

Contested Narratives

Challenging the State's Neoliberal Authority in the Aftermath of the Chilean Earthquake

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“I have come to the conclusion that taking your body out to the street is the most political act you can perform,” a long-time women’s rights activist whose mother had been tortured by Pinochet’s dictatorship said to me in August 2011. We had just emerged from the CS tear gas cloud that hung around the Baquedano Metro station in downtown Santiago, Chile, during one of the widespread student protests there that year. She has participated in many protests over the past four decades in Santiago, but the police repression that day, she said, was stronger than she had seen in a long time. Indeed, many social observers noted that the *mano dura* (heavy hand) of the dictatorship era seemed to be reemerging under the first postdictatorship right-wing president, Sebastian Piñera. Potent tear gas grenades, manufactured in the United States, were launched indiscriminately into the crowds, exploding at the feet of protestors, the majority of whom that night seemed to be adolescents. Army cars, nicknamed *zorrillos*, sprayed tear gas as they patrolled the streets. A helicopter flew overhead with a searchlight to spot groups to target for dispersal. Large tank-like vehicles, windows covered in wire, sprayed protestors with heavy jets of water mixed with CS gas, even as protestors attempted to flee the chaotic scene. The repressive apparatus of the Chilean state reacted in similar fashion to social movements’ protests against the inaction of the state in the wake of the earthquake/tsunami of 2010.¹ Protests and social movements have historically been part of the fabric of Chilean society, reaching an apex during the waning years of the dictatorship in the late 1980s. Many of the current protests reflect widespread dissatisfaction with growing economic inequality and vulnerabilities, more than two decades after the end of Pinochet’s dictatorial regime.

The 2010 Chilean Earthquake and Tsunami in the Context of Neoliberal Reform

Chile occupies a particular history in terms of its relationship to the consolidation of global neoliberal regimes. Following the military-backed coup in 1973, the Chilean state's neoliberal economic policies articulated with other manifestations of state violence against its citizens, including murder and torture, in addition to more-insidious repressive measures. The macroeconomic successes of the so-called Chilean miracle² often serve as justification for the seventeen-year dictatorial regime.³ Chile's macroeconomic situation makes it a middle-income country. Chile has the highest level of income inequality among the thirty-four member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; 2011). Nevertheless, Chile is widely touted on the global stage as exemplary of the successes of the neoliberal economic model.

February 27, 2010: 8.8 Magnitude Earthquake

The disaster of February 27, 2010, occurred in this neoliberal context. On that day, various regions of southern and central Chile suffered an 8.8 magnitude earthquake, which produced a powerful tsunami in coastal areas. Regions outside of the capital city of Santiago suffered the most, though some zones of Santiago saw condemned buildings and severe damages as well. The government's official death toll was 524, with 31 people reported missing (Gobierno de Chile 2011). The events of February 27, 2010, or F/27 as they are popularly called in various Chilean media, affected people differentially depending to a large degree on the fault lines of the social inequalities that structured vulnerabilities prior to and following F/27 (Adams, Van Hattum, and English 2009; Gunewardena and Schuller 2008). The regions that were the worst hit by the disaster were also the most poverty stricken of Chile. Adding to the precariousness in which many in these areas already lived their lives, 279,000 families lost their homes (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2010). This situation left many to live semi-permanently in *campamentos* (camps). Two years later, many continued to inhabit these lodgings that were intended to be temporary.

Competing Truth Claims about the State and Everyday Life

Claims by the state and by social movements about the events and aftermath of F/27 constitute not only narratives about reconstruction, but also

more-generalized, and opposing, narratives of the Chilean nation-state and the effects of neoliberal political economies. As global media attention is drawn to disasters, the Chilean state has sought to portray itself as powerful, authoritative, in control, and a bastion of modernity (see also Brown and Minty 2008). Meanwhile, Chilean activist groups protesting their exclusion from the benefits of the Chilean miracle, whose exclusion became only more apparent and dire on F/27, mobilized to protest the state's mishandling of the disaster and its aftermath, especially in poorer regions. These activist groups were oriented to the global as well, joining the globalized protests against economic inequality and neoliberal hegemony—such as the Global Call of the Indignant in Spain and Occupy Wall Street in the United States. Conflicting narratives of disasters, their aftermaths, and reconstruction often spring up in the aftermath (Oliver-Smith 2004, 10). States, private enterprise, local communities, and other actors have different stakes in the maintenance or contestation of “official” narratives (Button 2002), and they draw from and create competing forms of knowledge about the disaster as different forms of knowledge that emerge in its aftermath (see chap. 6 by Barrios, this volume; Button 2011a).

Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski (2006) have observed that media promote disaster myths in the wake of catastrophe that serve to bolster the state's authority and justify its use of repressive tactics on the populace. For example, a looting frame is common and Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski (2006) illustrate how this narrative, along with the frame of a war zone, were used to justify military intervention and martial law in post-Katrina New Orleans, and to show the necessity of the state for national security. This frame was also used in Chile, as media emphasized the lawless and dangerous nature of those who were stealing food from supermarkets in the wake of the disaster. However, Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski (2006) point out that often people are desperate and stealing food is not simply violent mob mentality but is largely a mode of survival under dire circumstances. It is important to note that similar to stealing food in the aftermath, post disaster social movements are produced largely out of desperation, not necessarily long-standing political activism against the state. However, new social media and the ubiquity of smart phone technologies in many places, as in Chile, make it possible for people in these crisis situations to talk back to the looting frame and purvey their own narratives of post-disaster realities on the ground, for consumption by national and crucially, for global audiences. They make counter claims about the post-disaster authority of the state, pointing to gaps in the state's provision of care prior to and in the aftermath of the disaster and therefore to the state's weaknesses.

This chapter builds on these rich theoretical frameworks about media, narrative, and power to show how the state's hegemony is at stake in its

deployment of narratives of authority and mastery in the post-disaster period, in part because of the state's need to assert itself as sovereign in the global context. It shows first how the Chilean state produces narratives that align the nation-state with modernity and "Empire," and asserts its authority through donation of humanitarian aid to Haiti in the wake of their 2010 earthquake, which occurred about a month before F/27. Then it examines the Chilean state's narrative of recovery, transmitted to the global stage in the wake of F/27 and the chronic disaster that has ensued (Adams, Van Hattum, and English 2009). The state used its spectacular rescue of the thirty-three miners in front of global media to bolster its narrative of Chile's technological modernity and mastery and therefore its belonging to the "first world" or "Empire" (Donini 2008), its belonging to the global North. Social movements have emerged in the wake of F/27 to assert their claims of the state's failures to act on their behalf following the disaster and their demands for inclusion in the state's reconstruction plans. In opposition to the state, these social movements proclaim the value of their members' lives and highlight to local and global communities that the state lacks authority and moral conscience. They assert that they are citizens who matter, and they assert this on a global media stage. They refuse to be what Agamben (1995) calls "bare life"—that is, persons with no political rights. Similar to the biological citizenship that Petryna described in the post-Chernobyl landscape (Petryna 2002), they assert their belonging to the state based on damages they have incurred. They make claims to and about the state's neoliberal successes in the process.

Resistance can be seen as an index for power (Abu-Lughod 1990). The greater the power, the greater the resistance it produces and the greater the power of the resistance, the greater the repressive response. The various social movements that have emerged since 2010 in Chile, including movements around reconstruction, are based broadly on claims to citizenship and a critique of the power of the state's implementation of *el modelo* (the neoliberal model), a set of policies and practices that people deem to negatively affect their lives, similar to contemporaneous social movements globally. These reconstruction-based social movements emerged within a wider ethos of social unrest on the registers of the local, the nation-state, and the global during 2011. Within Chile, people are increasingly disillusioned by the state's promises of democracy, citizenship, and prosperity, which many feel have not been fulfilled following the official end of the dictatorship. Various Chilean movements, including the student movement for quality education and the movement for fair reconstruction, have banded together and also consciously linked their agenda to social movements for democracy that occurred throughout the world during 2011. As social movements seek to show the failures of the Chilean

state to both national and global communities, through protests at times peaceful and at times violent that become media spectacles, the state in turn represses this expression through military force. Activists' counter-narratives of the aftermath of the disaster threaten the narrative of the Chilean nation as exemplar of neoliberal success on the world stage.⁴ But activists and protestors have new tools to get their messages out to one another, to wage their campaigns, and to project their narratives to national and global audiences. The use of new Internet media such as YouTube, Facebook, and groups like Anonymous have shifted the balance and allowed for local political battles between citizens and the state to articulate with the global in novel ways. New possibilities for linkages among social movements throughout the world continue to emerge. As realities of inequalities and poverty emerge within Chile and are projected throughout the world under the spotlight of disaster, the state's narratives of mastery and authority act as a mask for the state's lack of authority and power. As Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski (2006, 74) note, "Ways of telling are also ways of not telling." Social movements in the wake of disaster make this reality more visible to global actors and challenge the power of the state. This chapter argues that part of the fair reconstruction movement's aim is to show the weakness of the Chilean state on the global stage in order to pressure the state to act on its citizens' behalf.

State Narratives of Empire and Technological Sophistication

A common refrain throughout the global media in the wake of the Chilean earthquake was unveiled astonishment that "Chile is not Haiti" (Kurczy, Montgomery, and Ryan 2010), even though Haitian and Chilean histories are widely divergent. The surprise expressed in global media about how much better Chile fared reflects conflation of Chile and Haiti in the global imagination. And this is exactly what the Chilean state aims to dispel—the idea that it is but one of many "underdeveloped" Latin American countries. Both within Chile and as projected outward to the world, the Chilean government's master narrative of the recovery works against this conflation to portray and emphasize the stability and modernity of the Chilean miracle, exemplary of the promise of the neoliberal political economic model.

