



LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Social Protest and Conflict in Radical Neoliberalism Chile, 2008–2020

Edited by
Alfredo Joignant
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Alfredo Joignant · Nicolás M. Somma
Editors

Social Protest and Conflict in Radical Neoliberalism

Chile, 2008–2020

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Labor Organizations and Protest: Reflections on the Fragmentation of Unions, Union Pluralism, and Strikes

Pablo Pérez-Ahumada and Francisca Gutiérrez-Crocco

The social uprising in Chile in October 2019 revealed the weakness of the country's development model. Millions of people took to the streets around the country to protest against persistent inequalities, abuse, and the indifference of the political authorities (Araujo, 2020). The strength and magnitude of these mobilizations caused bewilderment. The growing individualism of society was widely believed to have laid to rest the specter

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of the great social movements that preceded the 1973 military coup and later opened the way to the end of the dictatorship (Joignant, 2003; Moulian, 1997). In the 2000s, this view was tempered by the irruption in the public space of a series of movements, including students, feminist groups, and the No+ AFP Coordinator (Bülow & Donoso, 2017). However, contentious actions increased only slightly and remained at a “baseline level” until October 18, 2019, when the situation changed radically (Joignant et al., 2020). The unrest that broke out then brought together different demands, giving the protests visibility and a mass scale.

In addition to understanding the social malaise that prompted the uprising, it is important to consider the latent processes behind the reevaluation of protest as a means of collective action. The international literature on social movements has shown that organizations play a fundamental role in the generation of disruptive collective actions. For example, resource mobilization theory questions the idea of the irrationality of these actions, demonstrating that organizations provide a base and key resources for the emergence and development of social movements (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; McAdam, 1982). Organizations not only provide economic, technical, and human resources, but also contribute to social movements’ characteristic framing process. In other words, they intervene in the definition of the problem that gives rise to a mobilization, contribute to the articulation of its demands, identify opportunities, and provide it with a discourse, among other tasks that are conducive to the participants’ commitment and the cause’s dissemination (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Snow & Benford, 1988).

However, organizations differ and their level of formality or institutionalization has a significant impact on the emergence of protests, the form they take, and the results (Tarrow, 1998; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). For example, more formalized organizations may have better access to established political channels while more informal organizations tend to adapt more quickly to emerging situations (as discussed by Caniglia & Carmín, 2005).

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In this chapter, we contribute to debate about social organizations and collective action by focusing on labor unions and worker protests. More specifically, we look at how the structure of labor unions, delimited by the institutional framework that regulates their operation, allows us to understand the dynamics of worker protest and strike activity in Chile during the past decade. Unlike most other social organizations that have participated in protests in recent years, unions have a long history and are heavily regulated. They were first officially recognized under the early legislation that was consolidated into the Labor Code of 1931. Currently, their operation is regulated by Law N° 20.940 (2016). In line with the decentralization and fragmentation sought by the 1979 Labor Plan, imposed by the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, this law promotes decentralized company-level collective bargaining, which must follow a series of highly bureaucratized stages that, in practice, exclude an important part of the labor force (particularly outsourced and part-time workers) (Pérez Ahumada, 2023). It also restricts the right to strike, which can only be exercised during a regulated collective bargaining process, and facilitates a series of mechanisms that render a legal strike largely ineffective as a means of union pressure (Gutiérrez Crocco, 2020; Pérez Ahumada, 2023). However, more than a third of strike activity in Chile is not regulated or legally recognized by this regulatory framework (OHL, 2020). More importantly for the purposes of this chapter, Chilean labor laws favor a structure that weakens unions. By fostering the formation of unions that bargain collectively only at the company level and generally have few members, they are conducive to *union fragmentation* (Pérez Ahumada, 2023a). In addition, they foster *union pluralism* or, in other words, the existence of multiple unions within a company, all with the same powers to represent workers and bargain collectively. Union fragmentation and pluralism are closely related and are an integral part of the Chilean labor relations model (Gutiérrez Crocco, 2013; Pérez Ahumada & Ocampo, 2023).

