

Conflict Zones: Space, Time and Metalworkers' Protest in Chile, 1945-2005

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Abstract: McAdam et al. (2001) have developed an innovative guide for rethinking traditional social movement theory. Their integration of interpretive processes into the understanding of opportunity, mobilizing structures, framing, and repertoires; their relational account of multiple actors in interaction; and their proposal of the comparative identification of mechanisms and processes as the causal pathways explaining diverse cases of mobilization point the way toward a reinvigorated research program. This paper clarifies their argument by examining the role of spatial configurations in shaping four metalworkers' strikes under three political regimes in Chile. I deploy Lefebvre's (1991) concept of the production of space, Brenner's (2004) model of evolving state spaces, and work on space and contention to show how spatial configurations constrain and facilitate contention, while contestation over space, place and scale is central to contentious events. I conclude by exploring how a focus on spatiotemporal change enhances our understanding of contemporary protest in Latin America.

McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) [hereafter DOC] developed an important innovation on what they call the “classical paradigm” of social movement research. Their introduction of interpretive processes into the static categories of opportunity, mobilizing structures, frames, and repertoires emphasis on the relational character of mobilization and, their emphasis on mechanisms, processes, and episodes offer a more fluid and contingent understanding of contentious politics that foregrounds history, culture, and the interpretive practices of political actors. I seek to extend their approach by addressing the crucial role of space, place, and scale in shaping contentious action. I do so through an analysis of the changing role of space in four episodes of metalworkers’ mobilization in Chile during the past half century. I argue that activists’ repertoires are both shaped by and creatively respond to historically defined “state spaces” (Brenner 2004). The findings clarify that space, place and scale are constitutive of the mechanisms and processes that do the key explanatory work in DOC.

My conceptual approach to labor in Chile since 1945 provides a unique contribution to the substantive literature on contention and political change in Latin America. Few authors have systematically examined the evolution of social movements and protest across democratic and authoritarian regimes (for exceptions, see Sandoval 1993; Schneider 1995) yet I will show that political, cultural and institutional legacies for movement actors persist across political regimes. Further, analyses of protest and political change have mostly focused at the local (such as studies of urban social movements) or national scales, thereby missing how movements operate across multiple scales, geographic variations across movement organizations, and how the uneven geography of Latin American states shapes organizations located in urban vs. rural or capital vs. provincial cities (see Davis 1999 and Yashar 1999). Finally, the Chilean case is crucial because its military regime was the most labor repressive and free-market oriented of the South American

authoritarian regimes of the 1970s-1990s (Drake 1996), and yet the focus on local mobilization helps explain how and why protest occurred *in spite of* this most inhospitable context.

Protests operate in and often engage with space. Longer-term spatial configurations reflect state policies shaping administrative structures and socioeconomic development (Brenner 2004). Thus, the production of space (Lefebvre 1991) during specific historical eras both constrains and facilitates mobilization in distinctive ways. Within these relatively stable frameworks, movement actors develop repertoires drawing on spatial routines (Sewell 2001), the estimation of time-distance costs (Tilly 2000), scale jumping (Miller 2000), and the appropriation of ceremonial sites (Tilly 2000; Sewell 2001). Thus, spatial configurations fundamentally shape the mechanisms of social appropriation, brokerage, and competition; scale becomes a central stake of conflict among challengers and state officials; and the pendulum swing between contained and transgressive forms of contention coincides with shifts in the locus of action.

I develop this argument through an analysis of four contentious episodes carried out by the blue collar union at MADECO, Chile's largest copper manufacturer. I argue that state policies as well as managers and workers participated in the production of space in a manner that both facilitated and constrained contention. Prior to Chile's 1973 coup, managers and workers produced an infrastructure of housing, leisure, and workplace relations that served as mobilizing structures until the 1973 military coup, and some of which continued to nurture activism into the 1990s. By concentrating workers in housing blocs, management facilitated the promotion of their collective identities via their daily co-presence; and through social appropriation, the union used these institutions to facilitate mobilization.

During the 1960 strike, activists drew upon *perceived space* [the layout of the local built environment] (Lefebvre 1991) and the “free spaces” (Tilly 2000; Polletta 1999) within it to devise innovative repertoires. The union’s location in a left-wing municipality within the capital city metro area also reduced time-distance costs for activists who sought to ally with congressional officials. The 1960 strike involved competition among distinct movement actors over the scale at which organizations should be forged and protest should occur. Additionally, sympathetic newspapers and politicians framed the 1960 strike as a *defense of place* (symbolically meaningful space).

The 1965 strike reflected political learning among workers and managers, a more open political environment, and the state’s reclassification of blue collar workers as employees, permitting a new alliance between the firm’s blue and white collar workers. Strikers protested during a congressional session, utilizing a key ceremonial site, while legislators used the conflict as a rationale for extending the nationalization of the copper mining industry to copper manufacturing, hence reframing a local labor conflict as one in which the Chilean nation confronted transnational capital. The strike’s peaceful resolution shifted the scale of conflict downward to the shop floor level, while leaders became increasingly active in national politics. This pattern continued through the conflictive socialist administration of Salvador Allende (1970-1973). Management’s subsequent sale of homes in the housing bloc to workers also eroded the linkages between factory and workplace, while the union’s construction of a coastal summer resort created a setting later used to clandestinely rebuild the union.

After the 1973 military coup, the military and management transformed the local spaces of factory and residence. The military converted the workplace, union hall and housing bloc into terror-filled spaces during the dictatorship’s early period in which workers felt unsafe engaging

in daily conversation. After labor law reforms beginning in 1978, managers fragmented and partitioned the factory through moving work sections off site and renaming them as new firms, outsourcing on-site activities to temporary employment agencies, moving work sections to new buildings, and breaking workers' primary group ties by rewriting job descriptions following Just-in-Time management techniques. In addition to suspending congress and political parties, the regime also subdivided municipal governments, thus ending the unions' previous alliances with local political leaders and low income populations (Greaves 2005). The regime also shifted from a policy of employer and state built housing to a voucher system that further dispersed the workforce.

Notwithstanding these changes, workers struck in 1983 building on the clandestine appropriation of free spaces, the attribution of opportunity, and responding to changes in leadership, the labor law, and management repression. Unlike 1960, police thwarted strikers' efforts to bring their conflict to the street, effectively confining them to the union hall. However, previous efforts to build a citywide coalition of plant-level unions yielded a successful conference, and union members' support of a provincial construction workers' strike publicized the two conflicts. In 1993, workers struck again in response to management induced benefit givebacks, the hiring of a new worker cohort, and work speedups carried out beginning in the 1980s. In this context, opening political opportunities under civilian rule and legal changes favoring class action suits, gave union members more freedom to engage in direct action tactics in front of the firm and clandestinely during the night shift, building on the experience of younger recruits who had participated in 1980s pro-democracy protests. Further, strikers took advantage of the firm's vulnerability to public pressure by marching on the presidential palace while a meeting with international investors occurred in a hotel across the street. These findings

demonstrate that space crucially shapes mobilization and its preconditions, and distinct political contexts facilitate different spatial forms of mobilization and countermobilization.

I develop this argument through a summary of McAdam et al.'s (2001) research program and an analysis of how space, place, and scale influence mobilization. I then review my methodology. I continue with a spatial reading of Chilean politics and the labor movement before analyzing the four strikes at the MADECO union. The conclusion explores the implications of the analysis for theorizing contentious action.

Space and the Dynamics of Contention

DOC seeks to move beyond the “classic social movement model” they helped create by proposing a more dynamic approach to the study of contentious politics that facilitates comparison across different types of political conflict. This first entails recognizing the key role of interpretation in shaping the static categories of opportunity and threat, mobilizing structures, frames, and repertoires. Instead, they speak of the attribution of opportunity or threat, social appropriation of existing relations and institutions, the multiple actors involved in framing, and the continuum between contained (involving established actors and repertoires) and transgressive contention (including new actors or innovative/prohibited repertoires).

