COLOMBIAN STUDENTS FOR CHANGE

The construction of a collective identity and how this shaped MANE's role in Colombian politics

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Introduction

In 2011, the *Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil* (MANE) first started acting in response to the Colombian governments proposal to reform the law that dictates the higher education in the country. The proposal the government had put forward had some issues according to MANE, the main one being, it would allow private profit into the public higher education. This is what drove university students in all of Colombia to unite and create MANE, a student movement for all those that did not agree with this reform. After they united and organised meetings to organise themselves, they ended up holding a national university strike that lasted over a month. This way MANE drove the government to withdraw its proposal, leading to the organisation reaching their first goal. Over the next years MANE tried to achieve its second goal, which consisted of setting up its own proposal that they believed the higher education truly needed. Unfortunately, this proposal was never passed. This paper will explain how MANE's outcomes were determined by their collective identity.

As MANE developed in 2011, Colombia's socio-political sphere was dealing with two main experiences. Firstly, the Colombian government was waiting for the US congress to pass their Free Trade Agreement, something that was mainly affecting Colombia's economic policies during that time. The educational reform shaped by the neoliberal influences in the region, was not the only neoliberal reform proposed by the government in those years. This created some strains in society, as not all were benefitting or agreeing with these reforms. This influenced the social sphere in the country which affected the construction of MANE's collective identity as they were trying to reach their first goal. Further, the government was handling the peace negotiations with the FARC, which began to develop fast and for the better during the time that MANE was aiming at reaching its second goal. These negotiations creating a mayor debate among society as well as politics. Both of which influence and set up the scene in which MANE constructed its collective identity.

This paper's research will mainly focus on the first part of MANE's existence, that is how they managed to successfully block the government's reform. It will be argued that MANE is a 'new social movement' as explained by Alberto Melucci (1996), that it is best explained through this paradigm and that their collective identity played a major role in their broad support. The aim of this paper will be at explaining how MANE's collective identity was constructed and what its impact was on the socio-political conflict regarding educational reform in Colombia.

In order to respond to this paper's research question three types of sources were used. First of all, a literature study was needed in order to find the fitting theoretical framework to set up a broader understanding of MANE's actions and its influences. Secondly, three months of fieldwork and qualitative research in Colombia gave the necessary insights from MANE's spokespersons and participants to find the arguments that supported this study's analysis. The most important fieldwork consisted in a set of interviews with experts and very active members of MANE, however it were the informal conversations with many of the people met during the time there, that gave the necessary understanding of the context in which all of this took place. Thirdly, media sources were examined to better understand the background and the environment of the situation.

Overall this resulted in the three chapters that set up the body for this thesis. While the first one depicts the paradigm of the new social movement theory with a focus on the role of the collective identity, the second chapter aims at showing the context in which MANE emerged. It will be found that the neoliberal influences in the region had an important impact on the situation and that this was a relevant factor in the construction of MANE's collective identity. As the first chapter aims at giving a basis as to what types of factors can influence the construction of MANE's collective identity, the second chapter explains how these factors can be interpreted in the context of Colombia. In the final chapter these factors will be analysed and concretised by including the interviews. This ought to explain what the characteristics of MANE's collective identity are and how they were constructed, answering the first part of the research question. As for the second part of the research question, this will be explained at the end of the paper in the last section of chapter 3 and in the conclusion as the bigger impact of MANE's existence is brought into discussion. In order to answer this part of the question all the before mentioned information is needed as it draws upon that to argue that MANE was in fact a successful social movement that, as a result of the construction of its collective identity, managed to broadly influence the educational conflict in the country and set up new rules for future attempts at reforming the higher education in Colombia.

1. The construction of collective identity in new social movements: a theoretical approach

In this first chapter this paper will discuss three main topics that will be the foundation of this paper's analysis in the later chapters. The first section will give a short explanation how this investigation will understand a social movement. In the second section the new social movement theory will be discussed, keeping the concept of collective identity at the centre of the debate. The last section will discuss the debate surrounding neoliberalism.

1.1 Social movements: a wide debate

Before engaging with the theories and debates surrounding social movements, this paper will have to give a clear description of what will interpreted as a social movement. Although the whole discussion cannot be covered here, this section will aim at explaining which definition of social movement this paper will use. It will start by giving some main definitions of the concept social movement given by different authors in the field and then narrow it down to what is relevant for this paper's research.

Before explaining these author's interpretation of a social movement, it is relevant to mention that Tilly, McCarthy, Zald and Tarrow are important authors within the more political and economic approach to social movements, the resource mobilisation paradigm. While van Seters, James and Diani work in the paradigm of the new social movement theories, which instead of focussing on a more economic and political approach, lays its focus on the collective identity of the social movement.

Sociologist, political scientist and historian Charles Tilly in his book *Social Movements, 1768-2004* describes social movements as a distinctive way for ordinary people to pursue public politics (2004). Tilly characterises social movements by the following three elements: '(1) a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities; let us call it a campaign, (2) employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions; public meetings; solemn processions; vigils; rallies; demonstrations; petition drives; statements to and in public media; pamphleteering; call the variable ensemble of performances the social movement repertoire, (3) participants' concerted public representations of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies; call them WUNC displays'(Tilly, 2004: 3-4). In his work Tilly often put social movements in a political

and historical context by analysing their relationship with the state and more specifically the process of democratisation. He first started writing about social movements in his work *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834.*

Sociologists John McCarthy and Mayer Zald prefer to define a social movement as 'a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society' (1977: 1217-1218). They chose for this definition as it allows them to include any type of organisation and not merely those that emerge through collective action in civil society. Their work was focused on American movements and the organisational dynamics to social movement organisations, treating them like true organisations and not simply like semi organised collective activity. Together they wrote one of the most influential articles in the field: *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*.

Political scientist Sidney Tarrow describes social movements as collective challenges to the authority by people with a common goal (1994). He frames them in a more political context and argues there 'are four requisite ingredients of sustainable social movements: political opportunities, diffuse social networks, familiar forms of collective action ("repertoires of contention"), and cultural frames that can resonate broadly throughout a population' (Gordiejew, 1995: 795). One of Tarrow's most influential works is his 1994 book *Power in Movement* where he focusses on the actual 'power' social movements can express on the authorities, in other words how they can lastingly influence the political sphere.

Paul van Seters, a law and civil society professor and Paul James, a professor on globalisation and cultural diversity, define social movements through four 'conditions of 'coming together': (1.) the formation of some kind of collective identity; (2.) the development of a shared normative orientation; (3.) the sharing of a concern for change of the status quo and (4.) the occurrence of moments of practical action that are at least subjectively connected together across time addressing this concern for change' (James and van Seters, 2014: xi). In other words, they define a social movement as 'a form of political association between persons who have at least a minimal sense of themselves as connected to others in common purpose and who come together across an extended period of time to effect social change in the name of that purpose' (James and van Seters, 2014: xi). Seters and James see social movements as a collective effort at establishing a new order of life. Their interest lying in global movements such as the Occupy movement, the Arab spring or the anti-WTO protests in Seattle (James and van Seters, 2014; van Seters, 2015).

One of the most recurring names when looking for a definition of social movements is that of Mario Diani who manages to summarise most definitions on social movements into one, arguing that these almost always include the following conditions: that they are 'networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities' (1992: 3). Diani further emphasises on the four requirements that social movements are firstly networks of informal interaction, secondly their collective action is on conflictual issues, third they have shared beliefs and solidarity and lastly the action displays 'largely outside the institutional sphere and the routine procedures of social life' (1992: 7). Diani emphasises on the fact that social movements only exist so long 'as collective action challenges the behaviour and/or legitimacy of specific social or political actors' (2012: 1569). Only addressing problems or expressing support to some moral values is in his opinion not enough to call it a social movement, it is thereby crucial to identify a specific social or political adversary. Diani's definition is argued to be 'sharp enough a) to differentiate social movements from related concepts such as interest groups, political parties, protest events and coalitions; b) to identify a specific area of investigation and theorising for social movement research' (1992: 1).

As seen so far social movements are often defined by a conflict in society, whether it is a more social conflict as often associated with the more European centred new social movement paradigm or a conflict of power in politics and society as is often connected to the more North American resource mobilisation paradigm. Social movements are engaged in promoting or opposing social change caused by a political or cultural conflict. 'By conflict we mean an oppositional relationship between actors who seek control of the same stake—be it political, economic, or cultural power – and in the process make negative claims on each other—i.e., demands which, if realized, would damage the interests of the other actors' (Diani and della Porta, 2006: 21).

At this point a short explanation of this papers case study is relevant to clarify what will be understood as a social movement. MANE was a student movement that came in to action as a response to a political decision of privatising all higher education in Colombia. Although at the start it mainly consisted of students, organised through different student organisations of the different universities in the country, it soon started to interact with other networks outside of its sphere. It will be argued that this was due to the construction of a collective identity or collective goal that influenced these other networks into participating in the collective action. The interaction between these different networks, as well as their approach to reaching out to

these other networks, was therefore of core importance to this movement and will hold a central part in this paper's analysis of the social movement.

For these reasons this paper will see social movements as organisations, that is a semi-coordinated network of people with a common goal. These organisations respond to social, economic, political and/or cultural change and try to affect the political sphere from the bottom up mutually through the construction of a collective identity and collective action. We assume that the organisations are semi-coordinated in that there is a network of informal interaction present, but that they are coordinated in the matter of coming together and speaking for (a part of) their own network. Assuming this allows us to exclude smaller, more aggressive and emotional side-protests that were present in our case study. These protests were not agreed on by MANE (during their meetings) and were performed by other students in pursuit of the same goal but through other means. This paper also assumes that for the social movement to develop to a point where it can stand together significantly, the coordination will come to be more important and present during the development of this social movement as for a movement to achieve a goal by certain specific means as we will see in our case study, it needs to be coordinated and work together.

1.2 Collective identity: New Social Movement Theory

Social movements have a long history and have been studied through a set of different paradigms. In this chapter we will look at some of the main ideas posed by the different approaches and explain why, for the sake of this paper's analysis, we will focus on the concept of collective identity as proposed through the new social movement theory.

1.2.1 Social movement theories until now: the relevance of the new social movement theory

During the 1960s there was a rise in student movements in European countries such as Italy (1969), Germany (1968) and France (1968), as well as the US, where the student anti-war movement created a lot of turmoil. Although Marxist theories of social movements dominated, these were unable to provide an explanation for these protests. It was in this context that the academic discourse led many authors to the new social movement paradigm (NSM after this) as an alternative (Pichardo, 1997; Cohen 1985; Melucci, 1980, 1985; Touraine 1977, 1981). This was a response to the previously used theories: the collective behaviour theory and the resource mobilisation theory.

