A Socio-legal Analysis of Collective Identity Construction in Social Movements
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Abstract:
This paper aims to analyze the processes of identity formation comprised within social movement actions. The case of the 8-N movement occurred in 2012 in Argentina is used as a central example of a collective identity formation through the use of new technologies in favor of political activism. The theoretical approach to this topic contains a convergence of notions coming from Social Movement Studies and from Political Studies. I take certain notions from Action-Identity Theory regarding social movements' doctrine. Regarding political doctrines, I review the impact of the Theory of Populism (developed by Ernesto Laclau) on the study of social movements. Populism proposes an adequate framework of political and social inclusion to analyze those marginalized masses intending to construct their own identity and mobilize. Finally, the paper reflects on whether or not the generation of a collective identity is a crucial requirement for the emergence of a social movement.

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of identity formation involves a complexity of intra and outer elements surrounding the person/group who intends to form its identity. During that process, there are influences coming from personal conceptions as well as from the social, cultural, economic, political context. Particularly, the way of constructing collective identities evolves as societies constantly re-signify their cultural parameters and develop new communication tools.

Social movements are one of the main examples of collectivities in society who look for a grupal identity. As I referred, new developments in technologies of information and communications have facilitated the creation of social movements' collective identities through a new type of space of protest: a virtual space for civic participation. This articles presents the case of the 8-N social movement in Argentina, as an example of how activists appropriated the virtual space generated through social networks, and used it to generate a collective identity and to give a wider impact to the diffusion of the protest's message (in comparison with classic mass media like TV and free press).

This paper is structured according to a general-to-specific pattern in order to facilitate the analysis of the process of collective identity formation within social movement actions. It begins considering general aspects about the concept of identity, both as a stable set of

features and as a dynamic process of identity construction. These general considerations will be applied to the notion of identity construction in social movements as collective social political actors. Later on, a double approach will be used to examine social movements. First, I make use of some theoretical content from Social Movement Studies; and second, I will consider some theoretical concepts within the scope of Political Studies. Finally, I will offer an integrated reflection on all the notions reviewed throughout this paper.

2. INTRODUCING SOME CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT IDENTITY

According to its etymology, the word 'identity', comes from the Latin word *idem*, which means the same and expresses the quality of being identical (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2014). In other words, forming a personal identity involves feeling equal to oneself and, in the context of this paper about collective identities, feeling identified with the group itself.

The identity formation process is developed as the product of a two-dimensional construction: self-identification as the creation of a group identity by that collectivity itself; and hetero-identification as the recognition of the group by other people who do not form part of it (Recondo 1997). The group members, in turn, collect the perceptions of themselves as well as of the external world.

Regarding the self, an identity comprises the combination of those circumstances that distinguish one person or group from the rest. As to collective identities, this type of self-identification allows groups to shape their own identity according to the cultural baggage and traditions passed down to each member through generations or received from the society they live in. Then, there is the challenge of discovering individual shared qualities, values, goals and the set of features that make the mass unique and different from others. The boundary established by a collective identity generates a union, which acts as a protective bond as well as a binding force among individuals within the group.

As regards to the external world, collective hetero-identification as a quality of sameness ensures the condition of autonomy, showing that the group does not belong to anybody but to itself, otherwise it does not exist at all as such. Therefore, in philosophical terms, the construction of a group identity is not a choice but a necessity to actually 'be'. In other words, not to have an identity is not to exist.

Within the hetero-identification, there are influences coming from a more immediate external context and from a broader external reality. The influence coming from the immediate external context arises from common views about external conditions present in the society that the group is part of. Indeed, members of a collectivity tend to have an implicit agreement over social co-existence, security, justice and other values, and they share their own conflicts or positions on prejudices or socially standardized categorizations, such as class, race, etc. Alain Touraine points out that "identity is not constituted by identification with an order in the world, social group or cultural tradition, and not even with the individuality itself. It is formed, on the contrary, by non-identification, a call to ourselves" (1999, p. 113). This move from non-identification with an original group to the birth of a new identity -expressed by Touraine in the quotation-can be seen, for example, in the case of a group of immigrants living in a foreign country or a group of vulnerable subjects who might suffer discrimination within their own

territory. The author aims to show that it is often a shared rejection of those external conditions of society that gathers people in a new commonality or identity. The rejection or non-identification acts in a double way: those who feel rejected find a self-identification in a new identitary group, while those who perform the rejection as discrimination produce the hetero-recognition of a new collective identity as a distinct group.

