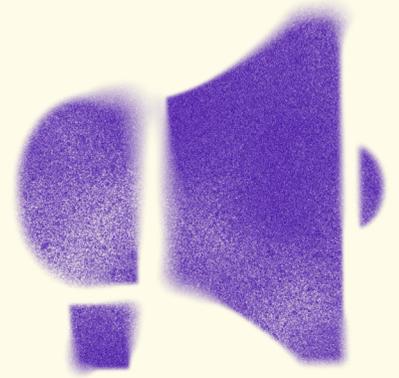


**M**OVIMIENTOS  
**J**UVENILES  
**D**ISRUPTIVOS

MÉXICO . CENTROAMÉRICA . COLOMBIA



**DIVERSE, PLURALISTIC, BRAVE,  
AND DISRUPTIVE:  
RESISTANT YOUTH IN SEVEN  
LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES**

**REGIONAL SUMMARY**



A program of



Seattle International Foundation  
Central America

Diakonia

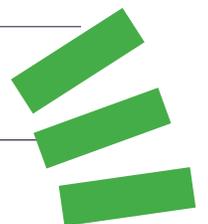


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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: ETHICAL AND POLITICAL POSITION

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The aim of the study "Disruptive youth movements in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia" is bring to the forefront people who organize to resist. The study aims to very carefully address these people's many and diverse experiences of struggle, organization, and resistance, and the impact this has on their personal lives and social spaces.



We are not interested in their stories for the purposes of drawing up a report. Instead, we want their stories to multiply and help ensure that the actions that arise from these movements transcend symbolic and real borders. We want to highlight the creative, counter-hegemonic, loving, and committed forms of being a young person across seven Latin American countries that are deeply marked by violence and inequality.



We have been able to maintain a critical, reflective, and vigilant viewpoint in our listening, writing, creation, and dissemination processes and have been able to create a safe, respectful, horizontal, collaborative, feminist, emancipatory space for sharing knowledge: a space that is committed to social change, the defense of human rights, and, above all, to those who defend those rights within the complex contexts of our countries. Our task has been to build collective knowledge about disruptive youth movements in order to understand, guide, support, and, in turn, appreciate the valuable contributions from resistant young people in our countries.



We believe that adopting this position is the best way to appreciate all the people who trusted our research enough to share with us their suggestions and experiences of resistance and who felt comfortable telling us what participating in movements means for them. We want to express our enormous admiration and gratitude to all those who put their lives, bodies, ideas, creations, reflections, and work on the line in order to defend their present, dream of their futures and make these possible. We also think that it's the best way to honor their stories and experiences of struggle.



We would like to thank our research group for their critical approach, thoughtful contributions, and listening skills, as well as their enormous commitment and respect for the processes and people who participated in this research.



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## **INTRODUCTION: A REGIONAL LOOK AT YOUTH MOVEMENTS**

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The common thread among young people who participate in social movements in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia is that they join these experiences of resistance because they are motivated by the idea of seizing their present in order to dream of other possible futures. They know that resisting, as young people, means experiencing a particular, specific form of political participation defined by their own criteria as well as factors inherent to their age, life experience, and situation.

They impact the public scene in very different ways, questioning, proposing, discussing, and taking issue with their own realities. They know that this is not what is expected of them, regardless of their gender<sup>1</sup>. In doing so, they break the tradition that holds views of young people as passive, disinterested, and selfish. And in organizing, they aim to put forward ways of participating from feminist and environmentalist perspectives, in addition to horizontal, participatory, and collectivizing forms of decision-making.

These organized people are changing the world, their worlds. They are diverse and embrace their differences, their identities, their own experiences and the idea of others being present, and, with this, the possibility of other, safer, fairer, freer, and more beautiful futures.

In Latin America, particularly in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia, young people have historically led and are still leading social protest, civil resistance, and citizen organization actions in the face of various governments, economic processes, neoliberal policies, and cultural practices.

They have also suffered the most direct and sustained persecutions, attacks and repressions (such as exile, arrests, disappearances, and murders) in connection with their resistance activities, which are varied and include street movements, cyberactivism, performances, presence on social media, activism, and voluntary or direct actions in their communities (such as building community canteens, growing fruit crops, river cleaning, education and communication actions for poorer classes, and social research).

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<sup>1</sup> In the original text, the mention "ellas, ellos and elles" are used as forms of political positioning to highlight that the message in question applies to all genders, ellas, ellos and elles being different forms of 'they'.





How do we know this? **This was reported to us by young people throughout 2020, in all seven countries.** We had the opportunity to talk openly and extensively with those who participate in what we have called "disruptive youth movements" by means of resistance, hope, and their constant quest to change reality.

These conversations took place within the framework of a research project organized by five community funds in order to understand the characteristics, contributions, and needs of youth movements in Latin America.

This project began without any idea of what was coming in the region: a global pandemic, two hurricanes, and significant changes in the region's political, economic, and social contexts that increased levels of violence.

The sum of events forced a slower pace in the processes and forced changes to decisions on several occasions, including the decision not to include people and organizations that were part of the research plan but that, after in-depth analysis and reflection, were deemed unsafe to include due to the risk of political persecution.

To carry out a project of this extent, over such a large and complex area, and involving such diverse experiences of resistance, a local team made up of young people and activists (and in Costa Rica and Panama, one person per country) was responsible for leading the research process in each country, which included participatory, knowledge-building sessions focusing on resistant and organizing young people using various techniques: mapping, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and workshops.

Through this, **in 2020, the team of researchers spoke to more than 150 activists participating in 134 experiences of resistance of various kinds across the seven countries.** From these conversations, the researchers prepared a report for each country that described the main characteristics of the experiences of resistant youth and, in addition, they created meeting spaces and various creative materials as a means to present their research findings: that is, everything they learned from and together with the activists. All the changes and adjustments taught valuable lessons: they reinforced collaborative, participatory work with holistic security, and showed that listening to the many voices requires time, patience, and reflection.

The text presented here is a summary of the research experiences, built from the qualitative research reports for each country in addition to the three audiovisual products, two fanzines, and a microsite prepared by the teams. It is, above all, the result of many conversations, virtual meetings and reflections on what youth movements face, what they share, what unites them, what they are suggesting, and what they have achieved.



This proposed summary seeks to **look at organized youth across all of the countries who are involved in regional youth movements with specific particularities and shared characteristics.** It will explore, discuss, and delve into the work carried out, but will not claim to be a sum of all viewpoints, since each viewpoint arises from different questions, contexts, and methodologies. Instead, the summary will seek to learn from these seven research experiences characterized by creativity, commitments, and critical viewpoints, to cast a moving eye at the young people who organize in the region and understand the points they have in common, elements in which they can recognize and rediscover themselves.

**What does it mean to be young and resist?** What does it mean to participate in resistance movements in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia? How are resistance movements organized in the midst of a pandemic? What do young people who resist in these countries have in common? How do the young people who live in these countries, known for a lack of future possibilities and for violating and criminalizing young people, construct their ideas of the future? How do they organize their resistance?

**Firstly, they have been doing so since the disruption.** But what does that mean? In this summary we invite you to explore, question, and seek a more regional perspective on the ways in which young people who resist are organized: their issues, the challenges they face, the stakes involved, and their valuable, courageous, and significant daily construction of other possible worlds. In other words, their organizing, recognizing, helping, protecting, and imagining.

It aims to answer the following questions: **What lies behind the disruption of these movements and what elements do the various experiences that help build a common regional perspective share?** Can we consider the experiences of resistance in these countries as part of a youth movement?

To this end, the text has been organized into two main sections. The first is a methodological, contextual, and conceptual explanation of how this research process was carried out. The second section presents the findings. First, we will present a **description of the organizations** with whom we worked and then we will present the main **issues extracted from the original, specific research objectives** relating to the characteristics, challenges, and contributions of the movements consulted. Finally, the conclusions will address the **reflections shared** and analyze how these movements carry out their **disruptive** actions.

This summary is not an exhaustive text in which all the valuable team findings are detailed, nor is it trying to be. In order to understand the specificities, we invite you to read each country's report and review their materials.

**Diana Campos Ortiz**  
Consultant and Research Coordinator



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## METHODOLOGY NOTES: RESEARCHING DURING A PANDEMIC

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### CONTEXT: RESEARCH IN A REGION IN CRISIS



This research covers a large and deeply pluralistic area with very diverse historical, political, social, and cultural realities, with varying degrees of acceptance, hostility, or persecution of citizen organization and diverse social movements. It seeks to explore how disruptive youth movements (movimientos juveniles disruptivos, or MJDs) confront the logic of their own contexts in each country and how there are rationalities that transcend the reality of each.



