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Social imaginaries of youth in the Chilean press on climate change

Imaginarios sociales de la juventud en la prensa chilena sobre cambio climático

Imaginários sociais da juventude na imprensa chilena sobre as alterações climáticas

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ABSTRACT | The media are fundamental in reproducing global ideas and visions on climate change. This study sought to analyze the social imaginaries of youth in relation to climate change in four digital media. 193 news items published from September 2012 to December 2020 were identified conducting a thematic content analysis. Imaginaries found had different degrees of crystallization: traditional imaginaries linked to institutions, violence, and climate vulnerability; alternative imaginaries, highlighting scientific youth, Greta Thunberg, and peaceful protest, and instituting imaginaries, exhibiting a youth aware of environmental inequity, activist, and capable of offering solutions. The challenge is posed for social communicators and researchers to transcend punitive and adult-centric visions of youth to others that recognize their leadership and contributions to climate action.

KEYWORDS: youth; climate change; social imaginaries; youth participation; mass media; climate activism.

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RESUMEN | *Los medios de comunicación son fundamentales a la hora de reproducir ideas y visiones globales sobre el cambio climático. Este estudio buscó analizar los imaginarios sociales de la juventud en relación con el cambio climático en cuatro medios digitales de prensa escrita. Se identificaron 193 noticias publicadas desde septiembre de 2012 hasta de diciembre de 2020, realizándose un análisis de contenido temático. Se identificaron imaginarios en distinto grado de cristalización: imaginarios tradicionales vinculados con las instituciones, la violencia y la vulnerabilidad climática; imaginarios alternativos, en los que destaca la juventud científica, Greta Thunberg y la manifestación pacífica, e imaginarios instituyentes, que muestran a una juventud consciente de la inequidad ambiental, activista y capaz de ofrecer soluciones. Se plantea el desafío para comunicadores e investigadores sociales de trascender las visiones punitivas y adultocéntricas de la juventud a otras que reconocen sus liderazgos y aportes a la acción climática.*

PALABRAS CLAVES: *jóvenes; cambio climático; imaginarios sociales; medios de comunicación; activismo climático.*

RESUMO | Os meios de comunicação social são centrais na reprodução de ideias e visões globais sobre as alterações climáticas. Este estudo procurou analisar os imaginários sociais da juventude em relação à alterações climáticas em quatro meios de comunicação social. Foram identificadas 193 notícias publicadas de setembro de 2012 a dezembro de 2020 e foi realizada uma análise de conteúdo temático. Reconhecemos imaginários em diferentes graus de cristalização: imaginários tradicionais ligados a instituições, violência e vulnerabilidade climática; imaginários alternativos, destacando a juventude científica, Greta Thunberg e demonstração pacífica; e instituindo imaginários, exibindo uma juventude consciente da desigualdade ambiental, activista e capaz de oferecer soluções. Há um desafio para os comunicadores sociais e investigadores de transcender as visões punitivas e centradas nos adultos dos jovens para aqueles que reconhecem a sua liderança e contribuições para a acção climática.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: juventude; alterações climáticas; imaginários sociais; participação dos jovens; meios de comunicação de massas; activismo climático.

INTRODUCTION

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) shows that we are in an unprecedented moment of devastating consequences related to climate change. In light of this, the scientific community is calling on us to take responsibility for the scale of the phenomenon and to act quickly. Despite a certain transversality in this discourse, there is still a relativist or denialist discourse associated with greenwashing[1] (Arcila et al., 2015).

In such a context, the media are fundamental to the construction of positions on climate change (Boykoff et al., 2021). Historically, the press has relegated the issue to the background, only giving it prominence through international events or environmental disasters that generate great excitement and attention (Vallejos-Romero et al., 2019). This contributes to a gap in understanding, information and communication between scientific communities, social organizations and the general public (Nisbet, 2014).

For this reason, several studies have sought to understand the relationship between the media and climate change and what shapes the public agenda of the press (Arcila et al., 2015; Legagneux et al., 2018). According to Weaver (2007), these studies allow us to examine how journalists set the news agenda by revealing what they consider important in relation to climate change, how they present the news, and how they evaluate government policies and actions on climate change.