The impact of a broader external context in collective identity formation processes can be seen in the effects of our globalized world. In this sense, due to the globalization process, frontiers around the world have been dissipated with a tendency towards economic and cultural unification. However, besides this equalization process, other notions such as multiculturalism and pluralism are becoming stronger. Ethnics, races, religions, indigenous cultures have reemerged with an empowered identitary outline concerning bigger and smaller groups. Under these circumstances, state frontiers have become weaker, as there is an internal mixture of cultures and local legal cultures which erases the image of a homogeneous national entity. Indeed, the internal national frame is composed of residents, immigrants, indigenous and religious communities, among others; which, in spite of living within the same political-geographical frontier, have strong cultural differences.

> As cultural geographers have shown, places are not sources of stability –the source of essential or integrated identities –around which boundaries can be drawn, but are particular constellations of historical relations articulated at a particular locus. What is unique about a place is constructed out of relations, processes, memories, and comprehensions generated elsewhere (Coombe 2001, p. 314).

Consequently, the Nation as a collective identity that used to be found in a community located in a limited geographical area needs to be reinterpreted as a sum of locally and culturally defined groups. Traditionally, modern states set their focus in distinctive elements, such as geographical location, a common language, a common historical, political and economic background, and a common cultural style, in order to shape a more homogeneous and permanent national collective identity. Nowadays, postmodern societies find that those classic paradigms that were valid several decades ago to give shape to identitary constructions have become obsolete.

Legal and political structures around the world have become sensitive to this change derived from the globalization process. The postmodern identitary discourse carries with it an axiological change in society which creates new identities through an exclusion system: those individuals who find themselves excluded from society gather around common interests, reorganizing into their diversity and making of their differences respectable identitary practices to construe their own sameness. Therefore, marginalization or exclusion conditions embedded in our globalized world have given rise to new identities constructed over a previously homogenous community. As part of a psychological process of survival, when living in a condition similar to alienation, citizens are forced to adopt new cultural codes or a global vision about reality and act accordingly.

Having reviewed some general conditions within the process of identity formation of collectivities, it is possible to see that the elements used to find their commonalities have changed due to globalization. The following section will describe how this process of identity formation evolves in the specific case of social movements.

3. SOME REFLECTIONS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT STUDIES

There are many types of groups or associations within civil society. In particular, social movements often act as social and political actors that represent the demands of broad sectors of society, which have been excluded from the market circuit (understood as an exclusion from economic or labor opportunities) or which are not reached by governmental protection. In other words, social mobilizations help to overcome the situation of those individual actors who cannot reach a good level of influence on the 'other', identified as the group's opponent for the sole purpose of their identity formation. These collective social actors perform an essential public function, acting as critical stages of resistance and cultural political pressure, as they try to empower those marginalized sectors of civil society by realizing their potentialities.

The situation of impossibility for the individual may respond to their belonging to a category of vulnerable subjects or minorities (such as children, women, indigenous communities, etc.), or to the fact that the goal they intend to achieve requires a communitarian effort to find a real solution (when related to critical issues such as environmental contamination, major system changes, etc.). In those cases, individuals as single citizens do not have enough power to demand or perform a social change. Yet, gathering in a collective identity empowers the group of individual members to present themselves as a single but compound political social actor in the political arena.

In the light of this paper, Action-identity Theory[1] within Social Movement Studies seems to provide the best framework to study the issue of collective identity formation. At root, this theory suggests that people have a reciprocal relationship to the state, and that people change their identity and relationship to the state through their protest activities.