During the session held to approve this summary, carried out with the group of research teams at the beginning of 2021, one of the researchers stated that "listening to all this makes me think that we're not alone in our country". Indeed, in this project we cannot fail to mention the context in which this research was carried out, in which it is clear that, despite the transcendental differences found in all countries, there are common shared realities.



In each of the research reports, each team/researcher drew up a contextualization to understand the MJDs of today and throughout history. In these contextualizations, we can read about aspects such as growing authoritarianism, recent histories marked by military actions, the exclusion of broad sectors of society, violence, inequality, and vulnerability to environmental processes that have deeply marked our countries.



An important aspect to mention is that in the different contexts, an attempt has been made to understand the MJDs in the long term; in other words, it is about understanding youth movements from other generations. Another central aspect is that several of the studies mention milestones in the countries' recent history that allow us to understand the current configurations of MJDs. These are powerful moments that have had a direct impact on the resistance experiences studied.





In **Mexico**, the disappearance of the 43 Normal School students from Ayotzinapa; in **Guatemala**, the trial against Ríos Montt and the movement for the reparation of genocide; in **Honduras**, the coup d'état in 2009; in **El Salvador**, the weakening of civil society under the government of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front; in **Costa Rica**, the movement against the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and its ratification in 2009, and the social polarization that has existed since then; and in **Panama**, the recent social mobilization events that in turn account for the social discontent. In **Colombia**, the process of ratifying the peace agreements within the context of a conflict that has lasted decades.



We were interested in drawing attention to a discussion that we believe is significant about the context of young people who organize themselves: What does it mean to be young in these countries? What are the possibilities and opportunities available to young people in these countries? Are they expected to organize?



In the countries consulted, young people survive under adverse conditions: unemployment, inequality, difficulty in accessing education, and violence in its various forms (state, gender, economic, and social). In countries where the choice for young people is to be a "NEET" (not in education, employment, or training), migrate, or join crime structures, our intention was to talk to young people who are aware of their context and who have decided to pay a generally high price to change it.



The context is changing. Since the end of 2020, reality has become more complex; however, we know that this depiction or detailed view of the movements in each country is a significant, profound, committed, and important contribution to better understand the young people who are making an impact. Faced with shared problems, the regional perspective gives us the clues needed to find, recognize, and strengthen ourselves, and above all, to consider common proposals for shared problems.



The research referred to in this document was a broad and pluralistic process that was carried out in 2020 simultaneously in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia.





While they have noticeable differences in their histories and processes, these countries **share realities** that will be referred to later.

## WHY RESEARCH DISRUPTIVE YOUTH MOVEMENTS?



The idea of researching MJDs came about from an assessment of the social environment and the forms of organization undertaken by the convening organizations which found that, effectively, young people in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia participate in politics in a very active and particular way and break with the traditional forms of social movements and civil society organization.



The task of carrying out this research arose precisely from that assessment and from the interest in better understanding the ecosystem of young people who are organized in these countries, specifically in order to understand how and why they are organized, how their work impacts society, and what challenges they face.



The interest in focusing our attention on disruptive youth movements (movimientos juveniles disruptivos, or MJDs) lies in the fact that there is a gap in terms of information about these groups. We started with the idea that their innovative proposals cover new forms of citizen participation that should be explored further to ensure that cooperation and funds can better manage and guide this participation, but also to highlight these experiences and help create a meeting point between different initiatives.



The idea of naming these "disruptive youth movements" corresponds to a nomenclature proposal for the broad phenomenon that was widespread throughout the region in which the research was carried out and to distinguish them from traditional social movements. The intention is also to underline the interesting, precise exploration of youth as something disruptive so as to emphasize that we are interested in these very diverse, plural, unexpected, innovative, and particular forms of participation and ways of exercising politics. Therefore, youth is connected more to attitudes, behaviors, and proposals than to specific ages.





Talking about youth in a region as diverse as Latin America enables us to learn about different realities and ways of being young, that are not always defined by age. We started with the understanding that MJDs as groups that challenge the established order, reject the place and destination that have been placed on them as people in training, who must obey and not propose concrete actions, and whose social impact is seen in the future, as the "citizens of tomorrow".



## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DISRUPTIVE YOUTH MOVEMENTS?



The group in charge of carrying out this research was given the task of conceptually and theoretically considering the scope of disruptive youth movements. The concepts collected here are the result of reflections and contributions made by the research team of Mexico, Central America, and Colombia, prepared by a commission that was responsible for formulating the theoretical and conceptual positioning of our research. In this summary, we will examine what was raised by the concepts of our research group:



**A youth movement** is understood to be the **collective processes driven by a defined group of young people who meet voluntarily to bring about a change in the status quo that does not meet their demands.** These people have common habits, they create spaces for socialization and dialogue about the problems they are interested in fighting, and they have a certain ideology based on the causes they defend.



Youth movements can be defined as a social expression that develops self-organized processes of social (re)construction that are determined by the cultural structure, which give meaning to individual and collective action. The movements are made up of people who identify as young, nourished by attitudes of resistance in an articulated manner so that they can effectively resolve their own problems and/or the problems in society in general. We start by understanding the **disruptive** as "an interruption or break with the traditional way of doing something." Usually the term is used in a symbolic sense, referring to something that generates a very important or determining change (regardless of whether such change has a physical correlation). From a political point of view, the disruptive are **unconventional actions constructed through protests and disputes** in the power relations that concern the triad of The State-society-young people.



The disruptive nature of social youth movements could be defined as any political action that rejects, questions, and non-conforms to the established social system and as a reaction to the power dynamics that undermine their human rights. Therefore, young people are constantly making an impact as challengers of the established order. They reject the place and destination placed on them. They disrupt, break, and fracture (almost always briefly or intermittently) their role in the world, to postulate other forms of social life for themselves, for society in general, and for future generations.



The disruptive aspect of youth is associated with dissatisfaction and rejection of the system, ranging from a reforming intention to vanguardist and revolutionary ambitions (Vallès, 2000).



These are organizational forms that every day, explicitly, coincide less and less with the forms of political action established according to sociology. They do not even coincide with the forms of the so-called new social movements, which have been in play since the 1980s, when much of this youth was not yet born.



Finally, we could define disruptive youth movements as **collective political actors with materials, stakes, and actions who try to challenge the established order and hegemonic, controlling power dynamics and who expose an alternative way of defining and interpreting reality, using discourse, resources, and strategies to mobilize young people** (Touraine, 1981; Melucci, 1985, 1988)<sup>2</sup>.

## WHAT DID WE RESEARCH AND HOW DID WE DO IT?



The process was developed by a research collective composed of about 25 people, organized into **seven teams, one in each country**. In Mexico, research was carried out by the group Jóvenes ante la Emergencia Nacional; in Guatemala, el Instituto 25A; in El Salvador, a collective composed of three researchers: Cándida Chévez, Carlos Melara, and William Ardón; in Honduras, la Academia de Liderazgo Social, and in Colombia, the consortium Escuela de Animación Juvenil. In the case of Costa Rica and Panama, the research was led by one researcher for each country: Jimena Cascante and Natasha Pacheco respectively.



The research was coordinated by Diana Campos Ortiz, a consultant who was accompanied by Josué Torres Martínez, Program Coordinator of the CAMY Fund at Seattle International Foundation, and by a committee made up of colleagues from the convening funds.



We started work in early 2020. This first part of the process involved coming to an agreement to **think collectively about the ethical positioning, conceptual framework, methodological proposal, and construction of the research elements**. The original plan was that by April 2020, field work would begin in each country, based on a preliminary mapping and the preparation of statements on the issues of each country.



<sup>2</sup> This text corresponds to elements extracted from the document prepared by the conceptual commission in March 2020.



In this first stage, we organized three working commissions composed of researchers from each country in charge of collaboratively building the research protocol: in particular, the conceptual positioning, the methodological framework and the instruments to be used in the research. The idea of working in this way was precisely to establish a research project that would meet the criteria, interests, questions, and training needs of our research collective. To do this, we organized the work in teams of between six and eight people, from at least four of the seven countries, who built their proposals and presented them to the collective for feedback.



The proposal was then to work towards this **general objective: to understand the characteristics, contributions, and needs of youth movements in Latin America**, as well as these **specific objectives**:



- Identify the various organizational forms that youth initiatives take in the region that are considered to be disruptive youth movements: How are they organized? What legal entities do they adopt? How do they make decisions?
- Identify the contributions of youth movements in the region: When are they visible? When are they most strategic and strong?
- Identify the main challenges faced by youth movements in the region: What internal difficulties do they have? What external threats do they face? How do they relate to the philanthropic sector or international organizations?



Like any process that was intended to be carried out during 2020, the development of this research underwent significant changes due to **the COVID-19 pandemic**. The original plan was for each country to carry out research according to a shared general protocol, but halfway through - and before starting the respective field work - we made the decision to press pause on the research in the face of the imminent closures, restrictions, and profound and diverse changes in the daily lives of the countries in which we were working.



