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The influence of the Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito in the approval of the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy in Argentina

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ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon

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SOCIOLOGIA  
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

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Department of History

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## **Resumo**

No final de 2020, o governo argentino aprovou uma nova lei do aborto que legalizou a interrupção voluntária da gravidez até à 14ª semana. Este acontecimento é indissociável do trabalho da “Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito” que, posteriormente, transbordou naquilo que ficou conhecido, a nível internacional, como “marea verde” e que trouxe milhões às ruas, apoiando a lei. No entanto, como é que um movimento, autointitulado autónomo e independente do governo, consegue provocar a aprovação de uma nova lei? Para responder a esta questão, esta dissertação recorre a evidência recolhida em quinze entrevistas com ativistas feministas argentinas que reúnem experiências de militância distintas, mas que participaram de alguma forma no movimento pró-aborto. As entrevistas foram examinadas através da metodologia de análise temática, assente nos conceitos de autonomia e estrutura de oportunidades políticas. De acordo com as feministas entrevistadas para esta investigação, apesar das diferenças nas militâncias, um objetivo comum, a articulação de estratégias que desenvolveram uma nova forma de autonomia e a construção de um contexto hegemónico levou o movimento ao sucesso.

Palavras-chave: Campaña, marea verde, articulação, autonomia fundida, oportunidades políticas, contexto hegemónico

## **Abstract**

In the very end of 2020, the Argentine government approved a new abortion law which legalized the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy up to the 14<sup>th</sup> week. This conquest for society is indissociable from the work of the “Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito” which extended to the internationally recognized “marea verde”, that brought millions to the streets in support for the new law. But how did this movement, self-described as autonomous and independent from the government, generate the approval of a new legislation? To answer that question, this thesis draws evidence from fifteen interviews with feminist activists with different militance experiences, but who have taken part in the abortion rights movement. The interviews were examined through the thematic analysis approach, supported by the theories of autonomy and political opportunities’ structure. According to the feminists interviewed for this investigation, despite of the differences between the movements, a common goal, an articulation of strategies that formed a new type of autonomy, and the construction of a hegemonic context led feminists to success.

**Keywords:** Campaña, marea verde, articulation, blended autonomy, political opportunities, hegemonic context

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## **Glossary of Acronyms**

ENM – Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres

WHO – World Health Organization

UN – United Nations

UK – United Kingdom

USA – United States of America

NUM – Ni Una Menos

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

CDA – Comisión por el Derecho al Aborto

CDD – Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir



## 1. Introduction

According to the Center for Reproductive Rights (n.d.) – an organization of lawyers and advocates for reproductive rights –, around 41 percent of women in the world live in countries with restrictive abortion laws, although the World Health Organization states that “comprehensive abortion care services” (WHO, n.d.) must be guaranteed in order for an individual to attain complete health, being that a part of their rights as a human being. Additionally, on a worldwide level, above 20 thousand deaths per year are due to abortions carried clandestinely (Center for Reproductive Rights, n.d.). The WHO argue that among the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations, Goal 3 – good health and well-being –, and Goal 5 - gender equality – could be met by ensuring abortion to all people wishing to interrupt a pregnancy (WHO, n.d.). Beyond being a human right, the right to abortion also represents liberty of choice, of living according to one’s wish, and of deciding over one’s body.

In Argentina, the Penal Code of 1921 established that abortion was illegal, except for two circumstances: when the woman’s health was at stake due to the pregnancy and when the pregnancy resulted from a rape or an abuse towards a disabled woman (Felitti & Prieto, 2018). However, in December of 2020, the legalization of abortion was approved and established the right to voluntarily interrupt a pregnancy up to the 14<sup>th</sup> week, without any exceptions. This happened after years of street protest, assemblies, demonstrations, forums, and debate. In this struggle, the “Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito” must be acknowledged as the main actor for its years of work and articulation with other movements which have added strength to the abortion’s legalization claim.

In this dissertation, my wish is to understand how these actors, the Campaña is characterized by an autonomous organization, horizontality, and independence from the Government generate change from outside the centers of legislative power – the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. My research departs from the following question: *How did the Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito conquered the legalization of abortion on demand in Argentina?* In the question I have decided to only mention the Campaña even though there are other actors – like Ni Una Menos - and important developments like the “marea verde”. The reason why I have decided to focus the research question to the Campaña is because it became the main interlocutor between different feminist agendas and movements, but also was the strongest voice of the abortion movements inside the political circles. Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to abortion rights movements and pro-abortion movements as the same thing.

To understand the circumstances that allowed this to happen, I focused my work on the testimonies of fifteen feminist activists that haven taken part in the abortion mobilization, some since before the foundation of the Campaña, while others joined later in time. The interviews were analyzed through the thematic analysis approach, supported by the theories of autonomy and political opportunities’ structure. My goals with this thesis are to understand the importance that autonomy had for the abortion right movement in Argentina, and how it shaped the work of the Campaña and the strategies adopted to

achieve the legalization of abortion. Furthermore, I wish to understand how feminists perceive the context in which this demand was successfully heard, after years of mobilization. According to the feminists interviewed for this investigation, despite of the differences between the movements, a common goal, an articulation of strategies and the construction of a hegemonic context led feminists to success.

## **2. Thesis outline**

I have divided this dissertation in eight chapters that go from Introduction to Conclusions. The first and second chapter – Introduction and Thesis outline – serve the purpose of demonstrating the relevance of the issue, give away an overview of what this research aims to achieve and explain its organization and division.

The third chapter – Literature review – explores different dimensions related to the main theme of this thesis, namely the evolution of social movements from the traditional ones to the new social movements, as described by Alan Touraine (1985); I present a decolonial feminist perspective over the waves of feminism by including non-White perspectives on the wave model which highlight some exclusions perpetrated by the Western-centered wave model; following that, I lay out considerations about Latin American feminisms and how they have changed throughout decades, highlighting some of the most important trends for this thesis, which are the double militance behavior, the autonomy of the movements and later their institutionalization/NGO-ization propelled by neoliberal policies (Alvarez, 1999); then I focus on the specifics of Argentine feminisms throughout the years, talking about some of the most relevant feminist actors and events, highlighting the “Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres” – from now on referred to as ENM or Encuentros – and the different agendas present in this country’s feminisms, which have been influenced by human rights groups, workers’ movements, unionism, leftist parties, neighborhood assemblies and particularly by the struggle for democracy; lastly, I present the specific evolution of abortion rights movement in the country, how the discussions bloomed, the creation of the “Comisión por el Derecho a Decidir” and the “Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito”.

The fourth chapter gives out a contextualization of the debate, especially focusing on the growing influence of the Campaña’s speech and other actors that joined the demand for the legalization of abortion on demand, and the organization of the “antiderechos” movement or “ola celeste”.