Building the public agenda on climate change is particularly important among young people, as they distrust politicians and the traditional media and rely on social organizations, peers and the scientific community to research and act on climate change (Teso Alonso & Fernández-Reyes, 2020). According to some empirical studies, this distrust of the media stems from the fact that they are seen as "exitist", that they promote a hopeless framing of climate change, give excessive space to denial and are not perceived as reliable communicators (Corner et al., 2015; Hibberd & Nguyen, 2013).

1. The literature review conducted by De Freitas Netto and colleagues (2020) shows that the most widespread definition of greenwashing, despite its polysemic nature, corresponds to a variety of discourses that relativize the importance of the environment. Here we see behaviors that allow green discourses without action, selective discourses that minimize the negative and maximize environmentally friendly actions, and discourses that legitimize actions within the framework of what is comfortable for certain social groups.

In a study with Canadian publishers on youth and climate change, Raby and Sheppard (2021) observed a dominant discourse in which youth are positioned as innocent because they are more connected to childhood, uncertain about the future, and have limited participation in traditional society (e.g., voting). They add that through this differentiation, the media promotes intergenerational division versus intergenerational solidarity, as well as the individualized heroism of activists. Both authors believe that while the media emphasizes youth activism, it often does so only to make the news more interesting or to directly or indirectly dismiss youth social movements.

The study by Teso-Alonso and Fernández-Reyes (2020) in the Spanish television and print media has shown that youth is more prominent on celebrity days or in front of the figure of Greta Thunberg, which contrasts with the days of transnational decisions, where young people are hardly mentioned. They have identified four categories with different valences: a positive vision, as subjects with qualities, creative or empathetic; a negative one, as critics of the adult population; a mixed one, combining to varying degrees the previous two; and a neutral one -majority-, which presents itself as aseptic towards youth. This study focuses on the figure of young people, as they are considered to be the great dynamos of current communication and a highly relevant group for climate protection (Liebel & Gaitán, 2019). Without going further, the absence of Greta Thunberg at COP27 2022 in Egypt and the summit convened by young people are the most striking facts of this version, which has been denounced by these youth actors as an entity aligned with the greenwashing of the parties of nations ("Greta Thunberg to...", 2022). It is therefore important to continue to develop studies that allow us to deepen these visions of youth and test their transculturality in the media.

To explore this, we will use Castoriadis' (2007) notion of social imaginaries, understanding them as a process of collective construction within the social spaces of a community, in which images develop and crystallize over time and are susceptible to change within the framework of a historical structure and different institutional forms. Based on this term, a distinction is made between two concepts: instituted social imaginaries and instituent social imaginaries. The instituted is understood as "social imaginary meanings, such as the institutional ones, which, once created, crystallize or solidify" (Castoriadis, 2007, p. 96); the instituent as "everything that depends on a vital condition of humanity and culture, of creation, because under the instituted there is a powerful instituent force that transforms the social into something unstable, far from equilibrium" (Arboleda-Ariza et al., 2020, p. 8).

Social imaginaries of youth

This research is part of a tradition of studies on social imaginaries that place youth at the center, beyond certain perceptions associated with age or their status as future citizens (Molina-Chávez & Álvarez-Valdés, 2017). To contextualize this tradition, a synthesis of Hispanic American studies on social imaginaries and youth is presented (Table 1).

As you can see, there are stigmas towards young people and their groups in the literature. These images are protected by an external locus of definition that assigns them a secondary role and only values them under certain conditions when they fulfill the expectations that adult society places on them. Specifically for Chile, the context in which this study is conducted, Hein and Cárdenas (2009) propose three central conceptions of youth: as an expression of modernity and social desirability, as danger and marginality, especially in popular sectors, and as a symbol of social change at different historical moments.

From a diachronic perspective, in the 1970s there was a vision of a free youth interested in contributing to the construction of an emerging socialist state. In the 1980s, they were associated with a rebellious imaginary directed against the civil-military dictatorship of Pinochet (Hein & Cárdenas, 2009). In the 1990s, they were then seen as a generation *ni ahí*[2] , free from political and social interest (MuñozTamayo, 2011), a free and permissive youth. Later, with the beginning of the 2000s, ideas related to the new democratic conditions emerged: more rights, new freedoms and possibilities of access to services and goods; a consequently controlling and stigmatizing view of popular youth and another purist view of those who were integrated, consumerist, industrious and devoted to the enjoyment of life (Hein & Cárdenas, 2009). Thus, between 2005 and 2006, young people were seen as part of a student movement (e.g., *Los Pingüinos*[3], feminist movements), from politicized to clearly militant positions (Muñoz-Tamayo, 2011). An imaginary of violence was also constructed, partly through trends in the media and in the discourses of the authorities on duty, as a violent youth desecrating public space and tranquility, which has persisted to this day (Zarzuri & Ganter, 2018).