The collective behaviour theory was especially used in the beginning of the 20th century and was fully focused on the emotional driven response of people that lead to collective action (Bryant, 2007: 529). Turner, Killian and Smelser all mostly treated these responses as strong emotional, often angry and violently driven, resulting in a quite negative view of group behaviour (Turner and Killian, 1957; Smelser, 1968). This theory would see social movements as 'spontaneous mass actions and semi rational responses to irregular conditions and strains between major societal institutions' (Smelser, 1962: 15).

In a response to this, the resource mobilisation fully excluded emotions by focussing on the economic and political approach and could therefore not account for the cultural dimensions of social movements (Polletta and James, 2001; Walder, 2009). This theory treats actors as rational human beings that decide whether to partake in a social movement or not through a cost-benefit analysis mainly influenced by the political opportunity in their landscape (Staggenborg, 2016; Morris and McClurg Mueller, 1992; Tilly, 1997). Although this can help us understand a lot about the success and behaviour of a social movement, it completely ignores the social, cultural and emotional factors that influence social movements. People are after all people, driven by both rational and emotional thinking. By focussing on the 'more structural, rationalistic and goal-driven explanations for the emergence and persistence of movements (…) (they) left out crucial social-psychological, emotional and cultural factors' (Fominaya, 2010: 393). In other words, the resource mobilisation theory mainly focusses on the 'how' and not the 'why'. This led to a void in the explanation of social movements that the NSM theory needed to fill in order to explain the new set of social movements that started to rise in the 1960s.

We can argue that the new social movement theory emerged as a response to the resource mobilisation theory and explores 'the idea that social movements emerge from a key concern to critique and construct new discourses of identity and belonging, generate new cultures and enact new forms of social relations including in the personal sphere and in lifestyle choices' (Horn, 2013: 21). As the economy shifted from producing material goods to the production of knowledge, social movements did the same and shifted from wanting to gain materialistic goods to the creation and preservation of spaces of autonomy (Goodwin, James and Polletta, 2000). The new social movement theory replaced class with identity and used that concept at the centre of their analysis. The construction of this collective identity being at the centre of their analysis. The new social movement theory sees the movement participation as a form of post-material politics and newly created identities, with a focus of the 'new middle class' (Pichardo, 1997: 416). This is especially relevant in the Latin American context as they

have experienced a big growth in their middle class during the past two decades as a result of economic development.

The new social movement theory has some valuable insight into the analysis of social movement, some that will be explained better later in this chapter. However, it also has some lacking, this criticism is relevant to understand the alternative contentious politics paradigm that has been competing with the NSM one. For one, the NSM theory is criticised to solely focus on the left-wing movements fully excluding right wing movements from their analysis (Pichardo, 1997). The theory further limits itself by claiming that NSM always have an open decentralised structure and are often claimed to be apolitical. Additionally, the NSM theory claims that there is a distinction in contemporary movements compared to earlier movements, one that not everyone agrees with (Pichardo, 1997). It is also important to acknowledge that a social movement solely based on a collective identity makes this alliance vulnerable. This is due to the fact that perhaps not all actors are mobilising for the same reason or that they only identify with parts of the movement making you doubt whether it is truly the collective identity that actives the actors or whether there are alternative reasons. Further a collective identity at group level neglects the beliefs and values on a personal level, which can lead to fragmentation within the group causing it to fall apart. Another relevant criticism is that the new social movement theorists have dropped political economy from their analyses, just like most new social movements have done.

These are all relevant criticisms that lead to the use of a more political approach, that of contentious politics. Tilly describes contentious politics as 'involving interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties' (Tilly, 2008: 5). Contentious politics draws on earlier theories that focussed on the role of political opportunity in the rise and success of social movements. It is relevant to now shortly explain exactly what is understood as contentious politics and how this relates to social movements.

Contentious politics is the use of disruptive practises to make a political point, this can include demonstrations as well as entire revolutions. As Tilly and Tarrow explain it, 'the contentious politics that concerns us is episodic rather than continuous, occurs in public, involves interaction between makers of claims and others, is recognized by those others as bearing on their interests, and brings in government as mediator, target, or claimant' (Tarrow and Tilly, 2009: 4). Social movements can and often do engage in contentious politics, however this is not a requirement, nor is all contentious action that of a social movement. Rather, 'disaggregating movements from within the more general term "contentious politics" will help

to focus on these differences, on the conditions that give rise to movements, and to the transitions between movements and other forms of contention' (Tarrow and Tilly, 2009: 4). Tilly and Tarrow continue by arguing that contentious politics challenges the boundary between institutionalised and non-institutionalised politics by brings actors from both spheres together. Further, when people partake in contentious politics, they combine responding to a threat with seizing an opportunity (Tarrow and Tilly, 2009: 7).

Overall contentious politics focusses on the networks and dynamics between the different actors at play. This is done through the concept brokerage, which in this context 'refers to the mechanism whereby an actor acts as an intermediary between two other actors that are not directly linked, thus creating a new line of communication and exchange' (Diani, 2013).

Although Tilly brings forth some interesting ideas through the paradigm of contentious politics, for the sake of the case study this paper will be more interested in the concept of collective identity as brought forth through the new social movement theory. While the criticisms against the NSM theory are valid ones, the case study can be better understood when looking at it through a version of the NSM theory. For one, MANE is a left-wing social movement with an open democratic structure. The criticism that the NSM theory claims for its movements to be different than others is slightly irrelevant to this paper as it is focussing on one movement and not comparing it to others. Further this paper will not exclude politics from its analysis by including theorists from the NSM paradigm that include a political approach in their work.

To better understand this reasoning, it is now relevant to better explain the new social movement theory. Some of the main theorists in the new social movement paradigm are Melucci, Castells, Touraine and Habermas. We will find that the NSM paradigm has two sets of approaches, a more cultural one and a more political one, making this theory unique as most other paradigms usually focus on one or the other. This paper will shortly mention Touraine and Habermas, however, focus on Melucci, as he is of great importance as he is one of the main scholars within this paradigm to expand on the concept of collective identity. After shortly explaining their different approaches to the new social movement theory this paper will continue in the next section on the role of collective identity within the paradigm ending with a section about the relevance of these theories in the context of Latin America.

The French scholar Alain Touraine puts the social movement in his early work in a historicity context, arguing that society is a product of reflective social action with a growing capacity to control the construction of a system of knowledge and the tools to intervene in this

(Buechler, 1995: 444). Touraine identifies two logics for new social movements. 'One logic is that of reinforcement of the system, of maximisation of the production of goods of general value, such as money, power and information. The other logic is the increasing reference in the cultural industries, to the effort made by each individual to construct and defend his individuality' (Touraine, 1992: 141). Touraine claims that new social movements moved their protests from the economic realm to the cultural one and that this has to do with the privatisation of social problems. Touraine does not exclude class from his view as most of his research was focused around labour movements in France, however he has difficulty placing the political status of these new social movements. His arguments claiming that the main difference between old and new social movements is that the first ones 'are mostly associated with the idea of revolution, (while) the new ones are associated with the idea of democracy' (Touraine, 1992: 143). As we shall see this is a common debate among the new social movement theorists where some scholars such as Castells argue the political movements are the most radical ones while the cultural ones are apolitical, whereas others such as Melucci argue that cultural movements are most radical and political movements are co-optable (Buechler, 1995: 456).

Touraine's claims will be of relevance towards the end of this section when we will put them in a Latin American context as we will find that this distinction between old and new social movements will be of far lesser importance than in the European context.

German author Jurgen Habermas 'proposes the most elaborate theory of modern social structure by distinguishing between a politico-economic system governed by generalised media of power and money and a lifeworld still governed by normative consensus' (Buechler, 1995: 445). He hereby claims that social movements have a mostly defensive character, something that he agrees with Touraine. Habermas hereby argues that social movements are far less about material reproduction but rather about cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation (Buechler, 1995). On the contrary from Touraine, he stands that new social movements are better explained in a context of post-Marxism and advanced capitalism, and that they are more related to an identity crisis rather than a class crisis. Habermas hereby proposes a more political approach to the study of social movements, whereas Touraine a more cultural one.

Alberto Melucci concurs with Touraine about the unclear political status of new social movements but is not too worried about this as he sees them as a response to new forms of social control, conformity pressures and information processing in our (post-)modern world. Melucci argues that 'only a theory of collective action can provide a meaningful basis for the

analysis of social movements' (Melucci, 1996: 14). He emphasises on the importance of free space between the institutionalised politics and the everyday life where actors establish their collective identities, as it is in this space that collective action takes place and gives possibilities of alternative arrangements. Melucci further delves into the concept of identity arguing that the capacity to partake in collective action is based within the capacity to define an identity in the first place. Melucci introduces the concept of collective identity in 1989 in his book *Nomads of the Present.* The construction of this collective identity is of core importance to Melucci's research into social movements as for him this is a major prerequisite and accomplishment of the new social movements. Melucci sees new social movements as social constructions and their achievements a result of ongoing efforts rather than an initial starting point for collective action like other authors have suggested (Melucci, 1996: 16).

Melucci emphasises in his research the place that social movements have in the political system. Although collective action in the context of new social movements 'has the aim of claiming an actors' freedom and his identity, and while these have to be connected to the political system, and therefore be applicable on an institutional level, the collective action has to look for some rationality' (Touraine, 2003: 48). His objective being efficiency and success. As Tilly showed us, the research to *why* and *how* social movements act, are complementary and interdependent (Tilly and Wood, 2015). In social studies a distinction and opposition was created between these two groups, one that Melucci refused to follow. Melucci, in *challenging codes* (1996), is one of the few scholars that clearly explains and states the complementary between some of the classic approaches used in the study of social movements: 'the comprehension of the self-liberating intentions of the actor, the analysis of the political consequences and the rational methods through which a group tries to reach its objectives' (Touraine, 2003: 49).

These authors, although all part of the new social movement paradigm, have distinct approaches to the study of social movements. This diversity comes from both the different national settings as well as the different history of social protest within those nations. However, it also shows the main contours of the new social movement theory introducing its main debates, such as whether social movements are reactive or progressive, political or cultural and whether they are class based or not.

1.2.2 Identity building in social movements: the theory of collective identity

Before properly discussing the construction of a collective identity in the context of collective action, it is relevant to look more closely at the concept of identity itself. We will shortly look at the different types of identity and how they are constructed. This will take us in the paradigm of cultural studies as we will find that culture and our social environment are of great importance in constructing one's identity. We will then bring culture and politics together and explain what we understand as collective identity, how this is constructed and why this is such an important concept in the current research on social movements.