The fifth chapter presents the theoretical framework supporting this dissertation which is built around the concepts of autonomy and structure of political opportunities. Regarding autonomy, I focused mostly on understanding the types of autonomy that could be associated with the work of the Campaña, which are extrainstitutional activity in relation to the State and embedded autonomy (Moura de Oliveira and Dowbor, 2020). As for the structure of political opportunities, I considered the opportunities for influence (Meyer, 2004) built by the movement itself that culminated in the approval of the abortion law.

The sixth chapter contains the explanation of the methodological approach elected for the analysis of the interviews that were conducted for this research, which is thematic one that involves the identification of patterns in the interviews, that constitute codes and themes, based on the theoretical lens chosen. In the seventh chapter, it is possible to read the report on that analysis.

The eighth and final chapter shows the conclusions that derive from this research and includes suggestions for future investigations related to this topic.



### **3. Literature review**

#### **3.1. Social movements**

There are different perspectives when it comes to define social movements. Alain Touraine (1985) described social movements as a “special type of social conflict” (p.750), which brings along a notion of disruption or revolution in society by a group of people altogether. The author highlights that not all kind of collective action can be named a social movement, because it is important that they hold a desire to alter a certain form of control or domination. According to Retamozo (2012), social movements arise from the need to address problems that are not tackled by governments. Solidarity, social conflict, structural reform, disappointment with the social structure or the redistribution of wealth are highlighted as major features of social movements (Retamozo, 2010). For Retamozo and Di Bastiano (2017), social movements are a “political logic characterized by the production of a demand that questions a certain aspect of the social order considered unfair, through collective actions not formally institutionalized” (p.118). Ruibal and Anderson (2020) established that “social movements are creators of meaning and are active contestants in the dynamic relationship between law and social change” (p.700). Even though they all differ, at the core we can understand all these authors established a relation between social movements and social change.

In his analysis, Touraine (1985) identifies that traditionally social movements were driven by social-economic power and labor conditions – for instance, the workers’ movements in the industrialized cities, including, factory workers, farmers, or miners. Their focus or organization developed around the Marxist concept of class, the desire to attain social order, or a public life focus that included labor and health improvement demands. In South America, according with Bruckmann and Dos Santos (2005), for years the Russian Revolution and anarchist ideals led the main influences of social movements and popular actions. During the 1920s, general strikes and unionist projects dominated the *movimiento obrero* – workers’ movement – in Peru, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico after the Great War, following the establishment of the communist regime (idem). Nonetheless, according with Touraine, from the 1970s onwards there was a “displacement of protest from the economic to the cultural field” (1985, p. 784) and “new social movements” emerge focusing on race, gender – like feminist movements - and human rights speeches. In the words of França and Silvestre (2011), new social movements strive for radical structural reforms of social paradigms and hold culture and quality of life as their core values; they recognize diversity and pluralism as key-characteristics of society.

#### **3.2. Feminist movements**

The feminist movement is usually framed and studied under the wave model, which allocates certain banners to each feminist wave, usually built around historic events (Hewitt, 2012). Even though some scholars argue it is a simplifying view of the movement, especially because it does not account for the simultaneity of claims, organization and strategies or the plurality of the movement, it is commonly used

as it provides a broader and clearer view of its transformations (Fraser, 2007; Sutton, 2020; Narvaz & Koller, 2006).

Up until the beginning of the new millennium, gender studies and the feminist theory outlined three different waves of the feminist movement all over the world – defined and guided by Western and European trends (Burton, 2013; Canavate, 2007). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when feminism started gaining shape in Europe – especially in the UK – and in the USA, it was mainly a white women’s movement about the suffrage, claiming women’s right to vote. It was also about economic independence, as well as social recognition of women as individuals, not dependent on marriage or doomed by divorce processes (Delmar, 2001; Conrad, 1981). This first wave of feminism is recognized as the equality wave, as the focus was to search for ways to reduce the difference between the role of men and women in society. Nonetheless, this is not a consensual view. As described before, the wave framework is constructed around the Anglo-Saxonist feminist history, which is dominated by white women and, according to Springer (2002), from the beginning it was not race-inclusive. Several authors claim that the opposition of black women to gender violence before abolitionism already concurs on a feminist stance that is not acknowledged (Springer, 2002; Smith, 2013; Taylor, 1998).

According to Burton (2013), the 1960s in the United States and Europe, and the 1970s in Latin America represent the breakthrough of a second wave. This wave is characterized by the institutionalization of the feminist speech – namely, its concerns like gender equality, gender violence, the problems women face in the labor market, the role of women in the family, reproductive health. The United Nations’ Decade of Women, 1975 to 1985, set in Mexico, on the first international conference organized by the UN with a total focus on women’s issues (United Nations Women, n.d.). During those years, several conferences, forums, and meetings were held all over the world. According to Alvarez (2014a), this decade had repercussions in the region, and it was able to legitimate feminist despite the dictatorships regimes in place at the time.

A decade later, in 1995, the Beijing conference brought together women from different regions, with diverse life experiences, who came together to discuss a multiplicity of issues associated with the feminist cause (Alvarez, 1998). The conference was particularly important as it defined a platform of action women’s rights with a focus on several areas like economy, poverty, education and training, health, and armed conflict. The Beijing Platform for Action became a reference in gender equality’s struggle and was ratified by 189 countries (United Nations Women, n.d.). Furthermore, it brought to the public sphere many issues regarding gender inequalities within the private space and made it a government’s problem too, namely gender violence and reproductive rights. Moreover, it also promoted the politicization of personal or private problems (Fraser, 2007). The voluntary interruption of pregnancy became a prominent discussion in meetings organized by women and feminist groups. This was a turning point which meant the beginning of the sociological construction of the private and the public sphere conflict (Bellucci, 1997; Monte, 2015). Up until then, sexuality had been mainly enclosed in the private domain of life, not to be discussed in public or made a State problem. Feelings of belonging,

sisterhood, and shared struggles were enabled by these international meetings, with a growing spirit of fighting for the liberation from patriarchy, enabling full autonomy for women around the world (Pinterics, 2001).

Nonetheless, it also resulted in a conflict between feminists in the North and in the Global South, with the latter ones questioning the idea of sorority and a global womanhood claimed by the former, which does not take into account race relations (da Silva de Araújo et al., 2018). Besides that, at that time, feminism was supported by a white savior rhetoric in which white women were portrayed as the voices of non-whites, needing to be saved in the Third World (Bidaseca, 2011). According to Pinterics (2001), the second wave of feminism is criticized for offering a perspective that is based on women's "sameness" (p.16). Mohanty (1984) describes this as a "suppression – often violent – of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question" (p.333). For Mohanty, Western feminism homogenizes women as a singular group linked by a common oppression, which does not reflect reality.

Black academics appealed then to an intersectional approach within feminism. This term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and is a framework she created to face the limits of antiracism and feminism, which according to her, do not question patriarchy and race, respectively. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) also suggests the concept of intersectionality to refer to the several layers of discrimination or that can discriminate non-white women. This concept allows us to understand how "gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation" (p.48) can built one upon the other as systems of oppression, reinforcing each other.