Following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Chile offered humanitarian aid in the form of basic supplies, food, water, and tents, and provided trained dogs to search for people buried under the rubble (Agencia EFE [EFE] 2010b). The Chilean state asserted that it is not Haiti by mobilizing the moralizing, dominant discourse (Donini 2008: 34) of its hu-

manitarian aid to Haiti. By using the global discourses and mechanisms of humanitarian aid, a major force of globalization (Rabinow et al. 2008), to refute its image on the global stage as “underdeveloped” and “third world,” it claims its place at the table of “developed” nations, the table of Empire (Donini 2008). In so doing Chile eschews an image of the Chilean nation-state as Other (Etheridge 2011). Haiti, on the other hand, is Other. In the wake of Haiti’s disaster, Chilean president Michelle Bachelet emphasized that Haitians are “a people who have made enormous efforts to reconstruct their democracy, to move forward, to fight against hunger and poverty, and because of that, Chile will give support and a friendly hand of solidarity that is required in this moment” (EFE 2010a). By highlighting Chile’s support for Haiti’s moves toward democracy, the Chilean state can also signal that it is a nation that promotes democracy and is therefore democratic itself, a notion contested by social movements of various kinds within Chile in 2011.

In another instance of Chile’s construction of its national narrative on the global stage, in opposition to the Haitian disaster, in August 2011 Chilean president Piñera hosted Haiti’s president Martelly to show him the “exemplary” relief housing and reconstruction in Chile following F/27. Both presidents marveled at Chile’s successes in dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake/tsunami (*La Nación* 2011). Meanwhile, social movements continued their protests of the Chilean state’s lack of reconstruction after F/27, demanding the failures of the state be made visible. Once again, the Chilean nation asserted on the global media stage that it was *not* Haiti, this time because of what Chile had to teach Haiti about the great strides the Chilean state had taken in the aftermath of F/27. Chile claimed technological knowledge and mastery by using Haitian technological failures as a foil in order to demonstrate Chilean belonging to the “us” of Empire and not to the “them” of underdevelopment. Various global media streams broadcast this message.

The Technological Embrace and Chilean Modernity on the Global Stage

About six months after F/27, another catastrophe struck in Chile that drew the world’s attention—perhaps even more so: the rescue of thirty-three Chilean miners (a Google search on October 17, 2011 for “Chile earthquake 2010” yielded 1.83 million hits and for “Chile miners 2010” 4.4 million hits). The rescue of these miners, known as *los 33*, from the mine redirected attention from the ongoing suffering of those affected by the disaster(s) back to Chile’s modern version of the enlightenment narrative of technological mastery in the face of danger to human life. This time the disaster was induced by the failure of technologies that put men under the earth to

mine valuable metals and minerals for the global economic system. During the decade of the 2000s, on average thirty-four miners died in Chilean copper mines each year and received no global fanfare or lament (Long 2011b). The global media spectacle of *los 33* who were valiantly rescued in 2010, seemingly by President Sebastian Piñera himself, is emblematic of Chile's national narrative of technological embrace and its appearance not only as a modern nation, but as a *hypermodern* nation. The Chilean nation was invested in that moment in the technological embrace, the channeling of hope for the future, hope for humanity, into technological solutions. In this case, the technological solution was a metaphor in the global media for Chile as a nation, one that indicated, according to a CBS news headline, that "With Mine Rescue, Chile Sets Sights on 1st World: President Sebastian Piñera Could Change Landscape of Chile and Bring Nation Closer to Developed Status" (Associated Press [AP] 2010b). The "miracle" rescue of the miners effectively mirrored the desired image of the Chilean economic "miracle" that the state leveraged to reassert Chile's exemplary and even exceptional status on the global media stage. As Olsen, Carstensen, and Høyen (2003) have demonstrated, media focus draws attention and money.

The technological feat was further heralded by an exhibit entitled "Against All Odds: Rescue at the Chilean Mine" at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (n.d.) in Washington, DC. However, a year after the miners' dramatic rescue, as the world watched, global media reported that many of them now struggled financially and psychologically, and, according to a *New York Times* report, "Many now get by on a steady regimen of sedatives and antidepressants." One miner told the *Times* reporter, "They made us feel like heroes. ... In the end, we are selling peanuts. It's ironic, isn't it? ... We feel a little abandoned here" (Barionuevo 2011). Apparently many of the miners, too, have been abandoned by the Chilean state, even after President Piñera carefully used the miners' rescue to promote Chile's image nationally and globally. The technological embrace had served its purpose for the image of the nation on a global stage but had failed for many of the Chilean miners, who were Chilean citizens.

The State's Technological Failure

In stark contrast to the miraculous rescue of *los 33*, the Chilean government lacked the technological knowledge to accurately predict the tsunami that followed the earthquake on F/27. Also in stark contrast to the spectacle of the rescue of *los 33*, the government's glaring failure to warn of the imminent tsunami has been notably muted in global media reports.

Directly following the earthquake, many residents of coastal areas drew from their historical, experiential knowledge about the risk of a tsunami following an earthquake and fled for higher ground. However, based on information gathered by the state's technological instruments, President Bachelet and the Oficina Nacional de Emergencia del Ministerio del Interior (Chile's office of emergency management, or ONEMI) were unconvinced that a tsunami would occur and gave the order for local authorities to tell people in coastal areas to return to their homes (Venegas 2011). The residents' knowledge turned out to be more sophisticated than the technological approximations of risk, but the state has authority, and scientific instruments represent authoritative knowledge, meanwhile experiential knowledge is figured as less reliable in modern systems (see chapter 6, Barrios, this volume). The Chilean state relied on a narrative of technological embrace that sees technological, scientific knowledge as the solution over and above other responses.⁵ The technological embrace failed. On the two-year anniversary of F/27 the government had only begun to address its error publicly.