**Why press pause?** From one moment to the next, without warning or instruction, we were faced with the process of researching people who usually get together, use the streets, proclaim collective ideals, and build communities. How could we research these experiences in lockdown?



**How did we deal with the pandemic in our research process?** This question applies to an even greater extent, since the organizations and people we wanted to talk to in this research project were also dealing with the pandemic themselves. We didn't want to ignore COVID. The break helped us realize that we did not want to pretend that the pandemic did not exist. We would study movements, but we needed to change strategy.



In this way, we made the decision that at a time of such uncertainty, we had to prioritize the physical and mental health of those who were working on this process. Because **talking to people who resist is not an easy task, especially in a pandemic**. Therefore, we asked each team to propose a realistic, effective, creative, and possible way to work on this project in their countries and in their contexts.



Thus, each team/researcher for each country suggested a way of working in line with their interests and the possibilities of conducting research in the pandemic. As the coordinator, we asked that these proposals include more flexible and creative views on what it means to research and generate knowledge.



The work was done simultaneously in all countries, but in each country, it was done in a different manner. Namely, with different techniques, populations, categories of analysis, reflections, interpretations of the processes, and with different ways of capturing what was learned and recognized during the process. However, all countries shared the same motivation: **to better understand MJDs**.



In each country, a process was initiated to redefine the research objectives. In some cases, the process entailed a rethink of the categories to be analyzed, concepts to question or delve into, or the inclusion of different perspectives to address the research objectives. Researchers were also invited to think about the possibility of presenting their results in a creative way.





In El Salvador, for example, the research team decided to perform the process based on the category "resistance scenarios". In Guatemala, they chose to map out the collective construction sessions with organizations and operationalized the concept of "ignition" (the concept of "disruption" did not resonate with them in the case of their country). In Mexico, they carried out an analysis of youth movements in the long term and questioned what it means to be young in Mexico today. In Colombia, they decided to name the study subjects, people who participate in "experiences of resistance" so as to include the wide variety of forms of participation.



With surveys, focus groups, workshops, conversations, and in-depth, structured, and semi-structured interviews, the members of the research teams **learned about the experiences, collected information, analyzed it, and wrote seven research reports**, one per country. In addition, opportunities were organized with the people and groups that participated in the process to present and approve the reports. Finally, in some of the experiences, the teams designed and produced creative products that accurately portray all their findings, such as fanzines, audiovisual products, and a web platform.



Through these research products and discussion spaces, the teams were able to convey, in a very reflective and committed way, the **characteristics, realities, challenges, contributions, and contexts of disruptive youth movements in each country**. They also sought to give an account of what it means to participate in resistance within the complex context of the COVID-19 crisis, with all its social, political, and economic implications.



So, **this summary is built from the products prepared by the research collective** and other sources, particularly from the following: seven research reports corresponding to each country (all are based on very varied information and have been developed according to each team's criteria), seven national feedback sessions, a socialization session between teams, participation in the Central American Donor Forum (CADF) 2020 and 2021, and the content of six creative products: a microsite (Guatemala), audiovisual products (Mexico, El Salvador, and Panama), fanzines (Honduras and Costa Rica), reflection sessions with colleagues from convening organizations, and a session to approve this summary with the research teams.

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## DISRUPT, RESIST, LIVE: DISRUPTIVE YOUTH MOVEMENTS

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There is no single way in which the collectives, organizations, groups, or activists who participate in the youth movements, with whom our research group was able to talk and reflect, exercise their resistance. The forms of participation, nature of the issues, ways of working, challenges, contributions, and reflections are profoundly diverse.



In fact, diversity runs throughout our work and we celebrate it because we truly believe that it is a central concept in the experiences of resistance that we learned about during this research process. Not only are the movements diverse (in the same way that the contexts are diverse), but much of the resistance work arises from the awareness of that diversity of resistance that converges in our countries, as described in the reports and approval sessions.



Therefore, these movements celebrate differences, embrace plural identities, suggest multiple views of shared reality, operate from a civil awareness that seeks to escape from the norm, and gives participants the opportunity to imagine new ways of relating: with the environment, with others, with the community, with research, with their own bodies, with the economy, with production, with the State, with the territory, and with cyberspace.



Taking into account that diversity and building on the plurality that characterizes the experiences of resistance included in the research, we will present what we learned from all of the experiences. We would like to delve into and reflect on **what we think all the experiences have in common: the aim of causing disruption in order to resist and live.**



Next, we will describe the themes of the experiences of resistance and then their main characteristics, the challenges they face, and the contributions that disruptive youth movements make to their environment. Finally, we will present a series of reflections around disruption as a contribution from the movements with whom we worked.



# 1 WHAT DO THE EXPERIENCES OF RESISTANCE INCLUDED IN THIS SUMMARY TELL US?

## ■ EXPERIENCES OF RESISTANCE



For this research, staff from our research group learned of 134 experiences of resistance across Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia. Research teams, however, collected more information through their first mappings and surveys.



Each research team/individual researcher established specific criteria to identify in each country the organizations that met their definitions of disruptive youth movements. These criteria had much to do with specific and historical contexts. There is some research that included youth from more classical political structures, such as political parties, unions, and institutional student movements. In some countries, following their own historical processes, the decision was made not to include trade unions or youth from political parties.



When we mention "experiences of resistance" we do so to include a wide range of forms of movement involvement. This summary (and therefore the work of the teams in each country) included associations, organizations linked to NGOs, collectives, political parties, schools, media outlets, trade unions, refugee centers, artistic groups, and activists.



All of these experiences are extremely diverse: that is the first characteristic. They are diverse in terms of their structures, working issues, actions, origins, funding, interpretations of reality, contributions, and contexts. They are also diverse in relation to power and institutional structures.



## ■ ONE HUNDRED WORKING ISSUES



The working issues addressed by these people, organizations, collectives, and political groups are very varied. Some of them, although they have a main theme or objective, simultaneously address different issues. We were able to count more than a hundred working issues across all these experiences, taking into account both the organization's central or priority issue and those with more specific areas of work.



The variety ranges from social research experiences to community river defense. From community actions in the face of COVID-19 to musical collectives. From indigenous student organizations to movements against street harassment. From legal abortion organizations to drug war awareness. From the protection of territories and crops to guidance for young LGBTIQ+ people in vulnerable situations. From anti-extractivism movements to alternative communication experiences. From self-care and the promotion of sexual and reproductive health to movements promoting access to decent education, workers' unions, and political parties.



Most of these organizations are multi-faceted and address a variety of working issues as part of their organizational nature. It is precisely this characteristic related to intersectionality that their work tends to be based on, which will be described in more detail later. There are organizations that are both feminist and activist, protectors of indigenous territories and identities, and activists for the rights of people with disabilities who identify as LGBTIQ+, to cite some examples.



## ■ TRAINING AND EDUCATION: CROSS-SECTIONAL WORK



In the working issues analysis, we were able to corroborate how the training and education topics tend to represent a cross-section of the work that different organizations and activists do within the various topics. Although not all organizations are defined as training spaces, most of them have an important pedagogical and communicative vocation. Not only is it about defending sexual and reproductive health, for example, but it is also about contributing to the circulation and provision of up-to-date information in relevant social sectors.



Likewise, it is not only about cleaning the river that flows through the city, but also about conciliating spaces to build environmental and community awareness in line with that river. It is not only a question of obtaining and introducing more rights for the LGBTIQ+ community, but of questioning, informing, and raising awareness with more people/institutions/groups about the need and importance of highlighting this discrimination and providing the relevant education.



The fact that most experiences have an educational vocation makes a lot of sense, since it is usually during youth that the main formative processes of life become clear. Thus, youth organizations seek to raise new awareness through, usually alternative, training and communication processes in order to position their working issues and within in a wider context.

## ■ THIRTEEN MAJOR CATEGORIES



We have produced this statement from a list that we drew up with the working issues found in the experiences and from which we were able to extract at least thirteen categories defined by the working issue, the type of organization, and the nature of the experience of struggle researched.

### CATEGORIES

COMMUNITY ACTION

ENVIRONMENT

ARTIVISM

LGTBIQ+

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

COMMUNICATION

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

TERRITORY PROTECTION

DISABILITIES

FEMINISM

AFRO IDENTITIES

INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

STUDENT MOVEMENTS



The most common category is feminism, followed by political participation and the student movement. This is then followed by: community action, education and research, activism, territory protection, LGBTIQ+, indigenous, and Afro identities, and disabilities.



Organizing the experiences of resistance in these categories allowed us to recognize their presence and main fields of action, a recognition that serves as a detailed view for us to understand the importance and presence of some issues in relation to others.