Following the wave model, the beginning of third wave does not gather a consensus among academics. While some set its beginning in the 1980s (Narvaz & Koller, 2006), others say it was a decade later with the growing influence of anti-racist movements; or the third wave as a generational phenomenon propelled by a dissatisfaction from generation X with the principles of the second wave (Pinterics, 2001). In the words of Pinterics (idem), "within the body of the third wave of feminist thinking, there exists strains and influences of other feminist epistemologies, including standpoint theory, queer theory, postmodernist, poststructuralist feminist thought and anti-essentialism" (p.15). Furthermore, the author points out that the third wave focuses more on rethinking oppressions and identities, and levels of privilege within the system. Evans' work (2016) also allows us to look at this third wave in a more complete way through different lenses – chronological, oppositional, generational, conceptual, and activist. Some points she highlights about the third wave are that its start can be traced to different decades in different regions, its appeal to a new generation, the inclusion of women of color, transgender people and even men and a greater use of online outlets to spread the feminist discourse (Evans, 2016).

The fourth wave of the feminist scene is very recent. According to Canavate (2020), it bloomed in the Latin American mobilizations of the last decade and extended throughout the world from there. The author highlights the student mobilizations in Chile, the Ni Una Menos movement, and the abortion protests in Argentina as the moments that made a new feminist scenario explode. Varela (2020) agrees

on the importance of these mobilizations and highlights several others in which we can see a common feature which she underlines: the fact that these episodes of mobilization defining the beginning of a new wave all started with an appropriation of the public space, in physical terms. In other words, feminists took the streets, occupied entire avenues and squares with demands that range from economic rights to reproductive ones.

Canavate (2020) says feminism is currently undergoing an era of great visibility. It is explained by a strong sense of intersectionality, a recognition of different narratives that multiply the perspectives taken into consideration in the movement and a component of cyberfeminism<sup>1</sup> which is key to create different spaces for debate (Matos, 2021; Varela, 2020; Canavate, 2020). This reflects on the massification of the movement and its intergenerational character (Canavate, 2020; Varela, 2020). Scholars also agree on the fact that this is a wave where we can see a global force sprawling from feminism practices, reflected on events like the International Women's Strike of 2018 or mobilizations that were articulated around the world in solidarity with other country-specific demands (Canavate, 2020; Varela, 2020).

### **3.3. Feminist movements in Latin America**

Even though Western social movements were influencing social movements around the world, including feminism, the problems and demands of the population differ across the different geographies. In her essay about the influence of white feminist rhetoric on a legal case in Argentina, Bidaseca (2011) brought back bell hooks words about contemporaneous feminism to highlight that the patriarchy is not the only enemy to be defeated to eliminate all forms of oppression in the world. Women from Latin America – and from all Global South – are not only victims of a patriarchal society, but also of a colonial one with institutionalized racism and a Western-focused discourse that defines them as “the Other” (Mohanty, 1984).

Overall, Latin American and Caribbean feminist movements are heavily marked by heterogeneity in terms of subjects, format, strategies, participants, and goals (Brown, 2008; Barros & Martínez, 2021). According to Widgor and Artazo (2017),

El pensamiento feminista latinoamericano, implica diversidades y particularidades (...) Hablar de un feminismo en América Latina es una ficción que posee potencialidad política pero quizás también, esconda un movimiento colonizador que oculta experiencias, expresiones y realidades de las más diversas (p. 197).

According to Fuentes (1992), the political mobilization of women in the region is cyclical and has spikes of intensive collective action and moments of diminished influence. In the 1970s, while women

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<sup>1</sup> A format that has been taking over during the fourth wave of feminism, which is sustained by the new technologies of information and communication (Canavate, 2020)



in the Global North were fighting for their liberation, women in Latin America were being faced with the atrocities of authoritarian regimes and trying to resist it. Matos (2021) says that the anti-dictatorial fight is a crucial element to distinguish Latin-American feminisms from others.

In the 1970s, women were already involved in socialist and radical leftist parties which were more vocal about women's struggles or sympathized with them (Trebisacce, 2013). According to Matos (2021), there are some components from clandestine leftist organizations that inspired feminist movements in Latin America, even though the latter remained critical and did not adopt the hierarchical and androcentric practices that were present in the first ones. The issue of double militance became relevant in the feminist scene of Latin America, opposing those who were considered "pure feminists" and those who were militants in leftist/communist parties at the same time they identified with the feminist cause (Grammático, 2005; Burton, 2013).

In the 1980s, due to the strong democratization movements mobilization, the dictatorships in Latin America, e.g., Chile, Brazil, or Argentina, started falling to give place to democratic regimes. Despite of that, this is a period widely known in the region as the "lost decade" for the lack of economic development. However, it marks a big decade for the feminist movement in the region (Bruckmann & Dos Santos, 2005; Alvarez, 2014a). For instance, in 1981, Latin American feminists created the Network of Popular Education between Women in Latin America and the Caribbean whose goal was social, political, and economic progress for women through critical pedagogy. The UN's Nairobi Conference in 1985 was also a great influential mark for feminisms in the region (Brown, 2008). The international concern with guaranteeing women's rights and women's involvement in politics influenced not only Government's political agendas, but also the feminist mobilization (Matos, 2021).

According to Alvarez (1998) and Palmero (2019), feminist transnational politics increased regional proximity because the political context – which was setting its democratic foundations – was also more prone to listen to feminist demands. New ideas and contributions for projects to help target the many social problems were needed, the political opportunities were high, and this contributed to the organization of feminist agendas and to the influence of feminist networks in the newly democratized societies (Burton, 2013).

Women throughout the region had an extremely important role fighting back the structural adjustments carried out by governments with a growing neoliberal tendency observed in the late 1980s through the 1990s (Alvarez, 2014a). In this first stage of implementation of neoliberalism in the region, when the Welfare State started to be dismantled by the governments, as described by Alvarez (idem), they organized in their communities to give a response to the lack of Government measures through the creation of health support networks, childcare infrastructures, and food provision. Women also started taking part in other popular movements, aligning with the workers' one in a reconciliation which perceived the unequal economic and work relations as reproducers of inequalities (Frega, 2019).

The 1995 Beijing Conference organized by the UN to establish an international platform of action to activate a women's rights agenda was of great impact for Latin American feminisms as well (Toro,

2009; Bosio & Frencia, 2017). The authors say that on one hand, it legitimated women's rights as human rights; on the other hand, it shifted feminist action from sole revindication to formulation of ideas to solve problems and improving the capacity for negotiation and dialogue to generate change. Toro (2009) says that this shift did not jeopardize feminisms' autonomy, rather showed an ability to negotiate and form alliances to achieve their goals when it was possible, without forgetting about other demands that did not reunite as much consensus as for instance the legalization of abortion.

Latin American women start to realize that their private problems were shared by others, and in their lives and in the dawn of democratic regimes, women demand "democracy in the government: democracy in the family"<sup>2</sup>. They understand that in the family, in their sexual relations and work environment, they are facing common problems, popularizing the idea of "*lo personal es politico*" – what is private is political, a saying that was upheld by Western feminists as well–, also deserving of scrutiny and regulation by the State (Burton, 2013).