2. Chilean expression which means "I don't care" (translator's note).

3. Name given to Chilean students mostly because they wear uniforms with ties and it can look like a penguin (translator's note).

Social imaginary	Content	Text
Problematic youth	To understand it as abnormal, conflictive, chaotic and problematic for the adult world.	Hein and Cárdenas (2009) Zarzuri and Ganter (2018)
Institutionalized youth	Participation in an institution such as a school or university.	Molina-Chávez and Álvarez-Valdés (2017) Palacios (2017)
Violent youth	Descriptions based on a global image as eminently violent people.	Hein and Cárdenas (2009) Zarzuri and Ganter (2018)
Unengaged youth	Apolitical or uninterested in national social issues.	Palacios (2017)
Political or revolutionary youth	A politicized vision in which it is assigned an inciting, motivating and transforming role.	Muñoz-Tamayo (2011) Zarzuri and Ganter (2018)
Consumerist youth	Consumer subjects interested in various products and services, which generate market trends.	Palacios (2017)
Free youth	Association with being free, self-determined people with the capacity to act beyond certain historical ties of adults.	Hein and Cárdenas (2009) Palacios (2017)
Suitable or responsible youth	Vision focused on ideal or desirable cases for society, where they are generally responsible, helpful, cheerful and healthy.	Palacios (2017)

Table 1. Social imaginaries of youth in Spanish-American literature.

Source: Own elaboration.

Despite this historical retrospective, it cannot be assumed that such social ideas are directly transferred to young people in the context of climate protection measures. Even in the historical reviews of environmental movements in Chile (Abogabir, 2008), the place and role of youth is not clearly explained. For this reason, this study seeks to describe the social perceptions of youth in the press on climate change published by four mass media outlets in Chile. Following the foundations of Castoriadis (2007), we seek to identify the social imaginaries that are established, as well as those that are established and expressed in tension and change with respect to the former.

METHODOLOGY

To carry out this research, a qualitative study was conducted, focusing on thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as it can determine the degree of newsworthiness, a technique that allows a systematic and qualitative description of manifest content (Painter, 2019). It is also suitable for analyzing symbolic content as it allows for the interpretation process by the research team (e.g., a photo of youth marching against climate change conveys an image of youth as protesters).

Sample

In the selection of the sample, the recommendations of Jiménez Gómez and Martín-Sosa (2018) for the study of climate change in the press were followed: a) favor the analysis of media from a single country; b) avoid focusing only on the elite press, including open access newspapers; c) select multiple press outlets; and e) focus the analysis on youth and avoid replicating overly global studies on climate change. Based on the above, four media outlets were included (table 2).

Name	Brief description	Readers
Publimetro	Free printed and digital newspaper. Presence in 19 countries, belonging to the Swedish holding Metro World News Company. In Chile since 2000, one of the most read newspapers in paper.	650.000
Las Últimas Noticias (LUN)	It is a printed and digital newspaper of the El Mercurio S.A.P. group. It is characterized by an entertainment chronicle or tabloid content, with a colloquial language. It is the most widely read nationally in paper format and the third in digital format.	1.200.000
El Mercurio Online (EMOL)	Digital media of the El Mercurio S.A.P. group. It was born in the 90's with business and economic information. Since 2002 it has operated independently from the print edition. It is the most visited digital media in Chile.	600.000
La Tercera	Founded in 1950, it belongs to the COPESA group. Since 1997 in digital version as a replica of the physical version, and with exclusive sections and contents for the portal. Its portal is the fifth most visited in Chile, its newspaper is the third.	650.000

Table 2. Media included.

Source: Own elaboration. Weekly digital format readers according to the Asociación de Agencias de Medios (2019).).

Analytical procedure

As an analytical procedure, the analysis was structured in three main phases: 1) exploration of press articles in digital media, 2) analysis of the content of the selected corpus and 3) interpretation of social ideas about youth and climate change.