As argued by Barker in his book *Cultural Studies* identity and subjectivity go hand in hand (2012: 219). Barker differentiates between self-identity and social identity, the first one being 'the conceptions we hold about ourselves and our emotional identification with those self-descriptions,' while the second refers to 'the expectations and opinions that others have of us' (2012: 220). He further explains that identity is both social and personal and that it can be showed through beliefs, lifestyles taste and attitudes. "Identity is best understood not as a fixed entity but as an emotionally charged discursive description of ourselves that is subject to change" (2012: 221).

Giddens argues that self-identity is not a reflection of traits possessed by an individual, rather it is 'the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography' (Giddens, 1991: 53). For this reason, Giddens speaks of an identity project as it builds on what we think we are in the present due to our past and current circumstances, as well as 'what we think we would like to be, the trajectory of our hoped future' (Barker, 2012: 222).

If we then look at the concept of social identities, we can find that this refers to the social process of using socially shared materials, also known as acculturation. In this context our identity is socially and culturally constructed by the pre-existing world and those that surround us (Barker, 2012). For example, the language you speak, your ethnicity, traits associated to your gender and other cultural and social traits that you grow up with in your moment in time and space, as well as the differential cultural resources to which you might have access (Barker, 2012: 222). In other words, a social identity, as Hall would explain it, is formed interactively between the inner and the outside, social world (Hall, 1992: 275). According to Melucci, a 'social identity is the attribution of the condition of 'belonging to'; it is a relationship within which one both recognises and is recognised' (Melucci, 1980: 210).

At this point it is also relevant to mention how according to Hall "the decentred or postmodern self involves the subject in shifting, fragmented and multiple identities. Persons are composed not of one but of several, sometimes contradictory, identities" (Barker, 2012:

225). Melucci takes this argument further in that we have a crisis of identity, meaning a continuous fragmentation and reconstruction of identity affected by the continuous change in our surrounding world (Touraine, 2003:50).

Melucci argues that new social movements, just like identities according to Barker, are social constructions. According to Barker identities cannot 'exist' outside of the cultural realm and if we were to follow this train of thought one could argue the same for the new social movements when considering them apolitical as some authors do. However, in the context of social movements this would bring forward the discussion as to the role of politics in the construction of a collective identity, bringing us back to one of the main debates within that paradigm.

Giddens found a way to bring politics and culture together in his concept of life politics, which is 'the inevitably political dimensions of self-actualisation and identity formation in post-traditional contexts' (Buechler, 1995: 461). In other words, life politics 'flows from the reflexive project of the self and emphasises the interconnectedness of personal and global survival in late modernity' (Buechler, 1995: 461). This approach being very similar to Melucci's argument that the social construction of a collective identity is a precondition and achievement of new social movements.

Melucci supports this as according to him both culture and economics have become political, placing the construction of identity in all these realms (Touraine, 2003: 51). He argues so, not only for the post-Marxist movements, but also for the class-based movements as according to him "a class movement fights for stakes which always directly concern the identity of the actors" (Melucci, 1980: 207).

He further argues that the crisis of identity directly affects the collective and individual behaviour to be autoreferential (Touraine, 2003: 50). When relating this to social movements he means that it is not about changing your position in society or gaining more power or resources, but about acting differently. Melucci 'portraits contemporary societies, (…) as constantly changing and as societies with fragmented identities to the point, and this is essential, where it is no longer the reason to be part of the movement, but its objective' (Touraine, 2003: 50).

Melucci further explains this active shaping of a collective identity as 'a process of negotiation between three parts: cognitive definition (of different group models), active relationships (between groups) and emotional investments' (Micheli, 2016: 13). In this context the cognitive definition is the formulation of a cognitive framework concerning the environment of action, its means and its goals. The active relationship refers to the active

behaviour among the participants and the emotional investment relates to the recognition between the individual actors. This shaping of a collective identity happens in the *multipolar action system*. A concept that Melucci uses to describe 'a system in which individuals who act collectively try to form a more or less stable "we" by negotiating on goals, means and the environment within which their action takes place' (Klandermans, 1990: 222). The outcome of which is the collective identity itself.

Another relevant approach to the concept of collective identity is the constructivist political one. This approach states that collective identities can be created (in part) by a third party grouping these people together (Wendt, 1994). Although Wendt speaks of countries in his article, it should not be underestimated how this can also work on a smaller scale which is of more relevance to our case. Due to the assigned collective identity, new alliances can be created, and the accuracy of this grouping becomes in part irrelevant as the treatment of this group by the third party, is the same. Due to this treatment the group of people will have a perceived unity which can be a strong connection if they manage to agree on the cognitive definition of the collective action.

At this point it is important to mention that so far, this paper has mostly discussed North American and European theories, that do not always apply the same in the Latin American case. Although strongly influenced by these theories directed at western societies, social movements in this region have developed differently due to the different levels of economic inequality and functioning of democracy, consequently staying in a more materialistic setting (Slater, 1985: 1985). It can therefore be argued that social movements in Latin America draw more heritage from those fighting a 'Marxist-inspired politics of national liberation and anti-imperialist struggle' (Horn, 2013: 21).

Another relevant argument is that the role of civil society in Latin American countries often differs from that of the more liberal democratic and capitalist countries in 'the West', in that they have often lived in 'the context of a centralised authoritarian, sometimes military, state in which the public space of civil society had to be either (re)-invented or expanded' (Miller, 1997: 291). This often requires the creation of new identities and a close relationship with the state, making it more likely for the social movement to be institutionalised. Although this might be seen as movement failure in a different context, in Latin America this is an achievement in that 'it learns to effectively negotiate with the state' (Miller, 1997: 292).

Overall, Latin American social movements are fighting in a different context than most western movements. Their impact showing in for example the expansion of the concept of citizenship, their development of transnational modes of social movement organisation, their

experimenting in communicating with parties and governments without surrendering their autonomy and overall changing the way ordinary people think about political participation (Stahler-Shold and Vanden, 2011: 5-6). All of which are argued to be a sign of success for a social movement.

Further, 'identity-based movements have been present in Latin America since colonial times' (Stahler-Shold and Vanden, 2011: 11). Although this proofs that NSM are not per se new in Latin America, it also shows the relevance of identity within social movements as it still plays a crucial role in the construction of such. The aim of this paper will therefore be to show how collective identity was used as a strategy by MANE and combining both politics and identity in the analysis.

1.3 Neoliberalism: a theoretical discussion

In this section this paper aims at shortly explaining a part of the debate and ideas surrounding neoliberalism as this ideology becomes increasingly important in the next chapter. Since neoliberalism is such a broad topic this paper will mainly stick to the sides of it that are of relevance to this paper. It will start by defining the concept and then explain the main criticisms on the theory that will come back in the next chapter.

It is difficult to pinpoint one exact definition to the concept of neoliberalism as its notion has changed of the years and according to country or region. 'At the most fundamental level, neoliberalism builds on the classical liberal notion implying the triumph of market forces and individual autonomy over state power' (Young, 2011: 1677). Neoliberalism first emerged in Europe during the 1930s, however a different revised version arose again in the 1970s. While, the European concept was a direct response to the 'Anglo-Saxon *laissez-faire* liberalism of self-regulating market', since the 1970s and still today, the terms neoliberalism and *laissez-faire* are used interchangeably (Young, 2011: 1677).

The difference between these two concepts of neoliberalism is noteworthy. The concept of neoliberalism in the 1930s became an umbrella to any sort of different trend different from the classical liberalism at the time and emphasised the normative-ethical foundation of economics, arguing the governments should take responsibility to manage the economy so it would benefit the larger interests of society (Young, 2011: 1678). It further rejected the belief of a self-regulating market and combined economic efficiency with human decency. On the other hand, the concept of neoliberalism that re-emerged in the 1970s and that developed since, advocates the idea of full economic liberalisation, arguing in favour of free trade, open markets and free flow of capital as well as 'minimal government spending, regulation, taxation, and

interference in the economy' (Goldstein, 2011: 30). For the sake of this study, the second concept of neoliberalism is most relevant.

This brings this paper to the debates surrounding the suggestions of this definition of neoliberalism. According to this notion of neoliberalism, proponents argue that the removal of barriers to trade cross-country will support 'the global prosperity, freedom, democracy, and peace' (Young, 2011: 1677). They argue that by deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation, capitalism will be at its most productive and efficient strength. 'For pessimists, neoliberalism has become an ideological construct associated with radical market fundamentalism based on the universal imperatives of competitive deregulation, liberalization, and privatization. This latter interpretation is often used synonymously with the concept of an exploitative form of neoliberal economic globalization' (Young, 2011: 1677).

One of the debates that is of most of relevance to this paper is the one surrounding the role of the state. According to neoliberalism deregulation is needed for an efficient allocation of resources and to maximise profit. It therefore mostly argues against any government interference. However, on the other hand, it is argued that this use of neoliberalism, especially in the developing countries, would have negative effects such as destruction of local ecological and biological systems, as well as increasing the inequality (Young, 2011; Elgindi, 2017).

The role of the state has become especially debated after the 2008 economic crisis, the worst one since the Great Depression in the 1930s. Since this crisis there have been more discussions with regards to the role of the government with even 'erstwhile proponents of neoliberal private governance voting to 'bring the state back in' in order to stabilise the global financial and banking systems' (Young, 2011: 1679).

Overall, neoliberalism has often been associated with democracies, this has to do with the ideological side of the concept. 'As an ideology, it construes profit making as the essence of democracy, consuming as the only operable form of citizenship, and upholds the irrational belief that the market can both solve all problems and serve as a model for structuring all social relations' (Harper, 2014: 1078). As Harper already insinuated, this has had some mayor effects on the structure of society within these democracies, leading to what we see now as modern capitalism. A society that is mostly focused on following the market and less so on the fragility of society as human beings. Neoliberalism, as mentioned earlier in this section, lays the focus on the individual, obscuring, according to some, the rights of the people (González Casanova, 1996: 39).

Summarized, the main discussion as mentioned above is about how much influence the government should maintain within its economy and societal structures. This is further reflected within the next chapter when this theory is discussed in the context of Latin America.