When we mention "**feminism**", we include in this category all those organizations that recognize their work as feminist or that have a marked gender positioning.



We recognize enormous diversity and ways of exercising feminism and positioning the issue of gender. We corroborate that the work of feminist organizations is generally embedded with an important intersectional positioning that includes experiences of Afrofeminism, feminism and migration, Ecofeminism, feminism and art, Transfeminism and lesbian feminism, as well as critical views on inequalities, both economic and gender.



There is also a wide range of proposed projects: for legal abortion, against harassment and rape, for sexual and reproductive rights, for employment rights, for women's health, for the promotion of rights, for artistic spaces and women's expression, and for a dignified life.



When we mention "**political participation**", we refer to experiences that seek to position young people as citizens in political parties, unions, or other forms of traditional citizen participation. Like feminism, this category is very broad and embedded with intersectionality. We start from the idea that any connection with the experiences of resistance listed here is political participation in itself.



Thus, we seek to demonstrate that young people seek to influence broad public spaces with other forms of citizen practice and in dialogue (or in contradiction) with state institutions and with traditional ways of participating in politics.



This participation is disruptive because it occurs exactly by redefining democratic exercises, with the aim to expand, diversify, transform, and appropriate traditional political spaces.



We thus see how within the experiences of resistance, there are political parties, unions, associations, youth sections of local governments, and collectives that position the political rights of young people. Among the positioned issues there is social justice, the right to disobedience, reparation and justice in the face of violence from the State, access to justice, anti-capitalist alternatives, and access to dignified lives.



The "**student movement**" category, one of the most present, seems to us to be very important. Firstly, because historically the student movement has been at the forefront of the youth struggle and continues to have an important impact in most of the countries where this research was developed. However, there are some countries in which it was not included, such as El Salvador, because it is not considered a disruptive movement, to the extent that it does not question traditional forms of exercising power, nor does it propose innovative forms of political participation. In Costa Rica, reference is made to organizations that originated from university students, but their range of action has more to do with feminism or the rights of LGBTQ+ people.



For the purposes of this summary, we consider the contribution of student movements to be vital (within the contexts in which they effectively participate in a disruptive exercise of resistance) because it highlights organization around new topics beyond those that have tended to be eminently youthful (such as training and education). From there, they can legitimately lead the way in defending educational issues, such as university autonomy, quality education, democratic access to higher education and access to education for indigenous or rural populations, and promoting universities and colleges as spaces free from harassment and discrimination.



The experiences of student movements have been very important in the histories of the countries studied. The stories related by activists from Mexico, Panama, and Honduras revive, value, and use this past to legitimize collective actions from the student experience.





We revisited how the disruptive student movement takes up and honors the memories of student struggles, and at the same time, recognizes their legitimacy to the extent that they have now expanded their demands (for example, subjectivities, feminism, the environment, mental health), thus questioning academic forms of power and supporting collective leadership.



The **LGBTIQ+** category, for its part, houses a series of collectives and organizations with varied objectives, but which share the defense of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, especially with regard to their safety, protection, access to rights and opportunities, and visibility of experiences. Among them are organizations that direct their attention towards protecting against the multiple vulnerabilities and cases of violence experienced by young people of sexual and gender dissidence, through shelter, peer guidance, or legal actions.



There are organizations made up of transgender women, transgender men, lesbians, gays, as well as groups generally made up of members of the LGBTIQ+ community . Several of the activists who were interviewed identify themselves within this category and exercise their political influence from the concept of intersectionality, for example, linked to the struggles for the rights of people with disabilities, access to art, indigenous or Afro identities, and feminism.



The other categories present are **community action, education and research, activism, Afro identities, indigenous identities, territory protection, the environment, disability, and communication**. All of the categories demonstrate the extensive work carried out from the different experiences of resistance and show that, although there is broad work in the feminist sector, the student movement, and the most traditional examples of political participation, the range of action for young people is wide and concerns a plurality of issues.



It seems essential to mention those connected to the construction of both Afro and indigenous identities, as well as people with disabilities. In general, these categories are based on an intersectional view of society, which starts with establishing who you are and discussing the position that is expected of young people within those contexts.





Thus, we see experiences of Afrofeminism and indigenous students in defense of their rights, research experiences from an indigenous perspective, and activism from people with disabilities from the LGBTQ+ experience. The connection between territory protection and indigenous identity is also very important, as this reflects long-lasting processes. In any case, these categories are the reflection of an activism that covers bodies, personal experiences, identities, and the active proposal of one's ideal position in the world based on personal and collective subjectivities.



The **environment, community action and territory protection** categories consider different working concepts but all operate from a construction of environmental attachment and some form of geographical belonging. Thus, the mobilization of identities also covers geographical belonging, which can have a local, national, or global element (groups that fight climate change, for example). All of them, however, allude to making an impact on the way we socially relate to the environment and the community.



These categories also appeal to the recognition of ancestral knowledge, to more natural ways of producing, consuming, and connecting with the environment (which in itself involves a critique of the capitalist and extractivist system that has had a great impact on the history of our countries), but also to more supportive ways of relating at the community level. These categories favor the collective and the shared, and deeply question the development models that define social relations in country contexts, but also propose alternatives to the different forms of violence that are so prevalent in our contexts, especially in countries with recent armed conflicts.



On the other hand, the **education, research and communication** categories have a common theme in that they appeal to the generation of new narratives. Their suggested effort is to contribute to building upon new feelings, knowledge, and sensitivities from a youthful, critical, disruptive, and innovative perspective that accounts for the various ways in which the complex reality of the region can and should be understood.





At this point, it is worth highlighting the presence of efforts to disseminate forms of non-violent communication, as well as the promotion of conflict resolution from a democratizing perspective: knowledge (and the effort of creating and disseminating it) must transcend the limitations of age, gender, class, and territory.



All of these categories aim to convey messages to stop normalizing violence, inequality and injustice, ecocide, adultcentrism, machismo, and other discrimination by gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and occupation; in other words, the series of violent and discriminatory acts that are part of the political systems of our countries, hegemonic culture, official media, and official history.



These categories –in which groups that defend popular education and communication, alternative, horizontal, and participatory media, non-extractivist forms of research, and inclusive education projects generally participate– accompany and are nurtured by all the aforementioned categories. They are fundamental because they contribute to detachment and to generating and disseminating more liberating, pluralistic, inclusive, rebellious, and critical narratives.



## ■ THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN CATEGORIES



However, defining these categories is not conclusive, since most of the organizations or resistant experiences operate from a place of intersectional logic, that is to say that their work does not focus only on one category, but on the contrary, on the sum of categories. For some of these experiences, the work they do is the result of two or more combinations of these categories, and that is what defines their ways of working. In a way, what they are offering is to give strength and power to issues that are normally seen as separate.



This intersection of categories is a feature that shows that political participation in movements is the result of appropriating and redefining one's own life experiences and contexts. The people who participate in the movements bring together several categories, and in doing so, give greater political content to their organizational stakes. Most experiences operate from a point where several issues meet; however, some organizations use this meeting point as their rallying cry, so as to unite issues that are normally looked at separately.

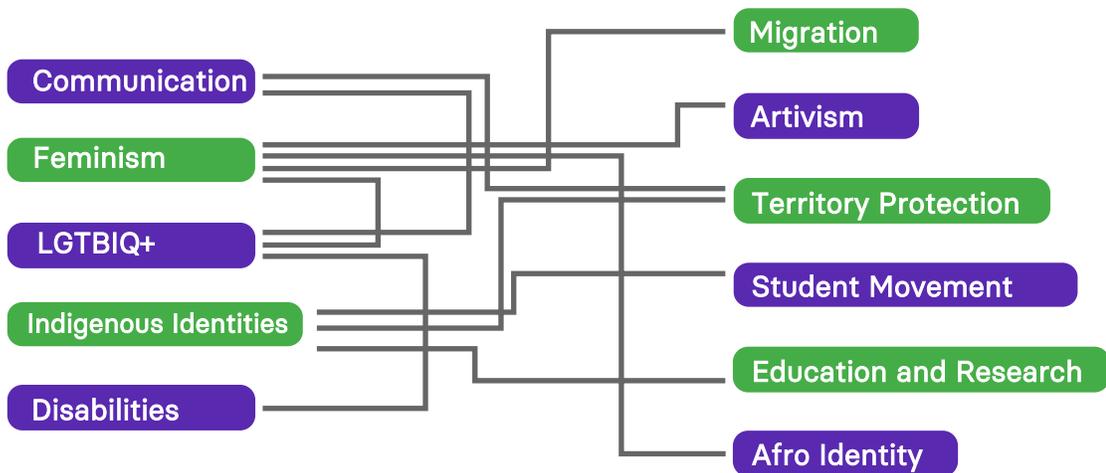




Examples include: the rights of people with disabilities from the gay experience or feminism exercised from a migration, transgender, or Afro identity perspective. Or even the protection of territories through activism or alternative communication processes. We also learned about experiences of defending LGBTIQ+ rights through educational experiences, feminism, or art. Likewise, another example is the efforts of organizations that work on indigenous identities from the perspective of the student movement, and through processes such as education, research, and territory protection.