All newspapers were searched by entering keywords in their digital portals: youth, young people, young or college on the one hand and climate change, climate emergency, climate crisis, greenhouse effect or global warming on the other. A second check was carried out in Google News to find news articles that may not have been identified. A total of 193 digital articles were identified, with the oldest published on September 12, 2012 and the most recent on December 20, 2020.

A thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted in four consecutive phases using Atlas.ti software, version 7.5.18. Excerpts that had relevant thematic content after open coding were considered as text units. Although these were not exhaustive, they generally comprised a paragraph or at least one sentence between consecutive bullet points.

1. Cross-reading of the news identified in *LUN*. A total of 40 text units and an initial pool of categories and subcategories were created.
2. Reading of *Publimetro*, adding 251 text units. A second version of the pool of categories and subcategories is established.
3. Both *La Tercera* and *EMOL* are analyzed, incorporating the last 830 text units, totaling 1121 units. The final categories are defined and the subcategories are nested.
4. Finally, these subcategories are expressed in terms of social imaginaries. Representative quotations are sought and the narrative that structures the results is elaborated.

RESULTS

On the basis of this study, three groups of social imaginaries were distinguished: traditionally instituted, alternatively instituted and instituted under a decreasing order of crystallization in the press media.

Traditional instituted imaginaries

The classical visions of youth have been pasted together here. As a cross-cutting criterion, it is the reproduction of an apolitical youth, subordinate and incomplete to the adult world, incapable of effectively engaging in adult climate action (table 3).

Subcategory	Operationalization
Institutionalized youth	Mentioned from the institutional framework to which they subscribe, linking their identity and actions to an institution (e.g., educational).
Criminalized youth	A fraction of the activist youth is perceived as criminal, associating the use of violence as the main means of demonstration.
Climate vulnerability	Expert accounts position youth as one of the sectors of the population most affected and vulnerable to climate change.
Blaming adults for the CC	The youth qualify adults, alluding to their high responsibility in the crisis and as incapable of implementing actions to protect future generations.

Table 3. Traditional instituted social imaginaries of youth and climate change

Source: Own elaboration.

Institutionalized youth

According to the news, two institutions predominate in youth and their climate action: educational institutions and the family. Thus, the different forms of action are understood from their role and place as children, family members, pupils and students:

> However, their struggle is not easy. "Managing the time between strikes and school is one of the most important principles for young people's participation", Axelsson explains, but "good planning usually helps (...). Of course, there are also teachers and schools that are very negative towards us young people and children on strike, which is unfortunate, but expected" (Velázquez, 2019, para. 8).

> She used the same social network to call her schoolmates who were interested in taking part in the demonstration, but only those who were close to her: "I didn't want to make it public because the principal wouldn't have approved of me skipping class to go to a demonstration". Her mother also believes that the school would probably not have supported Anais. But she does and accompanies her to demonstrations, interviews and meetings, because although she is in fourth grade, she is only 16 years old. "She's very young, but it's okay for her to do all this. If they don't do it, who will?" (Olguín, 2019, para. 4).

The media distinguishes between young students, who are more restricted in their actions, and college students, who are expected to be more involved. In any case, they are all dependent on the tutelage of adults when it comes to evaluating

their opportunities for participation. This institutional vision also extends to youth organizations, and there is a close link between youth climate action and student or college movements. The visions are linked to assemblies, strikes, marches and other actions characteristic of these types of social movements.

Criminalized youth

A notion of youth as the cause of violent acts in contexts of environmental mobilization has been observed. These are judged from a punitive perspective by criminalizing the youth who engage in these behaviors. Examples of this are the following excerpts, which were created in connection with the 2019 climate strike called by youth organizations:

> General Enrique Bassaletti, head of the Carabineros East Metropolitan Zone, reported that at the height of the march, 30,000 people were present. He also said that teams from TVN, Chilevisión and CNN were attacked by unknown persons, leaving 4 injured with knives and fist blows (Matus, 2019, para. 11-12).

> These are generations who, moreover, for the first time have no clear idea of the future. They see that their children will probably be worse off than they are, and that creates hopelessness. It is therefore important to understand why the young people – 12 or 14 years old – are protesting so vehemently (Ferrer, 2019b, para. 22).