According to Castells (2005b, p. 30), an identity construction in society always takes place within a context marked by power relations. Based on this claim, the author classifies three forms of identity formation: legitimated identity, resistance identity and project identity[2]. Out of those three forms, we consider that the last category could be applied to social movements, understood as an identity built by social actors on the basis of their cultural materials, redefining their position inside society and looking for a transformation of the social structure as an extension of that identity project. In Castells' words:

> A project identity appears when social actors, based on cultural materials, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by doing that, look for a transformation of the social structure (2005a, p. 30)
> [...] the project identity produces subjects, in terms of Alain Touraine...as the collective social actor through which individuals reach a holistic meaning in their experiences (2005a, p. 32).

According to this theoretical framework, the construction identity process must necessarily include the definition of three elements: identity, an enemy, and social goals.

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[1] Developed by Manuel Castells, Alain Touraine, and Donatella Della Porta, among others.

[2] According to Castells (2005b, p. 30), the legitimated identity is introduced by dominant social institutions in order to extend and rationalize their domination over social actors. This first form would be the case of general social categorizations, such as national/foreigner. Castells then describes a resistance identity which is generated by those actors who find themselves in a devaluated or stigmatized position, who construe a boundary of resistance or survival to fight against a sphere of domination. Indigenous or minority communities, for instance, would fit in this type of identity.

Identity refers to the self-definition of the movement. The adversary is its main enemy. And the social objective refers to the vision the mobilization has of the type of social order or social organization they wish to obtain (Castells 2005a, p. 94). Regarding the identity element, social movements undergo an internal process of interaction, attributing a specific meaning to their traits, and committing themselves to certain interests, values, symbols, practices and discourses. As to the social objectives, the general idea of a desired social change is usually accompanied by specific claims for effective rights, equality, governmental accountability, health, education, job opportunities, housing, environmental protection, etc. Lastly, there is always an identification of 'the' enemy. Donatella Della Porta and Diani clearly explain that:

> ...a collective action cannot occur in the absence of a 'we' characterized by common traits and a specific solidarity. Equally indispensable is the identification of the 'other' defined as responsible for the actor's condition and against which the mobilization is called. The construction of identity therefore implies both a positive definition of those participating in a certain group, and a negative identification of those who are not only excluded but actively opposed. It also includes a relationship with those who find themselves in a neutral position (Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 94).

Touraine (1993: p. 308) similarly states that "a social movement tends to the realization of certain values as well as to the victory over a social adversary."

Particularly, it should be pointed out that Action-identity Theory gives relevance to new information and communications technologies as fundamental means to build the organizational infrastructure of social movements. Castells (2005a, p.130) asserts that without the Internet, traditional and alternative mass media, protesters would form a series of disconnected and stunted reactions. Cyberspace contributes to developing social relationships, feelings of solidarity and collective belonging, identifying specific interests and promoting related mobilizations (Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 37).

Castells (2005a) presents the idea of a networked society[3], allowing us to consider the influence of individuals acting through virtual networks, establishing interconnections and shortening time and space distances inside a cyberspace or virtual space. In terms of identification, individuals stop being passive bearers of rights and duties, and become now responsible consumers and taxpayer users of new mass media, making use of social networks as a tool for political participation and constructing collective identities. In pursuit of identity construction, the creation of virtual communities, associations or groups enhances rituals, symbols, proper languages, conventions, rules, norms and even social bonds; all of which have a *sui generis* character. Besides, social interaction through new media leads to increased flexibility and functionality, with no straight rules but agreed principles, and the chance of reviewing people's understandings and agreements once and again.

