *pacifists* or proponents of *'direct action'*[2]. These two groups accepted their internal dissent and some of the members shared pieces of information that would reduce the chances for confusion or an internal clash. They decided to gather in different locations, conduct their collective action from different spaces, and continue with separate plans.

The 'pacifists' knew that they did not want to be part of the confrontations but they also felt responsible for calling out a demonstration to the general public. This group believed that as long as there were a large number of people gathered together in peaceful demonstration, they would be safe and able to present their political statement with a megaphone and continue marching from the Senate to the Zócalo (the city's main square). This portion of the student movement had the support of many groups in the civil society like a section of the teachers' union, part of the electricians' union, and at least one socialist organization. None of these were completely aligned with the movement's

[2] 'Direct Action' is a term that has been used by activists at least since the 1960s who engage in collective action meaning different forms of protest, this may be pacifist or confrontational (See Dave Graver's *Direct Action* 2009). Nonetheless, the concept of 'direct action' in my interviews and within the circles of activists in the movement I did research with, has a different meaning when contextually understood. It often involves the use of physical action on property or institutions.

ideals but all of them were also in opposition with the inauguration and decided to be there to support the #YoSoy132 for the safety of the crowd accompanying the march.

On the other hand, some students were fed up with trying to use institutional and legal channels to demand a fair election and democracy. They thought that this made no sense in a system that is broken and that a different type of intervention was required. This group organized 'direct action' with Molotov bombs and even a heavy construction truck to crash against the fence protecting the Senate. According to my interviewees within this group, there were strong rumors of police infiltration and this meant that confrontation had to occur, whether legitimately planned by insurgent citizens or framed by the police infiltrators. This group, too, wanted to march to the Zócalo.

Despite the differences, there was an agreement between the two groups to maintain distance from one another. Both groups wanted to go from the Senate to the Zócalo but they would do this in different ways. In the words of one of my interviewees "there were agreements made over a shared map."[3] From the beginning, the confrontations scattered the crowds leaving only the pacifist group more less unified, this group was following a white van that had speakers. On top of it, one of the #YoSoy132 students read the positioning of the movement. In the YouTube video "Operación #1Dmx (San Lázaro y Centro Histórico DF)" images of this speech and march intermix with images of projectiles, teargas, and people fighting with police agents.[4] Among this crowd, there was a lot of confusion. Although they had been more or less cohesive, many interactions occurred with people in the other group. Here are the testimonies of three

[3] It has been hard to trace a map that marks these different routes but at least two of my interviewees have referred to it.
[4] YouTube link (Másde131)

different people who were together in the group of "pacifists" who were close to or inside the white van with the speakers:

> Activist 1:
> "I don't know who broke the agreements; people were being judgmental about each other…"
> Activist 2:
> "One person approached me to try to convince me to enter the fight…I had never seen that person before so I ignored their provocations
> Activist 3:
> Kuykendall fell a few meters away from us, we saw him and all the blood"

Besides the double fences, one of the main strategies implemented by the state during that day was to close traffic to the protestors as much as possible. That is, hundreds of riot police blocked streets and metro stations thus forming a kind of container from which it was hard to escape. For this reason, some members of the movement thought that the police's main objective was "to stop all kinds of demonstrations" –peaceful or not. The distance between Congress and the Zócalo is about 1.5 miles. Some demonstrators had private vehicles and did everything they could to return to them, others had to run away from the police and many were able to use some metro stations to run the subway. In the words of an activist: "you had to run anywhere you could and hide; some of the metro stations were closed and this reduced our mobility. I was running with two other friends, we left one of them behind for one block when she got arrested" (Interview, 2015).

Another interviewee said that she was organized with the pacifist group but when people started to leave the area in all possible directions, she lost contact: "we were left with in a group of 5 so it seemed safer to leave with the other group, what was called that day "the black bloc". Yes, it was a little scary but it was safer to go with them than to stay there confronting a crowd of federal police" (Interview 2014).

A few hours passed and very few activists stayed together on either group. Most of my interviewees said that they were in groups of 3 or 5 people by 12:00pm. In Mexico's most popular and reliable radio news show at the time (that of journalist Carmen Aristegui), one of the students in the white van was interviewed. At about 2pm, he declared that the #YoSoy132 had suspended all of their activities for the day and therefore they were separating themselves from the groups involved in the confrontations. Some of my interviewees declared that this radio interview created disagreement and that the group inside the white van had not agreed on it. Some interviewees even said that this call off was the result of sentiments of confusion and fear experienced by everyone that day, no matter their ideology or their approach towards collective action.

Rumors spread about the many detentions already in process. The police had set buses around Zócalo (main square) to retain detainees and then take them to the authorities. In the early evening, some lists with detainees' names had been made public in the social media. During those hours, many lists were being compared to stories of friends and people who were missing from their homes or groups of friends; this process was carried out online and on in-person meetings. Those who called off their actions from those of the people who had been arrested realized that they knew people in the lists of detainees or that these were friends of friends. This is how the #YoSoy132 took back their positioning in the earlier part of the day. Multiple debates would emerge later to decide if they could engage in mobilization for the freedom of political prisoners or if they would only try to defend only the few people they knew.

The movement for freedom of the political prisoners of 1Dmx from inside

Recent research on Mexican prisons denounces inhumane living conditions, such as 40 percent overpopulation, and the use of different forms of intimidation and harassment by the official authorities and among prisoners themselves.[5] Additionally, there are corrupt situations of self-governance (*autogobierno)* or co-governance of the prisons by staff and prisoners. Following philosopher Giorgio Agamben's idea of the *dispositif*, we can argue that prisons as *dispositif* of the state may operate outside the legal norms where economic and power relations appear further repressive at the subjective level affecting how people interpret imprisonment and legality, and how prisoners interpret their freedom and their sociability both inside and outside the prison (Agamben 1998). For people who are able to regain their freedom, this path continues outside with trauma, stigma, and criminalization.

In this section, I present the experiences of activists for whom resisting criminalization required strategic actions of agency, solidarity, and intervention. Rather than focusing on the binary of legality or illegality, these young activists -now political prisoners- relied on sociability, pre-existing and new solidarity networks, and media strategies. Their emergence as a movement of political prisoners supported by the #YoSoy132 and the explicitly formed *Liga de Abogados 1Dmx* (Lawyers' League 1Dmx) eventually forced Mexico City to change article 362 of its penal code. This was done as a political and media strategy appealing to the public to put pressure on the government.