2. Neoliberal influences in Latin America: social protests and student movements

In this chapter, this study aims at explaining the Latin American background that influenced the construction of MANE's collective identity. It will start with a more wide-ranging chapter on the influences of neoliberalism on the social sphere in the region and then focus on how this set up a trend of anti-neoliberal social movements. In the second section this chapter will aim at showing the role that Latin American students have played in social movements ever since the 60s and 70s, where they were often at the centre of the, at the time ruling, regime's suppression. In the final section we will zoom in on Colombia and draw a picture of the socio-political sphere in which MANE rose and developed. Overall, this chapter will give a broader understanding of the instances that affected the construction of MANE's collective identity and that will be analysed in the third chapter.

2.1 Neoliberalism in Latin America: anti-neoliberal movements in Latin America

In this section this paper will be looking at the role neoliberalism played in Latin America, more specifically how this shaped a set of social movements that rose in protest of the reforms associated with this ideology.

During the 1980s Latin America was struck by an economic crisis that drove them into having huge national debts, the IMF along with the World Bank were willing to help these countries, provided that they would implement some necessary reforms to stabilise their economy. These reforms were later called the Washington Consensus. The concept and name the Washington Consensus was first used in 1989 by John Williamson a North American economist who summarised the reforms 'of what most people in Washington believed Latin America (not all countries) ought to be undertaking as of 1989 (not at all times)' (Williamson, 2002). Williamson summarised them under the following ten headings: fiscal discipline, public expenditure priorities, tax reform, financial liberation, exchange rates, trade liberalisation, foreign direct investment, privatisation, deregulation and property rights (Williamson, 1993).

'With the IMF and World Bank as "enforcers," U.S. policy used debt as a powerful coercive weapon to impose on Latin America a neoliberal economic system based on free trade and privatisation' (Keen, Haynes, 2013: 602). Latin American countries were required to enact austerity programs that increased the poverty in the region by 39% in the course of the 1980s, as well as selling valuable national enterprises at bargain prices, this way nullifying earlier advances towards an economic independence (Keen and Haynes, 2013). These measures,

combined with ‘poor rates of growth, declining real wages, and severe struggles with inflation and debt, led to the label “the lost decade” in Latin America’ (Kingstone, 2011: 45).

In the years following Latin American countries ended up privatising many of the previously state-owned properties. Some argue that this was not only to lower their debt, but also due to ‘a fundamental belief that government was not capable of running these businesses as efficiently as the private sector’ (Gizang, Pacheco, 1996: 267). Overall it meant that often the prices of these products would go up and that the local markets would see quite little of the profits as the income of these businesses would go to the multinational organisations owning it, which were often based outside of Latin America.

Although a widely used model, neoliberalism has been criticised for oversimplifying economic reality by claiming that economy is solely made out of self-interested individuals, whereas the ‘real’ economy is also made of communities and societies with collective interests (Goldstein, 2011: 30). Neoliberalism significantly affected the Latin American political and economic landscape. Due to privatisation many states lost control over previously state-owned enterprises, including those that control public goods, such as water, education and healthcare. These reforms lead to difficulties, especially the working and middle class struggled as they had to pay more for these necessities while at the same time losing jobs over it. The result was that many of the social movements that have emerged in the region were often in opposition of some sort of neoliberal measure that the government was trying to impose, creating a big debate as to how far privatisation should go and whether the state should maintain some control over the public goods as to maintain stability in certain sectors.

To better explain this set of anti-neoliberalism movements it is important to not only look at the economic situation in the countries as depicted above but also at the political side of neoliberalism and how this affected civil society.

In 1978 the third wave of democratisation started in the region of Latin America. This was one of the most important and overwhelming ones as it ‘lasted fourteen years and enlarged the democratic and semi democratic camp from three cases in 1977 to eighteen in 1991’ (Hagopian and Mainwaring, 2005: 19). Before this wave many of the countries in the region were ruled by military right-wing dictatorships or other sorts of authoritarian regimes, during these years there was a return to democracy and to left-wing politics, often led by neoliberal measures. This change in politics also showed in a change of social movements.

Under the authoritarian regimes, social movements were often focussing on fighting the authorities protesting for more representative and liberal institutions (Almeida and Ulate, 2015: 53). These movements were met by brutal responses often involving the military and led

to a period of movement radicalisation with as a result guerrilla groups and an increase of violence in the countries. The democratisation of these countries then naturally resulted in a change for the social movements as well. While previously they had been fighting for more liberal and democratic governments, they now moved on to address identity issues, social rights and, as already mentioned, the problems they experienced with the neoliberal measures implemented by their new democracies (Almeida and Ulate, 2015: 53-54). Although the responses against these movements were not nearly as bad as those during the dictatorships, police brutality and violence by the riot police remained common occurrences. Social movements in Latin America had extremely high expectations of their government after they had their democracies back, which led to high demands from still relatively fragile governments. Demands that the governments could often not provide. On top of that Latin American society had to endure the lost decade which caused a strong strain in society which resulted in the still occurring trend of anti-neoliberal social movements.

In this context, Latin American social movements have changed the relationship between the state and society. While European ones strengthened the already relatively strong democracies, the Latin American ones changed how citizens in the region participated and looked at politics 'helping to define what we might call a new politics and concomitant political culture' (Stahler-Sholk and Vanden, 2011: 6). The process of democratisation in Latin America and the fear of disrupting this hard-won transition meant 'that the expansion of social rights, labour reform and the introduction of comprehensive or universal welfare entitlements were put on ice' (Grugel and Nem Singh, 2015: 355). Instead these new democracies made a connection between liberalism, citizenship and the market which in terms of people's everyday life meant 'that market-based incentives and personal economic resources came to determine the extent and nature of political and social inclusion, and shaped access to education, health, housing, etc.' (Grugel and Nem Singh, 2015: 355).

These political, economic and social changes also influenced the response from society. While on the one hand protesting had become less dangerous with the democratisation, on the other hand the market reforms 'opened up a new era of contestation as the neoliberal roll-back of the state, and the rise of labour insecurity created a constituency of economically and culturally disenfranchised citizens' (Grugel and Nem Singh, 2015: 355). With the changes in the labour market and the power of the labour units, more radical opinions regarding the neoliberal democracies started to be expressed by civil society. With that, different actors started to appear within society that were representing the voices of those articulating opposition to neoliberalism and the newly established neoliberal democracies. This resulted in

young people taking over the protest landscape, people that had less memory of the dictatorships themselves, criticising the distance between the ordinary citizen and the political elite (Grugel and Nem Singh, 2015: 355).

The Zapatista movement in Mexico is a good example of an anti-neoliberal movement in the region of Latin America as this movement came in to existence on the first of January 1994, the exact day NAFTA came into effect and as a direct response to the implementation of this free trade agreement. The Zapatista movement is seen as the first social movement in the region that instead of focusing on radical social change concentrated on finding a political solution to their issues (Anderson and Herr, 2007: 511). It is seen as one of the most relevant in the region as it aimed at creating a national revolution against neoliberalism and the influences of capitalism (Fenelon, Hall, 2008). One of the Zapatistas main achievements on an international level was their call to discuss neoliberalism as 'global responses evoked a resonance within hundreds of diverse grassroots groups which had previously been unable to find common points of reference or vehicles for collaboration' (Cleaver, 1998: 631).

In conclusion of this part this paper has depicted two main strains in society that led to political dissatisfaction, anti-neoliberal feelings and that way influenced the landscape of the social movements since the 1990s. Firstly, there is the economic dissatisfaction where people have perceived a lack of economic growth even though the country's economy would seem to be growing, the region's inequality still being one of the greatest in the world. Secondly, there has been a gap between the expectations given by the return to democracy and the actual capabilities of the governments, creating a mayor discontent among those who were born and brought up after the return to democracy (Cummings, 2015: 60).

2.2 Student movements in Latin America

In this section this paper will look at the role of student social movements in the region of Latin America. Firstly, we will discuss how universities were affected by the dictatorships or authoritarian regimes in their countries. We will then look at the case of Chile as the student protests in the country have been analysed thoroughly and are seen as some of the most influential ones in the region. Afterwards the recent student protests in Nicaragua shall be mentioned finishing with some general conclusions with regards to them all.

During the dictatorships that were ruling most countries in the region of Latin America during the 1960s and 70s, we can find that universities were often at the centre of the regime's suppression and that rebellious students were often the first to be handled with a lot of violence.

Universities being great places for people to meet and share ideas, made them a hazardous and important place in the eyes of dictators, as it could be both, a place for the government to out their ideas, and a place for people to meet and rebel against them. This is for example visible in the student movements that rose during the Pinochet era. Blanco states how there is a difference in the students that were in university before the coup and those that joined afterwards and that already agreed with the implemented propaganda (Toro Blanco, 2015: 117). Similarly, in the case of Argentina, students were since 1918, 'overwhelmingly aligned with the ideas and projects shaped within the University Reform Movement' (Manzano, 2014: 44). However, even there when the government was suppressing autonomous education, whether it was Peron between 1946 and 1955 or Videla from 1976 to 1981, students would unite to show their support for what they believed it, whether the government agreed or not (Manzano, 2014: 44). The governments involvement in the universities actually strengthened these unions as they felt threatened and wanted to fight for what they believed was right.

When these countries found their way back to democracy during the 1970s and 1980s, students took a step back, they had mostly reached what they wanted which was freedom of speech and a democratic political system, they believed that with this it could bring them the development they needed. Consequently, during the 1980s and 1990s indigenous movements started to form an important part in the social movement landscape. As the neoliberal policies implemented by these new democracies started to show some of the issues that came with them, the first to rise were the farmers and indigenous people as they were also the first to be affected. The Zapatista movement is again a good example here, as it was originally started as an indigenous movement that wanted to give the indigenous people their right to their land back when the NAFTA was trying to take it away from them. As we discussed in the previous section with this, a change in the political landscape started to take place as a trend on anti-neoliberal movements started to arise. Students then found their place in this, when they started to lack change within the educational sector and this was seen in the rise of student protests during the first decades of the 21st century.

One of the most known and influential ones were the Chilean protests, also known as the Chilean Winter, which took place between 2011 and 2013, around the same time as those in Colombia. On the contrary of the Colombian ones, the Chilean protests were directed at changing the whole educational sector, from primary schools to universities. They demanded among other things increased state support for public universities, free public education, better quality and laws forbidding profit in the higher public education as well as direct and indirect government aid to for-profit schools (Grugel and Nem Singh, 2015: 354). These protests are

often linked to the early ones in 2006 also called the Penguin Revolution where secondary students were protesting for free travel passes on buses, a better subsidised education and quality for all. The students achieved some of their requests such as a guarantee to quality education, the allowing of student participation in university governance, the end of local control over public secondary education and an increase in university scholarships to help people with unpayable student debts. However, this is not necessarily why the Chilean student movements are seen as successful. It is said that the Chilean student protests have opened a debate surrounding the meaning of democracy and the meaning of citizenship, attempting to reclaim it from the market (Grugel and Nem Singh, 2015: 361). These protests had a mayor political repercussion contributing to a dramatic fall in Piñera's approval rating that year. "The success of the student protests lies, above all, in the way they have been able to capture the political imagination, challenge the idea that democracy has to mean unregulated markets and repoliticise debates about participation and collective action" (Grugel and Nem Singh, 2015: 364).