How has the structure of union organization produced by this institutional framework affected strike activity? More specifically, to what extent has the existence of a decentralized model of collective bargaining that promotes fragmentation and pluralism contributed to the proliferation of worker protests in the country? In this chapter, we seek to answer these questions through an exploratory analysis of the relationship between union fragmentation and pluralism and strike activity across the private sector between 2011 and 2019. In the analysis, we use information from

the Observatory of Labor Strikes (OHL), a joint initiative of the Alberto Hurtado University and the Center for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies (COES). Drawing on the press reports compiled by the COES Observatory of Conflicts, the OHL classifies contentious actions related to labor demands into events, referred to as strikes, which can last several days and occur in several places simultaneously.

By complementing the OHL data with other sources of information (for example, data on unions from the state's Directorate of Labor), we show a positive correlation between union fragmentation/pluralism and the number of strikes in different economic sectors. For example, we present evidence that strikes are more frequent in sectors where there are more unions and where smaller unions predominate.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, we describe the reactivation of social protest since 2010, discussing the participation of social organizations in this process and how they influence the emergence and development of contentious actions. In the second and third sections, we examine the role of unions and, more specifically, the effect of their organizational fragmentation on the occurrence of strikes. Finally, we conclude the chapter by summarizing the central argument and identifying lines of research that could help to better understand the role played by organizations and their division in the increase in social protest in Chile.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE INCREASE IN SOCIAL PROTEST IN CHILE

From the restoration of democracy in 1990 through to the middle of the first decade of this century, protests were infrequent in Chile and were not on a mass scale. This demobilization reflected a depoliticization of Chilean civil society that was accompanied by reduced interest in political activity and participation in public affairs (Joignant, 2003). In 2006, a wave of mobilizations by secondary school students, popularly known as the “Penguin” movement, interrupted the apparent political apathy of civil society, showing that protest remained part of its repertoire of action. However, it was not until 2011 that there was a real change in the tendency towards demobilization (Mayol & Azócar, 2011). Starting in 2011, various social movements erupted in the public space around the country, raising issues such as an end to for-profit education, the need to change the pension system, the state's indolence in the face of abuse and

gender inequality, and poor standards of living in the country's regions. Figure 1 shows the evolution of the number of contentious actions since the Observatory of Conflicts began recording this data, indicating that the new cycle of social protest that began in 2010 was characterized by frequent mobilizations that increased significantly in 2019.

How did social organizations influence this revitalization of protest? Due to the lack of official data on social organizations, the empirical research on this subject has been scarce in Chile. However, some studies provide clues to tentative explanations.

The first explanation relates to organizations' participation in the emergence of contentious actions. The available evidence suggests that social protest has been driven less by growth in the number of organizations than by a change in the orientation of some organizations and/or the strengthening of those focusing on the defense of rights. The Human Development Report on Chile shows that, notwithstanding the visible depoliticization of society, an important degree of "associative density" persisted in the 1990s (UNDP, 2000). Moreover, according to a recent study by the Center for Public Policy of the Catholic University of Chile (UC), the number of organizations grew constantly as from 1990, doing so at a far higher rate than the population or the number of companies

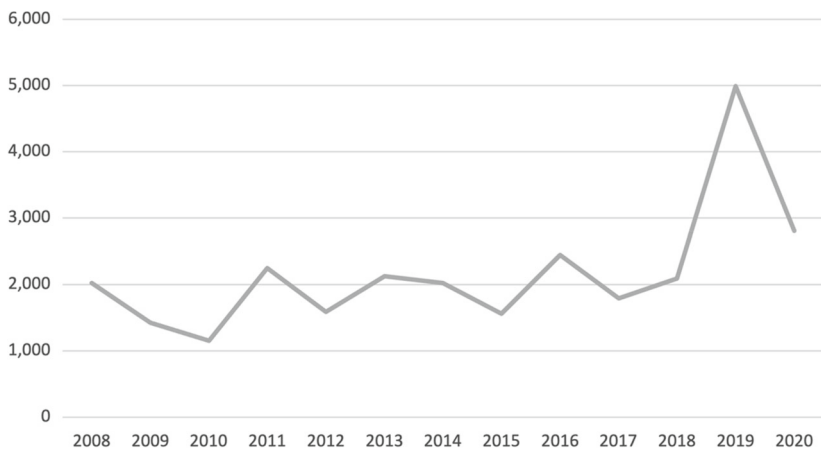


Fig. 1 Number of contentious actions, 2008–2020 (*Source* Compiled by authors based on data from the Observatory of Conflicts, COES)