"Too much light and too much darkness at the same time": Subjective perspectives from inside the prison

As explained before I chose my interviewees randomly with a *snowball sampling*. This is

[5] México Evalúa, Centro de Análisis de Políticas Públicas, 2013

a technique that has been appropriate and effective for people who may be difficult to access like those in social movements. Thus, I asked every person I met to refer me to someone new. Not surprisingly, former political prisoners were not the first to be referred in the sampling. One day in my second year of field work, I attended an event organized by Amnesty International. It was a small round table where former political prisoners with diverse case backgrounds talked about their dissatisfaction with the way the state handled their cases. I had an opportunity to participate in this round table. I briefly described myself as a researcher working on my doctoral dissertation. At the end of the meeting, some of the participants invited me to a short follow-up conversation. About six of us gathered outside the Amnesty International facilities. Suddenly, a young man and a woman with musical instruments arrived; I recognized them from a cultural event I attended the previous week where they were playing baroque music with guitars. As it turns out, the young man had also been one of the 59 male political prisoners of December 1st, 2012.

This was a moment triggered great distress during my research when a couple weeks after this encounter I saw in the newspapers that these two musicians had been incarcerated. They were accused of what seemed to be a staged robbery for the equivalent of US$30. The alleged victim was a member of the federal police and she said that the musicians used a weapon; what the victim presented as the weapon was a kitchen knife. The kitchen knife disappeared from the police evidence later in the investigation. Such missing evidence was the strongest point in their defense, granting their freedom after 8 months in prison. During that time, they suffered documented instances of famine and torture. Since I read that first newspaper about the arrest and incarceration of these two

musicians, my research experience was transformed by discovering the next level of *sospechosismo*,[6] a criminalized subjectivity in which anyone may be a victim of fabricated crimes due to political reasons.

After the Amnesty International round table, I was able to contact the first former political prisoner I interviewed. Another contact had referred me to a second former political prisoner. I interviewed a total of two men and one woman who shared this background. All of these interviews took place in the public, often at coffee shops or university settings. They lasted well over two hours and were originally conducted in Spanish language. All the meetings happened individually with consent forms and other university-approved research procedures. One person asked me not to include literal citations from their interview and this is why most of the following text will be from my own voice telling what my interviewees said. In some cases, some people told me that their cases were public already and that they had no problems if I decided to publish their names. However, I insisted on my procedure to protect the names of sources. I believe this agreement gave us all more confidence to talk about their experiences as interpreted subjectively.

In most cases, the process of arrest was violent. According to some of my interviewees, the government's presumption of violence prior to December 1st, 2012 gave the leverage to repress the demonstration and conduct more than a hundred arbitrary detentions. By the end of the day the riot police had beaten up both bystanders and

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[6] *Sospechosismo* was defined in the previous chapter: "Sospechosismo" or suspicion-ism. I define this recurrent, made-up word as a relative of conspiracy theories; sospechosismo worked as a movement deterrent during my three years in this research project. Sospechosismo can be simply defined as the belief that someone is working as a spy to someone else. When I say, that there is next level of sospechosismo is because someone could accuse you of something or could use you in the accusation against someone in any kind of judicial or extra-judicial process.

participants and detained anybody presenting opposition. Thus, many of the people arrested were not involved in the protests at all. This includes a schoolteacher, a shoeshine-man, and at least one street vendor. Gum bullets and tear gas were heavily used so the people affected reported gum bullet injuries, broken ribs, multiple bruises and the like. In the interviews I had with some of the ex-political prisoners whose arrests resulted from this event, they said that they knew of people who ended up in hospitals and were not presented to the media because they were too seriously (and visibly) injured. Nevertheless, there were two cases that made it to the media. One case is that of Uriel Sandoval, a young activist who lost an eye to gum bullets and the other is that of Juan Francisco Kuykendall who was outside of the Senate when hit by a gum bullet. Due to the impact Kuykendall suffered a brain hemorrhage. He was kept in a coma until he passed on January 25th, 2014. Kuykendall was a veteran of the 1968 student movement analyzed in chapter 2.

During December 1st, these confrontations were only partially covered by media. Mainstream TV stations focused their coverage of the inauguration ceremony and only covered the confrontations at the end of the day. On the other hand, many people were Twitting sometimes distorted versions of the situation. By noon, a legislator deputy in the opposition who was physically inside the Senate during these events announced that a protestor had died in the confrontations. Some radio shows were broadcasting different perspectives. This produced a lot of confusion. Some of the movement participants who I interviewed never left their homes but helped monitoring participants who they knew through their cellphones and social media in order to maintain safety. Others, at least kept themselves informed through the media, both mainstream and alternative. Some of the

activists I interviewed had decided to stay home and avoid the confrontations but then heard the news about a diseased activist (perhaps, Kuykendall who was in reality wounded) and this motivated them to go out on the streets and document the situation with cameras and first aid bags.

Some of the arrests started even before the demonstrators arrived to the Plazas near Zócalo. People were physically detained on the streets for two to three hours before formal arrest. A young woman activist I interviewed was put inside a circle of people surrounded by police, waiting under the sun, seated on the pavement on the corner of the streets *Filomeno Mata* and *5 de Mayo*. During those hours, a policeman told her and other people in the circle that they were their *aguinaldos* (*translation* Christmas bonuses). Three blocks away, another student interviewee was caught between two groups of riot police in the middle of the Avenue Lázaro Cárdenas, aside from the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* (Palace of Fine Arts). He was taking pictures for the purpose of documenting police brutality. The policemen surrounded him, took away his phone and belongings and then put him on the floor. They proceeded to subdue him and kick him all over his body; someone else uploaded a video of this on *YouTube* (See the video "Libertad inmediata a Abraham Antonio Alonso Reyes"). Not far from the *Palacio de Bellas Artes,* another young man wanted to flee on his bicycle and crashed against a group of policemen. He was tackled to the ground, he said he made a sign of surrender by raising his arms while saying that "the game was over", one of the agents kicked him in the ribs and stomped on top of his body. Then he was dumped inside a police wagon. He and others were taken to the attorney general's office. When taken out of the wagon and entering the government facilities, media correspondents wanted to take pictures of him, he says that he tried to go

slowly looking directly at the cameras; he wanted to make sure that there were enough pictures of him while hurt.

Inside the attorney general's office, all of the detainees were put inside the *galeras* (*translation* galleys) which are waiting rooms with only a few seats. Separated by gender but in random groupings, the detainees waited for their turn to present their first affidavit and receive medical inspections. Here, the guards bring the information sheet that contains the list of rights for every person. They are told to read and sign for acknowledgement. Not only protest detainees of 1Dmx came to this place. Among the men, there were some homeless people. Someone did not know how to read but only another detainee -one of my interviewees- offered to read this information sheet out loud. Before he finished reading it out loud, everybody was forced to return the information sheets with their signatures. While in this same space, my interviewee was denied the right to use a phone; he was told that they wouldn't allow for this civil right because they were political prisoners and they could call their organization leader and ask them to take them out of prison.

