EQUALITY¹

Sociological remarks for an interdisciplinary dialog on justice

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To be presented in:
6th International Symposium on Justice
Porto Alegre, August 19-23

Organizers:
PPG - Ciências Criminais, Ciências Sociais, Direito e Filosofia PUCRS
PPG - Direito e Filosofia UFRGS, PPG - Filosofia UFSC

This paper aims to underscore the importance of the sociological approach of normative principles, focusing on Equality, not only in a theoretic neutral perspective, but moreover as a fundament for the critical tasks of sociology and for the possibility of establishing enriching interdisciplinary dialogues with philosophy.

Since the arrival of modernity justice has been intimately related to the idea of equality. This is not only to say that equality became and has increasingly become an outstanding component of how we measure justice in a society. Furthermore, it means that equality has been conceived also as a central component of the structure of the notion of justice itself. As a normative horizon, as a common value or as a principle upon which the conditions of procedural justice relies, contemporary philosophers have mobilized equality in an explicit or implicit way to theorize or understand justice in our times. Sociologists have been specially sensible and receptive to this fact. The most important contributions to the equality debate come from the philosophical field, especially from the discussions about justice in their different traditions: liberal (Rawls or Dworkin), communitarians (Walzer) or critical theory (Honneth).

An important consequence of this fact has been that the philosophical notion of equality has worked as tool for social science’s understandings of societies and especially of inequalities. Philosophical normative or abstract concepts of equality have been used by social sciences as an outstanding contrasting reference to develop the analytical work of empirical data. The aftermath of this fact has been the tendency to neglect the sociological study of equality. In so doing, they have involuntarily reduced their critical scope. As we shall argue later, understanding social processes requires apprehending the fundamental sociological changes of normative principles. Understanding people’s moral orientations and expectations, are basic for the construction of social horizons for transformation. This obliteration
might be understood as one of the main reasons why the dialog philosophy – social science on justice has not been as extended and mutually nurturing as it could be expected. Social sciences have mostly failed to do their work in this dialog paradoxically in giving philosophy an excessive authority when it comes to the study of normative notions and principles.

Drawing on three empirical research projects conducted in Chile, we will defend the theoretical thesis that the contents of equality as normative principle are specified and transformed by means of the historical and structural features of a society. Thus, this paper pays attention to the process through which a new kind of equality has been established in Chilean society, which we have called equality on the social bond.

We will start by defending the importance of taking in account social notions of normative principles, specifically of equality. Secondly, we will briefly expose the fundamentals for the study of equality upon which our work is based. Once the former done, we will present the recent social and historical context in Chile from the perspective of egalitarian principles. Fourthly, we will address the transformations of expectations and legitimacy principles concerning social relations and its consequences for equality and inequality perceptions in this society. Finally, we will underscore the consequences of the analysis we carried out.

I. Normative principles and sociological approaches: the case of Equality

Social perceptions of inequalities, a major issue for social sciences today and a broad social expression of injustice, must be understood in reference to equality principles acting in a society. To support this statement it is worth recalling the fact that it would not be possible to conceive inequalities as we do nowadays – the kind
of inequalities we are able to identify or the lack of legitimacy we claim – if equality would not have been installed as a fundament for expectations in the so called modern democratic societies (Therborn, 2006)\(^2\). In other words, inequality conceptions would not be possible if equality had not become an essential component of the idea of justice. Notwithstanding, even though this statement might sound almost as self-evident in current academic discussion, usually this interrelation is not explicitly theoretically approached or, even less, empirically studied in social sciences (Reis, 2006; Turner 1986). Although there is a very significant amount of research on inequalities, this is not the case for equality.

Furthermore, when the interrelation between these two notions is evocated, most of the times this is accompanied by what might be called a “normativist” bias: the use of philosophical normative notions of equality, as we discussed above. Effect of the former is that frequently in social analysis social experiences are contrasted with an abstract normative principle deprived of context. Thus, the role of social processes in the consolidation and specification of equality in a specific society remains obscured. The paradox is that this obliteration has persevered in spite of broad historical evidence that shows that the principle of equality and its function is not only a drive for social transformations (Wagner, 1997), but a product of complex historical and social processes (Rosanvallon, 2011; Dumont, 1983). Brief, inequalities as long as conceived as complex social phenomena have received profuse attention in social studies, meanwhile equality being held as an abstract normative construction has been relinquished over philosophy. Which has been obliterated in this movement is that not only the perception of inequalities is a sociological problem, but also the configuration of equality principles.