Having opened up the “static boxes” in the classic movement agenda, they also attempt to move beyond the single actor model inherent in that agenda to a relational understanding of contention. Thus, they explore competition between activists, and iterative exchanges between government officials, polity members, challengers, as yet unorganized subjects, and outsiders, all of whom engage in the same interpretive processes. They propose to focus on mechanisms (events that alter relations in similar ways across different settings), processes (regular sequences

of mechanisms), and episodes (streams of contention) across different forms of contention to isolate causal pathways (2001: 10-24 *passim*).

Their focus on mechanisms, processes, and episodes seeks to identify parallels across ostensibly different forms of politics to show that the same mechanisms can be identified in apparently distinct settings but that differing initial conditions, sequences, and combinations of mechanisms produce different outcomes (2001: 82-82, 87). The analysis of contrasting episodes (e.g. the formation of modern Italy is compared with the breakdown of the Soviet empire) is designed to show the value of isolating specific mechanisms and processes for further examination rather than comparing whole episodes, as well as the continuum between routine politics and social action and contentious politics.

The emphasis on mechanisms as the workhorses of explanation also links this book to contemporary discussions of temporality in historical sociology. Recent scholarship has used the ideas of path dependence (how critical junctures usher in self-reinforcing processes that are resistant to change) [Aminzade 1992; Somers 1998; Pierson 2004], transformative events that profoundly alter social structures and identities (Sewell 1996), and combined, conjunctural causation (how multiple mechanisms operate simultaneously to trigger and shape historical events) [Steinmetz 2004, 2005; Ragin 2004; for reviews of these debates, see Adams, Clemens and Orloff 2005; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2002]. DOC builds on these ideas by insisting that all contentious actions build on previous conflicts as well as local cultural and historical contexts, but that this specificity does not prohibit the discovery of common mechanisms across cases (compare Steinmetz 2004).

The DOC program is implicitly compatible with geographic understandings of political conflict, though McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) are less explicit about how their argument

might relate to discussions of space, place, and scale, even though Tilly (2000) explicitly addresses this topic, and space is an important empirical dimension of McAdam's and Tarrow's work. To be fair, DOC does explore the process of scale shift, through which contention expands beyond an initial group to a wider population (2001: 331). Additionally, Tilly (2003) further elaborates on the idea of scale shift by exploring the conditions under which contentious action becomes more modular and detached from local settings.

I argue that these initial clues need to be further elaborated both to enrich the DOC framework, and more importantly, to better understand the historical evolution of contentious action. Space has until recently played a minimal and undertheorized role in analyses of contentious politics. Recent studies offer an important corrective to this pattern (overviews include Tilly 2000, 2003; Sewell 2001; Auyero 2006; and Miller and Martin 2003). Many of these studies claim a special debt to Lefebvre's (1974[1991]) magisterial work. [Lefebvre \(1991: 27-30\)](#) [criticized](#) both the empiricist understanding of space as the immediately visible world and the idealist view of space as a purely mental construct. [In his view, space and society are mutually constitutive.](#) [As an alternative to these problematic](#) empiricist and idealist alternatives as well as the posited separation of society from space, he sought to develop a "unitary theory" linking mental, physical, and social space (1991: 11). To develop this model, Lefebvre utilized the concepts of perceived space (physical space that encompasses economic production, biological reproduction, and the physical layout of roads and transit networks), [conceived space](#) (the mental images and blueprints of space that architects, planners, and government officials develop and apply in architectural design and urban planning), [and lived spaces \(space as lived in, used, inhabited, and symbolically understood\) \[1991: 33, 38-39\].](#)

He used these concepts to understand the “production of space,” through which he sought to extend Marx’s theory of commodity production and the transitions between distinct modes of production. Lefebvre argued that the presence of an economic surplus, a dominant class and a political elite were preconditions for the production of new social spaces. However, elites begin with a conceptual model (conceived space) that they implement to create new perceived spaces that, in turn, generate new lived spaces. Lefebvre’s “unitary” theory demonstrates how the production of space inevitably involves power and social control. He argued that businesses and the modern state use abstract space, modeled on the image of a mathematical grid, to control national territories and secure the generation of profits (1991: 46-47, 78-79, 89, 234-82).

In his discussion of the contemporary era, he argued that the state had become critical to the extension of abstract space, to both homogenize and fragment lived space as a tool of social control and a means to reproduce capitalist social relations. The state seeks to reduce all space to an abstract grid to manage and control its citizens and to promote capital accumulation through the real estate, product, and financial markets. The state’s use of abstract space to colonize lived space (e.g., through urban renewal projects; highway construction that eliminates residential housing, pedestrians, and green areas; or in the sterile and alienating modernist design of low income housing in the form of “stacked boxes”), provokes opposition from marginalized populations or “users.” These groups propose “counter-projects” and create “counter-spaces” to retain a livable environment (e.g. through demands for decentralized government or opposition to urban renewal policies that displace residential homes) [1991: 306-339, 373-74, 380-83]. He further contended that space was becoming the principal stake of conflicts, that these conflicts occur at scales ranging from the local to the global, and that these scales often overlap (1991: 410, 412).

Returning to Lefebvre, the concepts of perceived, conceived, and lived spaces and the view of spatial conflicts as operating at nested scales from the global to the local become useful for organizing contemporary work on conflicts in and over space. Some analysts of the geography of protest emphasize perceived space, namely the role of spatial routines --repetitive, everyday activities occurring in specific locales-- in facilitating social protest. Characteristics of the local built environment can reduce time-distance costs for activists (the time it takes to reach allies and targets of claims), provide the context for spatial routines that facilitate mobilization, and offer free spaces where they can avoid state repression (Zhao 1998; Stillerman 2003; Sewell 2001; Tilly 2000; for a critique of the idea of free spaces, see Polletta 1999).

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Others emphasize the concept of place to understand the sources of social protest. For some, place simply refers to socially meaningful locations, and hence is analogous to Lefebvre's idea of lived spaces (Lofland 1998). Routledge (1993) understands place as *locale* (local social relations), *location* (local economic and political structures), and *sense of place* (local identities and sentimental attachments). This tripartite division makes place akin to Lefebvre's conceptual triad (compare Miller 2000 and Gieryn 2000). Routledge and others argue that place becomes a salient basis for social protest, as groups defend their place of origin and its traditions against outside incursions from capital and the state, and use traditional practices to effectively mobilize against protest targets. Finally, activists can create a sense of place through repeated protests at a given site (Routledge 1993, 1997; Steinberg 1998; Tilly 2000).

Scale refers to the geographical scope of social action (local, regional, national, and international). While scale was traditionally understood as a fixed set of levels, contemporary scholarship emphasizes the social construction of scale (Marston 2000; Miller 2000), and this view fits with Lefebvre's argument that social conflicts operate at intersecting scales. Miller

(2000) elaborates on the concepts of “scale jumping” and the social construction of scale, contending that movement organizations may seek to engage state actors at the national and international scales if they are unsuccessful locally. Moreover, activists and their opponents may seek to change the scale at which a movement is perceived to operate in order to gain popular approval. Hence, one group may attempt to frame the movement as local or national to discredit or promote it (Herod 1994).

The production of geographic scale provides an important context for social mobilization. Neil Brenner (2004) fruitfully explores this phenomenon through the interaction between globalization and state forms in Europe. He differentiates between state spatial projects (focused on the degree of centralization or decentralization of state administrative structures) and state spatial strategies (the geographies of state involvement in the economy). He shows how Western Europe has evolved during the past four decades from Keynesian state spaces that privileged the homogenization of economic development across the national territory to neoliberal state spaces that emphasize connections between metropolitan regions and global capital flows to maximize economic development. While his emphasis on the re-scaling of the national state in the context of contemporary globalization does not address contentious politics, his framework is a useful resource for considering how the production of “state spaces” facilitates and constrains social actors during a given historical period.