### Category Intersections



The opportunity to understand the main themes of these organizations has allowed us to explore the main issues on the agendas of youth movements, as well as the type of work that is carried out in each country and the failings in some latitudes. Although the summary seeks to understand the main themes in common, we were able to observe differences that we considered important. In Costa Rica, for example, the LGBTIQ+ issue is quite well positioned, while in Panama it was not possible to talk with any organization that deals with this issue from a youth perspective.





The importance of youth movement organization and the presence of education as a cross-sectional theme of the organization's work allows us to demonstrate how education continues to play a fundamental role in the formation of young people as citizens in these countries, even if it is informal, self-managed, counter-hegemonic, and alternative.



In addition, the variety of topics suggests that there are no agendas that are exclusive of youth. In other words, young people do not only work because they are students or only seek to learn. On the contrary, the range of young people's action is wide and intersectional and seeks to take care of their environment, which clashes with the most common narratives of youth disinterest and selfishness that is so widespread in public thought.



The working issues represent an interest in collective care and community defense. An interest marked by the bravery and courage to care and take care of oneself, and to care for territory, knowledge, identities, education, and rights. To care for themselves, others, the community. In a nutshell, to care for a dignified life. And if this isn't within reach, then to imagine it.



## 2 WHAT ARE DISRUPTIVE YOUTH MOVEMENTS LIKE, WHAT ARE THEY UP AGAINST, AND WHAT HAVE THEY CONTRIBUTED?



The ways of resisting in the seven countries are diverse, but they have significant common elements, as we have already mentioned, and these lead us to believe that young people are indeed on the move. A movement that has local elements and roots, but also a broad capacity for dialogue with more regional and global processes. For us to learn about these characteristics and better understand how different experiences exert resistance, we undertook this task with three specific analytical focal areas: to learn about their characteristics, their main challenges, and their contributions.



The purpose of this section is to describe the main elements that we found in this search to understand youth movements. First, we will present the traits that we consider most relevant to understanding the way in which participation is exercised. Then, we will highlight the main challenges that were reported and, finally, touch on the most significant contributions from disruptive youth movements.



## "INFORMAL", FEMINIST, HORIZONTAL, CREATIVE: DISRUPTIVE YOUTH MOVEMENTS



In this section, we will discuss organizational forms in response to the first specific objective: to identify the various organizational forms taken by youth initiatives in the region that are considered to be disruptive youth movements.



The experiences of resistance are diverse and by nature consist in **embracing that diversity** and making use of it, in some way. This is precisely because the people who participate in the movements do so on the basis of questioning the established order; that is, to stop normalizing various situations involving oppression, discrimination, exploitation of inequality in access to political, economic, or symbolic power, and the use and possession of territories and their resources.



This **questioning of the established order** is diverse. As we mentioned earlier, the type of and issues addressed by the experiences are extremely pluralistic, and so is their relationship with power and the established order. Some of the experiences are profoundly radical and advocate structural changes in all social spheres. Others, however, do so on the basis of more specific questions: for example, the proposals range from positioning issues or agendas within institutionalism, changing legislation, raising awareness on a topic, or solving a particular community problem.



While all experiences arise by significantly questioning the established order, the radical nature of this questioning is a somewhat black-and-white concept. These questionings refer to the level of acceptance or negotiation in the face of power and the way in which societies are organized in political, cultural, and economic terms. When working within the experiences there is a tendency towards developing more transformative proposals, which seek to exert profound changes in social, political, economic, and gender relations.





The experiences researched indicate a huge variety of organizational shapes. These are seen as two main types: participation in "formal" and "informal" organizations. Formal organizations include associations, NGOs, institutional student representatives, trade unions, political parties or youth sections of political parties, media outlets, training centers, and refugee centers. In general, they have more access to resources or the ability to participate or compete for funding from state institutions or international cooperation, although the formality does not at all guarantee access to activism resources.



When we mention the expression "informal", we mean that the organizations do not have an established legal or juridical status (such as a legal tax ID). The majority of these groups adopt the form of a collective, more specifically a **"female collective"**, which emphasizes the need to specify women's collective spaces. Independent activists were also taken into account in some of the countries' research (Honduras and Costa Rica). These are people who position relevant issues within the public agenda of their countries and participate in different movements. In including activists, the intention is to highlight that movements are comprised of a variety of formations, some of which are personal.



Participation from within **the concept of a "collective" is the broadest example of disruptive youth movements.** The topics that are addressed from this form of organization are of a wide variety. In all the categories established in the previous section, there are expressions of resistance for feminists, defense of LGBTIQ+ rights, student movements, education, Afro and indigenous identities, art collectives (music, street art), education, communication, and community action. People with disabilities, in fact, participate in various collectives for the rights of people with disabilities and people who identify as LGBTIQ+.





Having said that, the division between "formal" and "informal" is clearly a suggested point of view for the purposes of this process in understanding the expressions; we do not think that the formal organizations are more or less disruptive than the informal ones. From our interpretation, while there is disruption, it is exercised in different ways. What we are interested in delving into is the concept of informality, because although most experiences are indeed informal, we want to take stock of this point because this division does not make much sense for disruptive youth movements, simply because their experiences of resistance operate from another position: **contesting the established order.**



These organizations do not seek institutional approval, such as in the form of a legal card, in order to exist and operate alongside all their formalities, responsibilities, and commitments. The question we ask ourselves is: what defines formality in an organization: the legal status or commitment of its participants?



Our response is disruptive. We learned from the movements that **formality lies in the commitment**, faith, and action that precedes the participation and advocacy efforts, and not so much in the organization's statutes. In this way, formality has more to do with endogenous organizational processes than the external view of state institutions, cooperation, or more adult-centric institutions.



This participation tends to have specific features, both in the more formal structures mentioned above and in the informal ones. Among these traits is the tendency to seek forms of organization with a clear **participatory and horizontal vocation**, in which decisions, responsibilities and resources (if any) are sought to be shared in equal ways. In addition, most organizations call themselves feminist, even if their central theme of action is not feminism. There is a positioning towards gender equality and against violence against women.





In addition, organizations and activists participate from **intersectionality**: whether defending the environment, positioning against extractivism, advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights, reflecting on climate change, positioning the realities of Afro, indigenous and disability identities, making art, developing popular education processes, or defending student rights, it is necessary to take into account everything additional that happens in society, beyond the specific field of action.



Thus, resistance experiences tend to hold a **position of defense for human rights** that involves questioning violence, discrimination, extractivism, ecocide, authoritarianism, and inequalities, regardless of the issue being addressed. Those involved are not looking to patch up broken societies, even if they're working on such one-off issues. The interpretation is that each experience of resistance contributes to remodeling, rather than mending, the social fabric.



This relates to another central aspect that we found in this research process linked to the motivations behind participating in movements and resistance efforts. Usually, according to the stories and experiences of participation, people participate in movements based on questions about their own identities and from their own subjectivities. In other words, there is a process of recognizing who you are, where you come from, and what you want to contribute that makes it possible to participate in the different examples of resistance. Participation is nourished by the **different subjectivities that people seek to build collectively**.



In this sense, people participate from their bodies and corporealities, that is, from a recognition of the body with a disputed territory<sup>3</sup>. This form of participation takes place through processes of recognizing one's own vital and subjective experiences, which pass through the body. They go on to recognize that in the patriarchy and in capitalism, the value of bodies is unequal, and that there are bodies that are more violated, targeted, persecuted, oppressed, and attacked.



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<sup>3</sup> The body as a territory is a conceptual contribution developed by indigenous community feminism. Particular reference is made here to the work of Lorena Cabnal. We used this image here because we believe it explains very accurately the way in which we understood how one participates in these movements by recognizing the life experience through one's body. For more information: Leyva Solano, Xochitl. (2019). *En tiempos de muerte: cuerpos, rebeldías y resistencias*. (In times of death: bodies, rebellions, and resistance.) Chiapas. Buenos Aires. The Hague: Cooperativa Editorial Retos. CLASCO. Institute of Social Studies. Erasmus University Rotterdam.



The people who participate in the movements recognize this disputed territory that are their bodies, and by means of a redefining process, resist through them, and position their bodies (both male and, above all, female<sup>4</sup>) as a starting point for their struggles and resistances: thus, the bodies of women, Afro or indigenous people, people with disabilities, transgender people, and non-heterosexual or non-heteronormative diversity are the starting point for these struggles. Because what's at stake is to build collectively (real and symbolic) social spaces in which all bodies, male or female, can simply be, exist, and live. This also applies to the bodies of rural populations, artists, migrants, and displaced, persecuted, and/or imprisoned persons.