### II. The study of equality

\(^2\) In European case, inequality as a main form of injustice appears only in the context of Modernity where human beings are conceived departing from the idea of a common foundation and human equality (Therborn, 2011).
The notion of equality has normally been discussed in association with political egalitarianism. In this perspective, it has been conceived as a modern normative principle linked to the development of the national state and the idea of democracy and citizenship. It is precisely in this historical context and due to social processes incarnated in political struggles (Rosanvallon, 2011: 27-106), that the modern idea of equality has been established as a normative principle. This means, that it works as an orientation to establishing the goals of a society as well as a measure of its performances. Equality as long as constituted as a normative principle of our times has no need of moral justification, as Berlin has pointed out, although it is worth to recall that it is an ideal among others (Wollheim y Berlin, 1956). Equality provides criteria for the evaluation of the paths a society takes, and propels the creation of institutions that safeguard the consonance between society and the normative principle and its orientations (Turner, 1986).

But if this normative principle derives from the political sphere, equality is not to be dissociated from social processes. This is to find, for example, in Tocqueville’s intuitions and statements about the future of equality in the United States which the author predicted to be much more influenced by the increasing constitution of individuals (and masses) affected by the “passion” for equality than from any political will (Tocqueville, 1961). To recall the former underscores the existence of a certain level of autonomy (as well as distinctive logics) between the function of equality in political order and the function of equality in the regulation of relationships and interactions in social life. In this last dimension, its contents as well as its effects have substantial variations depending on each context. These variations can be identified in the particular forms that individual’s perceptions and evaluations of social reality take (for example if a situation is perceived or not as unequal) or in the prohibited / admitted regime that frames institutional actions. The former allows to understand that some societies might show high rejection to the exhibition of exterior signs of wealth, whereas in other societies this exhibition might not only be well tolerated but furthermore even stimulated, meanwhile and at the same time, the formers might have highly hierarchical integration modalities.
towards migrant groups, where the last ones might reveal more egalitarian reception processes.

To this first analytical distinction – political domain and social bond – we must still add a second one: the difference between normative principle and social ideal. Equality is simultaneously a normative principle and a social ideal. A social ideal is a representation of what is valuable and desirable in a society which is offered to individuals. In this sense, a social ideal presupposes an attributive definition of the way social world and people should be. The ideal is the imaginary face of the symbolic dimension incarnated by the normative principle. Thus, equality as social ideal fills with representational contents the signifier equality that acts as principle. These representational contents are not fixed but undergo transformations. These transformations should not be understood only in a historical long term perspective. As the results of an empirical study on the notion of rights have shown (Araujo, 2009), they are also produced by everyday life social experiences specific to a society and even to the social position occupied in it.

The two faces of equality (ideal and normative principle) can hardly be thought one without the other, but they must not be confused. Not every social ideal is a normative principle. There are many social ideals that do not achieve to become true normative ideals and even less are those that achieve to become normative principles in a society or in a culture. For example, if Right has become a true normative ideal (Habermas, 1998), it is not the case of the ideal of leisure or wealthy life. But, on the contrary, it is impossible to conceive normative principles that are not supported by the function of the ideal. This, on the first place, because modern history shows, as we have already discussed, that they emerge from the political mobilization of some ideals. On the other hand, because, as Weber recalls in his discussion of Herrschaft (1964), it is indispensable that these principles relay on the belief – the cognitive-affective adhesion – of the individuals due to the fact that this belief is the fundament of its legitimacy. It is from this conceptual perspective that the issue of equality is here approached.
III. The expansion of egalitarian principles and local socio-historical processes.