Generally speaking, there has been a transition in the development of political identity constructions since the inclusion of new media in politics. Before the use of new media, the construction of a political identity was performed through a fixed relation/affiliation to

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[3] New communication and information technologies empower the research, storage and use of information, considered a new productive and economic value. Castells (2005a) presents the primacy of this value through the idea of a new society of knowledge or networked society, as a further stage following the previous industrial era. This new society is structured over information networks using information technologies.

big projects or organizations, such as political parties. Through the use of new media, individuals construct their identity within the network by participating in a variety of associations rather than being affiliated exclusively and permanently to one of them. In other words, constructed identities within virtual networks have allowed people to be together but in a fragmented way (Fuster Morell and Subirats 2012). Moreover, networked communications offer individuals the chance to form their own political and ideological constellations, escaping from established political structures and creating their own political identity in a politically adaptable environment.

Furthermore, in terms of communication sciences, we believe that new media has additional effects on identity construction. For example, traditional media spread discourses in a single way, as there is no chance of instant feedback. Instead, new virtual media allows communications to circulate in multiple ways, generating collaborative activism, with an active sender and receiver. This situation provides a better environment in order to generate self-identification within a collectivity. Particularly as regards hetero-identity, in traditional media there is regular public exposure with no control over the resulting identity creation; whereas in new virtual media there is a self-definition of the group that can be continually reviewed in order to shape the external image of the group.

Summing up, I consider that new information and communication technologies have the potential to favor the process of identity construction of social movements by reducing costs, producing open and equal interconnections, allowing for group-based grievances and feelings, and developing empathy and solidarity, among other actions. Thus, the introduction of new communications technologies and social networks in politics has provided people with a crucial tool for generating collective identities.

Throughout this section, I have considered the identity formation process in social movements according to Social Movement Studies. Action-identity Theory states that social movements produce social interactions in order to define their identity, social goals and the enemy, taking advantage of the benefits coming from new mass media. In the following section, I will examine the same topic from the point of view of Political Studies.

4. SOME REFLECTIONS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF POLITICAL STUDIES

In terms of Political Studies, the Theory of Populism developed by Ernesto Laclau offers a key framework in order to study the formation of collective identities of social movements. Most of its statements can be also articulated with the Action-identity Theory developed over the previous section.

Laclau (2005) presents Populism not as a political ideology with specific content but as a pattern for rebuilding politics through the imaginary construction of an 'us'. "Populism does not have a specific content; it is a way of thinking social identities, a manner of articulating dispersed demands, of building politics" (Laclau in Arenes, 2005).

In the Theory of Populism, the primary element is a political regime in which there is exacerbation of the power of the Executive Branch, which locates itself over political parties and organized groups. This situation is accompanied by a resulting social segmentation and inequality, within a general context of poverty, insecurity, uncertainty and general social confrontation. Therefore, Populism involves a society that is excluded

from the political and economic arena: it constitutes a depoliticized and disorganized society with a strong social segmentation. This condition leads to a definite impossibility for citizenry to find a symbolic meeting point in order to fit in the national political agenda. At this point, Populism seeks to restore social union through a symbolic bond and to recover politics as an action tool.

Within this political and social background, I find the central goal of (and my main interest in) the Theory of Populism: the populist process promotes a constructed equivalence as a re-articulation of dislocated identities. In technical terms, Populism establishes an identitary relation through an equalizing chain of subjects (and their demands) who, beyond their particularities, share a common idea of change. Laclau (2005, p. 40) explains this technicality in the following terms: when a group of people see that their claims are frustrated and that their neighbors also have different unsatisfied claims, some kind of solidarity emerges among them.

According to the author, this situation forms the 'logic of equivalence': a situation where all demands tend to gather around despite their differential character, forming an equalizing chain. Although each individual demand has a particular identity (differential logic), they are equivalently linked (equivalent logic) to the rest of the demands. In the case of the collective identity of social movements, Laclau's equalizing chain could be translated into the self-identification or common conventions within the group, as we have mentioned in the previous sections.

The equalizing chain generates a frontier within society, delineating the boundaries of the group. As a consequence, it becomes necessary to identify the other side of that frontier through a discursive construction of an enemy. Populism always divides society into two sectors: community, and oligarchy or the State, which is always seen as the enemy. In terms of the identity of social movements, the location of the enemy would comprise part of the hetero-identification stage.