In a second stage of neoliberal development in the region, as described by Alvarez (2014a), the states and transnational institutions approached the civil society with a new sight. This occurred in the 1990s and it opened the doors for a new phenomenon also coined by Alvarez called "NGO-ization", the boom of NGOs across Latin America in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While revisiting this notion, Alvarez (1999) clarifies that it does not only account for the exponential creation of non-governmental organizations but also to their "newfound public prominence" (p.182). Feminist NGOs started to be called for "partnerships" with the governments to help putting into effect development policies; they get involved with the states, international organizations like the UN and development institutions which entice this NGO-ization (Alvarez, 2014a; Alvarez, 2009).

This NGOs start to be seen as intermediaries between civil society and the government. At this point, feminist NGOs are seen as gender specialists and are not only responsible to assess and advise new policies, but also for project execution and provision of social services (Alvarez, 1999). This opened the opportunity for feminists position themselves beyond civil society only, gaining space in more traditional political parties, in the governments, universities and even in the big international institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations (Alvarez, 2014b). The spaces for feminist speech proliferated (Alvarez, 1999) and a gender mainstreaming process was in course. This process which is also linked to an institutionalization of feminism is connected to the growing presence of women with high levels of education in universities and research centers, as well as the incorporation of the gender category in the media and in State's political agendas (Canavate, 2020). It also concerns the process which took to the professionalization of feminists in political parties' elections lists, government cabinets, organizations and international institutions like the UN or the World Bank (Alvarez, 2014b).

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<sup>2</sup> Translated from the Chilean feminist movement motto: "democracia en el gobierno: democracia en la familia" (Molyneaux, 2010, p.196).

According to Bortolotti and Figueroa (2014), this process of institutionalization of feminism led to a decrease of its radical force and it created a conflict between those who remained anti-establishment – *autónomas* – and those who started cooperating with the governments – *institucionalizadas*. The first ones stated that NGOs were being co-opted by international institutions and governments (Alvarez, 2009) and that they were moderating their speech, aiming to achieve higher influential power, and become more likely to receive funds and contracts from international institutions (Alvarez, 1999). This means that more radical forms of protest or revolutionary discourses were not as welcomed by those who were distributing funds for feminist campaigns. Schild (2017) and Alvarez (1999) highlight the VII “Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe” in Cartagena, Chile, in 1996, as a great example of this big debate within feminism in the region. The *autónomas* strongly criticized NGOs and called them out on being “decorative and functional complements of patriarchal policies who constitute a ‘gender technocracy’” (Alvarez, 1999, p.199). While the *institucionalizadas* argued on the possibility of articulating a “dual identity” (Alvarez, 1999, p. 201), insisting that it is necessary to constantly “evaluate and interrogate their contractual and political relationship with official arenas rather than adopt rigid, ‘principled’ positions a priori” (p. 201).

In a third phase of neoliberalism, termed neo-development by Alvarez, feminists in the Latin American region became strong critics of the UN speech, including the *institucionalizadas* (2014a). They started calling out the dominance the United States had on the United Nations perspective and their goals. Feminists started promoting an alternative view to the globalization process and global justice actions from an anticapitalistic point of view. Alvarez (1998) says that during the last years of the past century it was possible to observe a growing proximity between different feminisms in the region that she describes as “unidad en la diferencia” – “unity through diversity” (p.91). While the driving issues of the feminist movement are gender violence, social justice, and sexual and reproductive rights, in Latin America, feminists understood that the processes of globalization, even though could serve as some external influence for new feminist agendas with claims coming from Western feminists’ centers, they enclosed a lack of recognition of the specifics of the diversity of women in the region (Palmero, 2019).

After having expanded vertically from grassroots to parties, governments, institutions and professionalized organizations, different forms of feminisms started proliferating, criticizing a dominant feminist school of thought – a process called by Alvarez as sidestreaming in which autonomy seems to come back to the arena as an X factor (Alvarez, 2009; Alvarez, 2014a, Alvarez, 2014b). Even though this was a process clearly propelled by a discontent towards the NGO-ization process and the institutionalization of a certain feminist rhetoric, Alvarez (2009) argues that NGOs were crucial to help articulating all these new different discourses blooming in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Latin American feminisms have also been marked by the decolonial feminist perspective defined by the Argentinean scholar María Lugones (2010). The concept of decoloniality refers to an attitude that reads contemporaneous society as a product of the colonial society. While post-colonial feminist

scholars focus essentially on a post-imperialist society, decolonial feminists are more involved in the community and try to rescue old forms of producing knowledge. Decolonial feminism addresses race, class, heterosexuality and gender as categories and systems produced by colonial powers to oppress and subjugate (Curiel, 2019).

Carosio (2020) says that the Latin-American and Caribbean feminisms are now extremely connected with the struggle against gender violence and the permanency of the patriarchy and its forms of oppression. According to the author, feminisms in the region are constituting themselves as a contra-hegemonic movement that tries to deconstruct the logic of coloniality, as well. Carosio (idem) also highlights that feminisms in the region are also facing themselves with a resurgence of an anti-democratic rhetoric, which tries to deter the implementation of progressive gender agendas, limiting reproductive and sexual rights.

### **3.4. Argentine feminisms**

According to Di Marco (2010), women's movement in Argentina, like in other Latin American countries, can be distinguished by three different strains: participation in human rights movements, collective action from popular sectors and the feminist movement. Popular women's movements – unionists, “piqueteras”, migrant women collectives, neighborhood associations, etc. – and feminist movements in Argentina are seen as manifestly constructed upon the women's movements of the “Madres y Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo” and by the figure of Eva Perón and the Peronist women (Bellucci, 1997; Sutton & Vacarezza, 2021). Eva Perón had a crucial role as an extremely popular public figure assuming the role of First Lady from 1945 to 1952; she was vocal about issues like women's suffrage, which was legislated in 1947, labor, education rights and others (Bellucci, 1997). According to Sutton & Vacarezza (2021), the Madres mobilization had a key-focus on social justice with a democratic tone to it that was later absorbed by the abortion rights movement, as they both focused on fighting for basic human rights. Furthermore, the white “pañuelo” (scarf), which was the main symbol of the Madres, was also adopted by the “Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito” – from now on referred to as Campaña only –, but in color green. This shows a link between the two historical struggles led by these two movements (Ingrassia & Retegui, 2022). According to Barros & Quintana (2020), another influence that the Madres had on the Campaña can be seen on the fact that the latter also occupied the streets in order for its claims to be seen, just like the first ones.

According to Bellucci (2014), the international influence defined the primordium of Argentinean feminisms because of the fact many women fled the country for political or economic reasons and when they came back, they brought along new ideas, including a strong speech about reproductive rights. Bellucci (2014) calls these women the “viajeras militantes” (p.15). Feminists in Argentina started by raising awareness to the women's liberation movement by translating articles from North America, France and Italy which were inspiring new agendas for the feminist movement, at the same time they focused on spontaneous protests (Bellucci, 1997).