(Irrarázaval & Streeter, 2020). Indeed, the demobilization observed in the first decade after the restoration of democracy seems to have been explained not by a drop in the number of organizations but by the weakening of the labor unions and other traditional organizations that had played a key role in the mobilizations that led up to the end of the military dictatorship (Jara Ibarra, 2019). According to the UC study, the number of organizations has not changed significantly since 2010 and has, indeed, grown more slowly than in the 1990s. Other studies suggest also that the organizations are generally small because the percentage of the population participating in them has decreased progressively since the 1990s (Somma, 2015). This would indicate that the new wave of contentious actions may have more to do with changes in the organizations' orientation, increasing the weight of those devoted to the defense of rights and/or more prone to disruptive action.

A second explanation has to do with the role that social organizations have played *within* protests or in their development, rather than their emergence. The 2019 uprising involved numerous organizations with different levels of institutionalization and trajectories. Some, like labor unions, have a long history and are heavily regulated while others emerged over the past decade in the heat of the social movements that preceded the uprising of 2019. In this uprising, in contrast to previous mobilizations, none of these organizations managed to take a leadership role. Its participants rejected not only traditional political leadership, but also any type of social leadership (Aguilera & Espinoza, 2021; Aguilera et al., 2023). This does not mean that the organizations did not fulfill other roles during the uprising (Aguilera et al., 2023) or that they were not important in the longer-term process of society's re-enchantment with collective action.

The Observatory of Conflicts data helps to identify the role that organizations have played in the protests. Figure 2 shows the organizational density of contentious actions between 2008 and 2020, measured as the average number of organizations present in them. The black line shows its evolution in absolute terms and the dotted line the polynomial trend. It is important to note that the Observatory records the presence of *formal* organizations in contentious actions when this is explicitly reported in the press. Organizational density should, therefore, be interpreted as a measure of organizations' visibility in the protests. For example, a value of 1 indicates that, on average, one organization was present (that is, reported in the press) per contentious action in a specific year.

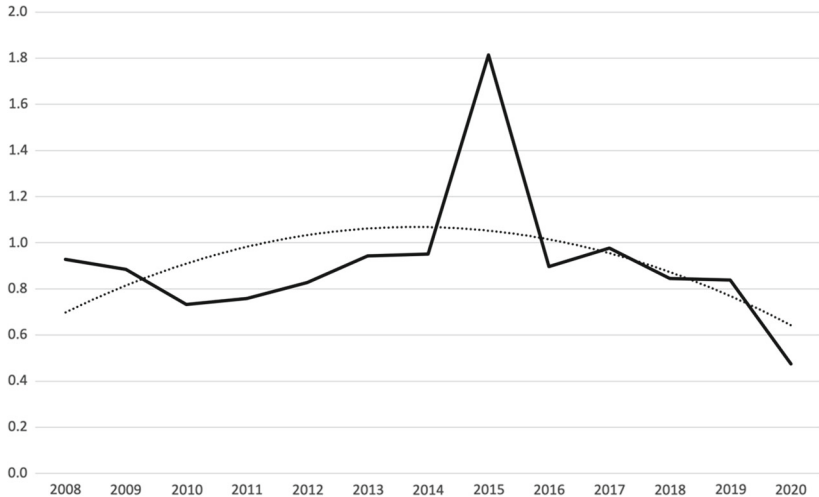
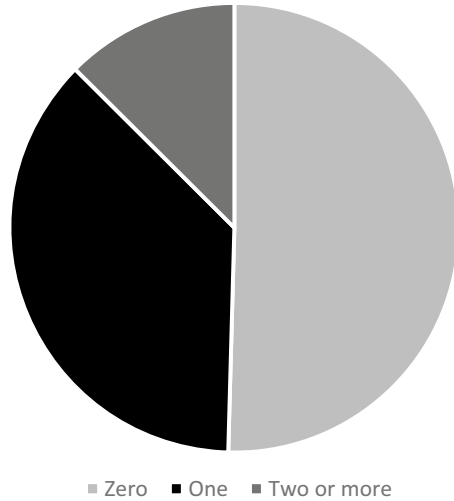