Neoliberal Inequalities within the Frame of the State's Discourses of Compassion

Only six months after F/27, President Piñera, along with the International Monetary Fund, declared that recovery had been successful; meanwhile, the BBC reported that economic indicators suggested that “the percentage of Chileans living in poverty—a figure that has been declining for decades—rose to 19.4% in mid-2010 from 16.4% in 2009. It is widely accepted that the earthquake was to blame” (Long 2011a). In 2011 Piñera celebrated the first anniversary of the earthquake/tsunami, insisting that, “reconstruction is advancing firmly” (*El Mercurio* 2010–11). The government's *Balanced reconstruction 2011 a un año del terremoto* (reconstruction account), an official report on the recovery efforts a year after the disaster, boasted that 61 percent of housing subsidies to build new homes had been issued, and 99 percent of the public infrastructure had been restored or almost restored (Gobierno de Chile 2011, 6). The official government document is nine pages long and provides glossy before and after pictures of damaged and repaired infrastructure, but no pictures of the supposedly temporary camps where running water and electricity are often scarce, and no pictures or mention of rural, largely indigenous, Mapuche communities like Tirúa, which were also affected by the earthquake/tsunami (Rojas Bravo 2010). In response to critiques of the slow nature of the government's efforts, especially in the poorer areas, Chilean government officials have

asked that its citizens have patience, as rebuilding takes time, especially since the government claims to be rebuilding with better quality in mind, according to President Piñera (*El Mercurio* 2010–11). The state’s narrative of overcoming the damages of the earthquake/tsunami of 2010 serves to brand Chile on the world stage, again, in a way that emphasizes its competence as a neoliberal state; along with its modernity, development, and technological sophistication. Meanwhile, it minimizes the harsh realities of the structural inequalities that persist even as Chile’s GDP has grown.

In another move that elides the structural inequalities underlying vulnerabilities to earthquake and tsunami in zones most heavily affected, the Chilean state has focused its recovery programs on a discourse of compassion about the emotional distress and post-disaster trauma in affected, marginalized communities.⁶ I posit that this is because emotional distress can be figured as natural—that is, not politically charged, part of *any* disaster and therefore channeled away from the uncomfortable reality of poverty that was exposed by the disaster. The Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (national women’s service, or SERNAM) launched a campaign in the affected zones called *Levántate Mujer* (get up, woman) and offered psychological interventions for women through their regional women’s centers. Psychologist Pilar Sordo gave motivational speeches to address what she called the earthquake of the soul that followed the disaster, promoting the state’s discourse of compassion, which masked the state’s failure to provide adequate material resources for those suffering. On the other hand, as of August 2011 SERNAM’s documentation center and its Santiago regional office told me that they had not done any research to ascertain how women in particular had been affected by the earthquake/tsunami (personal communication). SERNAM’s interventions, aimed at getting women to “just feel better” and continue executing their womanly gender roles to fulfill their “duties” as pillars of the Chilean family and nation (see Parson 2012), have been criticized by those working in non-governmental and academic settings in Chile. These interventions did not increase the visibility of social inequalities and social suffering—the roots of the unnatural disaster’s production of ongoing suffering. They called attention to the collective trauma of bare, “natural” disaster, one that could ostensibly be overcome through collective therapy, motivational speeches, and self-improvement. Similarly, Fassin and Rechtman (2009) have theorized how, globally, discourses of trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder have become the technical focus of humanitarian efforts in post-disaster scenarios. Attention is diverted to psychological trauma instead of to the underlying social contexts structured by inequalities that remain unquestioned. This allows the state to reinforce its authority, more legitimately and project an ethic of care for its citizens on the global stage,

meanwhile failing to provide needed material support. This is coherent with moves under neoliberal governance toward therapy as internalized social control (Merry 2001, 19).

The state attempts to claim its authority from its discourses of compassion on the local and global registers and not from real accountability to its citizens. The state thereby asserts that it is not the role of the state to provide materially for its most vulnerable in times of need. The role of the state is to offer compassionate discourses, but the citizens themselves and global humanitarian organizations must provide the real care. The state's authority is therefore fragile once the reality of its provision of material resources is brought to light, and it is this weakness that social movements are able to unveil to global media, when they have a powerful enough voice to speak back to the state, via the global media stage. Also highlighting neoliberal values of self-sufficiency, many nongovernmental organization (NGO) programs emerged in Chile to fill the gaps in the state's provision of care. One such program, Chile Ayuda a Chile (Chile helps Chile) proclaimed, "Chileans, sisters and brothers, all compatriots, it doesn't matter how many times we fall, ONE HUNDRED AND A THOUSAND TIMES ALWAYS we pick ourselves up, because we are children of challenge and to this we always stand up" ("Fuerza Chile: Terremoto 2010" 2010). Indeed, such fund raisers generate funding from within disaster affected countries and from outside. Brown and Minty (2008, 9) found that after the widespread and devastating tsunami of 2004, for every minute of nightly news coverage or newspaper stories about the disaster, donations increased by 17–21 percent. By putting the responsibility on the populace to generate funds for those in need, the state is once again excused from accountability. International NGOs also have provided care where the state has not, thereby bolstering the global in the local.