Feminist movements in the country became more prominent in the post-dictatorship era (after 1983), in which feminists were called by the Government to help redact a new Constitution (Burton, 2013; Burton, 2017). With a government moving towards a democratic state, a progressive agenda was in place and was defended by feminists' old allies – militants of socialist and other leftist parties (Frega, 2019) that obtained positions in the Government after the dictatorship. This opened possibilities for a stronger feminist influence and feminist-inspired reforms (Alvarez, 1999).

The ENM which started in 1986 - and have taken place every year since then – are highlighted by different authors as a great influential mark for the shape of Argentinean feminisms (Burton, 2013; Natalucci & Rey, 2018; Frega, 2019; Güemes and Güemes, 2020). This event was brought together by feminist groups which attended the UN's Nairobi Conference in the previous year (Natalucci & Rey, 2018). According to Frega (2019), their importance lies on the fact that they reunited a diversity of identities from trans women to lesbians, to militants of different organizations, some independent, some more institutionalized. Beyond that, the Encuentros represent a space to share and discuss common problems and have been promoting women's political participation (*idem*).

During a period of democratic stabilization in Argentina in the last decade of the last millennium and with a growing neoliberal influence, feminist movements watched their importance in the public and political domains being taken away by the State and its institutions (Brown, 2008). During the democratic transition, the Argentine governments created different State structures to coordinate action to reply to women's struggles in the country – the “Subsecretaría de la Mujer” and the “Consejo Nacional de la Mujer” are just two examples (Britos et al., 2002; Brown, 2008). Nonetheless, as pointed out by Brown (2008), they were underfinanced, and their action was affected by that. The 1990s also represented years of change for the feminist movement in Argentina, which started leaning towards more formalized structures and organized institutions (DiMarco, 2010; Burton, 2013), substituting the horizontal system with no leadership and rotating tasks (Bortolotti & Figueroa, 2014).

Nonetheless, as pointed out by Rangel (2012), in Argentina the street protest and protest culture with spontaneous and punctual mobilizations dominates over any form of organized struggle. For instance, Di Marco (2010) states that even the process of NGO-ization in Argentina happened relatively late comparing to other countries in the region like Brazil and Mexico. Furthermore, the authors state that very few established a gender equality agenda.

In the 2000s, the Encuentros started reuniting more and more people because the doors opened for the participation of people involved in other types of associations and collectives, which did not identify as feminist – like “piqueteres”, unionists, neighbors' associations – but that through the years adopted a feminist stance (Frega, 2019). This generated an articulation of several struggles, amplifying the voices and strength of each demand related to the full recognition of women's rights (DiMarco, 2010). In Di Marco's words, the spirit that emanated from all these intertwined demands generated what is called “pueblo feminista”, a political identity built upon the diversity of experiences and struggles that unite women in Argentina.

Diez (2019) says that the feminist movement in Argentina has nowadays “massive proportions with particular claims, methods and actions, as well as heterogeneity of actors and references” (p. 352). Argentinean feminism is currently characterized by a great connection with arts and performance, and this represents a challenge to the patriarchy as well, as this artistic side of protests includes body expressions and representations which defy the hetero-cis-normative of society and deconstruct the idea of the “woman” as a homogeneous category (Bonavitta, 2020). These artistic side of the feminist mobilization spread through social media, but also happened in the streets. From 2018 to 2020 – with an interruption in the first half of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic -, live music and art production, poetry reading, and other types of art expression marked the protests of “martes verdes” – “green Tuesdays” (Burton, 2021). Regarding its heterogeneity in militants, something that is highlighted by different authors is the popular feature of current feminism in the country (Di Marco, 2010; Diez, 2019). Commonly referred to as “feminismo popular” (Barros & Martínez, 2021), this is linked to the diversity of militants and demands reunited in the Argentine feminisms. According to these authors, due to the long history of social mobilization in Argentina, and the role of women on that aspect – like the great example of the Madres -, the feminist movements assume a diversity of voices that not only includes academics, feminists in political parties, feminist NGOs, feminist collectives, but also women that have been mobilizing from other sites and for other reasons. This includes militants from “organizaciones piqueteras”, women from peripheral neighborhoods and rural areas (Diez, 2019).

In this section, we could see an evolution in the shape and actors present in the feminisms of Argentina, as well as point out a big landmark for them, which were the ENM. This event definitely changed the route of feminisms and mobilized a lot of women and dissidences that became feminist militants, bringing different points of view and demands to the arena.

### **3.5. The abortion movements in Argentina**

Bellucci (1997) reflecting on the abortion struggle in Argentina declared that “making abortion legal and free does not depend solely on the internal strength of the feminist movement but also on the wider political situation” (p. 104). A progressive agenda on these terms is something that has not been widely welcomed (Carvajal & Vergara, 2009; Burton, 2017; Brown, 2008; Felitti & Prieto, 2018; Irrazábal, 2010). Sutton and Vacarezza (2021) argue that throughout history, Latin American governments have avoided the discussion of abortion legislations reforms until it is not possible anymore due to public pressure. Abortion is a very divisive theme given the conservative culture of these countries seriously influenced by the Vatican’s speech (Lamas, 2012; Bastidas & Beltrán, 2016), and it could result in jeopardizing the power of an elected politician.

According to Ruibal and Anderson (2020), abortion rights movements gained more visibility and relevance in Argentina during the democratic transition from the early 1980s until the 2000s. During these years, this issue became associated with the struggle for democracy, “because it concerns the citizenship status of around half of the population” (Sutton & Vacarezza, 2021, p.7). The abortion rights

groups bloomed during the 1980s, especially influenced by the French feminists' abortion campaign running through the previous decade and by the Encuentros. They served as a platform in which women talked about several issues related to women's experiences, being reproductive rights a big focus (Sutton, 2020), generating a process of "politicization of sexuality" (Monte, 2015, p.1264).

In 1988, the "Comisión por el Derecho al Aborto" (CDA), an autonomous entity, was created by pro-abortion feminists, whom together with women doctors and drafted a contraception and abortion law (Burton, 2017). In 1993, a group that played a big part in the feminist rhetoric in favor of the legalization of abortion emerged. This group was the "Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir" (CDD), an international movement, whose action defied one of the major opponents of the decriminalization of abortion: the Catholic Church (Bosio & Frencia, 2017).

In a context of permanent religious influence and conservative government positions, several authors define the Campaña as the main or key-actor performing and conducting change on the abortion discussion (Burton, 2017; Ruibal & Anderson, 2020; Sutton & Borland, 2019, Monte, 2015, Coêlho, 2018). The Campaña was born in 2005 and its scope of action was the following: political mobilization and drafting of a bill for the decriminalization and legalization of abortion (Ruibal & Anderson, 2020).