Fig. 2 Organizational density of contentious actions, 2008–2020 (*Source* Compiled by authors based on data from the Observatory of Conflicts, COES)

Figure 2 suggests that, over the past decade, social organizations have not always been visible or taken a leadership role in protests. Indeed, organizational density is below 1 throughout almost all the period studied, except for 2015. However, the role of these organizations seems to have been more evident in the first half of the cycle than in the most recent stage. In broad terms, two different trends can be observed in the period in question. Between 2008 and 2014, organizational density held steady at around 0.9, with only minor fluctuations. This was followed, in 2015, by an exceptional year with an organizational density of 1.8, a figure well above that for other years. This is explained mainly by the large number of organizations that participated, and had media visibility, in the demonstrations against abortion that took place in 33 cities around the country in September of that year. As from 2015, organizational density declines almost constantly, albeit with particular intensity after the 2019 uprising.

Another analysis using Observatory of Conflicts data suggests that heterogeneity of organizations in the leadership of contentious actions is relatively infrequent. Figure 3 shows the percentage of contentious actions in which the presence of two or more organizations, one organization, or no organization was explicitly reported. In just over half of

Fig. 3 Percentage of contentious actions by number of organizations present, 2008–2020
(*Source* Compiled by authors based on data from the Observatory of Conflicts, COES)



actions between 2008 and 2020, no organizations were reported and, out of the other half, two-thirds corresponded to actions in which one organization was reported while a third corresponded to actions with two or more organizations.

This raises the question of the particular dynamics that affect the different fields of conflict. As indicated above, organizations differ in their degree of institutionalization and this may affect the contentious dynamics. Below, we analyze the particular case of labor unions and labor strikes.

MODELS OF LABOR UNION ORGANIZATION AND STRIKES

As discussed above, Chile's institutional framework means that labor unions are characterized by their fragmentation and pluralism. How does this affect strike activity?

In international empirical research, there is abundant evidence that, to understand labor conflict, it is key to study the role of unions (Freeman & Medoff, 1984; Ringqvist, 2021; Pérez Ahumada, 2023b). According to some of this research, regulation that promotes or limits union fragmentation and pluralism has important effects on strike action (Akkerman, 2008; Dobson, 1997; Jansen, 2014). In it, the concept of union pluralism

(also known as multi-unionism) is used to denote those institutional models that, like the Chilean model, permit the existence of multiple unions within the same bargaining unit (company or economic sector, depending on the prevailing collective bargaining scheme). In some institutional models, union pluralism is designed to recognize the existence of unions that separately represent *different* categories of workers (for example, blue-collar or white-collar workers). In others, like that of Chile, union pluralism not only recognizes the coexistence of unions of workers of different types, but also allows multiple unions to represent the *same* type of workers within the *same* bargaining unit (Dobson, 1997, p. 549; Jansen, 2014, pp. 68–69).

In general, union pluralism tends to predominate in “pluralist” or liberal models of labor relations. In these models, institutional mechanisms for coordinating labor relations “from above”, through interaction between the state, unions, and centralized business associations, are weak. Indeed, collective bargaining is decentralized at the company level and union and business organizations are fragmented into multiple associations that usually compete with each other for members (Humphries, 1990; Kenworthy, 2003; Paloheimo, 1984). Consequently, unions lack monopolistic representation, and the existence of multiple unions within the same economic sector—or company, as in the case of Chile—is the norm (Jansen, 2014). By contrast, in “corporatist” models (for example, those commonly associated with Nordic and continental European countries), labor relations are “coordinated” through centralized collective bargaining schemes at the sector or national level, as well as through highly institutionalized union and business organizations that generally have a monopoly on representation in their economic sector (Kenworthy, 2003; Paloheimo, 1984).

Empirical research has shown that these institutional differences have a significant impact on patterns of strike activity. In countries with corporatist labor relations models, the level of strikes is lower than in countries with pluralist or liberal regulation (Brandl & Traxler, 2010; Humphries, 1990; Korpi & Shalev, 1979; Paloheimo, 1984). According to the comparative evidence, the greater coordination and centralization of corporatist labor relations facilitate negotiation between unions and business associations, producing stable patterns of exchange and communication between the two parties and reducing uncertainty during the negotiation process. This, in turn, reduces the probability of strikes (Brandl & Traxler, 2010; Calmfors & Driffill, 1988; Paloheimo, 1984).