Recoveries in the Margins of the State

One such place where the state has failed to care and international organizations have tried to "mind the gap" is Tirúa, a community populated mostly by indigenous Mapuche, a group that generally lives at the margins of the state (see Das and Poole 2004), and where poverty exceeds the generalized high levels of poverty in the southern regions most affected by the disaster (Rojas Bravo 2010, 6). In Tirúa, residents have criticized the state's failure to act after the disaster and people there, as elsewhere in Chile, have had to rely instead on mechanisms of global governance (see Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Ticktin 2011), which have taken the state's place. Ximena Rojas Bravo explained to me in July 2011 that she had been hired by the global NGO Non-profit Enterprise and Self-sustain-

ability Team (NESsT) to work in Tirúa on its campaign *Levantando Chile* (Uplifting Chile), based on her previous work on women's development and violence against women. Rojas Bravo conducted workshops and a survey of women's necessities in Tirúa in the wake of the devastation of the earthquake/tsunami there, something that the Chilean government had not done (Rojas Bravo 2010). Women in Tirúa reported to her that prior to, as following, the earthquake/tsunami their lives were lived in grave poverty and isolation from the state. From their descriptions, they lived almost in an abandoned state-less state. They felt isolated and marginalized, largely because of the lack of public transportation and the lack of telephone lines. "Here the mistreatment of the poor is very hard," noted one woman in an interview with Rojas Bravo. She continued, "It doesn't matter to them what happens to you. When we go to the Municipality for something, they see us enter and they put on a bad face. They look at us badly. They attend to us poorly and they criticize us a lot" (Rojas Bravo 2010, 8). All of the women reported that the authorities (municipality and national) did not give them help in the wake of the disaster and had not asked them what their necessities are, although 38 percent said that their houses suffered damages. No housing was offered for those who lost their homes (Rojas Bravo 2010, 8). In Tirúa the invisibility appears to be magnified by the abject poverty, isolation, and racism in which people live their lives. This example of global governance to fill the gaps in the state's attention to its citizens provides a dramatic counterpoint to the state's narratives of technological mastery, modernity, and economic success. But also, extremely poor, indigenous populations in rural areas of Chile, such as Tirúa, lack a powerful voice on the global stage. They are unable to protest their subjection on that level, and they lack the power to attract the state's attention. Global humanitarian organizations fill in the gaps left by the state, exposing weakness on the part of the state, and furthering the development of forms of humanitarian global governance.

Recovering Equality? Social Movements' Counter-Narratives

"'Mayor, there are still temporary houses without electricity. Thirty-three are okay and the rest are fucked,' declared graffiti on what was once an interior wall presumably destroyed by the earthquake/tsunami on February 27, 2010" (Senador Navarro, 2011).

Chilean social movements have taken note of the state's selective attention. An ethos of distrust of the state has emerged strongly in a range of Chilean social movements during 2011: against a hydroelectric plant in Patagonia, for reform of educational systems, and for fair reconstruction after

the earthquake/tsunami. I posit that these social movements grow in part out of an ontological insecurity shaped by lingering memories of the state's repression during the dictatorial era and the lack of equality produced after twenty years of official democracy under the Concertación, the left/center-left coalition. In stark contrast to the state's narratives of development, prosperity, neoliberal modernity, and technological sophistication, many people feel left out of the Chilean miracle so touted globally. They see their nation represented globally as a success, but they themselves do not feel this success. In the wake of the F/27 social movements and most notably the student movement of 2011, the Chilean state has used great force to repress social movement protests, reviving memories of the dictatorship government. These local social movements also link with global movements as a tool to further their local agendas. Just as economics and humanitarian discourses are globalizing, so are social movements.

National Movement for Fair Reconstruction

Around the first anniversary of F/27, a number of social organizations who had come together under the umbrella *Movimiento por una Reconstrucción Justa* (national movement for fair reconstruction; MNRJ) presented a petition to the Chilean government with their demands. The petition, presented in a protest march in downtown Santiago, demanded that reconstruction not be driven by “privatization and profit” (biobioprojecta.org 2011) and demanded, “a housing solution for all of the refugees,” including dignified housing, constructed with citizens’ participation, within two years. With community development in mind, they urged the government to make efforts to avoid, “ghettos of poverty [and] social exclusion in the [reconstructed] city.” They also demanded that crucial infrastructure such as schools and clinics be reconstructed, without privatization and profit, and that the coastline as well as water remain free from privatization in the process of reconstruction. In short, they argued against disaster capitalism. All of these measures, MNRJ argued, must be undertaken by the government within an environment of transparency. This critique of the privatization that has been at the heart of the neoliberal reforms in Chile that began under Pinochet resonates throughout the movement that has taken root around reconstruction. Romina Aros, the spokeswoman for *Red Construyamos* (we construct network) noted in an interview in 2011, “Definitely the issue of reconstruction is not a priority, nor education, nor health in Chile. The priority today is privatization. What the government is for today is to privatize all sectors, including reconstruction” (*Observatorio de Género y Equidad* 2011).