I propose to integrate these elements of spatial analysis into a mechanism and process based account of mobilization among Chilean metalworkers. I will argue that the production of space (and state spaces in particular) crucially shapes the institutions and relations activists can appropriate in order to mobilize; activists forge contained and transgressive repertoires as well as alliances by assessing time-distance costs, utilizing spatial routines, and drawing upon the

symbolic potential of ceremonial sites; and competition among activists and between activists and elites often entails struggles over the scale at which conflict shall occur and how places are framed. Elites, in turn, seek to shape and utilize space in their efforts to prevent, contain, neutralize, or repress mobilization. Space is thus an essential ingredient in mobilization and countermobilization.

Methodology

This article forms part of a larger study of the political and cultural transformation of MADECO workers under democratic and authoritarian regimes, 1945-1995. (Stillerman 1998). The study, conducted in Santiago, Chile from 1993-1995 (with two brief follow-up trips) relies on oral history interviews (N=100) as well as field notes based on daily visits to the union hall and participation in protests and celebrations. A stratified purposive sample was constructed (through snowballing and review of archival documents) that included all accessible former or current union leaders, workers from distinct sections of the factory, relevant political figures, and industry executives/board members. Interviews were triangulated for accuracy with press accounts, company documents, union files, and government ministry documents.

Labor and State Spaces in Chile

Before 1973, Chile's union movement played an important role in the country's political and social development. After its initial phase of illegal action and unions' legalization through the 1924 labor laws and 1931 Labor Code, the union movement was consolidated via the Chilean Workers' Confederation (CTCh, *Confederación de Trabajadores de Chile*) under the Popular Front administration of Pedro Aguirre Cerda (1938-1941). In spite of partisan conflicts and a harsh anti-communist law from 1948-1958, the movement gained strength under the National Labor Confederation (CUT), founded in 1953. The movement became more powerful,

institutionalized, and linked to parties from the late 1950s until 1973 (Angell 1972, Valenzuela 1976).

The 1931 Labor Code permitted the creation of industrial, professional, and (in 1967) agricultural unions. Alegal public sector associations (unions were illegal) gained considerable de facto power. Industrial unions organizing manual workers represented the bulk of union members. The law restricted these unions to the plant level, requiring a minimum of 25 workers in order to form a union, submitted them to significant supervision and financial control, and restricted their ability to strike through compulsory conciliation and the prohibition of raising strike funds. However, it offered them the closed shop, profit sharing and other benefits, facilitating their long-term continuity and development of infrastructure and activities. A Popular Front era law also required larger firms to supply all their employees with housing. (Morris 1966; Valenzuela 1976; Barría 1967; Angell 1972; Alexander 1962)

Professional unions that organized skilled and white collar workers (*empleados*) did not enjoy the closed shop or profit sharing, but members could negotiate at the inter-enterprise or confederal level. Empleados also received better salaries and benefits by law, so they had fewer incentives to join unions than did obreros. Because industrial unions were restricted to the plant level, were financially weak, and had traditions of political radicalism dating to the late 19th Century, they developed close ties to leftist political parties, who provided them with political and legal support, and the potential for coordinated action beyond the local scale (Angell 1972; Valenzuela 1976).

The spatial dimensions of the legislation were crucial. Because prior to 1973, most Chilean firms employed less than 25 workers, most workers were prohibited from joining unions. Moreover, the restriction of industrial union bargaining to the local level severely

limited the ability of unions to coordinate national action, though the local character of unions made leaders more subject to membership influence, and in principle, more democratic than larger unions. Finally, larger employers tended to build large housing blocs located close to the firm creating the potential for solidarity among workers outside the workplace. The division between blue and white collar worker created a socially constructed division in the daily life of the workplace and union hall, thus creating separate social spaces for blue and white collar workers.

Chile's pattern of import substitution industrialization beginning in the 1930s also had important effects on the geography of production and union action. Like many other Latin American states (De Oliveira and Roberts 1996; Davis 1999), Chile's leaders sought to locate many of the state supported firms created after the Great Depression in the capital city. In addition to the country's administrative centralization and unitary political structure dating back to the colonial area, this industrial policy intensified the pattern of urban primacy (the largest city is at least three times the size of its closest competitor). This policy gave industrial workers easier access to national political officials as well as opportunities for alliances with other unions.

After the 1973 military coup, the junta reversed unions' significant political influence by suspending political parties and Congress, attacking party militants, and suspending collective bargaining, union elections, and strikes by fiat and emergency decree. The regime replaced known leftist union leaders with the oldest workers in firms, and military officials supervised union meetings which could only be informational in character (Campero and Valenzuela 1984; Barrera and Valenzuela 1986).

Free market policies beginning in 1975 included currency devaluations, privatization, tariff reductions, and the elimination of firm and commodity subsidies. As a consequence, many industries failed, and those that survived reduced costs via mass layoffs and work intensification. These policies and the privatization of agricultural and forest lands led to a boom in non-traditional exports of fruit, wine, lumber, and fisheries as well as private sector services. While the reforms fueled a speculative bubble in the late 1970s, the economy suffered a severe recession from 1981-1983, when unemployment reached 30 % and many privatized industries failed. The economy grew from 1985-1997, after which it faced another severe recession resulting from the Asian, Mexican, Brazilian, and Argentine financial crises. From 2003 until the 2008 global financial crisis, the country was buoyed by unusually high world market copper prices (Martínez and Díaz 1996; Constable and Valenzuela 1991; Campero and Valenzuela 1984; Hachette and Luders 1992; Winn 2004b).

Labor law was a key to the reorganization of work and unions beginning in 1978. After vacillation over various modes of labor control, the junta permitted union elections as well as a series of new labor laws known as the Plan Laboral. The junta's late 1978 announcement of union elections followed a threatened boycott of the Chilean economy by the AFL-CIO.

The 1978-1982 decrees reduced wages, benefits, and job security. They also undermined union power by eliminating the closed shop, ending profit sharing, restricting the scope of contract negotiations, and reducing strikes' potential to benefit unions. The decrees also eliminated the labor courts. The provisions permitted employers to drastically reduce wages and benefits, fire workers at little cost, and change individual contracts at will. They made unions financially and organizationally weak, restrictions on strikes made them a limited tool for unions, and further restrictions were placed on the actions of federations.¹

The laws also had important spatial implications. The elimination of the closed shop allowed employers to create or support multiple company unions in the workplace, creating social and legal divisions within the workforce. The loosened restrictions on dismissals eroded the long-term continuities of specific groups of workers in a given workplace, thus breaking down long-term primary-group bonds. The capacity to outsource traditionally unionized activities (such as security, cafeteria, and construction staff) created further legal and social divisions among workers in the same factory, office, or work site. The growth of non-traditional exports also slowed the process of urban primacy, fueling the growth of provincial cities and economic sectors with weaker union traditions and less stable work arrangements. All of these phenomena undermined the erstwhile stable connections between workers linked to long-term co-presence in the same firm.

Notwithstanding these assaults on worker benefits and long-term ties in the work place, the resumption of union elections and collective bargaining reanimated unions. Opponents of the junta won in many of the first union elections. Moreover, a small, but significant number of unions struck to test the new laws' limits. The strikes followed early efforts at informal resistance in the El Teniente and Chuquicamata copper mines in 1977 and 1978 (Barrera and Valenzuela 1986: 248, 251, 259; Campero and Valenzuela 1984: 263-64, 276, 319-21, 335-36; Ruiz-Tagle 1985: 24-30; Winn 2004b: 36-38).