The centralization of unions also reduces the level of labor conflicts because they tend to moderate their economic demands in exchange for better wages and increased participation in instances of tripartite dialogue (Brandl & Traxler, 2010; Calmfors & Driffill, 1988). According to Calmfors and Driffill (1988), corporatist unions also tend to be more moderate because their leaders, representing a larger number of workers, are more aware of the negative effects of excessive wage increases (for example, inflation and unemployment).

In the case of business associations, centralization of the organization of interests has also been observed to have similar effects. The greater centralization of corporatist business associations gives them greater capacity to “oblige” companies to respect agreements reached in collective bargaining processes (Traxler et al., 2001). Therefore, although agreements usually result in greater economic benefits for workers than those reached under decentralized schemes, they are supported by business associations, not only because they reduce labor conflict through the signing of “peace clauses”, but also because the setting of wages and working conditions across the sector limits competition for labor between companies (Bulfone & Afonso, 2020; Martin, 2014; Wallerstein et al., 1997).

By contrast, in models where decentralized negotiation, fragmented relations and, therefore, union pluralism predominate, the likelihood of strikes tends to be greater *notwithstanding* the effect of union pluralism in weakening workers’ collective power (Dobson, 1997, p. 550). Empirical research has shown that union pluralism is associated with a higher level of contentious labor activity because the existence of multiple unions complicates the collective bargaining process and makes it more difficult to reach agreements with employers (Dobson, 1997; Jansen, 2014). Some authors attribute this to union pluralism’s effect in fostering competition for members among unions at the company or sector level. This, in turn, encourages unions to adopt less conciliatory attitudes towards the company in order to achieve economic improvements and, thus, increase their membership (Dobson, 1997; Humphries, 1990; Paloheimo, 1984). In recent decades, different studies have, indeed, found that strike activity is significantly greater in companies, economic sectors, and countries with union plurality or a higher level of union fragmentation (Akkerman, 2008; Brandl & Traxler, 2010; Jansen, 2014).

Based on evidence of this type, the central hypothesis of the rest of this chapter is that economic sectors with greater union pluralism and fragmentation will have a higher level of labor conflict.

UNION PLURALISM, FRAGMENTATION OF WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS, AND STRIKES: AN EXPLORATORY EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHILEAN CASE

To test this hypothesis, this section presents the results of a statistical data analysis that explored the relationship between union pluralism/fragmentation and labor strikes. For this analysis, we constructed a database with information from the Observatory of Labor Strikes (OHL-UAH/COES), the Statistical Yearbooks of the Directorate of Labor (Dirección del Trabajo, 2021), and the National Employment Survey of the National Statistics Institute (INE). This database, available on request from the authors, contains information about the number of strikes and the number of unions (2011–2019), their members, and their average size in 16 economic sectors, measured according to a modified version of the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC, Rev. 3). The dependent variable was the number of strikes per year in each economic sector. The data available allowed us to construct two independent variables through which to estimate the level of union pluralism and fragmentation: (1) the number of unions per 1,000 salaried workers¹ and (2) the average size of unions. As indicated above, our hypothesis was that the larger the number of unions, the greater union fragmentation and union pluralism and, therefore, the *higher* the level of labor conflict and, conversely, that the larger the unions, the less fragmentation and, therefore, the *lower* the level of labor conflict.

The analysis considered only the private sector because the special regulatory framework for public sector workers does not recognize the right to strike or union organization.

The results of this analysis are presented in Figs. 4 and 5. Figure 4 shows the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between the average number

¹ We calculated the number of unions per 1,000 salaried workers in order to control for the potential impact of the size of each economic sector. In this way, we could analyze the relationship between the number of unions and strikes controlling for the fact that larger sectors (such as commerce) may have more strikes simply because they have more workers.

of unions per 1,000 salaried workers and the average number of strikes in each sector in 2011–2019, while Fig. 5 shows the correlation between average union size and the number of strikes for the same period.