In the last decades in Chile, as in many other Latin-American countries, equality has undergone a new expansive wave. This does not mean of course that equality as principle or as an ideal has not been present before in the region. Indeed, as social movements at the beginning of 20th Century demonstrate, the expansion of these ideals is a long-standing process (Salazar y Pinto, 1999). But this expansion has acquired new features in the last three to four decades in the context of the democratization processes that took place in the region (Dagnino, Olvera y Panfichi, 2006; Méndez, O’Donnell y Pinheiro, 2002, PNUD, 2004, entre otros). As Domingues (2009) has pointed out, even though in Latin-America the horizon opened by the modern idea of egalitarian liberty has been present almost at the same time that in United States and Europe, we are allowed to speak of a third phase of modernity evolving in the last period. In this phase, citizenship strengthens through political mobilization and the Rights system acquires a new place on social imaginary as well as increases its institutionalization.

However, the sources of this new wave of expansion of equality ideals as an offer to individuals are specific to each society. Therefore, it is advisable to focus on Chilean social and historical process.

According to a recent study (Araujo y Martuccelli, 2012), individuals in Chile recognize that the most salient features of the historical change experienced in the recent decades are two. On the one hand: the implementation of the neoliberal economic model. On the other hand: a renewed democratic horizon, which is not only understood in political and institutional terms, but overall linked to new demands concerning the social bond. The first change has demanded them to reformulate their condition as economic subjects and workers and has confronted them to a increasing number of social spheres regulated by market logic. The second one has propelled a reconfiguration of the meanings of democracy and a particular understanding of democratization processes.
With respect to the former: Chilean society has been since 1973 the scenario of one of the most outstanding conflicts in modern societies, that is, following Karl Polanyi’s characterization (1994), the conflict between market logic and protection logic. As a result of the 1973 coupé d’état, Chilean society underwent an experiment that made the country first the laboratory and then the model of the so called neoliberal order. Thus, it moved from a model centered in the State to one based on the market. This transition implied privatizations, economic liberalization, deregulation, State subsidiarity, openness to international competition, labour flexibility, among others. However, the implementation of the model was not linear. The model went through important corrections. After the 1984 crisis and the strong GIP descent on 1982 (Hunneus, 2000) State action gained more presence (Collier y Sater, 1999), and entrepreneurs became relevant social actors (Montero, 1997). To this first inflexion point a second was added in 1990 with the return to democracy. As a consequence of this turn a set of social politics were incorporated and, even though limited, some regulatory efforts. For many analysts this is the moment in which “Chilean miracle” was consolidated.

In any case, the model provoked a new design of the frontiers between market and State. The relationships between social groups suffered a deep transformation. National economy was oriented to export. It was strategically opened to international market and later to capital markets. Labour market was regulated over new basis, which made possible an increasing flexibility, the expansion of the philosophy of competence, and the enfeeblement of collective negotiations towards a growing individualization of the employers-employees relationships (Ramos, 2009; Soto, 2008; Todaro y Yañez 2004). Social protection principles were transformed, and furthermore, citizen’s access to public services was restricted due to the expanded privatization of education, social security and health. Consume became a structural fundament of society and of the definition of status (Moulian, 1998). Credit turned to play a fundamental role in structuring social relations and personal life. Hence, Chilean capitalism transformation entailed more than a simple “reduction” of the State. It implied the advent of a new matrix. As it
has been discussed, what this processes produce is a new modality of social relations (Hutton, 2003; Lordon, 2003; Berger, 2006).

As consequence of these transformations, new imaginaries and values were installed: the image of a competitive and thoroughly mobile society, the valorization of personal ambition, the confidence in self-effort, the importance of the drive to succeed, a society characterized by its offer of integration through consume and credit as structural fundament of this offer. As our results show\(^3\), through this changes propelled by the economic model, individuals are required to incarnate “hyper-actors”. But, at the same time, a sui generis new egalitarian promise expands by means of the philosophy of competence, meritocratic promises, and the active introduction to consume and credit. The market in Chile, of course under different conditions as those discussed for the European 17\(^{th}\)-18\(^{th}\) Century, becomes an outstanding factor of the contemporary expansion of the notion of equality anchored on the individual. An equality that must be more precisely characterized as equality of opportunity in its two versions: probabilistic (due to the action of chance) and possibilistic (due to the action of merit) (Rosanvallon, 2011: 315).