As can be observed, the arguments and demands put forward by the youth are made invisible, with a marked tendency to emphasize the violent actions, although they are not necessarily connected to the events that took place in the rest of the march or to the actions of the youth.

Youth vulnerable to climate change

Young people who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change were also targeted, "as they are the least able to adapt to climate change" (Casillas, 2019, para. 15). According to the adults, this would lead to frustration among young people:

> Daniela Pesce, a researcher at the Centro de Estudios de Promoción del Buen Trato UC, says there are two aspects to the problem. "There's an impact on younger people, which is that they are more likely to feel disempowered or frustrated in the face of so much discouraging news about the planet because they cannot avoid risk because they lack the material means" (Arce, 2019, para. 4).

> Anders Berntell, Executive Director of the 2030 Water Resources Group, says (...) young people "realize that there are no ways to make a living due to a lack of natural resources, degraded land and water scarcity" ("Se está acabando...", 2017, para. 24).

According to experts, business people and decision makers, ineptitude and frustration are the result of the lack of material means to improve the conditions they face in order to survive.

Youth blaming adults

This image of youth makes adults responsible for the consequences of the climate and the lack of concrete measures. Through their representatives and social organizations, they reliably express that decision-makers "are stealing their future before their eyes" (Fuentes, 2019, para. 1):

> The statement from Friday For Future Santiago reads: "The lack of commitment from our authorities is evident and they continue to turn their backs on us. We, the youth, are the ones who end up paying the highest price for their bad decisions" (Rehbein, 2019, para. 10).

Here, young people are seen as mere recipients or mere players in the adult world, with denunciation or complaint being one of the few courses of action that can even be perceived as annoying or inadequate.

Alternative instituted imaginaries

In this category we find young people who are active in the face of climate change, but play only a limited role. These images of youth are already engulfed by what is considered appropriate by adults, but they are not directly linked to traditional notions of youth (table 4).

Subcategory	Operationalization
Youth linked to the scientific field	Participates in scientific education processes or develops technological projects related to solving the consequences of climate change.
Youth through Greta Thunberg	Greta Thunberg as a spokesperson and mobilizer of youth in the face of climate change. He becomes a symbol of youth demanding change, but his person and actions are caricatured.
Alternative protest	Peaceful, innovative and creative protest by young people against climate change, positive social evaluation of this type of event.

Table 4. Alternative instituted social imaginaries of youth and climate change

Source: Own elaboration.

Youth linked to the scientific field

Young people are actively proposing scientific projects that seek to respond to climate change through innovation and technology development:

> A group of high school students from the municipal school Aldea Educativa on Easter Island have developed a scientific project that has won them a direct ticket to Katowice (Poland), where the annual United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP24) is taking place. Young people from the Liceo Cordillera de Chincolco (Petorca) will also be traveling to this summit to present their prototype hydroponic vegetable garden, which allows them to save up to 90% more water (Yáñez, 2018, para. 2).

> A group of young Colombians (...) created state-of-the-art organic solar cells that are to be launched into space by NASA. 37 children and young people from several schools in Cali and the municipality of Caicedonia were responsible for the development (Trujillo, 2018, para. 1-2).

This idea refers to a youth that is part of the formal education system and participates in activities supported by universities, governments or companies. This gives their projects more influence and visibility, even reaching bodies such as the COP or institutions such as NASA. A greater protagonism is observed, although they lead ideas or actions in projects led by adults.

Youth through Greta Thunberg

The press focuses on the voice and image of Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, who has become a symbol of youth mobilized against climate change. Despite this totemization, it is acknowledged that her power is limited and that she remains subordinate to the logic of adults. Her role in the *Fridays For Future* movement is very prominent:

> And at the forefront of this movement, activist Greta Thunberg, who is already on her way to the summit after a long journey by eco-friendly transport, will once again be at the forefront of the media as a champion for millions of young people in the peaceful fight against the climate crisis ("Not solo los gobiernos...", 2019, para. 9).

It is claimed that many of the mobilizations were the product of Greta Thunberg, making certain local efforts and other people's leadership invisible. Although she is a well-known international face, she is one of the many coordinators of the environmental movement worldwide.

> The demonstration began in Plaza Italia and the vast majority of participants were teenagers and young people, attracted by the persuasive power of Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg (16 years old), who has been skipping school every Friday since August last year to stand in front of her country's parliament and protest for the environment (Morales, 2019, para. 2).