In line with the international evidence, Fig. 4 suggests a positive correlation between the number of unions per 1,000 salaried workers and the number of strikes (Pearson's $r = 0.19$). The correlation coefficient indicates that economic sectors with more unions (for example, the transport, warehousing, and communications sector and, to a lesser extent, the manufacturing sector) tend to exhibit more strike activity than



Fig. 4 Number of active unions and number of strikes (average values), 2011–2019 (*Note* The figures represent the following economic sectors: 1. Agriculture, animal farming, silviculture, and fishing; 2. Mining and quarrying; 3. Manufacturing; 4. Electricity, gas, and water supply; 5. Construction; 6. Commerce; 7. Hotels and restaurants; 8. Transport, warehousing, and communications; 9. Financial intermediation; 10. Real estate, business, and rental activities; 11. Public administration and defense; 12. Teaching; 13. Social and health services; 14. Private homes with domestic service; 15. Extra-territorial organizations and bodies; 16. Other service activities)

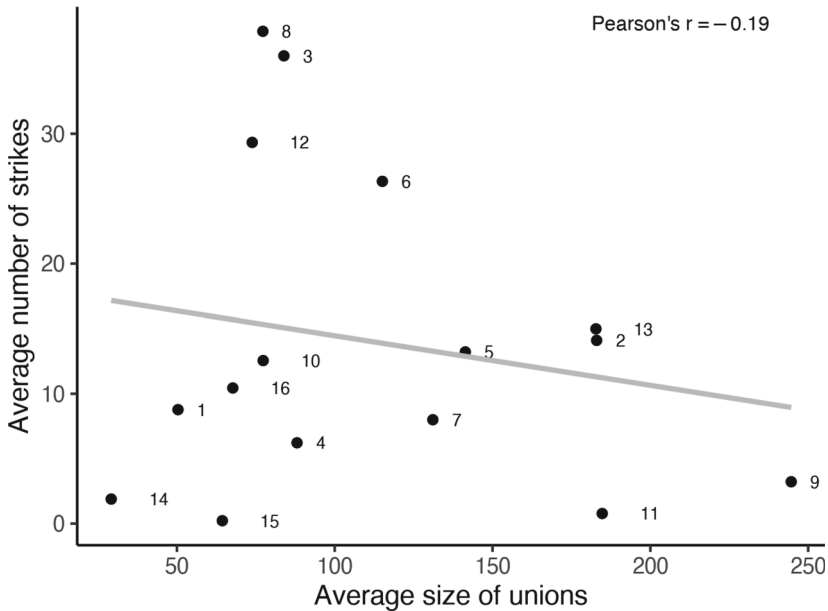


Fig. 5 Size of unions and number of strikes (average values), 2011–2019 (*Note* The figures represent the following economic sectors: 1. Agriculture, animal farming, silviculture, and fishing; 2. Mining and quarrying; 3. Manufacturing; 4. Electricity, gas, and water supply; 5. Construction; 6. Commerce; 7. Hotels and restaurants; 8. Transport, warehousing, and communications; 9. Financial intermediation; 10. Real estate, business, and rental activities; 11. Public administration and defense; 12. Teaching; 13. Social and health services; 14. Private homes with domestic service; 15. Extra-territorial organizations and bodies; 16. Other service activities)

sectors with few unions, such as construction, hotels and restaurants, and financial intermediation.

Figure 5 confirms this finding. As hypothesized, it shows a negative correlation between average union size and the number of strikes, (Pearson's $r = -0.19$). In other words, economic sectors with larger unions (for example, financial intermediation) tend to have fewer strikes, while in sectors where smaller unions predominate (for example, transport, warehousing, and communications, manufacturing, and teaching), the number of contentious actions is higher.

One possible explanation for these results is that they reflect differences between sectors in terms of unions' power or, in other words, that it is not union pluralism or fragmentation that explain their fewer strikes, but rather the weakness of their unions. To test this alternative interpretation, we estimated differences in union power in the different sectors by calculating their average rate of unionization in 2011–2019 (Table 1). This calculation was based on the assumption that unionization is an indicator comparable to the level of power and collective organization of workers (Brandl & Traxler, 2010; Pontusson, 2013).