Let us turn now to the democratization factor. The collapse of democracy at the beginning of the 1970s and the instauration of a new socio-political matrix, as well as the return to democracy in the 1990s, actively participated in the reconfiguration of the democratic horizon. “Democracy” under the dictatorship became gradually to a significant part of the population a hope and an objective, a goal that had a clear expression in the struggles for the return to democratic political regimes (Vicuña et al, 2001). Democracy was loaded with legitimacy and urgency. With the return to democracy with the government of the coalition *Concertación por la Democracia*, “democracy” becomes a task. A task that however, as it has been discussed had a limited accomplishment. The first limit was that this goal was principally understood in institutional terms (Toloza y Lahera, 1998): State modernization, political system transformation, reconfiguration of the relationships between State and citizens. The

\(^{3}\) Araujo y Martuccelli, 2012, tomo II, pp. 244-249.
second fact that has been underscored is that even by these objectives the scope of achievements has been limited, especially in the case of the last one. In this case, as different authors have discussed, no sustainable and effective participation processes were implemented (De la Maza, 2002), on the contrary, strategies to narrow public space were generated, as well as an increasing closure of political dialogue to elite members (Garretón, 2000; Garretón y Garretón, 2010; Jocelyn-Holt, 1999). Notwithstanding, due international context and national political and historical factors, a discourse promoting the values of citizenship and the offer of equality of rights (privileging the notion of equity and equality of opportunity⁴) was strongly mobilized by the State.

Hence, equality was normatively presented as a prior value for society and was politically mobilized by the State (although scarcely integrated in the reformulation of the relationship between State and society, as we have already pointed out) and by the institutional political system (gradually also by conservative sectors, specifically in its version of equality of opportunity). All this evolved in a context of high receptivity to the agendas of international organizations, UN system specially but also others like World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank. International organizations were conceived as “guarantors” of democratization, sources of international legitimization and of material resources which were conditioned to their agendas (Araujo, 2009b; Guzmán, 2002).

But if in this country, as in many others in the region, equality was strongly connected with democracy (CEPAL, 2010), the institutional political dimension does not reach for giving account of this process. The modalities that equality acquires in this democratization context must also and specially be explained outside political system.

The expansion of equality as social ideal requires an approach that departs from social and cultural factors⁵. We will mention here only two of these factors. On the

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⁴ For an early discussion of the tension between equality and equity and the use of the latter by the State, see Garretón, 1999.
⁵ The study of the mechanisms and process of socio cultural expansion of equality as ideal and normative principle is an issue that still requires more empirical studies in the case of Chile.
first place, equality has been propelled in Chile by social movements. These are defined by the outstanding role they played in the struggle against the dictatorship and the return of democracy, the transnational character of their agendas and arguments (Garretón, 2000). They are an important factor because they have, on the one hand, contributed to rise the number of spheres to which equality as normative measure should be applied. In this making, they have overcome the restrictive association between equality and socio-economic dimension and integrated other domains like, for example, recognition. On the other hand, its importance relies on their contribution to renew the struggle for citizenship, which, as is well known, is the struggle for equality since the beginning of modernity. The second factor we will like to mention is the increase in educational attainment. This is no second range fact. Indeed, education, as has been discussed, has been and still is a fundamental component of the promises of equality in Chile, which can be well observed in the expanded aspiration to accede to Higher Education (Espinoza, 2012).

Briefly, economy, politics and socio-cultural transformations contribute to build new basis for the expansion of equality.

IV. The “work” of equality and the perception of inequalities.

The effects of the expansion of egalitarian principles and ideals are to be identified in the results of our studies. A study on the modalities in which the notion of rights was mobilized by individuals to understand their world, orient their acts and legitimize their actions in everyday life showed that equality is a social ideal inscribed in individual ego ideals. For individuals, this notion is a relevant tool for the evaluation of justice in society (Araujo, 2009a). It is worth to underscore that what these results highlight is that nowadays equality in Chile is not only a normative principle available for some collective actors or “enlightened avant-garde”. It is a constant and active reference for the evaluations and judgments
ordinary individuals make about the everyday life experiences they have in their society.