Dichato Resists

A Chilean police water cannon tank and CS tear gas-spraying jeep was shown in a photograph of the temporary housing that is now the village of Dichato during a July 16, 2011, protest. The headline of the article associated with the photo says, “Police deny that police tanks entered the small village (*aldea*) of Dichato” (Terra 2011).

One of the most vocal towns in the struggle for fair reconstruction has been the small, coastal town of Dichato, which was completely wiped out by the tsunami. Dichato was one of the hardest-hit communities, with around 80 percent of inhabitants there losing their homes. One year after the disaster three thousand people were still living in temporary housing, some in El Molino camp in 20-square meter wooden shacks constructed for them after they lost their homes (“Terremoto: Campamentos, la emergencia que no termina” 2011). An article in *La Nación*, a widely read national newspaper, noted that these structures “lack insulation and they flood when it rains” (La Nación 2011). Furthermore, a citizens’ group report in February 2011 stated, “The sanitary situation of the families in temporary housing [*mediaguas*] is worrisome. They have difficulty accessing drinking water.... When there is electricity, it is from illegal installations that pose fire hazards. If there is a bathroom, many families have to use it” (Valenzuela 2011, 21).

A camp leader noted, “Life in the countryside is bad, it’s bitter, it’s ugly. For me, this is like a concentration camp. At 9 P.M. people lock themselves into their houses and that is it. Before it wasn’t like this. We went out. We went for a stroll” Valenzuela 2011, 21). They will be there for two to three more years, awaiting permanent housing, which is supposedly in process. One El Molino community leader referred to these living conditions and lack of governmental response as a “moral earthquake” that paralleled the seismic event (Toledo 2011), referring to the government’s unfulfilled promises of aid and challenging the state’s moral authority and its discourse of compassion.

Later in the year, on July 16, 2011, Dichato residents took to the streets to protest the continued lack of running water, lack of plumbing and insulation, lack of electricity, and the government’s failure to come through on its promises of reconstruction after eighteen months. And onlookers digitally recorded the events and then posted them on YouTube, for other Chileans and for the world to access. One YouTube video shows the bonfire of small trees that burned slowly in the middle of the highway, the protest banners, protestors talking to the press, and chanting, “El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido” (“The people united will never be defeated”). Lorena Arce, a leader of the movement in Dichato, asserted to

the press, “If the government won’t respond to us and provide the rights we deserve, we will fight for them” (Sepulveda Arteaga 2011). Global media allowed the protestors’ voices to be heard far beyond the local and the national. The state is accountable to its citizens in new ways via new global media linkages.

The governmental authorities engaged the police’s force to defuse the situation. In a video report of the event it appears that the police calmly tried to talk with the protestors to ask them to disperse from the roadway. The protestors responded with their complaints to the government. For example, one man said that his wife was old and ill and it was very difficult for her to make it to the bathroom, which is outside (Sepulveda Arteaga 2011). Indeed, residents had to share one portable bathroom among several families and these were located outside of their homes, a problem that has been documented in particular for women and girls, as well (Sabrido 2011).

The police remained calm and quiet, but did not respond to this man’s and others’ complaints, returning without words to their vehicles. They soon returned to the crowd, dressed in full riot gear, army green helmets, shields, and bullet-proof vests; they walked almost in lock step to form a wall of bodies. They easily worked their way into the disgruntled crowd to clear the roadway of the burning debris and then physically pushed the crowd out of the way, using their shields to protect themselves. A protestor hit one of the shields with a stick in a futile rage, for the state had spoken. In this visual image of the state’s relationship to its citizens, the state’s ultimate power, with physical gear and tools of repression represent a force that is overbearing and is no physical match for the protestors. But the movements find other ways to broadcast their messages.

Indeed, as in the so-called Arab Spring movements, new forms of social media provide novel platforms for social movements’ narratives, presenting new possibilities for alternative versions of reality to emerge and for the state’s authority to be challenged. In addition to the facility with which the above scene has circulated via YouTube, social movements’ Web sites, like “Dichato hoy,” run by the Movimiento Ciudadanos Asamblea de Dichato (Dichato citizens’ movement assembly) promotes their goals. For instance, in a post by Legua York, a popular Chilean hip-hop group, they shared their *Rimas para Dichato* (Rhymes for Dichato): “First came the earthquake, then the tsunami. Then came this shitty government. Two winters without reconstruction. Two winters with a lot of repression. Dichato Resists: The People Should Rule” (Legua York 2011). Social movements around reconstruction emerged in many other post-disaster sites in 2011, including in Villa Olímpica (Olympic Village) in Santiago, to which this chapter now turns.

Although the socioeconomic fault lines that show through the cracks that the earthquake left behind in Villa Olímpica are different from those in Dichato, there are important similarities that tie them together. Like poverty-stricken populations living in camps in Dichato who have struggled to make their lack of running water, plumbing, and insulation visible after the disaster itself struck, the residents of Villa Olímpica also fail to embody the state's narrative of the "miracle" of Chilean modernity and prosperity.