Further, it is argued that an important factor to unite the students in Chile was that they were part of *'La generación sin miedo'*, the fearless generation, a generation that had no memory of the dictatorship and was brought up with hopes of a good education and equal rights with the growing economy and a democratic system in place. They did not fear that protests could destabilise Chile's democracy (Cummings, 2015: 50). As Cummings correctly argues, "Pinochet-era Chileans were apprehensive towards protest action during the transition to democracy because of their generational experiences with dictatorship. Students from the post-Pinochet generation were more inclined to lead a massive protest movement because, as the first generation born into democracy, they held new perspectives on protest, which led to the formation of an impactful collective identity" (Cummings, 2015: 53). He further explains how the *'la generación sin miedo'* was a strong identity as it justified them for not being fearful in pursuing their democratic rights and gave them a reason to feel empowered and take action (Cummings, 2015: 67).

More recently, in early 2018 in Nicaragua students took it to the streets and created the biggest crisis so far since Ortega took presidency in 2007. The students along with many other citizens were protesting Ortega's announcement of a social security reform that raised income and payroll taxes. They were met with extreme violence by the police and pro-government paramilitary groups, which only angered the protesters more and caused for a nationwide support for the protests, intensifying the situation and creating one of the worst civil conflicts since Nicaragua's revolution (Protest in Nicaragua, 2018). The largely student-led protests

started with a protest against a pension reform and now reached a point where it has united people on two fronts: those in favour of Ortega and those that want him to resign (Herrera, 2018). Overall although the protests were started by students, they were soon joined by all kinds of Nicaraguan citizens, even many from the business sector who previously supported Ortega (BBC, 2018).

As the students that were the first to fight, they were also the first to be prosecuted by the Ortega government, with currently many of them hiding in neighbouring Costa Rica (Witschge, 2018). What united them and brought them to risk so much for their cause? As these mobilisations are still young, not many scholars have written on them yet, however it is relevant to this paper to mention that Elvira Cuadra, an associate and former director at the Nicaragua-based Institute for Strategic Studies and Public Policy (IEEPP), said that the generation at work during these protests is different from their parents in that they are part of a “"post-revolution" generation (Witschge, 2018). This statement can be linked to the previously discussed Chilean collective identity of *‘la generación sin miedo’.* It gives reasons to believe that perhaps also here collective identity that involved a whole generation was of relevance in the unification of so many students during these protests.

Students have a long history of taking part and initiating protests and sometimes even revolutions. While the goals of the protests may differ, there is a line of continuity and importance with the mobilisation of students since they are the ones that will later fill the seats of the politicians and their involvement having the capability in changing a nations political landscape and the relationship between the state and society. In Latin America the generation gap between those who lived through dictatorships and their violence and those who grew up in a democracy has also shown relevant as it created a collective identity that brought many together to fight for their democratic rights. Perhaps, even to the point where they could influence the perspectives and opinions of those outside of their ‘fearless generation’.

2.3 Neoliberal reforms and social protests in Colombia

Colombia’s history is slightly different from that of most other Latin American countries. Colombia has a more recent violent history that only recently changed when the government finally signed the peace treaty with the FARC in 2016. The country having had a long history of violence, influenced many lives up until today, with many still remembering the bloodshed.

The political conflict in Colombia between the conservatives and the liberals that led to its most recent civil war, started as early as 1886 with the disagreements between the followers of Bolívar and those of Santander. This dualism never really ended and can be found up to

today in Colombia's political landscape. For years these two parties shared power and took turns in governing the country with both up and downsides to it. By the 1990s many guerrilla movements were present in the country, to name some FARC, M-19 and ELN. These guerrilla movements started in the aftermath of the US backed anti-communism activities of the 1960s, when the Colombian Army units started attacking peasant communities claiming they were the homes of communists and bandits which led to the creation of FARC. Later M-19 was founded in response of electoral fraud. Their existence, along with the country's long history of narcotrafficking, resulted in a history of violence in the country, leading to many victims. Because of the international effect of the narcotraffickers who exported much of their products to the US, as well as its fear of communism spreading in the region, the US has been very involved in the country's politics.

To shortly explain the issues that surrounded the Colombian left, it is relevant to look at the development within the *Polo Democratico*, a left political party that has been trying to unite the left. They first participated in elections in 2002 and has been struggling ever since. This had partly to do with the left being associated with the violent guerrilla movements still present in the country, with some left political parties even supporting some of the guerrilla movements and others not wanting to be associated with that at all. This is an issue that is still visible today in Colombian politics, as there has been many debates surrounding the FARC peace treaty and how it allows FARC members to partake in national politics.

To have a better understanding of the opinions that developed within Colombia's society it is relevant to look at the Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Colombia. This agreement was first singed by both countries in 2006, however only passed US congress in 2012. It is argued that this would most definitely benefit the US businesses that are working and will be working with the Latin American country, however the benefits for Colombia itself have often been criticised and discussed (Fandl, 2015: 79). Although it would be relevant to fully analyse the agreement, for the goal of this paper this is not necessary as the relevance of this agreement lays in how the Colombian society perceived it and not whether it is actually good or bad. This paper will therefor only shortly give some examples of the reception, show which parts of society felt affected by this and what their response was.

To start, it was claimed that this agreement would especially benefit the already rich part of Colombian society and would increase inequality in the country with US companies buying themselves into the Colombian economy and the country losing control of their previously owned assets. The main opposition came from the poorer part of the population, the more left politicians and the smaller organisations. In a video set up by the non-profit

organisation U.S. Office on Colombia some examples are given that show some of the discontent related to this FTA (U.S. Office on Colombia, 2011). Jorge Enrique Robledo, a senator of the *Polo Democratico* argues that the agreement would bring more unemployment and poverty, that it would worsen working conditions and the local industry and that it would bring agricultural destruction and increase Colombia's inequality by concentrating wealth. Other people arguing against the agreement in the video are women that work in the flower industry, spokespersons of organisations such as INDEPAZ and RECALCA and human rights advocates, often referring to how this agreement would mostly affect the peasants and those parts of the population already struggling. It is important to note that there were some anti FTA campaigns going around in the years leading up to 2012 when in the end the agreement finally passed the US congress.

It is in this context that in 2011 the Colombian students entered the streets to protest an educational reform that was going to allow the private sector to intervene in the higher education in the country. The higher education in Colombia as dictated by law 30 of 1992 states that its public education should be fully financed by the state. Unfortunately, due to the increasing quality of the education and its increasing number of students the budged needed by the universities to function was exceeding the budged the government had reserved for it. For this reason, a reform in the higher education was needed and as a solution for the lack of money within the educational sector the government decided to want to insert the *animo de lucro,* profit motive, in their reform. 'The critics – rector of public and private universities, spokespersons of student organisations and congressman among others – argued that the reform was leaving quality for what it was, to focus on the covering of the financial needs' (Cruz Rodriguez, 2013: 53). Along with critics complaining about the lack of control of the quality of the education, this reform also fitted the earlier passed neoliberal laws that were seen by some as a means of the ruling parties to show their eagerness to the US in favour of the FTA that still had to be signed by their congress.

The Colombian students had been active since 2007 when protestors went onto the streets to protest Uribe's national development plan. When in 2011 Santos proposed the reform for higher education, student bodies and organisations were already alerted and acted quickly. The reform was first presented on the 10th of march to some universities, with MANE's first national meeting by the university students being held on the 19th and 20th of the same month. On the 7th of April the first protest was held, with follow ups on the 12th and 17th of May. The government responded on August 23rd that they would remove the *animo de lucro* from the reform, showing a fracture inside the government and weakening its position. This was

however not enough for the students and they started a national strike in all public universities (except for the military academy) on the 3rd of October that lasted until the 16th of November when the law was officially retrieved from Congress.

MANE, *La Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil*, was officially set up during the first meeting on the 10 of March 2011. Although student bodies had been uniting before and setting up the base for this national student body that was supposed to represent all the students, whether they were right-wing or left-wing. Before then, unlike other countries in the region, Colombia did not have a student union like that. During their meetings they set up a set of topics that would represent what MANE stood for and were a direct response to what they perceived as their university crisis: autonomy, finance, democracy, quality, the wellbeing of the universities and better relations between society and the educational sector. In the subsequent months they organised themselves and searched for support from society to block this educational reform. After they succeeded, they decided to write their own proposal to reform the higher education, as there was one thing that MANE and the government did agree on: there was in fact a financial university crisis. As MANE was regularly meeting and slowly progressing on their reform, the government was switching its attention to the peace process with the FARC. It was the end of 2013, by the time MANE was done with its proposal and they were ready to present it to the congress. The government refused this proposal as it was the complete opposite of what they were trying to do. At the same time, as FARC was taking over the interest of both society and the politicians, MANE's attention shifted there as well and the higher education in Colombia was not reformed up until today.

3. MANE's collective identity: a social movement with a strategy

This final chapter will be split in three parts. In the first part this paper will look at MANE as a social movement, explain what sort of social movement it is and what aspects define it as such according to the social movement theories discussed in the first chapter. In the second part, this paper will analyse the internal and external factors that are central to the construction of the collective identity of MANE. This paper will treat the internal factors as those qualities that MANE wanted to be identified with, the choices MANE made to create its identity and how this resulted in certain groups identifying with it. The external factors are those actions taken by outside actors, such as the government, that affected the perceived identity of MANE and how that influenced those that supported MANE and those that identified with MANE. The final part will try to explain how the fragmentation and recreation of the collective identity of MANE explained their initial success but also their later decline. That is MANE managed to succeed in blocking the initial proposal and to start a dialogue with the government about the educational reform, however it failed in proposing an adequate counter proposal or to maintain its initial support during this process.

3.1 The student movement MANE: a new social movement

At the end of the previous chapter this paper gave a description of how MANE came into existence, what its goal was and how it ended. MANE's characteristics as a 'new social movement' are its internal coordination that made it function on such a broad scale, the discussions that led it to take certain actions and its duality of taking place in both the cultural and political realm.