In this same logic, emotions play a central role and are an inherent feature of the collective actions of youth movements. The stories are loaded with emotion and feelings of **anger and joy** are central, and are places that mobilize subjectivities and promote participation to create, think, and propose.



We find that grief is also present, as well as commitment, anger, personal and collective self-knowledge, self-love, attachment to the territory and to nature, the need to build healthy bonds, community recognition, and the desire to have a different present. In short, disruptive youth movements affect society from a position of **disenchantment and dignity** and, as Mexico's team sums it up, "between fear and tenderness". In addition, of course, there is the rebellion which drives the engine for social change and the proposal of alternative narratives for the social fabric to, once again, reshape the fabric using the subjective as a key part of building the collective.



The central role of emotions is linked in turn to another of the most important features that we found: the use of innovative actions, enormous creativity, and a significant amount of **artivism** as a form of political and citizen action. Participation and influence have a face, a body, and a human life. That is why art as a form of expression is so important, because it imprints humanity and appeals to our human side, to emotions, to reality, to the expressive, to the vital.




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<sup>4</sup> Please see previous translator's note regarding the use of 'ellos, ellas y elles'. In the original text, the use of the feminine form of the words 'bodies', *cuerpas*, means that the issue in question relates to all genders.



Although the movements participate in more traditional forms of political action - such as demonstrations - we also learned about **innovative forms of political action**: from artistic creation, performance, the use of social networks, the development of cultivated areas, the cleaning of rivers, the development of festivals, social research, training spaces, support centers, workshops, the appropriation of community spaces, and the creation of alternative communication content, among many others.



It seems essential to us to mention that there are organizations in several countries that promote peace processes and non-violent communication, conflict resolution, memories and reparation, and transitional justice. In other words, proposals that cut away from traditional forms of political demonstration, especially in countries marked by a history of war.



The role of social networks is very important, since it not only allows us to position issues and participate with the creation of artistic and innovative content, but has also served to denounce through hashtags (tags), highlight and spread awareness of social problems and contributions made by the movements, and contribute to creating alliances with other experiences, whether local, national, regional, or global.



Social media gives organizations a certain formality. Creating a profile on a social media network also means entering the ecosystem of **cyberactivism** and that is a significantly vital place to meet and be recognized in the context of the pandemic and for security issues that will be mentioned later.



The role of **partnerships** is central to the occurrence of disruptive youth movements. In taking up the image presented above, the task carried out by the MJDs to reshape (and not to mend) the social fabric is a shared task in which the contribution of other experiences of resistance is recognized, visible, and celebrated from the intersectional perspective and by taking into account that it requires a capacity for dialogue that is not always simple.





This proclivity for building alliances encompasses another important feature: the constant **dialogue with more global processes** that one can glimpse in the ways of working within the experiences of resistance. This nurtures advocacy and strengthens actions that tend to develop locally, but also in conversation with more global agendas and movements such as intersectional feminism, the #MeToo movement, the legal abortion movement, climate change organizations, LGBTIQ+ rights advocacy, and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, among others.



At the local level, the movements in the countries researched have the capacity to recognize their own diversities, identities, and subjectivities and to establish **dialogues about experiences from other countries and other contexts** through a process of appropriating their reality and imagining the social fabric they want, in dialogue with more global narratives. On the contrary, this makes it possible to slightly further profile and recognize the young people who are on the move in the regional context and beyond.



The last point that will be addressed in this section concerns the resources to which the different experiences of resistance have access. Although some have resources to finance their work and actions, most of them do not. Those that have resources tend to be the "formal" ones mentioned above and find resources in educational institutions or state programs or have access to resources from international cooperation or funds. The others **exercise their actions through self-management** processes in which activists donate their time, space, knowledge, and materials or organize ways to obtain resources through the sale of goods or services or fundraising activities.



Mentioning **limited access to economic resources** is a fundamental way to end this first part on the detailed view of disruptive youth movements, since it brings back the topic of power, which introduced this section. Organizations that manage themselves are able to decide on their agendas and position themselves with a margin of freedom without being accountable to other organizations, which brings up an important debate that we will delve into later: **what is the relationship between power and resources?** Access to resources and funding is one of the many challenges faced by the organizations that represent the MJDs. The next section is dedicated to discussing these challenges.



## MJD CHALLENGES, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND LESSONS



Being young in these countries, which are profoundly affected by inequality, various forms of violence, corruption, impunity, and difficulty in obtaining opportunities to live, study, and work, is already difficult in itself.



Young people who decide to organize and be part of different organizations, groups, collectives, or activisms do so knowing that it will entail important challenges, both personal as well as organizational and social.



These challenges are inherent to one's own experiences of resistance; that is, they are internal and external and linked to the context. What are the main challenges faced by youth movements in the region? What internal difficulties do they have? What external threats do they face?

## INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES



Organizing involves sustaining oneself as a collective and thinking creatively and collectively about solutions to activists' diagnoses of reality. This means facing challenges on a daily basis that relate to the environment and the external reality that activists want to change or influence. As a result, we managed to identify three major types of challenges faced by organizations and experiences of resistance in their internal work: **cultural, political, and economic.**



In terms of the culture, MJD organizations are transformative proposals that are defined by or seek **to detach themselves from the violent and discriminatory practices** of their contexts with a strong military, vertical, adult-centered, and patriarchal past (and present) developed in line with the idea of neoliberal capitalism and with a strong extractivist imprint, and within the framework of many intertwined violent events. In several of the research studies and in the well-known stories, we were able to see how seeking to break with patriarchal, chauvinist, adult-centered, vertical, and violent cultural practices in organizational work is an important and ever present challenge.





In practice, according to several experiences, this is a constant and ongoing challenge that requires a commitment to remain vigilant. It is also a learning process: horizontality and feminism in organizations are values that are not taken for granted. Positioning themselves within these stances is a challenge for organizations, a challenge that they have decided to undertake.



With regard to political challenges, the focus is on maintaining political clarity and coherence (from a meaning that goes beyond the traditional party-political focus) with the aim of maintaining the capacity to hold dialogues and build alliances with experiences that defend other objectives or positions. This political challenge also goes hand in hand and is powerfully linked to economic factors.



Access to resources tends to be limited and is not an easy task, especially considering that most groups do not have a legal tax ID. In addition, the management of resources through payments for professional services or donations requires experience and training that most do not have, such as financial reporting, for example.



With regard to resource-related challenges, as mentioned above, participation in movements tends to be voluntary. Usually, people offer the shared cause their time, ideas, reflections, arguments, equipment, and spaces. This entails a point of reflection that we feel is fundamental in understanding the political economy of participating in the movements: **what do the people who participate in the movements live on?** Is it compatible with alternative paid work?



If so, this information sheds light on the level of commitment, but also of the work and energy that is involved in participating in movements, which affects participation. On multiple occasions, activism fights against the time, space, and energy of possible paid work and this directly affects active participation in terms of calls for proposals, delegation of responsibilities, and the existences of different groups and collectives.





On the other hand, it is essential that we mention the new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to reimagine actions, pause, change priorities, and continue organizing, despite the restrictions. The pandemic has been a challenge because it has been a mirror reflection of the already complex realities of our societies, maximized by unequal access to various types of resources, mainly economic, which, in turn, affect access to connectivity, the possibility of isolation, and access to support networks.



## WHAT DO DISRUPTIVE YOUTH MOVEMENTS CONTRIBUTE?



Within the framework of this complex climate in which the experiences of resistance unfold, both internally and externally, we want to introduce the contributions made by disruptive youth movements, in their local and regional contexts.



Participating in disruptive youth movements in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia is not an easy task. Organizations, collectives, and activists have to be creative and brave to carry out their work and political advocacy and contribute to changing immediate realities. Why be creative? Why be brave?



They have caused direct actions and changes to legislation, and have impacted public policies in their countries, as well as in the management of social processes. This includes, for example, impacts on legislation, changes in bylaws, and the inclusion of gender perspectives. But such changes are highly variable, and in contexts that are so hostile towards citizen participation (as our societies tend to be), the main contributions at the traditional political level tend to be to place issues in the public opinion.



In any event, in cases such as memory and justice, this instrumentalization of public opinion and youth organization has had very significant results, such as the case of a joint project carried out with the Permanent People's Court in Mexico, a process in which human rights violations have been examined, ruled on, and denounced in the country.





The contributions made by disruptive youth movements have a local scope and propose palpable solutions to specific situations, as well as to cultural changes and the construction of more powerful sensitivity to issues in general.