But, the referred study showed at the same time that the work of the ideal can only be captured in his articulation with social experiences. Ideals are intertwined with what individuals “know” (not necessarily a conscious knowledge) about the logics acting in a society. Ideals and this knowledge about social life, decanted from individual’s social experiences, exert constant a reciprocal mould action. This means, ultimately, that social experiences influence the scope of ideals action. This is to say, they affect the magnitude of ideals effects on social actions or judgments. But it also means that social experiences contribute to define the specific contents of ideals. In this regard, our results showed that in Chile social experiences permanently call into question the scope of action of equality. Certainly, this tension between principle of equality and inequalities is not specific of Chile. It is a constitutive element of modern capitalist societies (Turner, 1986), and, furthermore, it might convincingly be argue that of every society. But, this tension does not have the same features in every society nor the same consequences as studies on equality allow us to enlighten.

If, as Rosanvallon has noted (2011), the fundamental fact concerning this tension in European societies – like in French society today- is the gap between a strong rejection of economic and social inequalities and a tacit acceptance of the mechanisms that produce it and therefore a limited willingness to corrective action, this is not the most salient feature of this tension in a Latin-American society as Chilean. The tension between equality principle and inequalities in Chile sheds light, as we shall see, to the contradiction between a society that presents itself as modern and egalitarian, and even proposes and sustains institutional mechanisms oriented to equality, but in which, at the same time, remains preserved the experience of a deeply vertical and hierarchical social bond. Furthermore, it is important to underscore that is precisely at the latter level (social bond) that individuals imbued with the promises of equality seek, generally without success, for verification of these promises.
Individuals in Chile indentify as basis of these experiences of denial of equality the action of four systemic logics that regulate social relations.

(1) The logic of “naturalized hierarchies” (Bengoa, 2006; ICSO, 2010), what supposes the preserved importance of ascriptive traits and of a strongly vertical relational architecture.

(2) The logic of privileges, which is particularly related to class factors. This logic is identified in experiences that deny meritocracy (Navia y Engel, 2006), in the constant necessity to level opportunities by means of resources as the “pituto” (informal mobilization of influences) (Barozet, 2006) or in the fact that family names and family networks are central to define opportunities (Núñez y Gutiérrez, 2004).

(3) The logic of confrontation of powers, due to which social space is perceived as a struggle field in which abuse is a constant experience due to the deregulation of social relationships. This logic is expressed by a constant even though cautious display of signs of power, by expanded and spontaneous “appraisal” games and by social “calculating” and “avoidance” strategies that rule relationships (Araujo, 2009a).

(4) The logic of authoritarianism and the dismissal of authority. Authoritarianism is an expanded key of interpretation and action. Authority is confused with authoritarianism. Thus, the relationship with norms in this context appears necessarily as an imposition passively obeyed, and not as active consent.

Privilege legitimates differences based on hierarchies considered natural to which, from a sociological and historical perspective, equality opposes (Dumont, 1983). The deregulated use of power interferes in the development of mutual trust which is essential to social coordination. It also propels ways of exercising power that hinder handling hierarchies (authority) and blocks establishing a common space between individuals beyond their particularities. In words of one of our interviewees:
“This society is still too segmented. Although it is a more open society than before, it is still very hierarchical, quite impermeable, in general, there is little social mobility, that is to say, people identifies you by your face, by the color of your hair, identifies you by the clothes you wear, so it is very likely to typify, to pigeonholing… too much prejudice” (man, middle sectors).

It is worth underscoring that all this systemic logics are prevalent in everyday life social experiences. That is to say, from the experiences in public transportation to those concerning the functioning of politic through to interactions in public health services or schools. Therefore, all these experiences question in a continued and embodied manner the principle of equality.