Ruibal and Anderson (2020) refer two other strategies within the Argentinean abortion rights movement working simultaneously within the Campaña: one of them was the legal activism conducted by feminist lawyers that focused on strengthening the already existing law and working to eliminate the barriers imposed by local and health authorities; the other was the proactivity of feminist networks who worked with health professionals to reinterpret the Penal Code of 1921 providing women with information about self-induced abortion, as well as offering support throughout the process. Based on the provision of the health exception – which said that women could require an abortion in cases their health was at stake -, people involved in this strategy used mental health as a valid justification to request an abortion.

From 2010, propelled by a growing intergenerational character of the feminist movement in the country (Sutton, 2020), but also by the approval of the 2012 Gender Identity Law which established the rights of trans people, the abortion rights movements shifted greatly their narrative. As Sutton & Borland (2018) described, it was a process of "queering" abortion rights, an intersectionalization of the abortion legislation fight (Felitti & Prieto, 2018). As highlighted by Sutton and Borland (2018), the Penal Code language framing is heteronormative as it suggests that "the person imagined as pregnant and, therefore, the main target of abortion penalization is a woman" (p. 1380), not considering that the pregnant person may not identify as a woman. The fact that there was already a law recognizing gender identities that do not conform with the heteronormative duality of man and woman pushed the Campaña "to develop a vision of abortion rights that acknowledges anyone who might be pregnant, regardless of gender, as deserving such rights" (Sutton & Borland, 2018, p.1388).

By tracing the development of abortion rights movement in Argentina, we can understand there has been a big shift in strategies, shape, and content. The Table 3.1 in the annexes was created to gather all

the major information and landmarks of the abortion struggles in Argentina. Since the 2000s the mobilization for the decriminalization and legalization of abortion intensified and special attention should be paid to the foundation of the Campaña and the first Ni Una Menos mobilization which will define the next chapter of this thesis.



#### **4. The abortion debate in Argentina: a contextualization of the evolution of the debate and the influences of the *marea verde* and the *antiderechos* movement**

Güemes and Güemes (2020) establish three defining moments of the abortion discussion in Argentina: the ENM which started in 1986, the establishment of the Campaña and the Ni Una Menos – NUM – movement formed in 2015. Each of these moments had an impact in the abortion discussion in the country and contributed in different ways to achieve the reform of the abortion law. Throughout the years, alongside the developments in the pro-abortion mobilization – widely known as “marea verde” – there was also a growing articulation on the conservative side to rally against this feminist demand – known as “ola celeste” or “movilización antiderechos” (López & Loza, 2021). In this section, my wish is to present an overview of the evolution of both mobilizations and speeches, and their influence through the years until the abortion bill was approved in December of 2020.

The history of abortion in Argentina goes back to 1921. The Penal Code declared then the prohibition of the practice except for two situations: when the woman’s health was at stake due to the pregnancy and when the pregnancy resulted from a rape or an abuse towards a disabled woman (Felitti & Prieto, 2018).

Just like in most Latin American countries, the Argentinean Catholic Church has a significant role in determining the government’s agenda (Colazo, 2009; Vassalo, 2005) and the norms of society (Bastidas & Beltrán, 2016). In the words of Mallimaci (2008), the Church was responsible to upbring a catholic nation after the military coup in 1930 and throughout the decades became more present in every sector of society. The author highlights that some governments even went on to define Catholicism as a pillar of the Argentinian nationality, the fatherland and the national culture. This institution took great responsibility in maintaining the role of women as reproductive beings (Lamas, 2012), contributing to perpetuate the myth of the “woman-mother” (Cremona & Gariglio, 2018) and restraining progressive advances in terms of political and reproductive rights (Bellucci, 1997; Irrazábal, 2010).

During Carlos Menem’s presidency – which lasted from 1989 to 1999 -, the conservative sectors and the Catholic Church were determinant for the abortion debate. In 1994, amidst a new constitutional reform, the conservative wing alongside the Catholic groups tried to impose the “Cláusula Barra”, a new pro-life clause which tried to eliminate the chances of carrying abortions in any situation, by establishing the “right to life” from the moment of conception until death. Their wish was also to define March 25<sup>th</sup> as the “Día del Niño/a por Nacer” – Day of the Child to be born (Burton, 2017; Brown, 2007; Belucci, 1997). This generated a great articulation of different types of social mobilization– feminists, unionists, and activists from other social movements – and women in political parties, which was known as the “Movimiento de Mujeres Autoconvocadas para Decidir en Libertad” (Burton, 2017).

The Cláusula Barra episode takes place while struggles for sexual and reproductive rights were happening all over the world. Two United Nations conferences – Cairo 1994 and Beijing 1995 – reinforced the importance of recognizing sexual and reproductive rights to all humans (Brown, 2007). This had impact in governments’ agendas in South America, but also in feminist mobilization in the region. These

conferences and the attempts by governments of limiting even further the access to abortion generated a lot of discussion around (non) reproductive rights which are, as described by Brown (2007), “those that are linked to people’s capacity to take autonomous decisions over their bodies, their sexualities and the events connected to procreation and non-reproduction, which includes the possibility of abortion” (p. 1).

Felitti (2011) argues that in Argentina there is a phenomenon of “conservative religious activism” (p.95), while Loza and López (2020) call it “ofensiva clerical” (p.57). This is a mobilization founded on a human rights speech, which allows the Church to instrumentalize a secular narrative in their favor. The *antiderechos*, as this conservative wing is denominated by the feminists in Argentina, present themselves as the saviors of human rights (Irrazábal, 2010). By comparing abortion to genocide, the “ofensiva clerical” declares that they are saving lives, instead of killing them (*idem*), especially those of kids which are a population under special care within the United Nations. As the human rights speech is very strong in Argentina, since it had an undeniable relevance in the democratic turn and on the trials that followed the end of the military dictatorship (Felitti, 2011), this movement could gain some legitimacy.

Their strategies also included sabotage strategies like organizing groups of catholic conservative women who were responsible to attend the ENM and promote the Church’s view. It was also evident in some hostile acts, like the one described by Tarducci (2005), that occurred in 2004 in the city of Mendoza, where an ENM was going to happen:

A la presencia masiva de mujeres enviadas por la Iglesia, en Mendoza se le sumó la agresión verbal y física: asistentes que fueron golpeadas en la calle, se rompieron los vidrios en una escuela donde dormían quienes no podían pagar un hotel, hubo actos de sabotaje contra los buses que habían llevado a las mujeres al Encuentro, etc. Dos hechos fueron especialmente graves y concitaron la atención de la prensa: la bomba que incendió la instalación eléctrica del club donde se iba a realizar el baile y la quema de folletos del Programa Provincial de Salud Reproductiva en el anfiteatro (de madera) de la escuela donde se llevaban a cabo la mayor parte de los talleres (pp. 400-401).