Prior to the emergence of this legal union activity, after 1973, union leaders from the pre-coup era tried to rebuild the labor movement. Christian Democratic (PDC) leaders who initially offered the government tacit support later became its first public opponents through the Group of 10 and the Democratic Union of Workers (UDT). 1977 witnessed the formation of the National Union Coordinator (CNS), uniting leftist and left-PDC union leaders from manufacturing and

mining firms; and the United Workers Front (FUT), unifying graphics and transit workers. The Confederation of Private Sector Employees (CEPCH), a preexisting national organization of white collar employees, also became active (Barrera and Valenzuela 1984: 236-38, 243-44; Ruiz-Tagle 1985: 20-22; Falabella 1989).

In May, 1983, the Copper Workers' Confederation (CTC), one of the few organizations with a strong mass base, called national protests against the regime. Women, students and the unemployed predominated among protesters; industrial workers participated in the evenings in their neighborhoods, but rarely did so in the workplace (Albuquerque and Zúñiga 1987: 52, Constable and Valenzuela 1991: 242-43). The protests legitimized the CTC and the other national labor groups as opposition leaders. After the first protest, most national labor groups unified within the National Workers' Command [CNT] (Falabella 1989: 234-35; Drake 1996: 135).

In 1988, the CNT promoted the formation of the Central Unitária de Trabajadores (CUT), adopting the old CUT's acronym. The CUT's statutes allowed national unions, plant-level union unions affiliated to federations or confederations, or individual unions with greater than 300 members to join the organization. At the organization's founding congress, candidates were elected according to four party lists and the most salient floor debate regarded whether or not the principle of "class struggle" should be included in the Declaration of Principles. The Christian Democratic contingent prevailed, and the clause was stricken (Angell 1995: 199, Drake 1996: 142-3).

After the Concertation of Parties for Democracy (the coalition of pro-democratic parties) prevailed in the 1988 plebiscite and Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin won the 1989 presidential election, CUT leaders hoped for substantial labor reforms. However, the 1991 and

2001 labor reforms made only minor changes in the Plan Laboral and the CUT had little influence on the process (Frank 2004: 78-79, 92-93; Henríquez 1999: 97-100). Unionization rates increased from 1986-1991, and then began to decline; strike levels peaked in 1991-1993, and then subsided (Frank 2004: 101, 107; Henríquez 1999: 97-107, 120); and from 1981-1998, unions' average size declined (Haagh 2002: 113).

Space and Contention among Chile's Metalworkers

In 1944, two Italo-Chilean businessmen with artisan roots, Américo and Aurelio Simonetti, founded MADECO. They already owned a major home appliance firm, MADEMSA, which they used to incubate MADECO. The firm, which makes copper and copper alloy industrial inputs for the construction, energy, telecommunications, and mining sectors, began with substantial support from the government's Corporation for Industrial Promotion (CORFO), which in 1958 sold its stake in the firm.

In 1966, the Simonettis hired two professional managers to replace them, and a year later, MADECO began a joint venture with General Cable (U.S.A.) and CEAT (Italy) to build a wire mill in Antofagasta, the northern Chilean city where one of its largest copper mines, Chuquicamata, is located. The Allende Administration took over the industry from 1971-1973 and workers participated in its management. A former manager took over after the coup flanked by a retired military official, one of Chile's largest business groups, owned by the Luksic family, purchased the firm in 1970. It has grown into a successful multinational business group since the 1980s.

Prior to 1973, the MADECO industrial union was one of the strongest in the metallurgical sector. Workers earned among the highest industrial wages, left parties dominated the union during the 1960s, and the organization spearheaded unionization in San Miguel, the

southern Santiago municipality where MADECO is located. The union also elected leaders to the metallurgical federation, the CUT and San Miguel's mayoralty. The union hall was also a social and political center in the neighborhood, including a school, clinic, gymnasium, library, and consumer cooperative and sponsoring activities for members and local residents. The union also maintains a large summer resort in San Sebastián, a coastal town. In short, the union was a major political force within the metallurgical sector and a fount of local social life (Stillerman 1998).

The union undertook four strikes during its history, each of which had different relationships to the organization of space at local, municipal, national, and international scales. The union was implicated in the production of space locally. Mechanisms present in the origins and trajectory of these strikes include the attribution of opportunity and threat, competition among challengers, brokerage, social appropriation, certification and decertification. The strikes oscillated between contained and transgressive mobilization repertoires. I contend that space is crucial to understanding social appropriation; strikers' reliance on spatial routines, safe spaces and assessment of time-distance costs in developing repertoires and alliances; competition with other actors over the scale of contentious action; and the materialization in space of the ebb and flow between contained and transgressive mobilization. Employers and state officials actively used spatial strategies to constrain and contain workers' resistance.²

The 1960 Strike

The 1960 strike involved violent hand-to-hand combat between strikers and their family members, police, and strikebreakers. Strikers' social appropriation of existing relations and institutions and transgressive repertoires reflected management's implementation of government

housing policy, the geography of industry in San Miguel, and union members' creation of a sense of place.

As part of a popular front era government policy, management built housing blocs for MADECO and sister firm MADEMSA workers, locating them just a few blocks from the factories. Subsequent government policies and agreements between the union and firm permitted the construction of housing cooperatives a few miles away. Union members developed fictive kinship ties to neighbors as well as coworkers living in other housing blocs. The firm used internal subcontracting to hire family and friends of existing workers, thus workplace relationships were embedded in strong ties. These relationships formed the basis of mutual recognition and solidarity in periods of conflict.

Prior to the 1960 strike, the first in the union's history, union members had participated in contained contention within and outside the workplace evident in wildcat strikes and slowdowns, participation in general strikes, collective bargaining, and participation in political parties and the metal workers federation. The 1960 strike emerged from escalating conflicts in the firm, social movement sector, and state arenas. In 1956, management conducted the firm's first mass layoffs after a government currency stabilization intensified a recession. In response to the domestic recession, management fired at least 180 workers, the first mass layoff in MADECO's history. Workers' previous loyalty to management and expectation of lifetime employment in return was shaken. In 1957, management took advantage of repressive laws to remove several communist union leaders after the organization's participation in an illegal walkout and march during a state of siege. Within the labor movement, the CUT developed a shift in repertoires. While they had led three short-term and organizationally costly general strikes during the 1950s, they called for

general strikes by economic sector. This strategy implicated the MADECO union as one of the largest and most powerful organizations within the metallurgical federation.

Shifts in national politics were also decisive. In 1958, congress revoked laws outlawing the Communist Party (PC). While a conservative president, Jorge Alessandri, was elected, opposition legislators had a significant presence. Alessandri sought to limit all private and public sector raises to below the rate of inflation, and delayed by several months convening labor conciliation and arbitration boards, effectively making all strikes illegal. The stage was set for a national confrontation between the president and unions. The CUT pursued its new strategy, and the MADECO union joined this national campaign, though with the goal of increasing workers' lump sum payments upon dismissal in light of the mass layoffs four years earlier.

It is important to consider why MADECO union members perceived opportunities for mobilization at this juncture. Given the conflict's illegality, workers' risk of dismissal, and the President's staunch opposition, it would seem an inopportune time for a strike. Nonetheless, mechanisms of certification as well as pressures demanding commitment pushed the union toward the conflict. The communist-led metallurgical federation wanted the MADECO and MADEMSA unions to strike to strengthen the resolve of smaller unions. The socialist presidents in both unions were skeptical about the sectoral strategy and the prospect of an illegal strike because of the risks they and smaller unions faced. In contrast, Eduardo Long, the CUT's socialist lawyer, counseled the two union presidents that he believed the strike was legal as did opposition legislators. The MADECO union's members saw the strike as an opportunity to gain more protection for workers upon dismissal, and were less aware of or interested in the national conflict. Thus, strikers received pressures and encouragement from national allies, but partisan disputes occurred over the appropriate scale of mobilization -- local or national?