In summary, the background of a populist rupture is composed of a plurality of unsatisfied demands and an increasing inability of the institutional system to absorb those demands as differential. Therefore, the populist regime acts by converting a highly heterogeneous reality into a homogeneous equivalence. These conditions seem to reflect the marginalization or exclusion patterns produced by the globalization process that we have explained in the first section of this document.

At this point, Laclau (2005) includes another relevant element to his theory, by stating that the function of homogenization in a populist rupture is performed by a leader. He/she becomes "the name that best fills the symbolic void through which identification takes place" (Laclau 2005, p.19). In social movement cases, the populist leadership would be assumed by those spokespersons acting as organizers, whose mandate is generally limited in time and confined to a thematic field, intending to inhibit centralization mechanisms and build a collective identity. According to the author, when the process of change led by a populist leader is successful, the increasing institutionalization of a new state begins. The populist rupture seeks for the establishment of political institutions which are inclusive, legitimate and representative enough to the majority of society.

Populist theory then offers a good theoretical framework to specifically analyze social mobilizations as regards their identity construction. Laclau's theory proposes a project of political and social inclusion of social sectors which have been marginalized. It explains

how social masses intend to reorganize, with the emergence of new forms of leadership, conducting their identity formation process[4].

Finally, we may reconsider all the ideas exposed in this section from a juridical point of view. In this sense, it is noticeable that the formation of collective identities by social masses is constantly crossed by the idea of citizenship. In my opinion, any notion of citizenship would necessarily include the following three aspects: the competences, rights and duties established by law, the set of procedures and methodologies to make those rights and duties effective, and finally public servants' responsibilities towards the social community. Depending on the type of social mobilization, I believe that all collective identity formation is intended to cover or support any of these three aspects.

Social movements might be struggling for the recognition of new rights and duties, such as those collectivities supporting new legal trends in sexual orientation. Social mobilizations might also claim for the establishment of adequate procedures and paths to enforce effective rights, as in the case of social marches organized on behalf of vulnerable groups. Finally, they might even demand accurate systems of governmental accountability, basing their massive movements on general ideals of democracy and justice.

All in all, a collective identity formation implies an introspective and external study performed by groups of individuals/citizens who have been excluded from their regular status or environment, and who try to reorganize divergent understandings over social patterns in order to reconfigure their own identity.

The group of ideas and theories previously exposed configure the most suitable framework to describe the case of the 8-N social movement, performed in Argentina in 2012. This mobilization presents a clear example of a collective identity formation process through the use of new technologies in favor of political activism.

5. THE CASE OF THE 8-N MOVEMENT

The 8-N movement was a mobilization formally initiated from social networks and then exposed on the streets. It was physically performed on 8th of November of 2012 in almost all over the nation. According to newspaper reports, 11 of 23 Argentinean provinces (La Nación, 9 November 2012)[5] joined the mobilization, with meetings in the central square of the main cities. Also, the march had its replies abroad, in 10 different countries where people gathered in front of Argentinean embassies and consulates in support of the 8-N (La Nación, 9 November 2012).[6]

Although, the 8-N protest was criticized by government officials for not having a concrete message (as it convened a plurality of claims such as security, justice, freedom of expression, no corruption, etc.) it was catalogued by the mass media as a "protest against

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[4] According to Laclau (Laclau in Arenes, 2005), Populism prevents the regime from becoming a mere administrative process thus guaranteeing a more democratic condition. When social masses identify themselves with a single leader, this becomes a democratic leadership, since without such identification with him/her, social masses would not be able to participate in the political system at all, and political elites would replace popular will.

[5] Including Córdoba, Santa Fe, Tucumán, Buenos Aires, Misiones, Salta, Río Negro, San Luis, Catamarca, Santiago del Estero, La Rioja

[6] Including Spain, Brazil, United States, Italy, France, UK, Australia, Mexico, Chile and Colombia.

the government" (Balinotti, 2012). Reviewing the theories exposed in this document, this means that the 8-N mobilization gathered several heterogeneous claims that were unified in a shared social objective or, into Laclau's idea of an equalizing chain. The government was the enemy visualized on the other side of the boundary set around the activist group.