Villa Olímpica was built by the Chilean government for the Soccer World Cup in 1962 and houses around ten thousand people. In its prime, Villa Olímpica was associated with the strengthening Chilean middle class as a desirable place to live. In recent years, however, it has been associated with the increasingly vulnerable lower-middle-class; after the earthquake's damage many there are clinging to their lower-middle-class status by a dwindling thread. Many of the blocks of apartments were damaged so badly during the 2010 earthquake that residents were displaced, forced to move in with relatives or live temporarily in tents. Many owned their apartments but had little financial solvency to confront homelessness that the quake produced. The day following the earthquake, in response to the dire situation in which residents of Villa Olímpica found themselves, these residents formed the *Asamblea de Vecinos de la Villa Olímpica* (Villa Olímpica neighbors' association). Soon after, the municipality government declared fourteen blocks of Villa Olímpica apartments condemned. Inappropriate and utter lack of government action has been a common complaint of the *Asamblea de Vecinos*. The residents have been disillusioned and frustrated at what they perceive to be the abandonment and corruption of their local and national governmental responses in the post-disaster. For instance, on May 4, 2010, the mayor of their municipality said in a television interview that reconstruction funds would be used to repair the leaky roofs in the Villa, and that within twenty days of that appearance they would start the work and from there it would be two months to finish the roof repairs (TVN 2010). However, by February 2011, one year after the quake, the roofs had yet to be repaired. This and other complaints led to a series of protests by Villa Olímpica residents. In an interview around the first anniversary of the quake in February 2011, a resident told the media the following:

One year after the earthquake we have thousands of families [in Chile] in camps in undignified conditions, where they have not even started to construct the houses that ended up in the dirt. Today, from the Villa Olímpica we send them support and strength, since we as a people should work together against adversities, fighting all together so that the government of this country realizes that we are a population that is conscious, critical, and that does not permit them to pretend to be blind

to all of the pain of the families. Mr. President, Ministers, Senators and Business People, we will remain standing, fighting for our homes to be repaired, organizing ourselves every day and reminding you that the state is for all Chileans. (Anonymous 2011)

By August 2011 when I visited, little reconstruction to speak of had begun, in spite of residents' struggles to make their voices heard to their municipality. Residents pointed out that the municipality's May 2010 promise to fix their roofs still had not been fulfilled, and the roofs had not been fixed. Problems of rain water dripping into apartments persisted; the signs were easily visible on ceilings and walls.

In spite of these conditions many residents have returned to their condemned apartments to wait for the government's promises of help, at least for the roofs and other common areas of the blocks, to come through. These peoples' resources are largely tied up in the apartments themselves. Many of Villa Olímpica's residents are particularly vulnerable to the devastation of disaster—not because they have nothing, but because they have *something*, but not enough to fulfill the neoliberal expectation to pull themselves up of their own will and work. In neoliberal systems Harvey (2005, 65) has noted, "Individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings ... rather than being attributed to any systemic property." These people, then, do not fulfill the neoliberal ethic of (presumed) self-sufficiency. They reveal the cracks in the neoliberal regime, wherein hard work, a job, and a home are not enough in the face of disaster. Without the state's safety net, they live in utter vulnerability, and this is what they protest—their vulnerability to the neoliberal economic system and the marriage of the state and private enterprise. For in a seismic and volcanic country like Chile, disasters are a question of *when*, not *if* the next earthquake, tsunami, or volcano will strike.

The Global Call of the Indignant: The Local Struggle Is the Global Struggle

The movements in Dichato and Villa Olímpica are two nodes of the wider social movements related to reconstruction after F/27, and these various movements to protest the state's lack of care for those affected by the disaster are symptomatic of a generalized dissatisfaction with the state's lack of attention to its citizens' needs. The reconstruction movements have now joined with other large social movements in Chile and *global* social movements for social justice. In a statement on October 8, 2011, the reconstruction movement in Chile joined its voice to the Global Call of

the Indignant. In doing so, the group Movimientos Ciudadanos (citizens' movements) made itself visible to the world. Movimientos Ciudadanos is a conglomerate social movement comprising Chilean movements against (1) HidroAysén, the thermoelectric project in Patagonia, (2) ineffectual reconstruction, (3) profit in public housing, and (4) "Piñera's Damned/Cursed Law" (Ley Maldita; Ley de Defensa Permanente de la Democracia, that was imposed during the Cold War to outlaw the Communist Party and curtail individual freedoms), which the government has proposed to revive and social movements see as an attempt to criminalize their efforts. Finally, the Movimientos Ciudadanos' demands include free and quality education for all, the central demand of the Chilean student movement that has been strongly repressed by the state, meanwhile gaining wide international attention, for example in a recent article on student movement leader Camila Vallejo, in the *New York Times* (Wilson 2012). In 2011 the Movimientos Ciudadanos gathered in front of the Chilean presidential palace, La Moneda, to proclaim with a unified voice, "Chile needs a real democracy," and demanded citizen participation in constructing a new constitution to replace the 1980 Constitution put in place by decree of Augusto Pinochet's violent military dictatorship (Movimientos Ciudadanos 2011). "Our demands add to the global call of the indignant all over the world," they proclaimed, using the word "*indignado/as*" (indignant) as protestors had done in Spain to protest their disenfranchisement in the global neoliberal economic system (Poggioli 2011). As the movement for fair reconstruction has developed, it has increasingly formed connections with other social movements in Chile and globally, which have the same basic complaints at their base—social inequality caused by corrupt political economic systems, which are both global and local.