Because the strike was illegal, the company was entitled to hire strikebreakers. In order to respond, the strikers adopted innovative repertoires that drew on features of the built environment and alliances with elected officials at the local and national scales. The location of the MADECO and MADEMSA housing complexes just blocks from the factory gates allowed strikers to adopt these strategies. Strikers initially used the housing blocs and union halls as safe spaces from which they launched small groups of attackers who awaited strikebreakers' arrival by bus to the factory in order to beat them and prevent their entry. After police blocked this tactic, strikers' spouses were central to a distinct strategy:

We had to change tactics. Workers' wives played an important role in this new strategy because the cops couldn't do anything to them. They [appeared to be] just women walking along the street. They had bags of flour, and threw it on the strikebreakers' backs... We had hit teams on Gran Avenida [near the factories], and when we saw someone with flour on their back get on the bus, we followed them. The fight moved from the factory gates to other parts of Santiago.³

In the strike's culminating conclusion, strikers using the union hall as a safe space when they stoned police vehicles passing the hall after police began shooting.

In addition to drawing upon features of the local built environment, strikers appropriated ties to local actors. Merchants provided them with food and necessities on credit, as did the unions' own consumer cooperatives. Additionally, the socialist mayor and congressman representing San Miguel, the brothers Tito and Mario Palestro allowed strikers to use city hall as a meeting space, organized a food collection campaign on the strikers' behalf, coordinated protest marches, and used *place* as a frame to the press and in special congressional sessions for interpreting police violence, arguing that police were attacking the people of San Miguel:

“The illustrious municipality of San Miguel organized this march...due to the shutdown of the metallurgical firms, local commercial activity has been impaired. For this reason, this movement to redress economic grievances has the broadest support of all [social] sectors.”⁴

Mario Palestro was the strikers’ most vocal supporter, organizing two congressional inquiries on their behalf as well as acting as witness to police brutality. He may have done so to support his own vulnerable position, as the death of a newly elected competitor to city council and rumors that the Palestros had killed him placed doubts on the election prospects in a by-election of his ally, Joel Cáceres. Cáceres had been the CUT envoy to the MADECO/MADEMSA strike, and gained significant support toward his ultimate victory from strikers.

The strikers benefited from significant brokerage and support from congresspersons, senators, and national labor officials. This fact reflected the union’s location in the capital city. Legislators were easily accessible due to low time-distance costs as well as the conflict’s high visibility within the national press. Legislators not only supported the strikers but were actively involved in transgressive contention by gaining strikers’ release from jail through use of their congressional immunity and denouncing police brutality. In contrast, a longer strike in coal mines located in the provinces did not receive nearly as much congressional support as did the MADECO conflict. After the shooting in the union hall, the CUT president and Senator Allende brokered a cease fire; and the union’s attorney, a MADECO manager and a business representative formed an arbitration panel that gained strikers’ reinstatement in their jobs.

This conflict demonstrates the significance of the attribution of opportunity and threat, social appropriation, brokerage, certification, and polarization in the origins of transgressive contention. Nonetheless, the production of space in San Miguel shaped strikers’ use of free

spaces and spatial routines, their appropriation of local institutions, and actors' framing of the conflict as a defense of place. Their proximity to local and national officials facilitated patterns of brokerage, engaged them in conflicts with other activists over the appropriate scale of conflict, and affected the shape of local politics.

The 1965 Strike

The 1965 strike is an example of contained contention, reflecting a more open political environment as well as strikers' collective learning after the hardships experienced in 1960. Strikers also benefited from certification and brokerage from national authorities and a more favorable economic context. Proximity to legislators continued to affect strikers' repertoires. The strike led to the displacement of conflict from the streets to the shop floor, and was followed by the creation of safe spaces that were important in subsequent conflicts.

Strikers adopted a more professional orientation already signaled by national political parties. They hired an accountant in order to study the firm's capacity to pay the lump sum payment upon dismissal they sought. A legal change also altered the relationship between the blue and white collar unions in the firm. Several categories of manual workers had the opportunity to be reclassified as white collar workers which gave them superior benefits. Their change in status and move to the white collar union created new alliance possibilities linking the two unions: "When the mechanics, lathe operators, and electricians became *empleados* by law, we joined the white collar union. Quite simply, we gave it life, energy, and the desire to struggle because we brought the mentality of the blue collar union with us."⁵

The strike was an example of contained contention. The newly elected Christian Democratic president and his political allies initially took a conciliatory approach toward organized labor, in sharp contrast to Alessandri's anti-union stance. Hence, MADECO workers

had the support (or at least the acquiescence) from the president as well as their congressional allies. Their strike was legal, and thus the violent clashes over neighborhood space were unnecessary. The low time-distance costs strikers faced in attending sessions of congress and accessing supportive legislators was still relevant to the conflict's outcome, as was the support of local officials.

Strikers took pains to paint the conflict as a reasonable one because of a consultants' report showing that the firm could afford the strikers' demand for a lump sum payment. They also keyed into a discursive shift within parties on the center and left that promoted professionalism and efficiency among union leaders and party officials. This discussion fed into a broader question debated in congress about the nature of the copper manufacturing industry, and specifically Chile's inability to manufacture high value-added products from copper even though its massive copper reserves would intuitively indicate that it should be able to do so.

The congressional debate over the MADECO strike contemplated the firm's nationalization in the context of the Chilean government becoming a partner with U.S. firms in the largest copper mines. The discussion focused on Chile's place within the international system and the results of the state's investment in private industry. Congressional officials wondered if the "nation" was not shortchanged because private investors exported minimally processed goods at a high profit, but did not accede to workers' just demands and sacrificed opportunities for Chile's industry to satisfy domestic demand:

Beyond the needs of this industry and others of the same type [to supply the domestic market] it has been exporting copper, apparently manufactured, but it's nothing more than wire rod or sheet. Abroad, they 'bite,' (as technicians say) these products: they melt them down to ingots and sell them on the international market...Neither the workers nor the country enjoy any part of these enormous profits.⁶

Hence, legislators shifted the strike's frame from local distributive disputes between management and labor to national policies shaping Chile's position in the global economy.

Strikers' location in the capitol made the time-distance costs low for protests at official government buildings. Strikers availed themselves of these opportunities by attending the special congressional session and threw coins at Christian Democratic congressmen who stalled in their support of a resolution favoring the union. Their actions provoked arguments and a fistfight between left-wing and centrist congressmen. They thus used congress as a safe space where they could subvert its sacred meanings (Tilly 2000; Steinberg 1998).

The strike's resolution on workers' behalf closed the chapter on public contention within the union for two decades. Nonetheless, the compromises leading to its resolution as well as a change in managerial personnel shifted the contours of conflict, its locus, and the actors involved. In order to gain the lump sum payment they sought, union leaders agreed to disqualify workers for the payment if they were caught stealing from the firm and to limit the number of retirees each year in order to safeguard the firm's profitability. Union leaders also gained the ability to carry out their duties full time, so they became more professionalized.

While leaders took on a more collaborative role with management, managers' attempts to rationalize production provoked shop floor mobilization to defend job descriptions and threatened positions. Engaging in guerrilla warfare with industrial engineers, workers were able to resist speedups and work intensification through the elimination of some positions:

You could say that the section is fulfilling the function of establishing standards for incentives. In this sense, the objectives of Industrial Engineering are undermined by the negotiation over incentives, where on many occasions the standards are unrealistic and loose. Time-motion studies [*estudios de método*] are not done prior to fixing standards, either. This is because of the union's opposition and the lack of personnel in the section (CADE, 1970, Appendix 5, p. 22).