The so called 8-N movement was one of those cases in which a big part of Argentinean society got united and created a mass movement with the strength of a political organization willing to enforce their claims. Argentina is nominally a constitutional democracy, where people elect and submit to the resulting power of the authorities elected. Nevertheless, as in most of Latin American nations during the 90's, a determining conjunction of bad socio-economic national conditions, a political crisis derived of the lost of trust in governmental authorities and a reduced margin of action for citizens induced them to react. The community was forced to generate new ways of participation, to unify their roles into a massive action and get recognition as a collective identity. These external conditions express the impact of broader external context in the hetero-identification of the 8-N movement.

As Castells (2005) would state, there was an identity formation process implied within the 8-N social movement, boosted through the use new information and communication technologies. During, previously and after the 8-N, the crowd mobilized some resources and built a shared common identity, through the networks, on basis of mutual knowledge. In these terms, it is necessary to point out and reflect over some particular facts corresponding to the backstage of the 8-N social protest.

As a first advantage, the contribution of a virtual space permitted to open a new place for people to show their empathy, by publishing their opinion or uploading multimedia content to spread the message. Actually, it permitted to include more people than those who were actually participating in the public manifestation. This could be seen in the cluster of ideals, values, fundaments expressed by and to a wider population through the use of virtual communications among those who did not participate in the march but shared the idea and gave ideological support. In other words, the use of cyberspace was a useful tool to self-identification and hetero-identification (as exposition) of participants.

Moreover, the use of social networks during the process helped the 8-N movement to become international and to give their message a stronger effect in comparison with previous mobilizations.[7] Facebook and Twitter helped to coordinate the replies occurring abroad, and to give more meaning and diffusion even to some minimal meetings in further locations by the instant online report: "Other points of the world that joined the 8-N were Austria, the Canary Islands, Azerbaijan, Polonia and Canada. In these places, although there were no big manifestations, people with Argentinean flags expressed their support to the initiative and uploaded images to the social networks..." (La Nación, 9 November 2012). In terms of identity, the interconnection through the cyberspace allowed participants to form a collective identity far beyond geographical frontiers, foregrounding the nationalist element as their common root.

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[7] Previous to this movement, there was only one social protest in Argentina (the 13-S movement, performed on 13th September on the same year) that was captured by the digital media with a reduced covering (press reports only described its effect once the mobilization took place) and with only one retort in Punta del Este, Uruguay (La Nación, 14 September 2012).

Previously to the 8th of November, social networks also played an important role in the organization of protest and this situation was recognized by the ruling party: "The call for the mobilization on Thursday had a concrete source: it emerged from sites as Facebook and Twitter; and it spread through different services of messaging as chains. Later on, the political phenomena started walking by itself." (Radice, 2012) After many indications disseminated through virtual platforms, the mobilization was organized to be performed simultaneously from several points in Buenos Aires city, to finally join in the Plaza de Mayo;[8] and internationally, to be synchronized at a same hour across the globe.

The call of the 8-N was promoted by groups in the social networks, as Facebook and Twitter. And then, it was reinforced with text messages (Messeger and Whatsapp services), e-mails, songs and videos coming from several social, political and autonomous groups. The role of the social organizations spreading the messages through the web could be considered as a populist organizational leadership (in terms of Laclau), as it would not have been possible to re-organize the masses without their guidance. However, it was not an ideological leadership (in terms of ideological content) of the protest itself. This differentiation was explicitly stated by the boosters who called themselves as 'organizers': "We are a channel, but we are not the presenters... this is a reality that emerges from society and is channeled through digital networks... We only contribute with rules to organize and administer digital networks" (La Nación, 13 November 2012)