In this imaginary it is possible to recognize a caricatured and infantilized youth that uses a language of mockery by associating the young activists with caricatures or cartoon characters and tries to minimize the impact of their actions through these comparisons.

> Because she (Lisa Simpson[4]), like Greta Thunberg is only interested in shares. She didn't berate the heads of state and government at a summit, but she did try to get the guests at a barbecue organized by Homer to replace succulent chops with gazpacho. She doesn't organize Friday marches, but she once designed a feminist mannequin that broke the stereotype of femininity. As such, she was one of the first activists to bring non-prime time television to us without presidents writing derogatory tweets about her ("Lisa Simpson, la primera...", 2019, para. 3).

In addition to these caricatural resources, there are other, more direct allusions to Greta Thunberg that mock her. The heads of state of several countries have used these means and the media to make fun of her place:

> It is worth noting that US President Donald Trump, without naming her directly, alluded to the young woman during his speech in Davos on Tuesday and criticized the "prophets of destruction", referring to climate change (Hormazábal, 2020, para. 2).

> During her visit to France, the young activist was the target of criticism from right-wing and far-right parliamentarians, who described her as the "Justin Bieber of ecology" (Jara, 2019, para. 3).

Youth protesting in alternative ways

According to the media, there are different ways of demonstrating; some are considered positive, others - as we mentioned above –are criminalized or, as we will say below, considered part of activism. Within these notable, innovative, creative and peaceful demonstrations appear the "*comparsas, batucadas*, painted bodies and whistles, in addition to chants and shouts" (Matus, 2019, para. 3), or others with

4. Juvenile female character from the American animated series *The Simpsons* (FOX Company).

a higher degree of organization: "performances with animal masks simulating drowning in plastic, and others picking up cigarette butts and garbage" (Olguín, 2019, para. 15). Perhaps the most iconic expression is linked to the personification of an ecological superhero:

> Between recycled posters made from discarded cardboard boxes and chants, the protesters managed to peacefully attract the attention of passers-by, more than one of whom was dressed up for the cause. One of them was "Ecoman", an ecological superhero who joined the various environmental organizations in the front row (Soto, 2019, para. 4).

This superheroic appearance and others that are considered part of the good protest are associated with tonal or esthetic aspects that embellish the demonstration. Although it is highlighted as a positive aspect of youth, at the same time the dichotomous limits it has with the discontent caused by a supposedly violent mobilization are explicitly mentioned. All of this remains in a pole that is difficult to swallow positively and only passes through the adult lens in a criminalized way.

Instituting imaginaries

In this last category, we observe a committed and politicized youth, understood from their own logic and not from an adult-centered point of view. Nevertheless, they are part of a less crystallized group that quickly moves from positive to negative visions, from participatory to denialist (table 5).

Subcategory	Operationalization
Aware of environmental inequity	Refers to a critical awareness of environmental inequity, understanding structural social inequalities.
Activist and proactive youth	Action beyond whether structures allow it to do so. Associated with social movements and with the capacity to offer specific solutions.

Table 5. Institutive social imaginaries of youth and climate change

Source: Own elaboration.

Youth aware of environmental inequity

It was evident that young people have an awareness and critical capacity in relation to the global environmental crisis and understand that a large part of the problem is linked to structural social injustices:

> Estefanía González from the Civil Society for Climate Action (SCAC), which represents more than 150 Chilean and international groups, denounced the fact that in Chile "an avocado tree has more right to water than a human being". "Today, climate protection means social justice. It is not possible to achieve social justice without ecological justice", said the activist.
>
> "As civil society, we will not stop this time without concrete measures that must be translated into fundamental rights" (Heselaars, 2019b, para. 3).

One of the most frequently repeated injustices corresponds to the differences between the global South and North, especially in terms of resources and opportunities, with the countries of the North bearing the historical responsibility while the countries of the South have suffered the worst consequences:

> Using pots and pans and banners the protesters denounced that after a week of climate negotiations in Madrid (COP25) there has been "little or no progress on most" key issues, including the need for rich countries and polluting industries that "historically" have caused the climate crisis to provide funding to support communities that are affected by "increasingly severe" disasters (Heselaars, 2019d, para. 4).