¿Which is the outcome of this encounter between the expansion of equality (and its increasing inscription in individuals) and systemic logics that give account of the full force of a hierarchical and vertical structure of society (Bengoa, 2006; Larraín, 2001; Salazar y Pinto, 1999)? As a new and recent study shows (Araujo y Martuccelli, 2012), the outcome of this encounter is a particular translation of egalitarian principles in social life: the emergence of pressing expectations of horizontality which, on their turn, impact directly upon the forms of perception of inequalities.

The expectations of horizontality

It is evident that the expansion of equality principles is a long term process. Indeed, the first version in which equality embodied in our societies is a long-term and still in force presence. This first embodiment occurred by means of its translation to guiding juridical or political principles associated to demands of political inclusion which informed the horizon of social movements. But, there is a second way in which equality appears at present in Chile which is precisely what our results show as novelty. Equality appears, today, as a generalized demand for horizontality. By

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6 For a detailed discussion, see Araujo y Martuccelli, 2012: 83-121.

7 For the case of Chile, see Garcés, 2004.
this is not meant, of course, that persons have the expectation of living in a totally horizontal world. It means that individuals demand a horizontal treatment in symmetrical as well as asymmetrical relationships. Horizontality in face to face exchanges becomes a central exigency. Horizontality is an interactive yearning. It is expressed in the search for a more horizontal sociability. This implies the demand for handling asymmetries with a horizontal fundament, but also for the disappearance of the tendency in society to “vertical unsymmetrization” (Güell, 2012) of relationships by means of privileges or the use of power resources. This is a request made to both institutions and other individuals.

Thus, it is a revolution of expectations that concern the common social world because it entails the transformation of the social bond. But it also touches on the most intimate aspects of an individual because it concerns the definition of personal dignity and is at the moment a privileged sign of respect. From here derives the exigency of a generalized modification of statutory treatment between all individuals. The accomplishment of these expectations intervenes in a decisive manner in informing judgments about institutions or persons. It is in this regard that horizontality in action in Chilean society is expressed through the outbreak of a new sensibility which is to be related with the accurate perceptions of inequalities displayed in social interactions.

_Inequalities in social interactions_

Our studies show that in Chilean case inequality perceptions are strongly associated with a spread denunciation of verticality and hierarchy and its abuses. These denounces are based on individuals experiences in basic situations such as not being treated with courtesy or being called “huevones flojos” (“lazy jerks”) by their superiors at work, for example. In words of a woman that recalls her experiences at her job:

“_It is a mistreatment that is with…it is a mistreatment that goes from an annoying way of addressing you with the tú-form (tuteo) (...) to telling you “(tú) go make_
photocopies”; and you realize that to the other person they say “(usted) go make photocopies” and to you “tú” (adult woman, popular sectors)\(^8\).

Certainly, abuse experiences are not homogeneous and are not equally distributed in every sphere of everyday life. However, abuse is massively and transversally denounced, rejected and directly suffered. The central fact here is the acute awareness of abuse in social relationships. Acute awareness means the presence of a feeling of alert or even over-alertness in the relationships with others. Alertness is a fundament for denunciation, but over-alertness is the basis for irritated or still abusive responses toward others (the assumption of being abused or of the other’s willingness to abuse works as a premise that encourages and justifies the own abusive act). Abuse is the omnipresent social phantom.

The language of abuse has become a natural expression to name what is increasingly perceived as a product of morally intolerable social attitudes. As a young man says, “I feel that they take advantage of that (their power K/A). I understand that the problem is there: that one has no way to defend itself. They are like creepy-crawlies that can attack you and you have no decision” (middle sectors).

¿What underlies all these experiences? the conflict with power and verticality. In every egalitarian order it is necessary to know how to deal with vertical relationships, as Goffman has pointed out, but in Chile this has its own special features. Abuses and mistreatments are conceived as a result of the permanence of a hierarchical order and a notion of verticality based on the assumption of a naturalized superiority of those at the top of the social pyramid. That is, a result of a pattern of interaction historically produced and culturally reproduced.