According to several groups of human rights observers, the police had conducted the whole process unlawfully. One of the lawyers told me in an interview that the way in which the detainees were taken out of the attorney general's office was also unlawful not only because of the use of force but also because it did not follow the due process. My interviewee was part of a group of lawyers who had gone to the attorney general's office to offer their services; together they formed a collective called *Liga de abogados 1Dmx* (Lawyers' League of December 1st). Most of these lawyers did not know each other until that day where they were waiting outside the attorney general's office where they had

been denied entrance and pushed away by police.

For the detainees inside the attorney general's office, the hours progressed without them knowing if it was day or night. My interviewees think it was about 5am when the authorities took 59 of the men outside. They saw a lot of police, an operative of dozens of police patrols plus the busses where the now "processed" detainees were put in. He said to me "I thought that only drug lords would get so much attention". They were transported to *Reclusorio Norte* (Penitentiary of the North in Mexico City). During this process of transportation, some police members were taking pictures of them with their phones.

For the more than one hundred detainees that day, the process of presenting affidavits and talking to a lawyer would have required more attorneys or a longer amount of time. Another one of my interviewees was one of the last to present her affidavit. However, she and another woman who presented did not have to wait at all - they were immediately taken out of the facility to be put in a van along with nine other women. All of them were told that they were going to "*La Procuraduría de la Mujer*" (translation *the Attorney General Office for Women*) a place that does not exist. They knew that this place did not exist so they started protesting inside the van. The women also said that the number of police patrols surrounding the van where they were being put in by force was impressive. There were eleven women going to prison in this group.

Once inside the van, one of the female guards in the vehicle told the women that they were going to Santa Martha *Acatitla* (the name of the Southeast Mexico City Penitentiary for women). Incredibly, one of these eleven women had contributed to a

two-year long film project as a free activist *at this same prison*.[7] When she heard where she was going, all her memories of the women whom she worked with in this art project inside Santa Martha *Acatitla* female penitentiary came rushing back to her mind like a bucket of cold water. She remembered that all the women she knew there always said they were innocent. Her pre-existing friendship with many prisoners would bring manifestations of solidarity to most of the women in the group.

Their first day in prison was mostly spent on various paper work and medical examinations. At the nurse's office, they were welcomed by "*mata-viejitas*" (*translation,* the old-women killer) whose case was infamous in the Mexican media for having "killed" many old women by injecting cooking oil into their faces and bodies as part of a false beauty treatment. *Mata-viejitas* was working as the assistant-nurse and took the *eleven*'s data. *Mata-viejitas* found out that the eleven new women were all college graduates or professionals: a photographer, a nurse, a lawyer, a teacher, etc. The group was known as "*las once*" (the *eleven*). According to my interviewee, the eleven's profile seemed very strange compared to the rest of the women in Santa Martha. They were very young-looking political prisoners and they all came together under the same charges. So the eyes of guards and prisoners were on them all the time.

In the cloakroom, the eleven women were asked to take off all their clothes except their panties and brassieres. One of the *eleven* was wearing an exercise top; according to the guards, this was not allowed. They told her that her shoes were not allowed either and they asked her to take them off because of their high ankles. She agreed to take off the laces. Overall, this woman could have lost her exercise top and her shoes with no

[7] Italics for emphasis.

replacements but she negotiated with the guards. Some of the women in the group of *eleven* were not so lucky and were not able to negotiate these matters with the guards. My interviewee reflects on her skills to negotiate with the guards and other prisoners. She says that her intuition was sharpened by her previous experience in this same prison. She knew that she had to stop complaining or crying and show sincere empathy without pretending to be nice, that the people had to do their job and they were not the ones to blame for her situation. She negotiated to keep her shoes and exercise top by speaking with some of the slang she had previously learned two years before.

All the paper work lasted until the next day. Once in their cells, a guard said that a convict was looking for one of them. This was a big deal because convicts have a social hierarchy in the prison, like a higher power rank, and most new prisoners cannot easily talk to them. In Mexican prisons, convicts have dark blue uniforms and prisoners, yet to be convicted, wear beige so the difference is well marked. Many prisoners came to see *the eleven* while they remained locked in their cells. The guards kept them inside their cells for a longer time than the rest of the prisoners; they said it was a security measure. Eventually, the prisoners in dark blue started complaining “let them out, we are not going to do anything to them”. After a few hours, an old friend and convict came to see them, the doors opened and my interviewee ran to find her and hug her. The old convict friend kept her at a distance, maybe just to make sure there would be no crying or signs of weakness. She had no words except the question “what do you all need?” the answer was water, a jacket, underwear because there is someone with a period and not being able to change since the day of detention, a little toothpaste if there was any. The old friend asked if they had money; the answer was no. The response was “alright”. Half an hour

later the old friend comes back with supplies, not just for one of them but also for all the people in the group. According to my interviewees who were political prisoners, in these places everything costs money, even the food. Things for sale there include packed bread products, soft drinks, and prepaid telephone cards. A bottle of water would be MX$20.00 (US$1.20). The *eleven* did not have visits yet so they had no money.

The women prisoners had to go on trips to present themselves at the trials because the jury only goes to the male prison (*Reclusorio Norte*). The *eleven* went on two such trips. The second time they went to *Reclusorio Norte*, the guards were staring at one of them in particular; they started to harass her saying that she was in serious trouble. Later, she discovered the reason why when she found out that her photo and name were on the first page of a newspaper and in national TV news that said that she was the only female leader of the 5 most important anarchists who organized all the riots of December 1st, 2012. The other four people on the front pages and TV headlines were 4 of the male political prisoners. During the trip, the harassment by the guards continued. They pointed at her and made fun of her. They told her that she was there forever and that her family was going to suffer. According to my interviewee, those rides were awful; the guards were playing loud *reggaeton* and shifting the truck to the rhythm of it while the prisoners were in the back of the wagon rattling around. Before this, other prisoners told the *eleven* stories about guards who had sexually molested prisoners during those trips.