The contributions are enormous, varied, and widespread: helping to remember the historic memory, safeguarding ancestral knowledge, distributing food in the midst of the COVID crisis, recovering historical remembrance of social and student movements, guiding families of victims of multiple violent attacks, protecting resources and territories, sheltering vulnerable LGBTIQ+ people and creating safe spaces for the dissemination of artistic content.



Further contributions include creating education and collective care spaces, producing and distributing food, promoting community safety, conducting social research built from public perception, creating access to education, developing independent media, and lastly developing and organizing festivals and safe meeting spaces for LGBTIQ+ people, feminists, people with disabilities, indigenous people, Afro identities, artists, and human rights defenders.



Disruptive youth movements therefore seek to be a safe place for people to meet, reencounter, get to know each other, and recognize each other. To build diverse, counter-hegemonic, alternative, and radical knowledge and identities, as they contest the ability and position expected of young people.



In this task, the contribution of young people is, in our opinion, both major and important: positioning **issues in public opinion and raising awareness** about urgent issues in our countries such as youth citizen participation, gender-based violence, corruption and impunity, memory and social justice, protection of resources, human rights, and gender diversity. It can also highlight the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy and the very varied ways in which power is exercised in these countries with a heavy load of authoritarianism.





That is the primary and necessary purpose: **to show the system's multiple contradictions**. That is precisely the youth movement's scope of action and fundamental contribution: in demonstrating what does not work from the system, in showing its contradictions and in appropriating the gaps to denounce and act, to propose and transform and, in that process, to transform themselves.



To transform the system and oneself, creativity and bravery are both needed, and this is another contribution from the youth movements, ways to develop **new forms of citizen participation and political exercise**, and break with the most traditional forms of citizen participation without leaving them aside. Although the movements participate in strikes, demonstrations and walkouts, they do so in innovative and creative ways: with art and performance, they mobilize enormously creative narratives and aesthetics, they seek to challenge sensitivities, and they mobilize identities, subjectivities, and emotions.



But political participation also takes on other forms: **direct action in communities**, the development of workshops, specific impact, the creation and dissemination of content, the use of social media, and the staging of safe spaces (both virtual and physical). This is a fundamental contribution for meeting, reflecting and constructing new public feelings, since these coincide with ruptures in the ways that we participate in politics and bring to action the historical rule that the personal is political. Therefore, any coexistence space and any social dynamics (personal or collective) is political and within the scope of action for disruptive youth movements.



Moreover, the youth resistance movements, with these many actions, contribute to **highlighting counter-hegemonic experiences and proposing critical views against official narratives**, a process in which the questioning of countries' official histories plays a fundamental role, in which the violence that has affected bodies and societies has been normalized, and in which the characters who have gone beyond the norm are not included. MJDs want to change and participate in the story, which they do by profoundly questioning the official story that has been told.





This is a central contribution, since it has to do with how the work of MJDs **directly affects the way in which narratives about young people are constructed.** In fact, we were able to corroborate how, among various research processes, there is an interest in highlighting youth from other generations so as to better understand the influence that they have had, or have not had, in current youth movements, and to understand the similarities and differences between the political participation of today's young people with that of the young people of the past.



This is directly related to another characteristic of MJDs, which is the task given to young people to transgress "the opinion of young people as subordinate"; that is, to show and position themselves as young people who make suggestions, take responsibility, show interest, and who build and position themselves as people who have the capacity and interest to propose transformations, lead processes, and participate equally with other sectors of civil society.



Finally, we want to end this section with a statement that we think is powerful and transformative, because in the midst of social, economic, political, and economic difficulties, the great contribution and rupture that young people who participate in MJDs have made, either in the form of collectives or as activists, is to exist. It is, indeed, "to transgress that subordinate view" and to take the lead. It is the act of existing, resisting, and interrupting, in order to live. That is their great contribution and it is enormous.





## CONCLUSIONS: reflections on disruption

This summary sought to propose a unifying view of the various processes exposed in the research carried out in each country. This is in order to recognize those common elements of the experiences of youth resistance and, above all, to reflect together to understand disruptive youth movements from a regional perspective.

It seeks to answer the following questions: What lies behind the disruption of these movements and what elements do the various experiences that help build a common regional perspective share? Can we consider the experiences of resistance in these eight countries as part of a youth movement?

Young people who organize, resist, question, reflect, propose strategies and imagine another reality contribute their time, body, mind, and emotions to transforming their realities. They donate their everyday lives, safety, and desires to the service of collective projects that are inclusive and transformative. Although they start from subjective questions from their own experiences, the organization has a collective purpose: to change the shared environment.

### What is behind the disruption of the youth movements?

In the **capacity for dialogue** and **building alliances** between the global, regional, national, and local, experiences of resistance that feed on each other and have the ability to make a

difference, but also to form allies. Dialogue, which is not always easy and fluid, plays a central role in this process, as well as social networks and alternative forms of communication, spaces in which alliances are built and nurtured.

Another aspect that characterizes the disruption of MJDs is that it puts on the table, makes visible, questions, and talks about the relationship between power and resources. MJDs, as we have seen, often lack direct resources and access to funding, but they do not lack will, commitment, clarity, and energy, aspects that do not depend on resources. Is it possible to maintain a clear and committed political agenda and still receive resources like this?

This is an open, necessary, and courageous question that movements ask. However, beyond resources, we will end this summary with a series of statements that invite reflection on the disruptive nature of MJDs. What are their innovations, proposals, and disruptions?

Here's our list:

- The support for horizontality and feminism and the awareness that it is a territory that is won daily.
- The experiences of resistance that cover bodies, emotions, and experiences, putting life at the center.
- The central role of subjectivities, affection, and emotions.
- Creativity, innovation and art as forms of struggle and resistance.





– The recovery and reconstruction of historical memories.

– The existence of resistance, the main contribution.

While these experiences of resistance share disruption and other aspects detailed throughout this summary, can we consider the experiences of resistance in these countries as part of a youth movement?

The opportunity to learn about these 134 different, pluralistic, and diverse experiences in the seven countries of the region allowed us to recognize that there are very marked differences in the action, organization, objectives, and response to the hegemonic system, but there are also solid and robust shared elements that lead us to believe that young people, seen as a diverse and pluralistic age group, are part of a movement and share characteristics, guide, strengthen, highlight, sustain, and recognize one another.

This "movement" can be observed by region, by country, and by category. There is a strong feminist movement in the region, as well as youth citizen participation. There is an environmental movement and a movement for territory protection. There is a movement for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and there is a strong movement for the visibility of indigenous and Afro identities.

But there is, above all, a regional youth movement that is characterized by the ways in which it participates in the social dynamic, by breaking and by taking action from what we have called the "**disruptive**". What defines

it? Broadly speaking, it covers the capacity for dialogue with global processes, work from the horizontal and feminism, reflections on the negotiation between power and resources, resistance from bodies, emotions, and subjectivities. It is also defined by the creativity and innovation to influence, the reconstruction of historical memories, the appropriation of the present to imagine the future, and above all and fundamentally, the great contribution of knowing oneself as young and resisting.

This summary was completed in May 2021. The analyzed countries have suffered advances of authoritarianism, new mobilizations, hurricanes, and a crisis due to the pandemic that is far from over; on the contrary, its contradictions deepen. Faced with this circumstance, young people continue to be at the forefront of the resistance. The conversation around youth continues with increasing force.





## APPENDIX

### HOW TO SUPPORT DISRUPTIVE YOUTH MOVEMENTS USING FUNDS AND DONORS

Survey conducted in 2020 on the research group

In recent years, various bodies, including international organizations, cooperatives, the philanthropy sector, and governments, have paid more and more attention to young people in Latin America. However, there are prevailing limitations to bringing their movements, organizations, and initiatives closer to donors.

The organizations and funds driving this research are committed to strengthening the rights of youth and social change in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, they recognize that there are gaps in information about their way of organizing and that more donors are needed to invest in their causes and struggles.

Like funds and donors, support can be enhanced with more information on how youth groups, initiatives, and movements are organized, how they are mobilized, and the type of resources they require.

The objective of this appendix to the qualitative study "**Disruptive youth movements (MJDs) in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia**" is to expand our knowledge of the needs and perspectives of the various expressions of youth movements and the role that funds can play in supporting from a point of understanding that respects the characteristics and movements.

The information presented here is intended to be a complement to the research so as to identify some recommendations from the research group, composed of youth organizations, activists, and researchers of the youth movements, for the community of funds and donors. The parties involved responded to a survey on the role that funds play in supporting movements. Through their knowledge, experience, and perspectives, they raised additional comments and expanded on what they described in their research processes.

The reflections and voices of young people are fundamental in identifying the areas of opportunity and change that we must draw attention to, and thus influencing the barriers that prevent youth organizations from accessing funds and financing to sustain their activism.