However, if the persistence of these patterns is perceived, they have lost legitimacy. The loss of legitimacy has two main effects. On one hand, as recent

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\(^8\) “Usted” is a Spanish pronoun usually used to address estrangers, older persons or authorities; in any case it entails a respectful treatment.
research results show\textsuperscript{9}, it contributes to the generalization of mistrust towards authority. Every authority stops to be seen as a factor for regulation of power exercise by means of legitimacy (Weber, 1964) or as a plus that sanctions and pacifies submission to power (Renaut, 2004). Authority is perceived as excessive; authority is authoritarian. “Chile is a very authoritarian country, very authoritarian. But…not to 100%, a 70% because the other (for the other 30% K/A) is as if it had not much importance” (woman, popular sectors). 30% is not the rate of those who exercise authority in an authoritarian manner but refers to those who “do not care a bit” about authority. Authoritarianism and dismissal of authority go hand to hand. The demand for horizontality and the insistence for a horizontal treatment in symmetric and asymmetric situations require the production of the fundamentals of authority over new basis in politic as well as in family or work. This demand questions one of the regulatory pillars of power relations in this society. On the other hand, due to the loss of legitimacy of systemic logics that underlie social experiences, these constitute the privileged signs of injustice in society, which explains the strong sensibility to this kind of inequalities.

Therefore, the above discussed democratizing revolution in-process in Chilean society allows to explain the fact that complaints against abuses in daily interactions or mistreatments in face to face encounters are relevant components of inequality perception, what we have called interactive inequality\textsuperscript{10}.

Certainly, the perception of interactive inequality does not diminishes the importance of economic or juridical inequality perceptions, but it becomes a salient

\textsuperscript{9} Autoridad y procesos de democratización social en Chile, Proyecto FONDECYT Nº 1110733. Ver nota 2.

\textsuperscript{10} Garretón y Cumsille (2002), found in a study on inequalities perceptions that young men of popular sectors read inequality primarily as social injustice and power abuse. This same study showed that 87% of the interviewees declared that the biggest inequalities were those related to people with power and people without power. Based upon these results the authors propose to speak of citizenship or civic inequalities. However, this notion is not systematically developed. In any case, the reference to citizenship ends to be restrictive because what this data reveals cannot be completely absorbed by a notion restricted to rights and duties.
barometer from which other inequalities are interpreted, especially in popular sectors\textsuperscript{11}.

Of course, having reached this point, it is worth asking, why not using the term existential inequalities coined by Therborn\textsuperscript{12} to name the type of inequalities discussed for the case of Chile, or why not associating them to Honneth’s theorization of Recognition? No doubt interactive inequalities imply or at least are related with each of these conceptualizations. However, they cannot be absorbed by them. Why? There are three reasons that might be given.

Firstly: because Recognition far from being a central element in the case studied appears as one among other elements that constitute the “grammar” of the good treatment demanded in social interaction. This makes the difference with those that have worked Recognition departing from the problem of justice with a focus on identity or status respectively (Honneth, 1997; Taylor, 2003; Fraser in Fraser and Honneth, 2006).

Secondly: because inequalities identified in this work are far from being constituted or articulated by the legal or institutional spheres which is the case of many inequalities concerning Recognition. The type of inequalities that the case studied allows us to situate focus on social interaction patterns. This is to say, they relate to sociability and civility. It is worth to insist: they fall outside the scope of legal and institutional treatment. This is decisive.

Thirdly: there is an important reason for insisting in the notion of interactive inequalities and not to subsume it under a broader definition as existential inequalities

\textsuperscript{11} It is possible to suppose that these results contribute to explain the fact that when perceptions of economic inequalities are analyzed, the magnitude of this perception in popular sectors is less acute than in other sectors (Castillo, 2009, Castillo, Miranda y Carrasco, 2011). Seen from our results, we could make the hypothesis that this is an outcome of the importance of interactive inequalities in the hierarchy of perceived inequalities in these sectors.