The day of this trial was the first time that 69 of the prisoners, men and women, were all together in the same place.[8] The men were put right next to the walls of a

[8] The other prisoner had been detained earlier in the day and had gone through a different process, different attorney general's office and he was also taken to a different prison.

hallway through which the eleven women entered forming a line. As they walked through, all the men started clapping calling them “warriors” trying to cheer them up. One of my interviewees said that she hates to think about gender divisions and archetypes but that the differences between men and women that day were very visible. The women were really beaten up but they were ok -chatting, joking- then they saw the men, who appeared emotionally disturbed, quiet, with no energy. The eleven women had brought stuff that the other prisoners had given them for the trip; they were carrying a lunch bag with food and water for all. The women started eating oranges little by little, trying to measure the amounts so there would be enough for all. They passed the bag of oranges to their male *compañeros*; the men just devoured the food. This brought a realization that they had not been eating well. The men could not be chatting and joking, they were kind of sad, laying on the floor, beaten up with broken ribs, with twisted arms.

Everyone, including the lawyers was there for 27 hours. Early that day, they found out that that they were being accused of “attacks against social peace” and that this could mean a sentence of up to 30 years in jail. Even under the guards’ custody and not being allowed to break the lines, the 27 hours progressed with different forms of interactions; a moment of prayer, several moments of friendship and even the reunion of a couple of prisoners who got together and were allowed to stand next to each other and hold hands. These moments were the highlights of the day, standing on that hallway waiting for this 27 hours multi-trial to finish.

The story of the female prisoners was unique compared to that of the men due to pre-exiting networks one of them had with other prisoners. The conditions they had were still difficult although, as political prisoners, both men and women were put in “special

cells" which in reality are isolation cells that are used for punishment but all my interviewees said that they had a privileged treatment compared to the other prisoners. These special cells were equipped with two iron beds and no other bedding but one bed pad so they all decided to sleep together on the floor. The female prisoners were put in two cells and divided into two groups of 5 and 6. A study of Mexican prisons in 2012 shows that the overpopulation in the male and female prisons here mentioned was of 170.5% that year (México Evalúa 2013; p. 5). My interviewee saw that the usual occupancy was of 15 or 20 people for each cell. According to the same study, these two penitentiaries are better off than other major ones in Mexico where the overpopulation could reach up to 188.6%. There are also small prisons with worse problems, for instance in a prison in the nearby state of Puebla where the overpopulation is of 266 people for a space designed for 46 (México Evalúa 2013; p. 5). According to my interviewees, the food in *Reclusorio Norte* (male penitentiary) is known as *the rancho* (*translation* the ranch) because it looks like animal food. The prisoners do not have to pay money for the food and the political prisoners were given the food inside their special cells while most prisoners are forced to pay for the dish where they eat; a kind of iron tray. If they don't have money, sometimes they can find some used *coca-cola* bottle in the trashcan and use it as a dish in order to receive the *rancho*.

Militancy for the prisoners: *¡Presos políticos: Libertad… Libertad, libertad a los presos por luchar!* (Freedom to political prisoners for their fight)

The political prisoners did not passively observe situations of injustice against themselves and others while in prison. They actively resisted injustice in many forms, including through the media. The political prisoners of December 1st were criminalized

by mainstream media but they also used the media to defend themselves. As stated above, some of the prisoners were part of the student movement #YoSoy132 and the movement decided to support the mobilization to free *all political prisoners*. Along with them were several human rights organizations, families, and friends. Some prisoners' coworkers produced video statements on their favor. The *Lawyer's League 1Dmx* was formed, and the prisoners themselves started organizing from inside the prison. Several activists started camping outside both penitentiaries and some marches were organized in the city in solidarity with the political prisoners of December 1st. The chanting ¡Presos políticos: Libertad… Libertad, libertad a los presos por luchar! (Freedom to political prisoners for their fight), has been commonly used in these kinds of movements.

As we know, the #YoSoy132 and its sympathizers were characterized for their use of Internet media to raise awareness about several issues of injustice, corruption and media monopoly in Mexico. In this way, a campaign to free the political prisoners was conducted at the same time as the judiciary process. The activists created the *hashtag* #1Dmx on the very day of the confrontations so the same *hashtag* was reused for the purpose of freeing the prisoners. At this point Mexico City's government had installed several surveillance cameras watching the very street intersections where many of the activists had been arrested but the judiciary denied access to them to the lawyers. In fact, the prosecutors' evidence consisted of police declarations and mainstream media videos. Therefore, the defense called for the public to send their videos or photos to the lawyers so they could present them as evidence. Compiled on a case-by-case basis, the videos showed that people put in prison had not done the things alleged by the state. The lawyers also resorted to the more independent online media to help counter the arguments

criminalizing the protestors. The case was presented in formats like the following where the arguments presented by the police would be followed by arguments presented in videos received by the lawyers. Here is a fragment of the website *ADN Politico*:

> "…in file ACI/T2/322/12-12 of the attorney general's office, [see the case of] 18 year old Rodrigo André Nieto Bojórquez... the policemen justified his detention only through their saying: "one of the subjects…insulted us with vulgar language, throwing rocks and bottles, then started tussling with one policeman…seeing this we [policemen) subdued him" (Balderas 2012).

These are direct citations from the policemen. Then the website *ADN Politico* describes the two videos made by other activists where Rodrigo André Nieto Bojórquez appears:

> "In a second video, Rodrigo is detained while he is walking in front of a group of police, he is not doing anything disruptive. He does this [to walk] for four seconds until one of the policemen grabs him from his waist and drags him to where the riot police were aligned; they started kicking him" (Balderas 2012).

On their part, one of the political prisoners started a Facebook page from *Reclusorio Norte*. He and others wrote letters on paper, these were later turn into pictures by a friend-family member who would then post them on a Facebook page. Appealing to the public, the letters showed gratitude to those supporting them, urged the society to stay critical and promote justice, one of the letters says "your solidarity makes us believe in a just and critical society who walks with us"; another letter says "by defending us, you defend our country", another letter says "your actions and determination in the streets give us the strength to continue standing inside this prison, do not falter because you are our voice, our body, and our soul"; another letter is addressed to "you and all of us who are in the search for a country with justice where the individual rights are respected"; another letter also asks for support to the people camping outside the female penitentiary.

This page was also published by independent media (Lopez-Michelena 2012).