First of all, MANE was a semi-coordinated organisation. What this paper means with this is that the informal interactions were present and are at the core of its success. Without them, MANE's participation would not have been as successful. At the same time MANE was semi-coordinated from the beginning in the sense that all universities in the country were participating in national meetings with their student bodies, which naturally required some sort of coordination to take place. Students would then spread those ideas that were decided upon during these meetings through informal interactions, making these, in combination with the coordinated meetings, crucial to MANE's existence and success, hence semi-coordinated. This approach was a defining aspect in MANE as during these meetings they did not only discuss their ideas as in their goal, but also decided what actions to take and how they wanted to be seen by society, something that will be analysed more thoroughly in the second part of this

chapter. This characteristic, of being semi-coordinated, not only defines MANE as a social movement, but rather as a 'new social movement'.

As earlier mentioned, new social movement theory places identity at the core of its analysis and uses this to explain how and why social movements act. This characterisation fits MANE's history wewll. During its meetings, MANE decided on what their identity would be by discussing what they would represent and how they would represent it. These meetings fit what Melucci describes as the multipolar action system, the place where individuals try and form a more or less stable 'we' (1989). It is in this space that the goals, means and environment for their actions are discussed, and it is in this space that MANE shows the relevance of a collective identity for their movement.

MANE responded to a political decision and organised itself on a national level so that all would act accordingly to change the public view and create broader support. We saw that as the national coordination and meetings strengthened and became more frequent, so did their actions and the outside support to their goal. These are all characteristics that define MANE as a social movement that responds, to social, economic, political and/or cultural change and try to affect the political sphere from the bottom up mutually through the construction of a collective identity and collective action as defined in chapter one.

Further, through these meetings and through their decisions MANE started broadening its support, something that this paper argues is due to its broad collective identity. By enlarging their collective identity MANE started to gain more people's support as more could identify with its means and goals. As will be explained further in the next section, a part of their constructed collective identity was linked to protecting education for all, protecting their student identity and protecting their citizenship, especially the last one being quite an important factor in one's individuality. This relevance can be found in what Touraine explains as one of the two logics of new social movements: the increasing reference in the cultural realm that emphasise the construction and defence of everyone's individuality (Touraine, 1992). One's individuality is here argued to be determined by one's identity.

As already mentioned, and as will be explained better in the next section, MANE was an inclusive movement and had the support of both right- and left-wing students. However, at the same time MANE was, especially at the beginning, mostly associated with left-wing politics as they were fighting a neoliberal reform proposed by a right-wing government. It was argued in the first chapter that the new social movements theory has a tendency of being most applicable to left wing movements. This paper argues, that although MANE has a tendency of

being seen as a left-wing movement, this theory can be applicable to any movement that practices in the construction of a collective identity.

Further it is interesting to point out that MANE contains characteristics from both the political and cultural version of the new social movement theory as mentioned in chapter 1. For on a societal level MANE is dealing with both advanced capitalism by fighting the neoliberal reform and trying to create a dialogue with the government, while at the same time living in an information society where social media play a crucial role and culture and identity are of core importance to the individuals partaking in the movement. This paper will argue that this duality is most clear in the outcome of the movement's success. While the movement managed to succeed in blocking the reform by dealing with both the advanced capitalism and the information society, it did not manage to maintain the attention needed in the information society to succeed in the second part, that is creating its own reform. This duality was its strength but also showed its weakness when one of the two diminished. The new social movement theory is the only one that allows this sort of reasoning and inclusion of both the cultural side of a social movement as the political side.

3.2 Internal and external factors contributing to the construction of the collective identity

In this section this paper will analyse the factors that influenced MANE's collective identity. For analytical purposes this paper will make a distinction between internal and external factors. The internal factors will be seen as the more intentional and consciously taken actions by MANE, while the external factors will be the accidental factors that were outside of MANE's control. Both influenced the construction of MANE's identity to the point that it strengthened certain features of their identity. It is important to remember that in practicality identity is more fluid and not as simple as will be explained hereunder. However, for the sake of this paper, the main traits of MANE's collective identity will be analysed and explained through these two distinctions.

3.2.1 Internal factors that lead to certain choices that defined the collective identity of MANE

In this section of the chapter this paper will analyse the internal factors that shaped MANE's collective identity. Internal factors will be seen as internally made decisions decided upon during the meetings MANE had, that defined who they wanted to be and how they wanted to represent themselves. This includes how they wanted to set themselves apart from other

students with the same goals that wanted to use different means. During their meetings MANE fragmented and reconstructed its identity by deciding what to focus on and how to take action. This section will divide MANE's internally determined identity in two traits: their inclusiveness and their non-radical approach.

Inclusiveness

MANE's inclusiveness can be found in three different sorts of behaviour: their student approach to the issue, their apolitical stance and their democratic internal behaviour.

One of MANE's most defining decisions was to be an inclusive movement that would allow everyone to partake. They showed this first of all through their definition of what MANE was, a student movement for all students, no matter what political views they had. MANE stands after all for *Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil,* literally translating to 'broad national student platform'. The only requirement was that they would have to agree that the reform proposed by the government was a bad idea. During the first meetings MANE focussed on setting up a basis for their ideas, *un programa mínimo*. These ideas would represent them as a national student movement. They came up with six points that were the foundation for what they stood for and how they wanted to be defined. These points were autonomy, financing, democracy, welfare, quality and the university-society relationship. (Muñoz and Hernandez, 2013). During the debates that preceded this outcome, they included as many voices as possible so that these ideas would allow as many as possible to feel welcome and part of their position (Nuñez Gonzalez, 2016).

A very defining aspect of MANE's identity was to stay apolitical. MANE was the first Colombian attempt at creating a national student organisation without political agenda that would unite all. Some neighbouring countries such as Chile and Ecuador already had such organisation, however this paper will look at this more international picture in the next section, when discussing what will be called 'external factors' that impacted on the construction of the collective identity of the social movement. MANE cared for their apolitical stance because it would help unite all students and keep them united.

Democracy became a point in MANE's agenda as they wanted more democracy within the universities, as to who was chosen to represent them and how. However, this point also represented them as an organisation, as all their decision making would go through a voting. Furthermore, MANE's spokes persons were chosen through democratic elections. This use of democracy was both relevant during the creation and the first phase of MANE, however as Paola Galindo explains during her interview, it was in the end also the reason as to why MANE

failed during its second phase (2017). Their internal democracy managed to maintain political balance within MANE. Due to the variety of the partaking students no extreme political stances would be passed, and all decisions had to be agreed upon. Although a democracy and apolitical may seem incompatible, in MANE's case they both strengthened each other. This internal democracy however also caused strong internal debates that would last a long time, which is what hurt MANE especially in the creation of their own proposal, which ended up taking over two years.

MANE faced some difficulties during the debates that were allowed because of their use of internal democracy. During MANE's creation and the years that followed, Colombia was going through a peace process to end its civil war with the FARC. This affected MANE and the students as many of them felt that MANE should also have a say in the peace treaty. Lopez explained during his interview that during the meetings this was a topic that was often discussed and referred to, with the underlying questions being: how far should MANE go? What did MANE stand for and how would it identify itself within society on other political points such as this? Their inclusive approach was of core importance as to why MANE managed to connect with so many, however it also allowed for these discussions, discussions that according to the interviewees Lopez, most did not care to have as it was not why MANE was created (2017). To better explain, MANE managing to keep the peace treaty out of their agenda and doing this through open meetings with voting as to what should be done, incredibly strengthened their identity. Even though some students always believed a stand on this should have been included, by not having it MANE maintained a non-political opinion that left the doors open for all students, no matter what they believed with regards to the peace treaty, and there were many opinions and debates on that.

Non-radical character

The second important trait that MANE showed through its behaviour and its agenda is its non-radical approach. There were three factors showing this: its peacefulness that went hand in hand with their university-society relationship, its informative character, its not anti-neoliberal character and defensive character. This paper shall now look at how this identity trait was shown through these three factors.

First, the peaceful actions. MANE's peaceful approach to protesting was of core importance to its students as they were well aware of the known prejudice in society that would define any student protest as aggressive and leftist, meaning guerrilla.

> *"Esas movilizaciones se ganaron el cariño de la gente, los medios de comunicación por primera vez en la historia veían al movimiento estudiantil en la calle de manera creativa sin capuchas, sin papas, sin molotov, nada de eso, si no que los veían peleando de manera pacífica y eso de verdad fue un golpe de opinión durísimo, entonces siempre que ha habido movimientos sociales en Colombia el gobierno ha dicho ahí detrás esta las FARC y el ELN y como iba a decir uno que no, salían muchos tipos, además unos con brazalete que decía FARC a tirar papas, eso decía si claro son las FARC, pero ahora eran 100 mil personas entre esos viejitos, señores, niños de todo, con la cara pintada, mujeres desnudas, de todo, gente disfrazada, en fin y quien iba a decir que era FARC."* (Fernández, 2016)

As Fernández explains here during the interview, MANE was actively trying to change this prejudice by maintaining peaceful and creative ways of protesting and involving society. That way defining themselves as non-aggressive, left, non-guerilla movement. Their awareness of this, and their actions undertaken to distinguish themselves form this prejudice mayorly determined their non-radicalism and allowed for the support of the left, without immediately being associated with the guerrilla movements.

Further one of the points in their agenda was the university-society relationship. This referred to how society should see them and how they wanted to improve this relationship. There are two aspects to this, the passive one shows how university students wanted to be seen as fellow citizens, defending their rights in their country, their right as students, but also as Colombians. The second more active aspect shows what was explained in the previous paragraphs, that they wanted to change society's view of students and by extension the left. This side of their identity is also what mostly affected their decision making on how to act and what sort of protests to hold. Through this side of their identity they were showing the world that they were not the guerrilla left students, but that they were peaceful.

A smaller yet very important detail that showed how they fulfilled a non-radical identity, was through information. Lopez mentioned that most parents in the end were involved, not because their children were, but because they knew it was the right thing to do, because they were protecting their education (2017). At the start many non-students were unaware of why the students were protesting. However, as some students explained to me in personal interviews during unofficial meetings, their own parents, who initially did not support MANE, changed opinion once they were better informed about the issues at hand. Julian Escobar explained how even an organisation of the parents of the students of the national university joined in support, MAPA *Madres y Padres de Estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional*. Lopez further explains

how during the protests they would go into busses, bars and other public places explaining why they were protesting, giving out information to those uninformed. In other words, MANE spread the word about the law and what it would do, without per se emphasising the anti-neoliberal side of this, however in the end, because of their better understanding people changed their first impression and started to support MANE because they actually agreed with this.