Thus, rather than the neighborhood, the negotiating table, or the halls of congress, the shop floor became the principal site of conflict during the late 1960s and even under the socialist Allende administration.

The shop floor conflict that emerged involved the social appropriation of shop floor networks and built on preexisting repertoires. The union had a tradition of wildcat strikes to reverse dismissals or gain the removal of disliked foremen. Moreover, the work section was the primary group for most workers where reciprocity was developed on a daily basis, workers developed friendships, and candidates for office gained support. Workers later appropriated these shop floor relationships under the dictatorship: work was one of the few sites where such relationships could be maintained without incurring high risks.

The union also contributed to the production of space through its establishment, with management support, of a summer resort on Chile's Pacific coast. These actions created another venue for developing social networks among union members. Moreover, like shop floor primary groups, workers used the summer resort as a safe space during the dictatorship.

This conflict shows how elite actors can reframe the scale of a local conflict as national or international in order to link it to other policies. Additionally, it offers an example of protestors' effective use of ceremonial settings as safe spaces where symbolic repertoires can subvert their hallowed meanings. Furthermore, it shows how the consequences of collective action may shift the scale of conflict when grievances at one scale have been resolved.

The 1983 Strike

During Chile's three-year socialist experiment, the MADECO union had actively supported the Allende administration, and the state purchased a controlling interest in the firm. The firm's personnel manager, Jaime Deischler, a retired military official, conducted

surveillance during the period, and hence had a list of 300 alleged “terrorists” ready when the firm reopened a few days after the September 11, 1973 coup. The military intensified surveillance of the work place, union hall, and housing bloc through undercover intelligence personnel who reported to the personnel manager. They periodically frightened and humiliated the work force through individual threats or by forcing individual suspects to search for weapons in the firm. The use of terror against the work force made the maintenance of frank communication difficult if not impossible within the work place and union hall.

Nonetheless, workers used the shop steward system and summer resort as free spaces where potential leaders could gain visibility and clandestine organizing could reemerge: “The people at MADECO really supported me because I had worked two years on the San Sebastián [summer resort] commission as treasurer. They even wanted to elect me for a third term.”⁷ While the dictatorship outlawed union elections, collective bargaining, and strikes until the 1978-81 labor reforms, the junta allowed unions to function as vehicles of “communication.” This meant that the union retained its assets and a few minimal union functions remained.

The firm hired new recruits beginning in 1976. Two of these recruits were former university activists who worked with existing union members to revive an independent organization. One of them, Héctor Velásquez, played a crucial role in this process. While he began work within the factory, he applied for a position as custodian of the firm’s day care facility which meant that he lived on site. He met secretly with small groups of workers in the facility to reorient the union: “I held meetings in the daycare center since it was close to work. Five or six of us would get together there to propose ideas and try to influence the organization. In fact, we led the winning insurgent slate in 1981 which changed the union's direction. By then, we had another group in the brass mill.”⁸ Additionally, he had been working on a degree in

physical education before his expulsion from college for leftist political activism during the Allende administration. As a consequence, he was an avid and talented athlete. He participated in and often won annual “Olympiads” sponsored by the firm and union. Furthermore, he was active in the several sports clubs that continued to operate. In meals and gatherings following sports games, he discussed both party politics and union issues with veteran workers. This became another free space.

Because of workers’ appropriation of these interstitial spaces, they were prepared when the junta called union elections in late 1978. Though the law forbade electoral campaigns, workers who had organized clandestinely quickly identified a presidential candidate who had been shop steward in his work section. They passed out little pieces of paper (palomitas) as workers left the shift the day prior to the election with the candidate’s name, and he gained the most votes. Activists effectively used knowledge of workers’ spatial routines to win the election. After two years, a subsequent election brought in two new insurgents, Velásquez and Carlos Vargas. The former’s key role in sports and clandestine organizing was described above; Vargas had been president of the summer resort administrative committee and was a left party militant. Union members’ appropriation of these free spaces proved crucial in the election of an oppositional slate after a slight political opening of a very repressive regime.

Just a few months after the new leaders had taken office, the government decreed labor reforms permitting mass layoffs and allowing firms to suspend payment of quarterly bonuses due to economic hardship. The leaders began to organize a counterattack by criticizing the firm to the press and founding a newsletter. The union unsuccessfully fought off management’s attempt to suspend quarterly bonus payments in 1982, and with the dictatorship passing a law reducing the wage floor for upcoming contract negotiations, the union was poised to strike.

However, prior to the strike, the union's leaders began to develop alliances with other plant-level unions. While veteran national union activists had attempted to revive the old sectoral federations, these organizations had little capacity to mobilize affiliated unions; and multiple federations, each with a distinct party affiliation, claimed to represent each economic sector. As an alternative strategy MADECO leaders and the small cadre of dissident activists who supported them went door to door to visit union leaders throughout the Santiago metro area. Many of the leaders refused to speak to them for fear of repression. Nonetheless, the union succeeded in organizing a meeting in the MADECO union hall with the attendance of 300.

The significance of this effort to link plant-level unions is twofold. First, it represented an effort by the MADECO union leadership to shift the scale of mobilization from the local to the metropolitan scale, given that they had little confidence in putatively national organizations. Second, the workers premised their discussion with a new discourse about autonomy from political parties. The activists who formed the Metropolitan Inter-union Conference (*Conferencia Intersindical Metropolitana*, CIM) had been involved during the Allende administration in small ultraleft parties that pushed for "workers' control" which entailed factory takeovers and horizontal ties among unions located in large industrial boulevards. They opposed the PC and CUT's top down strategy of only organizing large unions permitted under the labor law via sectoral federations as well as their gradualist approach to revolutionary change.

Under the dictatorship, they hoped to build a new collective identity among workers that was not tied to political parties, but that was heir to the traditions of union mobilization. They objected to the parties' assertion of movement leadership taking action to link together plant-level unions. They also perceived workers as fearful of association with political parties, and hence for practical reasons, as well, they adopted a non-partisan identity. Thus, the CIM was a

simultaneous effort at identity shift and scale shift, which proposed a local, place-based model of organization as opposed to a national, hierarchical one.

The creation of this organization, in addition to the brokerage function that linked together formerly unconnected plant-level unions, opened the organization to a small cadre of political activists who supported its goals. This group, in addition to doing coordinating work for the CIM, organized a number of cultural activities for workers in the MADECO union hall – music lessons, theatre groups, etc. – as a way to enliven this space which had been previously left unused. This example of social appropriation was an important, though short-lived effort to construct new mobilizing structures.

During the course of the strike, space became a principal weapon management and military officials turned against strikers. While strikes were legal, they operated under conditions of dictatorship. Strikers' former parliamentary allies had been arrested, murdered, or exiled, and open party activity was illegal and punishable with severe repression. Furthermore, the junta consistently repressed public protests. Thus, in contrast to the 1960 strike, when strikers disputed control over the street with police and strikebreakers, or 1965, where their public actions were peaceful; in 1983, police effectively contained protestors within the union hall. When the firm began to hire strikebreakers, strikers were unsuccessful in their attempt to deter scabs at the factory gates because police attacked and repressed the strikers. When strikers tried to persuade job applicants at a remote site not to apply for jobs, police beat and arrested them as well: “[The leaders] state that some of them were harassed, insulted and punched. Héctor Velásquez was interrogated while ‘blindfolded’ about ‘the reasons for the strike and its ‘political character’ and was told that ‘it was just like Colbun Machicura.’”⁹ Thus, police and management effectively used a strategy of enclosure to prevent strikers' public manifestations.

One wonders why workers decided to strike under such inauspicious circumstances.

Chile was enduring an economic crisis, unemployment was high, recent laws had eliminated any remnants of job security, and the dictatorship ran roughshod over public assemblies. Loveman (1998) suggests that individuals who are embedded in dense and diverse networks and who hold preexisting political or moral commitments are most likely to engage in “high risk” activism.