The Facebook page also had updates about the situation in the prisons. The existence of political prisoners with media attention in both male and female penitentiaries was also regarded as a phenomenon among the people already in the prisons. In Santa Martha Acatitla female penitentiary the prisoners would first come to the cell to watch the *eleven* as if they were part of an exhibit in a museum. Many prisoners had heard that the *eleven* had been arrested for protesting against the new president so some of the bullying in the beginning was politically charged with satirical jokes cheering for the new president. Later, some of the prisoners would visit the cell of the *eleven* to tell them about their own issues with the state. The same happened in the male prison where some of the political prisoners even tried to organize assemblies like the ones the students held during the movement. They also witnessed much of the everyday injustice occurring in these prisons. According to one of the *eleven*, at nights you could hear the shouts of a woman who had a mental illness until someone would discipline her inside their cell, then you could only hear her sobbing. One of the *eleven* prisoners in Santa Martha Acatitla, was a nurse and was the only one who stayed in prison for as long as 27 days. She wrote a letter to the public that said "it is not easy to be in here, more than anything because this is an injustice and because they make us suffer", this letter was published by the prisoners' human rights organization *Comite Cerezo* (Neri 2012). The study "Las Cárceles en México, para qué? (*Mexican prisons, what are they for?*) shows that poor nutrition and overpopulation create problems of auto-gobierno or *prison self-governance* which means that Mexican prisons are often controlled by extralegal structures involving both prisoners and personnel (México Evalúa 2013).

After the trial, 10 women and 46 men were released due to lack of evidence against them. The *Lawyers' League 1Dmx* successfully produced an *Amparo* (*translation,* order of appeal for most of the people in prison. This group of 56 freed people spent a total of two days dealing with the legal process plus seven days serving prison time. The 14 people remaining were released within 27 days. According to my interviewees, the 14 people who remained in prison stayed there due to problems in their defense: either the lawyers did not present consistent cases or that they were not very strategic and they did not stay longer because there was any more evidence against them. December 1st, 2012 was the first year to have this number of detentions during protest events in Mexico City. That is 124 arrests that occurred in 2012 from which there were "99 cases of arbitrary detention, 24 violations against physical integrity, and 6 cases of torture" (Frente por la libertad de expresión y la protesta social en México 2014).

On social movement deterrence by repression and incarceration: I asked the young activists, why continuing engaged in militancy after all of this?

Prisoners and their stories are not isolated from the rest of society and that there is much injustice in confinement and, therefore, add grievance to the causes for activism. The people already involved in processes of incarceration had to overcome confinement through extended forms of sociability while people outside prisons had to put pressure on the government to speed up and keep accountability in the judiciary process. Additionally, for those who are inside, what happens outside continues to impact their lives. The political prisoners were angry when the student movement #YoSoy132 denied any responsibility of what had happened during the December 1st confrontations. However, these same interviewees said they were encouraged when they heard that the movement was now organizing a new struggle for the political prisoners of #1Dmx. One

afternoon, some activists were camping outside the penitentiary itself; they were calling out the prisoners' names to remind them they were not alone. Despite the prison walls and the denigrations on TV made against them, the feeling of support from the community outside produced justice for these prisoners. Here are the words from one of the former political prisoners who stayed in jail for 27 days:

> "I was sure that they [activists and lawyers] were going to take us out. [I knew it] after hearing them over here [camping outside the penitentiary] and that there was [involvement of] media and international organizations. Once I heard that [December 1st] was now an emblematic day and all of that, I did not worry a minute that they were taking us out…[I told my family] there is no way they [the government] are going to keep us here… I always tried to calm down friends and family, they cried and all, but I was like: I have no doubts!" (Interview 2014)

In an interview with one of the lawyers, he told me that the *amparo lawsuit* was an effort to put all the prisoners in the same investigation file. This made it possible to prevent the judge from dictating sentence for anybody while they remained inside the prison. Thus, the prisoners were able to leave the prison before sentencing. The *amparo lawsuit* was supported on the grounds of no legal description or *typification* of crime. That is, that the legal description did not correspond with the behavior of the prisoners or at least not according to the evidence the prosecutors had gathered. For the *Liga de Abogados 1Dmx*, the next move was to promote a legal reform on the Mexico City penal code. The initiative started on December 18th, 2012. As established by the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City, article 362 of the penal code typified social order based on a previous legislation meant to typify terrorism. Therefore, the ambiguity of article 362 gave the possibility to sentence "attacks against social peace" with incarceration of 5 to 30 years. The outcome of this initiative was the revocation of article 362 (VI Legislatura del Distrito Federal 2012).

Nonetheless, the criminalization of protest continued after these happenings with increased policing, double the number of arbitrary detentions of protestors, and media accusations of vandalism in protest events. Many of the political prisoners of December 1, 2012 became activists in defense of other political prisoners and continued in the struggle to promote the decriminalization of political prisoners and the open expression of dissent. Some of them continue to be harassed by the authorities. Such is the case of the musicians I met outside Amnesty International who were falsely accused of stealing US$30 from a policewoman. The networks activated for December 1st, 2012 continued and they too, were involved in the defence of the two musicians in 2014. Being activists, imprisonment was interpreted as another source of grievance. Thus, their subjectivities as political prisoners changed not only their views in conceptualizing justice and collective action in broader terms than the sole rights of the free individual and beyond the binary of legality or illegality. According to many of my interviewees –not just former political prisoners-, this experience has remained as an everyday positioning.

This does not mean that their grievances have been resolved. The fact that they were detained and defamed on national television was still a burden in their lives when we had our interviewees in 2014 and 2015. This has affected many aspects of their lives such as their interpretation of the public space. For one of the *eleven*, her freedom was rather a bitter experience. She was extremely upset with the system for what her and so many other people have to go through. That is, a system that she thinks is a joke. And she is not alone in this; two other interviewees said the same thing. She said that even at the moment of letting you go, prison officials humiliate the now free individual with dilatory and inefficient paperwork. For the *eleven*, having left one woman behind seemed unjust.

My interviewee said that while being a protestor, one could feel as the epitome of *the right to the city* like a radical feminist owning her life. Nonetheless, while describing her reencounter with the city after being in prison, those same streets that she took to go to work, and those same buildings she used to see felt like a different place. She felt like a stranger. Her parents were driving her everywhere; she was doing everything they told her to do. She was seeing friends and family she had not seen in years. She and her family had experienced a strong trauma so they tried different things like moving her back to her parents' house or going out of town. Still, thinking about the prisoners still in Santa Martha Acatitla and Reclusorio Norte brought her back to activism, against her parents' will. She found out that what worked in order for her to overcome the trauma was to work for other prisoners' freedom and she stayed involved with the new network that started in December 1st, 2012. Most of these were new friends because her own subjectivity had changed, she could not go back to who she was after seeing "too much light and too much darkness" at the same time.

Conclusions of this chapter:

Thanks to youth studies and the focus on subjectivity, this research was a constant reminder against the criminalization of youths and their intersections of identity. This chapter analyzed what I called a "path through militancy" as the end of a journey that began with political disenchantment of a group of activists who wanted to believe in electoral legality, the democratization of media, and the redeeming of youth's role in political culture through radical democracy and pacifist collective action.