Finally, the project of the 8-N protest was announced publicly and in advance through the media, exposing their reasons and calling citizens to take part of it. This situation generated an opportunity for the ruling party to be ready and counter-react before "the date" of the event. In this sense, previous to the 8-N the cyberspace was transformed into a virtual struggle between people representing the ruling party and the opposition parties, as general identities representing both parts in the struggle.[9] Also, during those days the new and the traditional mass media acted as blackboards for every political leaders' side to create its own story about reality.[10] During the march, for example, the general dimension of the 8-N movement was shown with contradictory numbers and stories in circulation coming of different sources (those media supporting the government and those supporting the opposition parties).[11]

Summarizing, the example presented in this section shows how new technologies have transformed the way of perceiving or standing for a social change, allowing the emergence of a new kind of political existence or collective identity for many activists. In the 8-N case, the social struggle located around the social movement suddenly ended up being transmitted by television and the free press, but it was mainly developed inside the cyberspace (within social networks and multimedia websites). This "virtual translation" happened not only because of the facilities offered by new media, but also because inside

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[8] Plaza de Mayo is the main square in Buenos Aires located within the area of public buildings.

[9] For example, different groups gave diffusion to campaigns on both sides, with the help of multimedia virtual tools. For example, in Twitter there was a war of hashtags between "8NI'mGoing" and "#8NI'mNotGoing".

[10] Mainly through the use and manipulation of Twitter accounts and TV channel signals.

[11] The perspective of the official party was transmitted through the signals C5N, A24, Channel 26 and CN23. On support to the 8-N movement, channels belonging to the Grupo Clarín, TN and El Trece. During the march, the role of TV became relevant to draw different realities, as there was a confusing transmission of the protest. For instance, the signal channels supporting the government made use of short shots, what impeded to appreciate the dimension of the mobilization on the screen (Lantos, 2012).

that virtual space citizens have conquered a common collective identity with a lot of Argentineans standing all over the world and fighting for the same cause.

To conclude, I offer an integrated conclusion in the following section, intending to cover all the aspects developed throughout this document.

6. AN APPROACH TO AN INTEGRATED CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the processes of identity formation comprised within social movement actions, particularly in the example of the 8-N movement, from the point of view of the Action-Identity Theory of Social Movements and the Theory of Populism. Throughout the text, I have tried to show how groups of weakened individual social and political actors gather in collective masses, generating a new type of shared identity.[12]

Collective identity, as a public –political- image, is purposely constructed. In Castells' words: "the creation of the personal image is creation of power" (2005a, p. 556). In the case of the 8-N movement, I have considered the relevant role of new mass media in empowering individuals to find a leader and construct their own identity. Participants in the 8-N mobilization turned to strategic methods to make their action stronger, in a permanent effort to expand their message, get more popularity and support from the crowd, and finally, in order to be recognized by authorities in its existence. This type of mobilizations propelled through the virtual space incorporate an additional challenge to the basic framework of massive movements, using another type of language, methods, and strategies, implying a rethinking of the classic idea of civic participation.

I have presented the process of identity formation as a dynamic procedure of consecutive phases in constant formation, through a dialectic process of construction-deconstruction performed by the group that generates its new identity in two directions: deconstructing their identity from the original one and reconstructing it into a new one. Indeed, social mobilizations transform their condition of 'others' (usually considered as political opposition, terrorists, citizens committing illegal acts or civil disobedience, etc.) into a condition of 'us' within diversity. In this sense, I believe that the formation of their new collective identity promotes social coexistence and diminishes social fragmentation.

The line of argument of the analysis presented in this document has shown how the existence of a social movement brings on the formation of a collective identity. And so I would like to reflect on the character of the movement-identity relation: whether or not the generation of a collective identity is a crucial requirement for the emergence of a social movement.

Continuing with the populist approach, Laclau offers a relevant statement to explain the reasons that prompt the search for a collective identity:

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[12] In fact, collectivities have been included in politics through traditional forms of civic participation as plebiscites, local assemblies, referendums, and participative budgets or just mobilizing through social movements or virtual campaigns. The participation of social mobilizations in politics has facilitated a transition of entire political structures to a more transversal, networked and inclusive political flow with a redistribution of power.