Conclusions: Power Struggles on a Global Stage

This chapter has shown that it is crucial to attend to the multilayered aspects of any disaster and its chronicity—including the media broadcast of forms of state actions and citizens' actions in the wake of disaster. As the state asserts the value-lessness of its citizens in its attempts to abandon them through inattention to their needs and through global narratives of its authority and modernity, social movements also create and purvey narrative claims to personhood, value, and rights on behalf of their members. In Chile, neoliberal economic policies are entrenched, but also entrenched in the Chilean social body are the tactics of resistance and protest finely honed by the population in their historical interactions with the state. These movements are largely cognizant of the need to broadcast their

voices of dissent on global stages, in the face of the state's assertions of its hegemony via global media pronouncements.

Resistance to the state's inactions in the wake of disaster is far from limited to the Chilean context, though it manifests in particular ways in Chile. At the same time, people most directly affected by disasters have found ways to attempt to talk back to the state and to make the state accountable to its citizens' needs by using media outlets, specifically widely viewed and available Internet sites like YouTube and Facebook. Protests and citizen unrest in the aftermath of disaster have become a widespread reaction to the immensity of both the visible and the invisible impacts of disaster, and this is a worldwide phenomenon. Protests in Japan over the nuclear fallout of Fukushima and the government's failure to provide accurate knowledge of the severity of the nuclear disaster have emerged (Button 2011b; Rose Johnston 2011; Tabuchi 2011). In Haiti protestors have rallied in response to allegations of government hoarding of aid (Vega 2010) and in the wake of widespread death due to the rampant spread of cholera in the camps (AP 2010a). In the aftermath of the BP Gulf oil spill in the United States, groups protested the handling of that environmental, health, and economic disaster (Jonsson 2010). Although states value lives differentially through their creation and enforcement of the rules of reconstruction and through the broadcast of global media narratives that attempt to consolidate its power and authority, social movements' power to assert a different narrative of the reality of these policies on the ground and to shift power relations and distribution of resources cannot be overlooked. Social movements protest and resist the devaluing of their lives, and their linkages with global media and globally dispersed social movements are crucial. These movements are part of new socio-political landscapes that emerge when the more insidious vulnerabilities that preceded the disaster suddenly become critical (see Kleinman 1999).

In disaster capitalism, national and international capitalist interests take advantage of post-disaster vulnerabilities in order to make profits (see Adams, Van Hattum, and English 2009; Klein 2007; Schuller 2008). The analysis in this chapter suggests that vulnerable people themselves and their social movements also leverage the visibility and the desperation of the disaster's aftermath to make claims on the state, claims that are about the aftermath of the disaster itself but are also claims to democracy, citizenship, and belonging to the state in an era of intensive globalization of economies, media, and inequalities. The disaster provides those who are disenfranchised subjects of the state the "conditions of possibility for forms of subjectivity" (Fischer 2009, 42) that hinge on protest of their submission to local and global orders. They use new Internet media to mobi-

lize attention to their experiences and protests—thereby to some extent engaging in attempts at “reshaping the public sphere by changing power relations” (Fischer 2009, 37). The question of how social movements will continue to affect and shape global political economies, and the ways these movements articulate with post-disaster landscapes in particular, is an open one.

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Notes

Author did all translations throughout this chapter.

1. In May 2011 citizens from various sectors of the society came out strongly in protest against HidroAys, a hydroelectric company to be built in Patagonia in southern Chile.
2. It is important to note that Hale has argued that neoliberal economic regimes in Latin America were actually “consummated in tandem with a region-wide return to democracy” (Hale 2005).
3. In 1970, Salvador Allende, a socialist, was democratically elected president. Allende nationalized the lucrative copper mining industry, redistributed land, promoted free education, health for all, and other public policies directed at social justice. These policies, in concert with his friendship with Cuba during the Cold War represented threats to the United States’ political and economic interests in Chile. The U.S. government under the direction of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger backed the imposition of economic policies that drove scarcity of basic goods in Chile under Allende and then underwrote the violent overthrow of Allende during a bloody coup, led by General Augusto Pinochet, on September 11, 1973. Neoliberal economic policies were instituted under Pinochet’s dictatorial rule, led by *los Chicago Boys*, Chilean economists trained at the University of Chi-

cago under Milton Friedman, who led the charge to privatize agriculture, health care, education, and social security; to make trade unions of most types illegal; and to maximize trade profits.

4. See Button (2006) on counter-narratives in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.
5. Building on Del Vecchio Good's (2007) concept of the biotechnical embrace, which includes the affective dimensions that lead people to trust technological intervention in biomedicine and bioscience over and above other forms of knowledge and experience.
6. Fassin and Rechtman (2009) have explicated the phenomenon in global humanitarian aid whereby trauma, and not the underlying structural inequalities that shape vulnerability, has become the focal point of interventions.

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