I use the work militancy which broadly refers to violent confrontations between the sate and the citizens for a social cause. It was necessary for me to find a more

profound definition of this as it relates to youth's political subjectivities. In chapter 3, I recurred to the term "insurgent" from Rossana Reguillo's 2017 book *Paisajes Insurrectos* (*translation* Insurrectionary Landscapes) which presents a working definition of "insurrectionary subjectivities". I believe that this definition strongly adheres to the Mexican youth reality. For Reguillo, insurrectionary subjectivities are "…raising the anchor from the dominating systemic experiences and perceptions subjectively normalized and internalized in order to bring or open room for other forms of what is possible; dissident subjectivities call on other towards a different space, and from there, it articulates a different we/us" p. 86. Not all the students in the #YoSoy132, however, engaged in insurrection and their openness to mobilization had strong boundaries that either held them from engaging even with possibility of violent confrontation or pushed them forward with the collectivity in the search for other activisms.

In a reflexivity, it was through the interviewing of the youth in the movement whom were involved, willingly or not, in direct action that I understood something very valuable about my positionality as participant observer. Through this research I learned to understand unconventional course of action in activism or militancy even if in disagreement with my own preconceived values. It wasn't a voluntary process of unlearning nor an intellectual decision, it was a necessary effort to understand my interviewees better and maintain our communication flows uninterrupted by my views as a scholar, Mexican citizen, person of privilege, etc. I think that the process of "unlearning" or, the "opening" of my perspectives came as a consequence of that exposure.

Like in the previous chapters, my field work drove me toward the theoretical approaches that I have presented so far and continues to guide my work. One of the ways in which I recognized my own subjective changes was through the concept of *sospechosismo*. As explored in the third and fourth chapters, the concept is a kind of hegemonic force that inspires distrust and revives the role surveillance as socially experienced. Thus, it also intersects with interpersonal relations. In my view and particularly through my research with the political prisoners, I experienced several months of fear for either myself or for the confidential information I was collecting from people whose freedom had been taken away in the past. I always wondered if *sospechosismo* was a general state of mind and if all #YoSoy132 experienced it.

The #YoSoy132 movement activists stood together with *all* political prisoners of the #1Dmx. It was however, a learning process for all #YoSoy132 who, according to my interviewees, there were consideration of denying responsibility in the violent confrontations between youth and the state. The activists and leaders of the movement had to shift in view of the injustice and in a natural solidarity response (or "social responsibility" according to one of my interviewees). This would have a particular impact for the political prisoners who, during incarceration, could feel accompanied and supported, that there was public opinion who cared and would struggle for their freedom and which, together with their own support networks, eventually got them out.

The shifting struggle for the political prisoners on behalf of the #YoSoy132 activists and my reflexivity as a researcher of this movement converge in one way: the deconstruction of the hegemonic divide between legality and illegality as it does not necessarily correspond to the idea of justice. For the first part of the student movement,

the #YoSoy132 were protectors of electoral legality and proponents of democratic media and other nationalist (but not patriotic) values such as the Mexican constitutional the right for every citizen to "own" the media, in other words, against the duopoly of media that had misinformed Mexican citizens and criminalized youth for more than half a century. The #1Dmx was the lived experience by many of those young activists that the idea that the institutions of the state are an instrument of the rule of law was a myth which would have prevented them from supporting the illegal arrests of 1Dmx and the many human rights violations incurred. Further, that it is different to argue the latter without the lived experience of injustice and from a position of privilege than to live the experience of injustice through your own arrest or that of your close friends.

Nonetheless, the full circle came to a close thanks to the analysis subjectivity and sociability and networks of support as a way to survive the traumas of confinement. Not having experienced it in first hand, I have to remind myself and the reader that not everyone is a political prisoner whose media strategy and public attention has helped them leave the prison. This is a different position to that of doing participant observation with the #YoSoy132 and believing for months that the Mexican democratic history could change and benefit everyone.

The #YoSoy132 motivated so many youths that went from never having protested on the streets or rallied on the plaza to directly fighting the police in defence of their right to protest, some of them were arrested accused of rioting, and others participated on activism for the defence of political prisoners. As seen in previous chapter and throughout this research, the degree of collective consciousness and solidarity, the degree of togetherness across difference among the hundreds of thousands of participants with

#YoSoy132 would vary subjectively and that validates the movement as a cultural transformation among that generation of activists.

CONCLUSIONS

In my introduction I asked: what made this movement unique, important, enduring, or worth fighting with for the youth of Mexico that year? How do first-time activists decide to engage in social movements? Why do activists continue in the struggle despite state repression? I observed that most of the #YoSoy132 constituents were mobilizing for the first time in their lives and their level of political engagement and collective consciousness developed in the first weeks of mobilization. An important priority of this dissertation was to show the trajectory of these activists at the subjective level recognizing that power and political struggle is part of their lives prior to mobilization and that collective consciousness will be both empowering and challenging. This is perhaps one of the most salient challenges in new anti-authoritarian social movements that promote horizontalism and democratization, to continue motivated with these values while having to step up and exercise power.

Methods

This research was qualitative focusing on large social and historical events while interacting with smaller groups and individuals. This design provided insightful perspective that the young activists relied on historical memory and consciousness to make sense of their ownership of their role as agents of change in Mexico. The latter was also a cognitive process which unfolded by denouncing the complicity of mainstream media in violent and antidemocratic values of the PRI regime. All of the above was possible through participant observation and in-person semi-structured interviews with movement militants, journalists, academics and one lawyer whose recounts offer

everyday life experience, factors in subjective perspective and decision making, emotions, and political processes. Ten years after the disruption caused by #YoSoy132, there are no studies that present a similar accumulation of perspectives like those collected through this study.

Chapters in conclusion:

In chapter 2, I found that it was important to study the role of youth in Mexico and in the world to be able to understand and organize the subjective perspectives from my interviewees. The #Yosoy132 was not a movement made of heroes and the formation of heroes would be explicitly and structurally rejected. The strong emphasis on Internet communications could not explain the data of I collected with observations of place and space, emotions, and other embodied experiences that came out of my research as participant observer. The Internet is not accessible to everybody in the same way; as explained by my Interviewees, social networks like Twitter carry biases of classism, sexism, and more. It is also a place where actors may self-censor an are in constant surveillance. It was perhaps the challenge of surveillance what taught the #YoSoy132 to close the doors to media and turn off cell phones during their general assemblies. Thus, the Internet could not be the #YoSoy132 *spark* and it was not the arena of equality that many people thought.