At this point it becomes relevant to look at the anti-neoliberal stand of the social movement. On the one hand this movement is to be seen as an anti-neoliberalism movement, in that by protesting the reform, it was questioning neoliberalism and capitalism, however on the other hand, they managed to maintain their focus on just the one reform and not on neoliberalism as a whole. During their speeches the spokes persons of MANE showed broader discontent, however they maintained a non-radical approach to it, so that even right-wing oriented people could show support without too much issues.

What can be understood from this information is that MANE not only created an identity that could be grasped by more than just left-wing students, that it was inclusive and non-radical, but that they actively used this as a strategy to gain more support. This strategy can also be found in their sometimes more defensive approach, represented also by their agenda and the six points mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Through some of the points set up in MANE's agenda and how they explained those to the outside word, they set up a defensive approach. This can especially be found in the autonomy, financing, quality and welfare of the universities. As stated by MANE, universities needed more autonomy in their decision-making process, something that was still mostly in the hands of the government and that MANE wanted to diminish. For example, the principal is appointed by the government and MANE would rather see him or her democratically elected or chosen by those closer involved with the higher education than most politicians. Further, the government was to finance universities and not implement the profit motive, as MANE argued this would corrupt universities and affect the third point that will be discussed in this section: the quality of the education. Lastly MANE wanted universities, public and private, to be better equipped and taken care for, this was of course also dependent on the financing, as without them it would be difficult to provide.

These topics of MANE's agenda essentially said what students disliked about the government proposal for the reform and a direct response to this. Additionally, they represent what they as Colombian students wished university would be like and what it currently was not. By explaining these topics and making this part of the foundation of MANE, they

emphasised the student identity and their inclusiveness, but also showed that they cared about their education and wanted to defend its quality and accessibility.

The last internal factor that contributes to MANE's non-radical identity trait is MANE's defensive nature. This can be found in some of the point included in their *programa mínimo,* namely the autonomy, financing, welfare and quality. In short during the first phase of their existence MANE laid the emphasis on them wanting to defend these points. They wanted to defend the right that Colombians had to affordable universities, with good quality educations and facilities. This defensive nature draws upon the basics of citizenship and the rights that should come with this. It speaks to a broader issue rather than just a student issue. It shows society that they want to defend themselves from government intervention in what should be seen as their right. This defensive character of their shown identity was for many more approachable and identifiable with, than their initial idea of the 'violent student movements'. It further also draws on the already discontent population. In the next section when discussing external sources, this part of their identity will be better explained when looking at the government actions that cause for the discontent population in the first place and aided their identification with MANE.

In short, MANE had two main identity traits constructed through all kinds of internal decisions: inclusiveness and non-radical. Their inclusiveness was mostly constructed during the first part of their existence and before the national strike. During this phase they set up their student identity and unified amongst themselves first. Once the strike started, they broadened their approach and started showing more and more their non-radicalism through peaceful actions and the active sharing of information, with their defensive character truly coming to light.

3.2.2 The effect of external elements and processes on the collective identity of MANE

The bigger part of MANE's construction of their collective identity can be found in their internally made choices, however to some extent outside elements did contribute to the construction of MANE's collective identity. In this section this paper will analyse the main external elements in that regard. Two elements will be analysed here. The anti-neoliberalism that was influenced by the actions undertaken by the government which grouped MANE and other Colombian parts of civil society together. Secondly, how a social identity was constructed, affected by international events, more specific by other student and youth movements.

As discussed in section 2.3 Colombian civil society had witnessed dissatisfaction with regards to previously passed neoliberal laws. The reform of law 30 which regulates the higher education in the country was another neoliberal decision, that according to Fernández, was influenced by the FTA that the US senate was about to pass, and that Colombia had already agreed on (2016). Fernández argues that in the FTA between Colombia and the US, there is a chapter in which the higher education is seen as a service that can be privatised, however according to the current law 30, the public higher education is forbidden to be privatised. Lopez further explains that Santos, the Colombian president at the time, wanted to gain trust from the US and 'show off' to president Obama (2017). Santos wanted to show that they were doing as the US wanted, by allowing higher education to be privatised, so that national laws fitted the Free Trade Agreement.

The education reform was not the only one within this trend of neoliberal reforms, there were four: '*la ley de primer empleo, la ley de sostenibilidad fiscal, la ley de educación y la ley lleras, que era una ley para prohibir contenidos de propiedad intelectual en internet que fue la ley SOPA en estados unidos para restringir el uso del internet y los derechos de autor, el copyright y todo esto'* (Lopez, 2017). Eventually, the laws on employment and fiscal sustainability passed, the other two did not. This behaviour of Santos and the at the time ruling party and politicians, affected the response of the civil society and their response to the student mobilisations in 2011. The reform on the employment law was the one that had the biggest impact on civil society. It would make young works cheaper than older ones, this would diminish unemployment among the youth, but negatively affected the older side of society. This in turn affected the behaviour of the labour unions when the students started their protests.

The government's trend to pass neoliberal reforms and MANE being against one of them, made MANE in fact an anti-neoliberal movement. MANE, as discussed before, did not actively brand themselves that way, as they were more focused on uniting people of all political parties rather than being seen as a left wing anti-neoliberal movement. This anti-neoliberal side of their identity was especially emphasised when labour units and other parts of civil society started to support them, namely Sintra Unicol and SintraUal (Escobar, 2016).

The reason for these non-students to partake in the protests and to identify with MANE was due to the anti-neoliberal nature of the movement. Labour units had already been negatively influenced by the employment law and when on top of that the government was about to affect their children's future this gave them enough reasons to support MANE. These unions were supporting the anti-neoliberal side of MANE's identity, perhaps not per se because they identified with MANE. Rather, because as explained by Wendt, they were grouped together

because they were all suffering the same consequences due to the actions of the government (1994). This feeling of being treated the same can be a strong unifying factor that in the case of MANE brought them the outside support needed to pursue their goal. In other words, although MANE did not want to be identified as an anti-neoliberal movement, these external factors drove it to be associated with such anyway, affecting its collective identity.

The second point in this section is about how MANE's identity was affected by international events. When MANE was set up, the students were not only fighting a reform they were also creating a nationwide student organisation, one that did not exist in Colombia before, but that other Latin American countries had already created (Fernández, 2016). This would be the first Colombian student organisation without a political stand other than to offer its partaking students help at bettering their education. This combined with the international news of Chile's students uniting and protesting created an even broader sense of belonging as it related to other countries and other students as well. MANE happened during a series of international events, that gave MANE not only its own national student identity, but also an international student identity.

> *"Estaba como de moda, pero además había un contexto internacional super bueno; Entonces lo de Chile, Calle 13 jodiendo con lo de la MANE, Calle 13 vino, el vino acá subió a la tarima, entonces imagínate acá la gente ama el reguetón, calle 13 entonces a ti te vale huevo la política, pero tú vas a un concierto y ves que Calle 13 saluda a los estudiantes que están luchando entonces la gente se emociona; también coincidió con la primavera árabe un poco coincidió con los indignados de Francia, coincidió con una ola en el mundo que la gente de pronto tu estas en una universidad y estas leyendo noticias y no te parece tan loco que alguien este protestando si tu estas leyendo que todo el mundo está protestando* (Lopez, 2017).

Lopez explained during his interview, how he and many other students were influenced by the international events and support. Calle 13 for example, is a band from Puerto Rico that showed it support in MANE's cause by playing a free concert in Bogotá for their cause. This of course attracted a lot of people as it is quite a popular band. Further in Chile students were fighting a similar cause and so this showed that the issue of neoliberal influences in the universities was perceived as a larger more regional issue. Similarly, the year before, in 2010 the Arab Spring happened, which was led by the Arab youth rebelling against their oppressive regimes. While the same year that MANE developed, Europe and the US were dealing with movements such as the French Indignados Movement, the Spanish 15-M movement and the

Occupy Wall Street in the US. These were mainly anti-capitalist movements also led by these countries' youth.

These international events strengthened the student and youth identity that defined MANE as a student social movement and that lead to the support of so many Colombian students at the time as well as other students or politically active individuals. As to why these international movements and events affected MANE's support can be found in the construction of a social identity as explained in section 1.2 of this paper. As Melucci explained a 'social identity is the attribution of the condition of 'belonging to'; it is a relationship within which one both recognises and is recognised' (1980). When MANE first was created, its students were aware of the already existing student movements abroad, with MANE's success and international attention, they actually felt like they were part of this bigger worldwide movement. This excitement can for example be found in Lopez' words quoted above (2017).

This anti-neoliberal nature imposed on them and the bigger sense of being given to MANE by the international youth movements also can be placed within MANE's inclusiveness and non-radical nature.

Although the anti-neoliberalism is in conflict with MANE's own approach of being non-anti-neoliberalism, it feeds into MANE's defensive nature. The anti-neoliberalism movements that have been taken place in Latin America are at its core claiming to be protecting themselves from neoliberalism, a system that takes resources away from the governments and the people. Inherently strengthening MANE's defensive character. Further, although MANE itself did not take a specific stance, they also did not specifically deny being anti-neoliberalism. That is to say, they had to stay as apolitical and inclusive as possible, but there was a large enough portion of these students that did have some issues with the use of neoliberalism in their country. Lopez for example, was very clear during the interview that he felt like the United States had been profiting a lot through these neoliberal reforms from Colombia as well as other Latin American countries.

The international youth movements on the other hand strengthened MANE's inclusiveness and student identity. By having an even larger group to identify with MANE's supporters were broadening their own sense of being and feeling like they were including themselves to a larger purpose. It strengthened the feeling of a youth or student identity as so many all over the world were struggling to be heard. It was almost as if MANE itself was joining the world and by joining MANE you would join the world as well.

3.3 MANE's support and how it led to its success in blocking the reform

This final section of this chapter analyses the impact on the generation that was involved in the creation and support of MANE. First this section will explain what exactly happened with MANE, it will analyse how there was an initial success with regards to the first part of the movement and how the second part failed. It will end with insights on what the lasting differences have been for those that were actively involved with the movement, as well for the political consequences.

As mentioned before there are two parts to MANE's existence that should be analysed separately. This paper so far has focused on the first part, that is the creation of MANE in order to block the reform, and the role that MANE's collective identity had during this initial part of their existence. The second part is what comes after MANE blocks the reform. As one of its requirements for stopping the strike that had left all but one public university empty for over a month, MANE demanded that there should be a democratic process through which the new, well needed, reform would be created through. The government under the lead of the minister of education Maria Fernanda Campo, agreed. Consequently, MANE started meetings and for another two years tried to set up a reform that all those partaking in these meetings could agree on. This reform was never accepted, hence MANE 'failed' during this second part of their existence. There is a couple of points to be made here with regards to the definition of failing, the role that collective identity played at this stage, and the outside factors that influenced these events.