Complementary analysis indicated a positive correlation between unionization and the number of strikes (Pearson's $r = 0.19$) (Appendix 1). This shows that, in line with the alternative interpretation above, the level of union power and organization does influence the number of strikes: the greater union organization/power, the higher the number of contentious labor actions. However, detailed analysis of differences

Table 1 Unionization by economic sector (average values), 2011–2019

	<i>Unionization rate</i>
01. Agriculture, animal farming, silviculture, and fishing	13.6
02. Mining and quarrying	26.9
03. Manufacturing	18.8
04. Electricity, gas, and water supply	19.8
05. Construction	11.9
06. Commerce	21.0
07. Hotels and restaurants	13.6
08. Transport, warehousing, and communications	33.2
09. Financial intermediation	30.6
10. Real estate, business, and rental activities	15.6
11. Public administration and defense	11.5
12. Teaching	16.8
13. Social and health services	26.4
14. Private homes with domestic service	0.1
15. Extra-territorial organizations and bodies	22.2
16. Other service activities	54.8

Source Compiled by authors based on data from the Directorate of Labor (Dirección del Trabajo, 2021) and the National Employment Survey of the National Statistics Institute (INE). The rates were calculated taking only payroll workers in each sector (that is, excluding self-employed persons) and, therefore, overestimate real union membership in each sector. They should only be used for the purposes of comparison between the economic sectors indicated

in unionization rates between sectors calls into question the hypothesis that the correlations observed in Figs. 4 and 5 are simply an effect of differences in union power. When comparing Figs. 4 and 5 with the data in Table 1, which shows each sector's unionization rate, it can be seen that some sectors with low levels of labor conflict, such as hotels and restaurants and financial activities, have dissimilar unionization rates (31% for financial activities but only 14% for hotels and restaurants). Similarly, some sectors with high levels of conflict, such as transport, warehousing, and communications and manufacturing, show important differences in unionization (33% for transport, warehousing, and communications, but 19% for manufacturing).

In short, while not excluding the existence of a positive correlation between unionization and the level of strike activity, an analysis of Table 1 reaffirms the conclusions derived from Figs. 4 and 5. In other words, our analysis indicates not only that there is a positive relationship between the level of union pluralism and fragmentation and the occurrence of strikes, but also that this relationship is not explained, at least not totally, by differences in union power between sectors.

How then can we explain this relationship between union pluralism/fragmentation and contentious labor activity? As noted above, international studies have argued that the existence of multiple unions tends to produce more “chaotic” collective bargaining processes with higher levels of uncertainty than when unions are less fragmented (Akkerman, 2008; Brandl & Traxler, 2010; Jansen, 2014). Some studies have even affirmed that, in such contexts, conflict increases because unions compete for members by adopting confrontational attitudes towards companies (Dobson, 1997; Jansen, 2014). Our data does not allow us to test this specific hypothesis. However, recent research suggests that, in Chile, competitive relations between unions do not significantly increase the probability of strikes in companies (Pérez Ahumada & Ocampo, 2023). This might imply that union pluralism's positive correlation with the level of labor conflict may be explained less by “competition” between unions than by its effect in complicating negotiations with employers. Unions' limited negotiating capacity was at the core of the 1979 Labor Plan and has not been modified by any of the labor reforms of subsequent democratic center-left governments (Pérez Ahumada, 2023a). The persistence of laws created to restrict unions' bargaining power is, according to the evidence presented in this chapter, key in explaining the proliferation of strikes in Chile.

The explanation proposed here is consistent with that developed in other studies which have suggested that the excessive “bureaucratization” of collective bargaining and “over-regulation” of the right to strike in Chile have tended to favor the appearance of labor mobilizations “outside” the legal margins of collective bargaining (Gamonal, 2011; OHL, 2017). Some of these studies have also asserted that, over the past decade, Chilean unions have become politicized in their demands since the percentage of strikes for reasons other than workplace issues has increased (Medel et al., 2021). This could be another factor in the increase in labor mobilization seen in the country.