\textsuperscript{12} This author, taking in account some other works like those of Honneth (1997) or Margalit (1999), defines this type of inequalities as an unequal acknowledgement of human beings as persons which has an important effect in the distribution of freedom to continue projects and in the affirmation and negation of recognition and respect. This inequality might be recognized as such when a feeling of humiliation, of not being recognized or of not being respected arises. (Therborn, 2006).
inequalities. This notion sheds light to and allows drawing the consequences of one very specific trait of Latin American societies: the weight sociability has in them. This is an importance that has been underscored in Latin America from the so called “Ensayos del carácter” (Paz, 1987) through to fundamental texts of social thought (Freyre, 2010 o Buarque de Holanda, 2006) until more contemporary interpretations (Nugent, 1992; Nino, 2005; Adler-Lomnitz, 1971, among others). In all of them, sociability has been highlighted as an essential element for understanding social integration in the region (Lechner, 1987; Morandé, 1984). It has also been conceived as a privileged scenario of social power struggles, as shown, for example, by the famous debate between Roberto Da Matta (2002) and Guillermo O’Donnell (1984). Due to this centrality, the domain of social interactions becomes in this region the privileged field in which takes place what Rancière (2007a) has called the “verification of equality”. The notion of interactive inequalities and the process to which it refers sheds light to one of the possible destinies of a salient tension in the region diagnosed long time ago: the dissonance between modernizing economic and cultural processes and the permanence of the hierarchical and vertical character of social relations.

V. Final Remarks

Socio-historical process participate in defining the perceptions of what is conceived as inequality as well as the hierarchy between inequalities, because they contribute to define the specific contents of equality principle in a particular society.

As we have seen, in Chile equality appears as a very relevant element for thinking and evaluating society and oneself in it. But, furthermore, equality is applied to a new domain. The functioning of equality in a society can be measured by calculating the degree in which the normative principle has permeated the distribution of resources (Ottone y Vergara, 2007) or how individuals are conceived before the law in comparison to others (Méndez, O’Donnell y Pinheiro, 2002). Chile is no exception. But, as our studies have shown, the functioning of equality is
also measured by the magnitude in which it has accomplished to permeate the pattern of social interactions: the treatment I receive from others, the quality of the exercise of authority, the requirements for recognition, the degree of kindness or disregard.

However, our results not only reveal that equality is associated to a new social domain. They also show that there is a new way of defining the measures of its accomplishment in society. We are all equal as long as we receive the same treatment in everyday life interactions regardless of social position, signs of distinction or the access to social power sources. Thus, the particular index for the measurement of equality on the social bond is horizontality in social relationships. The forms sociability and civility take are the salient barometers of injustice.\(^{13}\)

Finally, two major consequences of this work are worth to be underscored.

Firstly, in a theoretical-methodological perspective: as we have intended to argue, normative principles are not immutable notions. These notions acting in social life are social ideals and therefore have specific contents in each historical moment, certainly, but also in each society. For example, although equality as a normative principle achieves to migrate and simultaneously be present in different societies, its contents and scope are not exactly the same in each case. This means that understanding inequalities (but also the possibility of overcoming them) fosters taking in account the sociological study of equality and moreover the sociological study of normative principles.

Secondly, the political consequences. What derives from the processes analyzed is that a new domain becomes a salient barometers of injustice.\(^{14}\) Equality on the social bond, and the expectations of horizontality that are consubstantial to it,

\(^{13}\) An additional argument is given by the observation of actual political phenomena in Chile, for example: the rhetoric of new social demands; the modalities of construction of social leaderships, or the effort of institutional political system to make use of a language sensible to interactive inequalities in their electoral strategies.

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foster a new domain of Citizen’s demands. Demands for equality in this sense are not so much evocated with respect to abstract juridical and political norms; and such demands are also not exclusively measured in economic terms. Demands for "equality" in the context used here are fundamentally embedded in concrete experiences of social interactions. This is to say, that we face a notion of equality that, although certainly related to juridical/political and economic equality, transcends both. This notion of equality goes beyond what has been produced by political and institutional discourses. We have to deal with a kind of "equality" that cannot be separated from the interactive dimension of the social bond. As a consequence, social interpersonal as well as political demands gain a new character and a new rhetoric enters public space. This novelty entails, with no doubt, a whole set of anew defies to society as well as to institutional politics, but, seizing them is also an ineludible and urgent task for social thought. Equality on the social bond is, at present, a burning issue of democracy in Chile, and as recent phenomena let us believe, in the region as well.

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