Nonetheless, the last decades in Argentina, and in other countries like Colombia, have seen a growing tension between the Catholic “ought to be” ideal and the practice of the religious values (Felitti, 2011; Bastidas & Beltrán, 2016). In both countries, authors noted that people do not identify as less religious, but that they have established boundaries to the influence of religious convictions in their private lives. In Argentina, the formation of groups like the CDD, the growing public opinion approval on abortion procedures (Petracchi, 2007), the approval of same-sex marriage and the recognition of transgender people show a decrease in the level of influence of the Churches’ ideology in the social agenda, even though it is still present.

Recognizing the obstacles that their “historic enemy” – the Church – (Burton, 2013, p.16) was placing on their path, made feminists understand it would be necessary to articulate different demands and groups to amplify women’s voices in the public sphere (Di Marco, 2010). In 2005, the creation of

the Campaña changed the abortion fight, taking the debate to the streets, but also contributing with the draft of a bill to modify the abortion law (Ruibal & Anderson, 2020). The idea for the Campaña was born in the ENM in Rosario in 2003 and was officialized two years later in an in the city of Córdoba (Monte, 2015). The Campaña grew over the years and reached a point where it articulated action between more than 300 organizations and associations with different levels of institutionalization; among them, there were the “Lesbianas y Feministas por el Derecho al Aborto”, “Movimiento Evita”, “Nuevo Encuentro”, “Profesionales de Salud por el Derecho a Decidir”, “Socorristas en Red” and others (Ruibal & Anderson, 2020).

Their motto was “Educación sexual para Decidir, Anticonceptivos para no Abortar y Aborto Legal para no Morir”<sup>3</sup> (Ingrassia & Retegui, 2022, p. 190) which claimed the need to articulate sexual education and the distribution of contraceptives to prevent the need to go through abortion procedures. At the same time, it defended the need for abortion to be decriminalized in order to avoid the death of those who perform it in illegal terms, without proper medical care. According with Cremona and Gariglio (2018), the Campaña focused on communicating exactly that: the legalization of the voluntary interruption of a pregnancy would solve a public health issue and provide those with ability to carry a pregnancy full dominion over their bodies.

The heritage of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in the behavior and in the symbology of the Campaña is highlighted by some authors (Sutton & Vacarezza, 2021; Barros & Quintana, 2020). In the late 1970s, the Madres took over the streets to claim answers for the disappearances of their children during the dictatorship, at the same time this move also made themselves visible in the public space, as political subjects (Barros & Quintana, 2020). The Campaña functioned in the same way, bringing to the streets an issue considered taboo for decades, making it a public discussion through performances, protests, sharing of personal experiences, and so on. Furthermore, the symbol that characterized the Madres was the white pañuelo around their heads, which was adopted by the Campaña decades later (Ingrassia & Retegui, 2022; Barros & Quintana, 2020), with a green color that has been since then associated with the fight for the legal, safe, and free abortion in Argentina. This inspiration later transpired in an alliance between these two historic movements, with some Madres taking part in the Campaña under the motto “la maternidad será deseada o no será”<sup>4</sup> (Barros & Quintana, 2020, p. 185).

The Campaña’s discourse was legitimated under a human rights framework – an approach which resembles the Church’s one, being that a point of critique (Sutton & Borland, 2019) – and a public health lens, but it also approached the decriminalization of abortion as a social justice issue, since the illegality of the procedure makes low-class and racialized people more vulnerable; and as an issue in need of supervision and proper physical and psychological care to make the whole experience less traumatic

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<sup>3</sup> “Sexual education to Decide, Contraception not to Abort, Legal Abortion not to Die”

<sup>4</sup> “Motherhood has to be desired, or it will not happen”

(Güemes & Güemes, 2020). The fact that the cause was looked at from different perspectives, crossing several injustices which are creating obstacles to people who seek abortion, created a great network of support (Bellucci, 2014).

In 2015, following spikes in episodes of gender violence and specifically the murder of Chiara Pérez, a 14 years-old girl who was pregnant (Llorente, 2020), a new movement blooms and brings strength to the protests in the streets. Ni Una Menos was found to protest the dramatic situation of gender violence in Argentina. It was created by a group of female journalists who used their position to spread awareness online around the issue of gender violence (Natalucci & Rey, 2018). It took place for the first time on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June of 2015 and was concretized in street mobilizations that happened a bit all over the country. This date was taken by the feminist movements in Argentina, which have since that year mobilized every 3<sup>rd</sup> of June to protest the lack of action from the successive governments of the problematic of violence.

In 2015, the association La Casa del Encuentro registered 286 murders of women and trans people (Perfil, 2021). According to Bonavitta (2020), Ni Una Menos also shone a new light on the abortion debate, combining their main demand for the end of “femicidios” or “feminicidios”<sup>5</sup> with the claim for the decriminalization of the abortion procedures. The fact that people were still dying undertaking interruptions of pregnancies on illegal terms without appropriate medical care, made an articulation between both demands legitimate.

Furthermore, NUM provoked a new phenomenon in feminism in Argentina, associated with a fourth wave of the movement in the country (Diez, 2019). It renovated the movement and the abortion discussion in many ways: it contributed to a massive use of social networks which became the paramount spaces for debate and awareness-raising (Diez, 2019); it brought new generations to the movement with a special mention to middle school and high school teenagers (Sutton, 2020; Tesoriero, 2019); it is also associated with the massification of the feminist movement in Argentina, as it brought attention to an issue which generates more social consensus – the issue of gender violence (Rebón & Gamallo, 2021). After the first protest organized by NUM on June 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2015, this movement articulated its action with the Campaña, offering an insight into illegal abortion as a mechanism that perpetuates violence against the bodies of people able to carry a pregnancy (Bonavitta, 2020).

On February 19<sup>th</sup> of 2018, a protest organized by the Campaña brought thousands to the square and the avenues that surround the Argentinian Congress with the attempt to push the abortion discussion

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<sup>5</sup> The discussion between both concepts is developed around two different thoughts. According to Meneghel and Portella (2017), “As violências contra as mulheres compreendem um amplo leque de agressões de caráter físico, psicológico, sexual e patrimonial que ocorrem em um *continuum* que pode culminar com a morte por homicídio” (p. 3079). The authors say that the difference between calling those murders femicide or feminicide lays on what we are referring to. Femicide would describe the assassination of women, while feminicide describes murders which are linked to gendered violence in contexts where the State can be responsible for its lack of protection over these lives.

once again into the public sphere. This strategy succeeded and led Mauricio Macri – the president at that time – to open the discussion of the abortion bill in the lower chamber, a couple weeks later (Dulbecco et al., 2021). The Campaña presented then the draft of the abortion bill for the seventh time. This project proposed that every woman could be able to interrupt their pregnancy up to the fourteenth week of pregnancy, including no time limits in case of rape, health or life risk, or in case of recognized severe diseases in the fetus (Manzolido, 2019). Every Tuesday, from April to May of 2018, the discussions in the Congress regarding the abortion law were streamed in the main squares of almost every major city in Argentina, always ending with a “pañuelazo”<sup>6</sup>.