The #YoSoy132 movement was a movement of youth. Some of my interviewees had expressed that the defamation of youth was, indeed, a source of grievance, that the role of youth in Mexican history needed to be redeemed. When the PRI's campaign managers called the Ibero students *porros/acarreados*, was an example of these defamations. It was not, however, the first time that youth had been labeled and

criminalized in the political discourse. The word *nini* had defamed the youth of Mexico for most of the period that former President Felipe Calderon's war on drugs took the lives of dozens of thousands of youths at the time[1]. The word *nini* blamed the youth for not having a job and not going to school and therefore, being more prone to getting involve with organized crime. This, one of the purposes of the focus on youth's perspectives is to prevent the analysis of youth in politics as objects of study and detached from their agency. The understanding of youth in their subjective complexity this, would shed light on the motivations to join a political struggle as a young person in Mexico and during those years.

Nonetheless, I recognized that there was some distance between criminalization of youth as *ninis* and the motivations for the #YoSoy132 movement to emerge. That distance in my analysis was filled with the second defamation of "*porros/acarreados*". As noted in the previous pages, these words mean "thugs for hire, agents, provocateurs, false students, paid by another political party, etc." These words, bring back a profound collective trauma of student massacres of the 1960s and 1970s. My analysis captures the message that ignited profound anger between the youth of Mexico and the PRI government and mainstream media: that youth did not deserve to die to cover up for corrupted governments and that the mainstream media should stop supporting that violence. The evidence presented as a brief historical analysis of these relationship

[1] The numbers have continued to increase as the war on drugs continued escalating. A first mobilization that brought the criminalization of youth to the public opinion during this period of time was the case of Juan Francisco Sicilia, a 24-year-old who was murdered next to 6 other youth and found inside a car shot and tied with packing tape. According to the authorities the multi-homicide occurred by 'chance' and due to war related violence. Juan Francisco Sicilia was the son of a nationally acclaimed poet who started a social movement against war on drugs and to stop the killing of youth. At least one of my interviewees in #YoSoy132 was part of this same movement.

between the PRI-Televisa and the youth of Mexico shows the compelling claims of collective trauma that emerged due to the imminent return of the PRI and the confrontations between the PRI presidential candidate and the students at *Ibero*.

The said collective trauma brings additional discussions around difference and ideological orientations that had divided the youth of Mexico for decades. Thus, the analysis of *horizontalism* as a resource to appease the competition for leadership within the movement. Horizontalism is rather thought as an import of global transversal or anti-authoritarian movements of the time which usually corresponds to a need for safety and sustainability of mobilization. However, my findings showed me that for the case of #YoSoy132, it became an organizing strategy that brought people together in action-oriented mobilization which for various weeks, maintained ideological differences (capitalists, anti-capitalist, conservatives, Marxists, anarchists, etc.) and other differences of identity (i.e. class, gender, school affiliation, etc.) in second place. This was a level of adaptability that could not be understood without the understanding of cultural hybridity in youth cultures which would be further explored in the following chapter.

The analysis of youth as a category was introduced in the previous chapter but deserved further exploration in *chapter 3*. Youth studies proponents, known among themselves as the *juvenólogos*, emphasize the need to understand youth as agents of change. This represents a shift, for social scientists from a focus on youth and how social issues have impacted them, to a focus on youth and how they have impacted their context (Feixa 1998). The type of analysis that this dissertation endured, provided an approach that challenges the vision of youth as victims of their context to a youth that challenges the past and present and wants to change the future. It is perhaps during this period of

time of enthusiasm that the participants of #YoSoy132 truly enacted this role as agents of change. This did not mean that #YoSoy132 did actually achieve its goals against the imposition of the PRI candidate as the new president of Mexico. The #YoSoy132 transformative power, I argue, was cultural.

The focus on key moments was helpful for the interviewees and for the analysis here presented. Given that most of the interviews I performed were made in retrospective, the activists were able to focus on one day tell the story of it according to their perspectives and interpretations. Through these key moments, we are able to be in the mind of the activists as they reflect on their #YoSoy132 actions. These reflections are not romanticized versions of the movement, they were critical analyses which unveiled the motives of these activists and provided the answers to my research questions.

The goal was to define the *spark* of #YoSoy132. In this chapter, I argue that the *spark* is a kind of ideological infatuation along the lines of social movement theories of *framing* whereby a collectivity engages cognitively in diagnosis, prognosis, and motivational frames for action. That cognitive engagement, its interpretation, and the collective action that follow are experienced individually, put into motion through the body, and collectivized (Taylor 2013). Thus, defining the *spark* was necessarily a subjective search within the movement participants, especially for anti-authoritarian, horizontally organized social movements. Although, this chapter is not an exhaustive transcript of all my interview materials, it presents a cohesive description of how this movement became a *fiesta* to those involved which this explains how much energy they put and the impressive outcomes of their manifestations and actions such as *La fiesta de*

la luz (The celebration of light) or *El debate presidencial #YoSoy132* (The #YoSoy132 Presidential Debate).

While the previous chapter describes the context of "Mexican youth" during the period of time when the movement emerged, this chapter begins by describing the context of each activist on the very day of the first protest. The statement was clear across the interviews that the youths were politicized (*politizados)* prior to the emergence of the #YoSoy132. The expressions of this were still at an individual level and disconnected from one another, scattered, with actions like *theorizing* on the Internet, or having attended a couple protests, signing up for political affinity groups, studying political philosophy, reading the newspapers, etc. Something that did connect them was when they made references to historical memory, to cultural expressions, references to their local everyday life, and even the youth of their parents or of previous generations of activists.

The latter contrasted to the second aspect of the energy (the *spark*) that youth put and maintained into mobilization that year, it is the acquisition of *collective consciousness*. Without me having designed an interview question about this, or perhaps only having implicitly built in the whole interview process, the entering of *collective conciousness* was very explicitly articulated and described by most interviewees who had no experience with mobilization before. The key moments when this occurred were different to all participants who talked about it. It included emotions, intellectual and ideological compromises, and the sense of being part of something greater than themselves in history, in their generation, in the city, in the multitude.

I included key moments that detail the experience of being inside the multitude. The marches that are analyzed in this chapter aim at transporting the reader to those

spaces made by the youth. Without pictures, the testimonies describe the view from their subjective perspectives. Moments such as the March of silence where marchers were in silence, entering the Zócalo (Mexico city's main square) and finding thousands of candle lights and people holding an enormous banner saying "thank you, youth of Mexico…" would make this youth reassure their ownership of the city, their power to improve the country's democracy, and their subjectivity as change makers. That was the *spark* #YoSoy132.