They highlight the critical consciousness of young Latin Americans who recognize certain historical processes and common factors at the grassroots level. From there, they recognize the inability of Latin American governments to act accordingly:

> Latin America is in a socio-environmental crisis, the pressure from influential circles is very strong and governments are not giving the environmental crisis the importance it should have. "In Latin America, nobody has declared an environmental crisis and yet we are all convinced that it exists", said the young Uruguayan (Guillermo Passegi). María Esperanza de la Cruz (Ecuadorian) explained that "we have come as the voices of Latin America and the Caribbean, we want to take responsibility for the environment on our continent, if we do not work together, young adults and older adults, we will not achieve anything" (Heselaars, 2019a, para. 8-10).

Environmental or climate justice is also linked to other social injustices related to social class, anti-speciesism, feminism and sexual diversity:

> As a concept, antispeciesism is one that is often repeated in an overarching way in almost all demonstrations and protests. Anti-speciesist women's collectives participate in feminist marches, including those of sexual diversity, as well as other protests. It is read as a concern of the new generations (Ferrer, 2019a, para. 13).

> "We need to change the system and transform it into a sustainable system that relies on clean energy, because oil and coal will eventually run out and the only thing that will happen is more poverty", says Josué (...) "At the moment, people with more resources are being spared, but in a few years' time it will affect us all equally" (Olguín, 2019, para. 13).

Activist and proactive youth

Young people are recognized as part of cultural, political and social movements that express their point of view on climate change and actively and purposefully seek to mitigate its effects and improve people's adaptive capacity.

> UNICEF highlighted the stories of Alexandra Villaseñor and Carl Smith from the United States, Catarina Lorenzo from Brazil, Chiara Sacchi from Argentina, Elle-Ane from Sweden, Iris Duquesne from France, Raina Ivanova from Germany, Raslene Jouball from Tunisia and Debora Adegbile from Nigeria. Ayakha Melithafa from South Africa, Ridhima Pandey from India, Carlos Manuel from Palau, Litokne Kabua, David Akley III and Ranton Anjain from the Marshall Islands are also leading the fight. The entire group of teenagers are fighting in their showcases to ensure that the leaders of their countries and the world understand that now is the time to take steps to curb the environmental crisis (Lepe, 2019, para. 5).

This meant the personification –with first and last names– of the activists who are part of the movement. As Greta Thunberg and the German Luisa Neubauer emphasize with regard to the media attention they receive, "it is our moral responsibility to use this attention to give a voice to those who need to tell their stories" (Heselaars, 2019c, para. 6). By the same token, they recognize that the role of the activist is not the same in all parts of the world, with leaders in the Global South clearly invisibilized:

> The Chilean took the opportunity to call for "many young, rural and indigenous activists in Latin America" to "receive more attention". Referring to the Swede Greta Thunberg, Silva said: "She is a very good activist, but in our continent there are many activists, rural and indigenous leaders, and we would like them to receive more attention, because there are many young people who are fighting for this cause" (Heselaars, 2019a, para. 4-5).

Without detracting from the above, a few remarks make these local activists visible:

> Valentina Chavarría is 17 years old, studies at the Liceo Bicentenario Ciudad de Los Ríos in Valdivia, and after finding out about the movement through social networks, she is now an ambassador for Fridays for Future in Chile. "It is important that we as students demand a safe future, because the measures

> taken by our governments to help the planet are not enough. We are not warning of a future crisis, because the crisis is already here: Hunger, drought, extreme weather, deforestation, extinction of flora and fauna" (Córdova, 2019, para. 20-21).

> But the struggle of Gabriela and the students in Quintero and Puchuncaví is different from that of other young people who expect governments to respond to climate change. These days, they are collecting cases of young people who have had spots on their bodies since last year (Parra, 2019, para. 19).

All these cases seem to be part of a youth that is both critical of the role of adulthood and proactive, for legitimate or, in the eyes of the press, understandable reasons. The youth seem to be equipped with completeness, their arguments and perspectives are plausible:

> The Concausa network consists of more than five thousand young people in South America and is a program developed by Unicef, ECLAC and América Solidaria. It aims to promote new voices to mitigate the social and environmental crisis (Heselaars, 2019a, para. 3).