CONCLUSION

Research on social movements has shown that social organizations play a fundamental role in the generation of disruptive actions. They not only provide resources that facilitate the action of social movements, but also help to articulate demands, discourses, and identities that reinforce the collective nature of disruptive actions (Caniglia & Carmín, 2005). Based on arguments of this type, recent research has attempted to explain how, and through which mechanisms, social organizations have influenced the process of social mobilization observed in Chile over the past decade. Although there is scant empirical evidence about social organizations’ internal structure, recent studies suggest that there has not been a correlation between the proliferation of social organizations and increased social protest (Jara Ibarra, 2019).

What happens in the particular case of contentious collective actions in the labor sphere? How has the structure of unions’ organization and, specifically, their level of fragmentation and pluralism affected the development of strikes in Chile? In this chapter, we have answered these questions by providing evidence that, in economic sectors with greater union fragmentation and pluralism, there is more strike activity. Thus, our evidence reinforces the argument according to which labor regulation conducive to fragmentation and the coexistence of multiple unions favors the emergence of contentious labor actions (Akkerman, 2008; Dobson, 1997; Jansen, 2014).

We believe that this finding is important because it complements the evidence presented in other recent studies, which assert that the growth of strike activity can be explained by unions’ politicization or their adoption of disruptive tactics in an institutional context that overregulates

and limits the right to strike (Medel et al., 2021; OHL, 2017). In line with these studies, the evidence presented here indicates that regulation that promotes union fragmentation is also key for understanding strike activity in Chile, *even though* it may, at the same time, weaken union bargaining power. As noted above, contrary to the literature on the subject, recent evidence suggests that the positive correlation between union fragmentation/pluralism and strike activity is *not* explained by the existence of competitive relationships between unions (see, for example, Pérez Ahumada & Ocampo, 2023). Future studies should explain in depth why this is the case and why companies and economic sectors with a higher level of union fragmentation are more prone to strikes. Future studies should also look at the extent to which the findings of this research apply, or not, to other actors and social conflicts. The rise in social protest observed in Chilean society over the past decade makes answering questions of this type a necessary task, which has theoretical, methodological and, above all, political implications.

APPENDIX

See Appendix Fig. 6

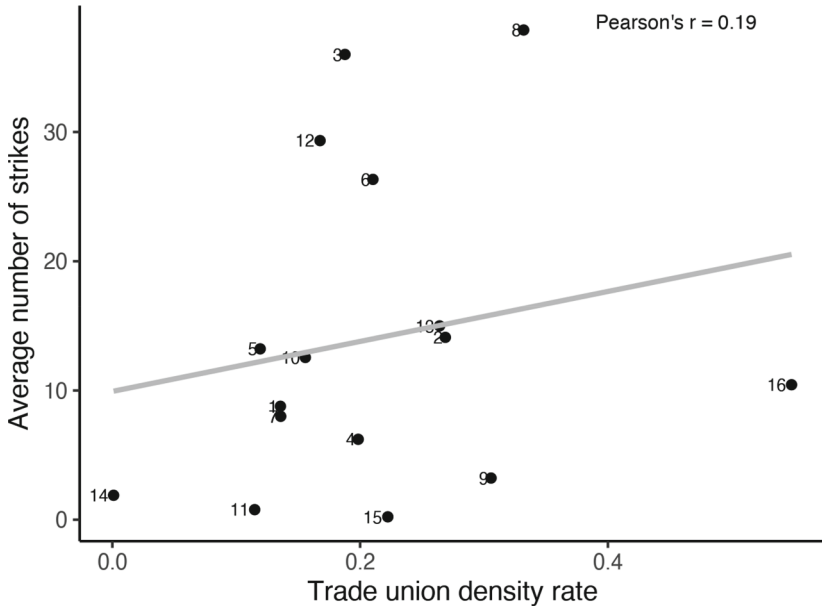


Fig. 6 Labor union density and number of strikes (average values), 2011–2019 (*Note* The figures represent the following economic sectors: 1. Agriculture, animal farming, silviculture, and fishing; 2. Mining and quarrying; 3. Manufacturing; 4. Electricity, gas, and water supply; 5. Construction; 6. Retail; 7. Hotels and restaurants; 8. Transport, warehousing, and communications; 9. Financial intermediation; 10. Real estate, business, and rental activities; 11. Public administration and defense; 12. Teaching; 13. Social and health services; 14. Private homes with domestic service; 15. Extra-territorial organizations and bodies; 16. Other service activities)

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