The election came the day after that march of silence. The entire day is document with participant observation notes where I was inside the very headquarters of the operation called *Cuarto de Paz"* where students monitored electoral crimes from across the country. That day was an intense coordination with #YoSoy132 participants from everywhere in the country, an expression of horizontal, collective combined activism. When researching this key moment, the point was to understand the dynamics of combined activism which was possible through the electoral journey. However, the more interesting findings were related to framing of the movement. That night I was able to witness framing realignment of social movements as it was happening. The leaders of the movement congregated at this house after midnight and planned their public statements. The days following this event, I was also able to witness that these communications were only of junctural importance. The youth would take over the "leadership" of the movement and continue in mobilization with a different frame. Something that started with catharsis and would gradually derive into direct confrontations with the state which are the focus of chapter 4.

In chapter 4, I found that the changes in the state's approach or response to the activists of the #YoSoy132 was not a change in the political party that took office. It was more of a consequence of the protection of the establishment, the elections could not be interrupted by a bloodshed of students like in 1968 and subsequent years of student movement co-optation and infiltration. The tactics in which a democratic government attempts to control and deter mobilization would vary depending on the democratic priorities of the administration. It will also be impacted by power dynamics, time, and space. In other words, the months leading to the presidential election were not conducive for physical repression of the student movement, especially if this movement was in the pollical center of the country, Mexico City, and given that the cross-class constituency of the student movement was supported by and included youth with influencing social networks (online and offline).

The student movement in Mexico had long been infiltrated, harassed, and repressed by the state and even by particular political parties. #YoSoy132 was not the exception of this, the state attempted to burst the movement from within through co-optation of leaders, through the Internet, through under-cover agents, and publicly through repression. One of the most visual examples of co-optation of leaders was when mainstream media offered and performed "exclusive" interviews with student leaders on national television attempting to collapse the movement's approach to *horizontalism*. The youth in assemblies made it a rule to ostracize leaders who fell for *protagonism* and gave interviews without the assembly's consensus. It was early in the movement when an undercover agent of the judiciary infiltrated the movement and published information from one of the student leaders making claims of partisan support and affiliation.

The analysis of the days and years after the repression of December 1st show that the political tensions within the movement would survive its juncture. So many of the #YoSoy132 activists continued mobilized even if completely disarticulated. The government continued harassing and repressing youth in mobilization. During the years of 2013 through the present, criminalization of youth increased. This was most noticeable in the number of protests that were repressed, physically contained, and in the increasing numbers of arrested protestors.[2] Despite the challenges of enduring research with the hardships of repression, the story of the movement would not be comprehensive without the points of view of the political prisoners of #YoSoy132. Their experiences before, during, and after incarceration permeated with cultural and subjective significance for all #YoSoy132 members to the point that they changed their perspectives in the course of the first 24 hours of repression on whether or not to support the political prisoners. It was thus, a key part of the learning process for these activists. That is what generated my interest in the durability of the mobilization as subjectively experienced by young activists as a trajectory from the first moments of the spark to the hardest moments of repression.

Reflection

Like in the previous chapters and particularly in the introduction, my field work led me toward the theoretical approaches that I presented in this dissertation and continue to guide my work. One of the ways in which I recognized my own subjective changes was through my experience identifying prejudice while thinking about the movement's ethics

[2] Importantly, the #YoSoy132 activists became highly involved in the movement that followed the disappearances of the Ayotzinapa 43 on September 26 of 2014.

and values and another one was through the concept of *sospechosismo*. As explored in the third and fourth chapters, the concept is a kind of hegemonic force that inspires distrust and revives the role of surveillance as socially experienced. Thus, it also intersects with interpersonal relations. In my view and particularly through my research with the political prisoners, I experienced several months of fear that the safety of my data could be compromised and thus, that the confidentiality of my interviewees. As a preventative measure I subscribed to an encrypted data storage server; I also secured my data every day after having conducted research activities.

Could the question the question of youth entering collective identities have more abstract conceptual relevance? What makes young people engage politically for the first time? In my first years conducting this research I searched the answer to this broader question in critical analyses of the concept of *citizenship*. My case study about the #YoSoy132, even if being emphatically directed towards democratization and electoral processes, did not provide many answers using the concept of citizenship. Could this be due to the crisis of the nation state and the values that it represents? Could this be because the political rights of a person are thought to begin once the individual becomes "an adult" or "politically responsible" according to the parameters of procedural law? The lack on answers to these questions in the #YoSoy132 made me understand that this dissertation was not a case about citizenship. Instead, it was a case of disenchantment with the state and the need to change the political culture directed to youth studies and subjectivity.

The studies that undertake youth as a category of analysis are present across Latin American and the world because youth are at the forefront of mobilization. As an

example, young Latin Americans in the United States such as the *DREAMERS* or the *#IamUndocuQueer* have built social movements around topics of belonging and empowerment both celebrating and challenging traditional expressions previous social movements. With the newer understandings of identity and horizontal transversal anti-authoritarian mobilization, there is continued need for more engaged and nuanced research. One major lesson from this research is that I had to confront my prejudice and ideals in order to understand of youth. The latter would allow me to center the vice of young people and support them owning their own history. In other words, honoring the understanding of youth as change makers may require rethinking research methods and updating the scholarship as youth continue to challenge previous generations.

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BIOGRAPHY

Diana Karina Soto-Olson was born in Guadalajara, Mexico but grew up in Michoacán and Ciudad Juárez where she received her BA in Economics from the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juarez (UACJ). She received an M.A. in Government from New Mexico State University (NMSU) with a thesis about the militarization of Mexico and the responses of civil society. In New Mexico, she worked as a liaison between university faculty and staff and several human rights advocacy groups for immigrants. Diana Soto-Olson was awarded a fellowship by the School of Liberal Arts at Tulane University to complete a Ph.D. program at the Stone Center for Latin American Studies in August, 2011. Her studies were focused on Mexican Politics and Latin American social movements and her dissertation is about activists' political subjectivity. During her fieldwork, Diana worked with activists in the student movement #YoSoy132 in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Puebla from 2012 to 2015. She taught courses for Tulane University and Loyola University and worked for College Track New Orleans as student coach and tutor. She also participated in the Loyola certification program for interpretation and translation English-Spanish-English and volunteered with the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice in that capacity. From August 2017 until now, she has worked with the Center for Public Service in several appointments such as Senior Service-Learning Coordinator, Mellon Graduate Program Manager, and Assistant Director for Social Justice and Student Leadership Programs.