> ...the more institutionalized a society becomes, the more impersonal society's structure becomes. But when people have their social roots in the open, they require a form of identification outside their everyday experience through which they can reconstitute a sense of identity. Once they gather a big number of unsatisfied needs, they crystallize around a symbolic leader (Laclau in Muñoz 2014).

Therefore, Laclau explains that mass mobilization leaders serve to create certain forms of collective idealism or identity. He specifically points out that the collective identity is a constructed element: populist speeches do not express simply a certain kind of original popular identity, but it constitutes that identity (Laclau 2005). The author states (Laclau and Balibar 2011) that identity must be built, since homogeneity is never given, it is always constructed. Thus, his theory offers theoretical support to social mobilizations' efforts to construct an identity, to rebuild political ties and to improve the receptivity to social demands by the political system[13].

In my opinion, the basis of homogenization to construct the collective identity of social movements could be found in a general claim for justice or the proper right of protest (Gargarella 2006). At the same time, depending on the national context, the common root among mobilization participants could be traced back to past experiences (to a common tradition or historical fact that causes social indignation), or it could be related to the present (as a feeling of solidarity with the current protest) and/or to the future (to a new political project or proposal).

The main obstacle to the construction of a social movement identity seems to be the fact that the more significant the precarious working and social conditions of an individual are, the more personal resources, origins, and social and family background count. This leads to an increased individualization or social fragmentation, with a consequent rising inequality (Fuster Morell and Subirats 2012). Thus, it becomes more difficult to obtain an identitary homogenization -or even a collective feeling of solidarity towards the movement. The growing pressure of individualization often worsens cultural fragmentation and violent conflicts, as millions of individuals lose their place and status in society and become suddenly poor or suddenly rich.

Nevertheless, this severe fragmentation brings about social unrest, and the legitimacy of the political system deteriorates further. This situation closes the circle once again in a shared a sense of injustice, resulting in an empty but solidary homogeneity in society. This kind of temporarily homogenous union is reflected in the example of the 8-N, where the claims were really diverse but the goal of overcoming the political and social crisis was enough to join citizens from many locations.

Cheresky (2011, p. 146) argues that collective social actors are the result of a public construction, whether they are permanent or ephemeral, and regardless of their capacity to be socially or territorially located. In other words, mobilizations are groups of personally harmed people who invoke a general principle of justice that counts with

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[13] According to Laclau, "there will always be a tension between horizontal participation and vertical political institutions, but that tension is exactly what we call democracy" (Laclau in Muñoz 2014). It is important to articulate their relation and avoid extremes. This tension is identified by Laclau as the struggle of social protests to conquer their integration in political institutions. A social protest that does not produce effects on the political system is doomed to fail; while a political system that totally absorbs the social protest without giving it a certain degree of autonomy generates bureaucratization. According to Laclau, none of these extremes are good.

citizenry's support, in terms of social –homogeneous- legitimacy or identity. Additionally, from the point of view of Psychology Studies, we might quote Drury and Reicher who argue that "participation in protests strengthens identification and induces collective empowerment. The emergence of an inclusive self-categorization as 'oppositional' leads to feelings of unity and expectations of support. This empowers people to offend authorities." (cited by Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2010, p. 9). Most of the time social protests occur in a context of socio-political crisis, and they usually see the state or the government as their enemy; however, I consider this is not a concluding requirement to constitute a social mobilization, but a necessary part of the collective identity building process.

To conclude, the generation of a collective identity seems to be a crucial requirement for the emergence of a social movement. It is necessary to find common social objectives and a leader to guide and mobilize the crowd. Yet, I could assert that, in most cases, the identity formation process exceeds the main act of a social protest. Although the organization of a mobilization becomes easier with technological advances, the collective identity development that grows inside is a much more extended process, nourished by a wide range of ideologies and social feelings, as the initial conflict fluctuates over time.

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