While this general argument seems to apply in this case, I would suggest that involvement in a legal strike during a modest regime opening is less risky than the human rights activism she describes in the early period of the Chilean military regime. In this somewhat more open context, I would supplement her argument with the concept of the social attribution of opportunity and note the shift from contained to transgressive contention help to understand workers’ decision to strike. While strikers were well aware of their disadvantages and threats from management and the police, they saw the strike as the only means to defend their jobs and benefits and as an effort to test the limits of the new law that limited strikes to 59 days. The strike was also a principled stand against both management and the dictatorship. Thus, the opportunities of success were less important to many strikers than taking a stand against the dictatorship. As the strike proceeded past one month, some strikers crossed the picket line and the company began to hire strikebreakers. A debate ensued within the union about whether to continue the strike, and if so, for how long. Some recommended returning to work, others recommended continuing until the legal limit of 59 days, while still others called for continuing the strike indefinitely to its “final consequences.” Ultimately, the strike ended at 59 days, a middle position between the more pragmatic and principled extremes. Nonetheless, the fact that a group of strikers hardened their resolve in the face of evident threats shows that

strikers did not merely engage in a rational calculus of opportunities and threats. Additionally, the presence of allies in the CIM may have stiffened strikers' resolve.

The decision to go on strike was also an escalation of a long period of contained transgression beginning in the late 1970s. While leaders and activists took incremental steps to rebuild the organization through clandestine and open work, at each juncture, managers escalated their attacks against the union. This process of polarization led activists to engage in the high risk strike.

After the strike's conclusion and new union elections, only Velásquez was reelected and management promptly dismissed the losing candidates (who were no longer protected by law against dismissal) as well as 100 strike activists. Additionally, managers attempted to encourage blue collar union members' shift to the weaker white collar union in an effort to destroy the blue collar union through attrition.

Union leaders and supportive activists continued work to rebuild the labor movement from the grassroots. The MADECO union leadership helped form a series of organizations grouping together plant-level unions in San Miguel and disputed national leaders' focus on pro-democracy protests instead of organization building. Leaders unsuccessfully attempted to gain small unions' admission to the CUT's 1988 constituent congress. While CUT rules only accepted unions affiliated with federations or with more than 300 members, the MADECO union leaders argued that all unions should be able to send representatives. The Congress's presiders blocked this demand as well as independent and communist union leaders' call to insert the concept of "class struggle" into the CUT's Declaration of Principles. However, Velásquez forced his way to the microphone stand at the Congress, and shouting over the moderator, declared, "the class struggle is as real as the law of gravity."¹⁰ These efforts exemplify competition between

distinct political currents claiming authentic representation of trade unions, union members' and leaders' creation of a sense of place within San Miguel, and the crucial role of scale in disputes over organizational form.

The MADECO leadership, with union members' support, also opened the union hall to proscribed political parties and national union organizations so that they could hold their party congresses:

MADECO played a very important role during the dictatorship. Beginning in 1980, its hall has been of great importance to the national labor movement. There were always meetings there. The other halls were more politically defined. CONSTRAMET [a metallurgical federation] was identified with the PC. On the north side of Santiago, you had to meet in the church. MADECO was one of the few politically neutral spaces.¹¹

The union hall served as a safe space for these organizations, which ostensibly was more secure than a more visible location in downtown Santiago. The hall was not entirely safe, however, as police raided some of these meetings and arrested attendees. Their provision of access to the hall underscores the importance of safe spaces to the organizational work of challengers to a polity in repressive settings.

The 1983 strike underscores the crucial role of the social appropriation of safe spaces as building blocs for mobilization in repressive settings as well as the roots of transgressive contention in preexisting patterns of contained contention. It also shows how repressive governments can utilize spatial enclosure to shut down public protests. Finally, it demonstrates the crucial role of scale as the stake of conflict among competing movement actors.

The 1993 Strike

The 1983 strike temporarily debilitated the MADECO union, but it also set in motion processes that permitted subsequent contention a decade later. These changes related to the shift

in the firm's personnel as well as the reorganization of production. Routine shop floor conflicts became the basis of public protests as well as internal dissension within the union. Additionally, the political opening following Chile's political transition transformed the military's relationship with the firm, labor laws affecting unions, and activists' attribution of opportunity and threat.

After dismissing over 100 activists, the firm hired a new cadre of workers. New hires expanded as the economy reactivated in the mid-1980s. The younger workers had few explicit connections to the union movement, but they had been involved in the 1983-86 street protests and were familiar with the protest repertoires adopted there: "I participated in the protests during the mid-1980s. I was a kid. I wasn't married, so I didn't have any major responsibilities... We used to risk everything. We used to get in a van and pass out pamphlets promoting the party line."¹² Their involvement in this distinct movement sector made them familiar with different repertoires and gave them a different political styles, creating a new dynamic in the 1993 strike.

Shifts in managerial practice in the late 1980s heightened workers' resentment. Managers adapted Japanese-style Just-in-Time (JIT) and Total Quality Management (TQM) techniques to the firm in a manner that intensified work without offering laborers anything in exchange. In practice, management modified job descriptions so that machine operators previously in charge of a single machine might operate several machines. They also reduced buffer stocks so that the firm produced only as orders came in, reducing slack time. Line workers gained increasing responsibility for quality control, which formerly was limited to a separate work section at the end of the production process. In the setting of Japan, core workers receive greater responsibility in exchange for lifetime employment and a generous benefits package (Womack et al. 1990). At MADECO, as in other plants in Chile, managers increased

workers' responsibilities without any additional compensation (Errazuriz 1990; Echeverría and Herrera 1993).

The company updated machinery with computerized monitors that helped managers reduce down time. Additionally, the closure of the Antofagasta plant and its installation in the Santiago firm headquarters had ramifications for work speed. Because workers in the Antofagasta plant had not been influenced by the union traditions in Santiago, they were more compliant with management. Thus, managers would send individual workers from the telephone section to other sections to pressure workers to speed up production. In sum, managers reorganized the internal space of the plant in an effort to increase surveillance of workers, break down primary work group solidarity, and to intensify production.

Workers' organized response to these changes did not occur until the early 1990s. After the 1990 inauguration of Chile's first elected civilian president since 1973, two crucial changes affected union members' perceptions of opportunities. First, a modest labor reform in 1991 permitted class action suits against firms for underpayment of quarterly bonuses. Union members alleged in a class action suit that MADECO had underpaid these bonuses from 1989-1991. They also successfully sued management for underpayment of overtime wages. Second, in 1992, Osvaldo Romo, the intelligence service interrogator who had worked in MADECO in 1974 was extradited from Brazil for human rights violations. In a magazine interview after his return to Chile, he commented that he had worked at MADECO under Deischler's supervision. Apparently as a consequence of this publicity, Deischler left the firm. His departure lifted a cloud of fear over workers.

In response to the union's class action suit, management attempted to bust the blue and white collar unions by creating non-union negotiating groups and pressuring union members to

sign away their rights to sue the firm. Much of the white collar union's membership joined the non-union group, and the remaining members voted to withdraw their suit. Only a few blue collar workers joined the blue collar non-union group, and the union decided to strike in order to maintain the contractual clause that was the basis of the suit.

The strike resembled the 1960 conflict more than it did the 1965 or 1983 strikes. Its spatial organization was also distinct from those conflicts. Rather than the MADECO housing bloc (where few current workers now lived) or the union hall, members used the union federation building they owned (located immediately across the street from the firm's administrative offices) as a safe space. Operating under a government that owed its election in part to trade union mobilization and that wished to distinguish itself from the dictatorship, strikers felt emboldened during this conflict.