## Difficulties in accessing funding

Below are some of the obstacles identified by the researchers surveyed:

- "Uniting our concerns with those of the financiers and limiting the objectives of our intentions, that are always too large than how the backers classify them. Also the accounting."
- "Youth organizations want to have the independence to establish their working outlines, areas and/or strategies. This leads them on many occasions to avoid seeking funding from cooperative agencies because they believe that it will restrict their freedom."
- "Ignoring the calls for calls for proposals because we are not immersed in the 'world' of funding. In our case, we are an organization that has existed for almost a decade and only now, for new projects that have emerged, we have established ourselves as a non-profit association (Asociación Civil, or AC) and we have supported some funding. However, we do not have any staff or any employees or experts to do the research work. We do so only on a voluntary basis and without knowledge of many of the existing networks where this information circulates."
- "At the moment, this is our way of working and we want to keep it that way, but this is one of the most obvious issues that limit - and the same goes for many other spaces that we know and have described in our research - our access to funds."
- "Sometimes we find everything relating to administration and accounting difficult, so we have come to you to train in that aspect."
- "The application processes are long, there are usually only very large funds available for few organizations. There is often no accessibility for donors to ask questions about the applications, or there are no other ways to apply for funds that highlight the work that the organizations do or it is not possible to translate a certain aspect into the application process."
- "The difficulty of accessing economic resources in the sociopolitical context."
- "The interests of donors, calls for proposals with limited scope, competition o between projects even for minimal funds, organizations' legal status or inexperience in fund management, inexperience in the formulation of projects, etc."
- "As an NGO leader and activist, the most difficult thing is recognition. We are small organizations that sometimes do not have a national or global impact and when we introduce ourselves we don't even get a response."





## Barriers to accessing funds and financing

**Legislation and States.** Increasing restrictions and controls for tax and bureaucratic taxation.

**Imposing agendas.** Youth organizations do not believe they are free to present their proposals or interests to cooperative agencies. They feel that these co-opt the agendas of work and advocacy, which forces them to self-manage in order to address real public problems and not international agendas.

**Lack of knowledge about the funds and their processes.** Funds move in certain areas which the organizations (mainly rural, countryside, or indigenous) do not cover or know about. They don't know about the funds, how to access them, or have any contacts.

**Lack of financial education and training.** Lack of knowledge on project management and fund logistics, and lack of technical knowledge on how to write projects.

**Lack of a legal tax ID.** Most organizations do not have a legal tax ID and there is a belief that this is needed to access funds.

**The complexity of the processes for accessing funds.** The requirements and processes for accessing funds are perceived to be very complex and are not always met; for example, quotas for one type of population within youth organizations. There may also be cooperation resources co-opted by intermediaries, which reduces the possibilities of resources.

**The conditions under which organizations work.** Youth organizations do not always have equipment, facilities, and Internet access to meet funding expectations; for example, coordination and systematization.

## Actions that limit access to resources

**Time factors.** The times for responding to calls for proposals do not always fit with the timings of organizations and collectives.

**The issues that are funded.** The limitations of the issues to be financed, which are not always appropriate to the contexts. There are also issues that provoke less interest within the funds' agendas and therefore it is not as easy to find funding.

**Legal status.** Many youth organizations do not wish to be institutionalized and point out that this can present a difficulty in receiving funds.

**The way in which calls for proposals are communicated.** The platforms or networks through which they are communicated or reported do not reach all organizations.

**Lack of trust in emerging organizations.** It is thought that donors prefer to work with "legally" established organizations and that there is some distrust in transferring resources to organizations or projects that are new or unknown.





**Bureaucracy.** The organizational dynamics of the movements do not always tie in with the funds' working dynamics, and there is a sense that the latter are bureaucratic. For the most emerging organizations, there is little knowledge of administrative and managerial issues.

**Adultcentrism.** Movements believe that the funds are managed in an adult-centered way, without sufficient knowledge of the problems of young people, and there is a distrust of the sustainability and scope of projects led by young people.

### Ways to improve programs, funds, grants, procedures, and calls for proposals

**Creative support.** Funds can provide support through diverse, and not just financial, resources (from training spaces to IT tools and materials). They can finance communication processes (audiovisual production, everything that has to do with audiovisual products, social networks, applications) and fund research into youth, using data science to explain phenomena, discover patterns, or predict behaviors. In addition, support short-term initiatives (projects), of three months or less, for example, to boost funds and click with the sometimes volatile dynamics of young people.

**Clear and simple processes.** Design clearer calls for proposals in all aspects (economic, time-related) and define "friendly" and simple forms of verification. Simplify the process of applying for funds, so that it does not involve investing a lot of time in applications that are too detailed and complex. Establish selection criteria that do not require a legal tax ID to participate. Make access to finance and control mechanisms more flexible, and develop user-friendly platforms.

**Better publication of calls for proposals.** Reflect on how to optimize the dissemination of calls for proposals, expand the scope (not only for projects, but also for research), and think about new ways to make fund information available to organizations.

**Make the issues more flexible.** Fund what the organizations propose, not what the donors want, broaden the scope and offer support based on the needs that arise from the communities/collectives/organizations. Understand and finance even what they do not like, without this violating the principles of each donor.

**Communicate assertively.** Establish more horizontal and/or bilateral lines of communication to describe the proposals and needs of youth organizations. Be more accessible when requests are made and open more communication channels to follow up on processes. Learn more about local contexts so as to locate organizations, collectives, and initiatives.

**Act as mediators.** Mediate (if possible, in any way) between the State and the organizations on administrative and resource issues.



## Actions that favorably change the way funds and donors work

- It is important to make the effort to get to know today's youth and their problems.
- Truthful and sensitive checks, critical guidance, complete and clear administrative support, and the development of fruitful, enriching, and friendly processes.
- Critical guidance and direct management of local processes.
- Complete and clear administrative support.

## Good practices

**Highlight and circulate more effectively.** Contribute to the circulation of organizations' work for networking between organizations in different parts of the country and the region. Be very present in the field and during activities. Circulate project results more effectively, monitor them, and evaluate the impacts in the medium term.

**Develop training plans.** Provide training spaces on various topics, such as finance, technical support to finance campaigns, new leadership, and critical thinking.

**Provide more continuity.** Promote longer-term sustainability, so that the connection with foundations and funds is not lost once the research, support, or project is finished.

**Support with more empathy.** Transform internal organizational cultures to empathize with the activists who participate in the funds. Directly promote knowledge on the various contexts. Generate more direct relationship spaces that include field visits. Recognize the limitations of emerging organizations in countries under constant repression that sometimes impedes consistency in work and systematization.

**Fund with respect and flexibility.** Do not be so rigid with access to funds for organizations with little or no experience, or that are not legally established. In such cases, financiers could designate someone to guide the organization (as a sort of mentor) so that the funds are utilized transparently and efficiently.

**Revolutionize effectiveness.** Manage projects using communication technologies and content adaptability.

## Non-financial strategies and support

**Generate meeting points and build bridges.** Propose more activities so as to get to know the organizations working in the region. Guide and organize virtual face-to-face events to lobby and generate contacts. Promote reconciliation between activists and organizations at the regional or global level with the same areas of interest/work. Link partner organizations to broader donor networks and open calls. Exchange experiences between organizations from different countries and regions.





**Develop advice, training sessions, and workshops.** Organize inclusive and pluralistic training spaces on topics such as administration and funds management, basic network management and elements of popular communication, workshops on how to write projects, and diplomas or free short courses on topics of interest to organizations.

**Circulate information about the work of organizations.** Support the creation and circulation of content on networks (social and labor) about campaigns, content, and the political actions of different expressions of movements.

**Disseminate key information.** Disseminate key and accessible information such as lists of available funds by type of organization and various calls.

**Develop research.** Promote participatory and inclusive processes that reflect, highlight, and recognize the work of different organizations and activists.

**Support with materials and tools.** Provide support in graphic design, content creation, licenses for secure platforms, material and equipment, travel expenses, and spaces. Generate tools that give movements a certain autonomy and self-management and allow them to communicate their experience and network.

**Be there and be present.** Provide on-site guidance and support struggles, human contact, an active research and recognition of the spaces that exist and their needs.





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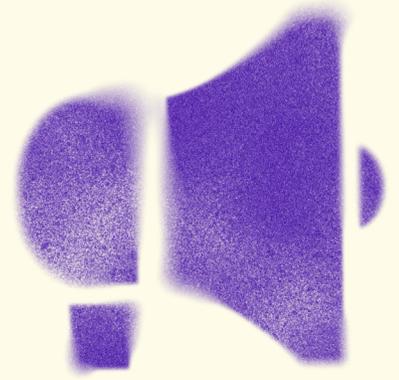
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