The first point to be discussed will be that of the collective identity. As argued before, MANE's initial success was due to its broad collective identity that led so many to show support and which eventually led the government to retrieve their reform. This section will then continue to discuss the second part, where this support started diminishing. This paper will argue that this was in part due to the diminishing collective identity.

As explained in the previous section MANE's collective identity was constructed through a certain set of internal and external factors that influenced its construction. As a consequence of such a broad identity MANE had a lot of support. For one, due to its inclusiveness MANE managed to bring all the students together to the point where when the strike started all public universities, except for the military academy, joined in and actively participated. Their non-radical nature on the other hand helped them connect to the non-students, that is for example the parents and the workers unions, as well as anyone else that crossed their paths. Especially their peacefulness and informative character gave many people a reason to think about it and even if they did not actively join, they were also not against them.

At first the government did not take MANE as serious as they continued to push the reform through. It was only when the students started the national strike that the government was forced to listen. It was also during this time that their non-radical identity started to show more as it became crucial to the students that they had to change not only the governments mind but also their fellow citizens.

After MANE succeeded in blocking the reform, they got together and started meetings to set up their own reform. This did not go as planned for four issues. Three of which damaged the before explained internally constructed identity and one that was external and completely out of their control. All of which diminished the well-needed support and collective identity that MANE needed to pass the reform.

Firstly, by trying to create their own reform, they were no longer actively portraying their non-radical identity. As argued before this included peaceful actions, the spreading of information and their defensive nature. All of which were of great importance in keeping people actively involved and supportive of their actions. When they started actively participating within the political sphere, they diminished the (peaceful) activism due to their switch of focus, which diminished the attention they got, as well as their visibility. Along with this they lacked time and space to spread information. While before they had time and opportunities to go onto busses to spread information, now they were busy getting back to their studies as well as creating the actual proposal. There was information to be found online, however only those that cared and looked it up would find it. Naturally this group became smaller and smaller. Lastly their defensive nature was gone the moment they actively got involved in setting up their own reform and therefor deciding what to change. From defensive they became assertive and with that the three factors that contributed to the non-radical character of MANE's collective identity basically disappeared.

Secondly, by trying to create their own reform, they were actively involved in politics, automatically creating a debate as to their initial inclusiveness and apolitical approach. As Fernández explained during his interview, while the lack of the first trait simply diminished the support, the second one started to fracture the unity among the students themselves (2016). The lack of active support through protests and other activities is an issue, as Fernández explains this is the biggest strength of a social movement to keep the government involved. However, the internal incoherence damaged the movement at its core, as without its internal coherence it would lack the capability of creating the needed broader support. This study argues that this was one of the main reasons why MANE did not succeed in passing their reform by the government.

In a personal communication with Hernán Martínez (2017), a third reason was discussed. Martínez was a Colombian student that was not part of any specific student organisations. When he spoke of the MANE's meetings he often mentioned that they were often guided and controlled by those that were part of these student organisations. While during the first part of MANE's existence many other students were still involved, he argued that this became less and less as MANE moved on to setting up their own reform. He argued that the student organisations, all had their own political agenda and were only supportive of those other organisations with similar agendas. This led to the point where the student organisations with different points of view started to compete more, polarise the students more and therefore breaking the unity they had maintained until that point. This argumentation is also supported by some of the other interviewees, such as Fernández (2016) and Galindo (2017), while others like Nuñez Gonzalez (2016), Lopez (2017) and Gomez Orduz (2017) were more positive on the matter and blamed the government and other outside factors for the failure.

As for the outside factors that influenced MANE's collective identity during those following years. One of the most important ones that worked against MANE's attempt at writing their own reform, is the peace treaty with the FARC. As this topic started to take over all media and political attention, MANE faded to the background, and after the protests were done, they were less and less mentioned in the media. This also gave politicians with no initial interests towards MANE's ideas, a good excuse to side-line MANE's attempts at proposing their own reform. MANE had an inclusive identity and most students were in itself already involved in the peace process, meaning that MANE had no way of stepping out of the shadow as that would almost naturally require putting the FARC peace process in the side-lines, something that would not have given them much support and that most students were also not willing to do.

Although MANE failed as they did not manage to pass their reform, which here is argued is because of their badly affected collective identity, this paper will argue that the definition of failing should be brought into discussion. Some of the interviewees argue that is was a good proposal, others that it was not, in this paper it comes down to the point that the government refused it. However, this does not necessarily mean that MANE failed. Each interviewee I spoke to gave good reasons for their success, as well as most students spoken to on the streets, at parties and at other social occasions. Most interviewees argued that MANE was successful on one particular front: that MANE managed to have a dialogue with the government and involve people whom before were unaware and uninvolved in politics. MANE activated political participation by spreading information, but also by setting up a democratic

system through which students could participate and become more involved in local and national politics. Many of those elected as spokespersons are currently involved in politics and when looking back, point at MANE as the start of this. Further MANE made itself be heard by the government, forcing it to have a dialogue, although not always a very functioning one, with organisations outside of the rather exclusive and perhaps fragile Colombian political system.

Conclusion

This study started with a definition of 'social movement'. It further pointed out the core features of the new social movement paradigm and collective identity. In the second chapter the context was laid out in which MANE rose, explaining how its collective identity was constructed through internal and external factors that all together emphasised MANE's inclusiveness and non-radicalism. It further argued that it was thanks to this constructed identity that MANE succeeded in blocking the government's reform to then continue in their second phase of creating its own reform. It was also due to the changes that MANE's collective identity went through in the second phase that led to its failure in passing its own reform in government.

MANE is a new social movement in that it is defined by its nationally organised meetings that determined its actions and behaviour, through which they constructed a collective identity that led to the support of not only left- and right-wing students, but also of Colombian society as a whole. Their duality of partaking in both the cultural sphere as in the political sphere is a very defining aspect of MANE and shows the still ever relevance of the new social movement paradigm. As identity building is being influenced by the current growing information society it is likely that the new social movement paradigm will stay of relevance as it allows for the combination of politics and culture.

MANE's collective identity was characterised according to this paper as inclusive and non-radical. According to its internal factors, its inclusiveness was determined by their student mentality, their apolitical attitude and their democratic approach, while its non-radicalism was influenced by its peacefulness, informative approach and defensive attitude. These factors are mainly represented by MANE's choices, which are a response to a couple of things.

First of all, MANE's student and defensive character were a direct response to the proposed reform, while the other characteristics of MANE's identity were a response to Colombian society and its political prejudices regarding the left. When the government proposed the reform, students felt threatened and decided to take action to block this reform, reaching their first goal. Blocking the reform is in itself a defensive characteristic as MANE did not aim at changing something, yet. Further, during the beginning of MANE it was mostly students taking part of it, it was not until the strike that the students were actively supported by society. During the first months after the government announced the proposal, the students were still busy organising themselves and agreeing on their *programa mínimo,* emphasising their internal student values during their debates. It was only once the basis was laid that they could focus on expressing these values and influencing the socio-political sphere.

As MANE was conscious about the national stereotype towards left-wing movements, they made conscious decisions that would allow for people to notice they were different. MANE acted on this, by showing their peacefulness and actively informing the public about the educational conflict. MANE's awareness of the socio-political situation in their country helped them chose these tactics, of being peaceful and informing the public, that would reach the broadest amount of people. These decisions not only defined their collective identity but also influenced the political situation in the country opening a way for the left to be seen as separate than the guerrilla movements. Overall, it can therefore be argued that MANE was indeed successful due to its broad collective identity and how they influenced this due to their awareness of the political landscape they were acting in.

The one thing MANE and the government did agree upon was that change was needed as per how the higher education was regulated, however up to this day no reform with regards to the higher education has been passed yet. This means that Colombia is still facing a university crisis it was facing in 2011. Although, neither two parties reached an agreement, MANE impacted the conversation as the government learned through these protests, that it should take a more democratic approach to this reform and include the university's opinions in their approach. Thus, the biggest impact MANE had with regards to this conflict is this dialogue that did not exist before between the government and a peaceful and reasonable student body. Although more research for this claim is needed, it would seem that the student generation that lived MANE is now more involved in politics and more aware of the political situation in the country. This fits what was explained earlier in this paper, that social movements have a different aim and success in Latin America due to their different political situation.

That is not to say that there are no other paradigms that would allow for some useful insights in the movement. Contentious politics could give a necessary focus to the political side of this case study. The relationship between the students and the government as acted on by MANE is quite interesting especially in the Latin American context, where civil society is dealing on how to deal with the government in a context of weak democracies. Many of those participating in MANE explained how the success of MANE did not only lay in the blocking of the reform, but also in activating and interesting people in the national politics (Galindo, 2017). This relevance can also be found in other Latin American cases, where the relationship between the state and civil society is fragile and where social movements can be seen as mayor contributors to the bettering and the initiation of conversations between the two. The paradigm of contentious politics would therefore offer an interesting insight that this study could not give, to better understand MANE's role in this, however it would lack the explanation of the

cultural side of MANE, something that this paper managed to do through the new social movement paradigm.

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Appendix

List of interviews:

Escobar, Julián Robledo. Former law student and active member of MANE, at the time of the interview law professor at the national university of Bogotá. Bogotá, November 2016.

Fernández, Sergio David. Former spokesperson of MANE and student of political sciences and (international) humanitarian law, at the time of the interview political analysist, expert in educational law and working at *Universidad Externado de Colombia*. Bogotá, December 2016.

Galindo, Paola. Former member of university student organisation *Comuna Universitaria*, at the time of the interview working as a legislative advisor of the Chamber Representative Víctor Correa. Skype, March 2017.

Gómez Orduz, Omar A. Former spokesperson of MANE and student of sociology at the National university of Bogotá, at the time of the interview president of the student organisation *Asociación Colombiana de Estudiantes Universitarios.* Skype, February 2017.

López, Juan Sebastián. Former spokesperson of MANE and a representative of the private university *Universidad Externado de Colombia*, at the time of the interview advisor to Senator Jorge Enrique Robledo in Congress.

Martinez, Hernán. Former philology student at Bogotá's National University, Bogotá, January 2017.

Núñez González, Amaury. Former spokesperson of MANE and political science and journalism student. Medellín, December 2016. January 2017.