> And in light of these two events, more than 160 social organizations will hold a People's Summit in Santiago, a kind of "alternative COP 25" to the meeting of heads of state and government (...). Emilia Schneider says that students will participate in this alternative summit in response to the meeting of heads of state and government to make proposals on the climate crisis (Said, 2019, para. 7-8).

As we have already mentioned, the press is taking up the subject of marches and rallies again. This means an active use of public space, although reference is also made to these demonstrations and forms of expression in digital form:

> The march lasted until four o'clock in the afternoon along the Alameda and gathered 5,000 people, mainly young people. The demands were clear: protection and care of forests and water, an energy transition towards non-conventional renewable energies (NCRE) and better legislation on environmental issues (Soto, 2019, para. 3).

> For Anais, Facebook has always been a place linked to her interest in the environment. The young woman from Peñaflor created a page where she published data on plastic consumption when she was in sixth grade. "I did it without thinking about a specific audience", she says (Olguín, 2019, para. 4).

It also shows a notion of youth as proactive, able to develop specific solutions to their local socio-environmental problems resulting from the self-management and capacities of their organizations:

> "I believe that in the coming years we will all have to take a leading role in sustainable development in our homes, communities and countries". Millions of young people will soon have to help solve the problems of climate change, water, energy, transportation and education ("La era del desarrollo sostenible", 2014, para. 8).
>
> During the day in Cajón del Maipo, the Latin American young people worked together to develop a series of actions to be carried out as part of the Climate Action Week. Ideas included clean-up and garbage collection days and the composition of a protest song to be sung at mobilizations across the region later this month (González, 2019, paras. 14-15).

Through these ideas, it is possible to look at a youth that is capable of overcoming the challenges of climate change. Regardless of whether they are mediated by institutions or adult subjectivities, they are seen as fully-fledged individuals.

CONCLUSIONS

The study supports the idea that there are different types of young people who are more or less acceptable to the adult hegemonic gaze (Teso-Alonso & Fernández-Rodríguez, 2020). The first group includes young people who do not experience any validation, who are subject to institutional logics, who are vulnerable to climate change, who exhibit criminal behaviors or who tend to blame adults for their actions.

There is a second group that is more validated by the adult world for climate action: young people linked to the scientific field, alternative protest and positive leaders, all associated with the dimension of creativity (Teso-Alonso & Fernández-Rodríguez, 2020) or dealing with the figure of Greta, as already pointed out by Raby and Sheppard (2021). Nevertheless, even the Swedish speaker is questioned in the media by spreading discourses that ridicule and belittle her.

Finally, in the instituent imaginaries, characterized by bringing the place back to young people, we find people who are aware of environmental injustices and those who are committed to the climate through activism that proposes solutions and pushes for change. Here we find a more objective and respectful use of language, as they are understood as full social subjects.

Based on the above, the ideas identified here are linked to others from the literature (Molina-Chávez & Álvarez-Valdés, 2017; Palacios, 2017; Muñoz-Tamayo,

2011), as they provide characteristics of institutionalized youth, in which a distinction is easily made between good (responsible, scientific, free, contributing to the economy) and bad (violent, immature, dependent), with the former being accorded greater agency and value than the latter. These characteristics serve the adult world to assign them a secondary role due to their condition as young, incomplete persons (Liebel & Gaitán, 2019). Only the apparent mutability of youth defies these established notions (Zarzuri & Ganter, 2018; Hein & Cárdenas, 2009; Hibberd & Nguyen, 2013).

A communication model has also been observed that deemphasizes content of greater importance and privileges salient aspects for the audience (Corner et al., 2015; Legagneux et al., 2018). This can be seen in the high level of attention paid to the visual aspects of the marches - and not so much to their slogans or motivations - in the search for fictional and real symbolic figures (Greta Thunberg) or in the positive acceptance of scientific youth.

This panorama makes it difficult to form a critical awareness of climate change (Painter, 2019; Nisbet, 2014) and the role of youth (Liebel & Gaitán, 2019), avoiding aspects such as the causes, the local and global consequences and the mitigation and adaptation measures implemented by different social organizations (Hasbún-Mancilla et al., 2017; Teso-Alonso & Fernández-Rodríguez, 2020). For the same reason, it invites to think new ways of press and research work that involve effective and deep participation of young people, so that they can (re)define the categories from which they want to be thought and express their arguments against the established and immobilizing images.

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