Post-1983 recruits were at the forefront of the conflict, much to the surprise of older workers who believed they lacked class loyalty. These workers adopted repertoires common during the neighborhood street protests. They disrupted scabs' spatial routines by banging on garbage cans and tooting cornets, creating an unbearable din for office staff and replacement workers who had crossed the picket line. They also stoned buses carrying replacement workers into the firm, much as unemployed youth had stoned police vehicles during the 1980s protests. Additionally, they clandestinely sabotaged company trucks, using the factory as a safe space due to lax supervision during the night shift:

We knew that a peaceful strike wouldn't work, so our goal was to intimidate management... We had a group that got together at night and cut the electricity, flattened truck tires in the warehouse, and blocked strikebreakers' entry to the firm. Most of the leaders had no idea about this. We had a sort of parallel organization of rank-and-file workers from both plants that organized these sabotage actions.¹³

In addition to the use of proximity to intimidate management, the union strategically identified a visible and symbolically charged target for protest, delivering their strike demands to the presidential palace. This gesture represented the recovery of pre-coup democratic traditions and placed the president in a vulnerable position because inevitable media coverage might tarnish his image if he did not respond to the strikers.

More significant than the protest's political symbolism was its location across the street from the Hotel Carrera, owned by the Luksic family (the firm's owners). Strikers learned that foreign investors were visiting the owners that day, and they inferred that these investors might be negotiating MADECO's initial stock offering on the New York Stock Exchange. MADECO was the first Chilean company to list on the NYSE, and certainly the Luksic family would be concerned that foreign journalists might learn of industrial conflict at the firm:

The most important event was when we marched at La Moneda. Since investors were staying across the street, management agreed that afternoon to drop its demand that we withdraw the lawsuit. We met with a staff person at the Ministry of Interior. Our wives and kids marched there with us. At first, we thought the police wouldn't let us march, so we arrived in small groups. The police surrounded us, spoke with our lawyer, and allowed us to continue if we weren't violent or disrespectful. All the press covered the march.¹⁴

Strikers managed through a single action to engage objects at two distinct scales – national and global. Exploiting the firm's, president's, and foreign investors' vulnerability to negative media exposure, strikers utilized the "boomerang effect" without ever contacting activists in developed countries, as is common when utilizing this strategy (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

MADECO appealed the suit up to the Supreme Court, and the latter ruled in the union's favor. Management eventually settled with the union in 2002. Immediately following the strike, conflicts continued as management offered non-union groups a vacation bonus. Again without the knowledge or blessings of most of the union leaders, workers staged a cafeteria protest (a

repertoire developed in the late 1970s by copper miners) in which they overturned their lunch trays and threw food at supervisors: “Management thought, ‘If we don’t reestablish discipline now, it will cost us more later.’ So, they organized a military operation with ambulances, detectives, two busloads of police, and vans to prevent any conflict.”¹⁵ Management secured the arrest of all those involved and pressured them to resign or face criminal proceedings. While workers had identified a vulnerable space within the factory, the company’s access to police power made the protestors no match for them.

The 1993 strike illustrates how shifting the location of action influences the shape of transgressive repertoires. It also shows how the introduction of a new actor from a different movement sector (former shantytown protestors) can reactivate transgressive mobilization where it had been contained. Strikers’ use of a symbolic and strategic site of mobilization as well as their ability to jump scales was crucial to the strike’s outcome.

Conclusion

McAdam et al. (2001) have developed a profound agenda for reshaping the study of contentious politics. Their introduction of interpretation to social movement processes, their relational approach to the multiple actors involved in contention, and their use of mechanisms and processes to understand the causal pathways of mobilization across space and time open a needed avenue for the comparative study of contentious politics.

I extended this innovation by integrating space into their research paradigm. I argue that the production of space (Lefebvre 1991) is crucial for understanding activists’ social appropriation, alliance building, and transgressive repertoires that utilize safe spaces and spatial routines. Protestors’ time-distance costs affect the alliances they may build and the outcomes of

mobilization. Scale is a principal stake of conflict among movement actors, and becomes the basis for distinct frames for activism.

This analysis contributes to the literature on Latin American social movements that has primarily focused either at the neighborhood or national scale without examining the crucial ways that space, place, and scale shape mobilization. However, the few studies that do explore the role of space in contention amply show the necessity of this approach. Yashar (1999) and Davis (1999) suggest that the uneven reach of Latin American states facilitates the emergence of indigenous movements in peripheral areas because states have little capacity to control, observe, or provide services to these populations, while urban movements have greater access to decision makers. Auyero (2003) shows how rioters plan protest routes to sack specific sites with particular symbolic value as targets, while Auyero (2007) shows the reciprocal interactions between geographies of policing and geographies of protest. Finally, Rothman and Oliver (1999) develop the concept of “nested opportunity structures” to understand the linkages and reciprocal influences between Brazilian protestors and national and international allies.

This paper contributes to this incipient discussion by showing how protestors’ and elites’ spatial strategies vary across time as a consequence of both long term spatial projects and strategies (Brenner 2004) that shape the geography of political institutions and economic activities as well as short term political changes that affect the perceived opportunities and strategies adopted by activists and elites. Through the analysis, we see the crucial connections between the geography of policing and activist strategies and alliances, contestations over scale among competitors within distinct activist organizations, the geographically-inflected symbolic framing of conflicts by activists and elites, the evolving role and location of safe spaces in the planning and execution of innovative repertoires, and the diffusion of spatial strategies across social movement sectors. The

DOC program is not only complemented by geographic thinking; the framework needs a spatial imagination in order to effectively operationalize the mechanisms and processes that are central to its explanatory goals.

In this regard, the inclusion of space in the analysis is not designed to “add another variable” or mechanism to the mix. Rather, I have shown that spatial variation and its strategic appropriation by activists are materially and symbolically constitutive of mobilization. Thus, an analysis of causal pathways through the identification of mechanisms necessarily must attend to the role of space in shaping mechanisms and processes of contention.

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ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Detailed reviews of the laws are in Campero and Valenzuela (1984: 125-50), Barrera and Valenzuela (1986: 253-60) and Ruiz-Tagle (1985: 45-75).
- ² My accounts of these strikes summarize the more detailed and fully documented accounts in Stillerman (1998, 2003, and 2004).
- ³ Marcos Medina, *op cit.*; Angel Mendez, 22 June 1994; Arturo Osorio, 13 May 1994.
- ⁴ "San Miguel marcha hoy sobre Santiago: en apoyo de los trabajadores de Madeco y Mademsa," *El Siglo*, 20 June 1960, 1.
- ⁵ Interview with José Pérez Rodríguez, 26 May 1994.
- ⁶ Chile, Cámara de Diputados, "-Conflicto que afecta al personal de la industria MADECO.-Inserción de documentos.-Proyecto de acuerdo," Sesión 20, 18 November 1965, 1884.
- ⁷ Interview with Juan Fuentes, 9 March 1995. Fuentes was later shop steward and president of the 1983 strike committee.
- ⁸ Interview with Héctor Velásquez, 13 January 1995

⁹ “Dirigentes de Madeco quieren hablar con Mardones,” *Las Ultimas Noticias* 18 February 1983, 10; Cabezas, *ibid.*

¹⁰ “Triunfa posición DC en principios de la CUT,” *Mercurio*, 21 Aug. 1988, C7; interviews with Lucho, 23 March 1995; Héctor Velásquez, 16 March 1995; (Drake, 1996, p. 142; Drake and Jaksic, 1991, pp. 199-200).

¹¹ Interview with Humberto Arcos, 10 January 1994. Arcos was a leader in CONSTRAMET and president of the Metropolitan Workers Command. See below.

¹² Interview with Manuel, 14 November 1996.

¹³ Interview with Arturo, 21 November 1996.

¹⁴ Interview with Angel, November 9, 1993.

¹⁵ Interview with Velásquez, *op cit.*