Alongside the pressure in the streets, the Campaña also formed an assembly responsible for the “cabildeo parlamentario” – a process of lobbying that sought to involve all the political forces that could possibly become allies and work in favor of the abortion legislation reform (Tesoriero, 2019). The abortion lobby built a chain of support that reached different political parties and positions and regularly organized activities and press conferences to elevate the discussion in public agenda, according with Tesoriero (idem). This was replicated at a federal level, in the provinces where the Campaña was also present, by creating networks of direct contact with deputies and senators who were pro-abortion or were keen on voting in favor of a new legislation. On June 13<sup>th</sup> of that same year, the Congress approved the abortion bill with 129 votes in favor, even though it was revoked by the Senate two months later (Dulbecco et al., 2021).

This growth and changes in the feminist movements in Argentina and particularly in the pro-abortion mobilization, including the fact that the draft was approved by the Congress in 2018, also rang the alarms in the conservative movements and pro-life protests who entered the public space with new strategies and a newfound strength (López & Loza, 2021) that articulated the Catholic and the Evangelic Church (Loza & López, 2020). According to Irrazábal (2010), the Church acted as one of the main obstacles to any advances in the abortion legislation in the country. The author noticed that from the end of the first decade of the third millennium, we could already notice a progressive secularization of the Church’s speech, including a focus on the necessity of conscientious objection or on more philosophical aspects like debating from when the embryo can be considered a person.

According with López and Loza (2021), in the last couple years, the celestes’ speech gained strength – at the same time the marea verde’s influence grew, they end up emerging as the alternative and opposition’s discourse. This was manifested on the heavy mobilization in the streets, media support and diffusion of the conservative speech by figures of the entertainment and political world. In 2018, the creation of the “Unidad Provida” represented the epitome of a national articulation of conservative institutions and organizations that united against the reform of the abortion law (idem). Loza and López (2020) state that the communication strategies of the antiderechos target emotions with sensationalist

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<sup>6</sup> A demonstration that reunited everyone with their “pañuelos” echoing their support for abortion rights.

speeches and pictures. Furthermore, their arguments are usually supported on evidence from other countries, exposed by specialists from those nations who are invited to present, for instance, how the legalization of abortion did not contribute to lower the mortality rate of women giving birth (Loza & López, 2020); but their arguments also contain hints of conspiracy theories and international complot against Latin America (López & Loza, 2021). In this last line of argumentation, the antiderechos grab concepts like imperialism and coloniality to attack a progressive agenda in terms of reproductive rights and what they call the gender ideology (Lamas, 2012; Güemes & Güemes, 2020; Loza & López, 2020; López & Loza, 2021). Both these concepts are usually aligned with a critique to the Global North progressive agenda which is allegedly attacking the social order in force in South America, usually linked by the conservatives to a special concern with life and the family (López & Loza, 2021).

The year of 2018, when the Campaña successfully delivered the draft bill for the seventh time and it was finally discussed in the lower chamber, was also a time of extreme cleavage between the marea verde and antiderechos movement (López & Loza, 2021). At this point, the celeste speech was dominated by the idea of “salvar dos vidas” – “to save both lives” –, the life of the mother and the life of the baby (Güemes & Güemes, 2020; Ingrassia & Retegui, 2022). On the other side of the battle, the Campaña was claiming autonomy for oppressed bodies and asking the State to pay the democratic debt it was owning all bodies capable of carrying a pregnancy for decades (Sutton & Borland, 2017). The conflict was also intensified by the appropriation of the pañuelo by the ola celeste, which carried it around in color blue. This was a move to obtain visibility and counterattack the symbology already established by the Campaña with the green scarf which was linked to freedom and fight against patriarchal oppression (Barros & Quintana, 2020).

In December of 2020, after months of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Senate voted the abortion legislation for the last time, sanctioning the law for voluntary interruption of abortion after months of discussions. The new abortion legislation made it legal until the 14<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy without any exclusions but including a clause for conscientious objection and the need for people younger than 16 years-old to present the authorization of a legal guardian if they wish to interrupt the pregnancy. These two situations were not predicted in the draft elaborated by the Campaña (Dulbecco et al., 2021). The Campaña still celebrated the victory but is aware that their work is not finished.

Currently, the Campaña is defining what path to take in the future. Their goal has not been fully achieved and, according to the militants I have interviewed, the main concern right now is guaranteeing the law is applied effectively and that the antiderechos movement does not provoke a regress of the rights already recognized. Moreover, even though it has been legalized institutionally, in practice, it is still hard for some people to exercise their full right, especially in provinces where the antiderechos have a stronger influence or where a social legitimation of abortion has not been as successful.

## 5. Theoretical framework

### 5.1. Discussing autonomy in social movements

According to Böhm et al. (2010), the concept of autonomy was integrated in social movements studies through political thought, which brought an operationalization of the concept of autonomy from the individual subject to the collective action. In the authors' words, autonomy is linked to "self-established rules, self-determination, self-organization and self-regulating practices" (p.19) and is also defined by "a group working together in common to construct alternatives ways of living, rather than simply an individual seeking to assert their subjective autonomy against a dominating group" (p.19). In this sense, autonomy must be understood as a relational concept, which means that when we are using it to analyze a collective action, in our case, a social movement, we are establishing its autonomy in relation to other actors, political institutions and other movements. Therefore a relationship with other entities has to be identified, for instance between the social movement and the State or a social movement and a countermovement (Moura de Oliveira & Dowbor, 2020).

It is important to define which analytical frameworks we are using to assess the autonomy of a movement, because it is not a univocal concept. Furthermore, the shape of autonomy is subject to social dynamics, which means it can take different forms in a particular movement throughout time (Moura de Oliveira & Dowbor, 2020). In their work, Böhm et al. (2010), define three types of autonomy which are autonomy in relation to capital – linked to a Marxist line of thought that aims for freedom from capitalist production –, autonomy beyond the State or from the State which rejects the possibility of creating social change through the State, and autonomy beyond development which emerged from post-colonial thinking and wishes to preserve ways of life which do not conform with the Global North norm. For the purpose of this thesis, the second strand presented is the most relevant because I will be focusing on feminist autonomous mobilization in Argentina, which as presented in previous chapters, is characterized by an intense extrainstitutional activism, with street protest being a distinguished strength (Diez, 2019). This represents an action which rejects more institutionalized forms of action. The Campaña was widely known for its association with the *marea verde* – which represented the massification of the abortion rights movement – and that was an extrainstitutional force, recognized in the streets not in the centers of political power (Diez, 2019).

Moura de Oliveira and Dowbor (2020) have defined three other types of autonomous action in relation to the State within a logic of rejection and construction. These three strands are based on the following actions: social movements might reject the State, State's behavior or State's decisions and construct alternative forms of sovereignty, organization or generate projects to make the State meet their needs (idem). In order to ensure a more adequate analysis, I am using two of the concepts theorized by these authors: extrainstitutional political confrontation with the State and embedded autonomy.

In the case of *autonomy in extrainstitutional political confrontation with the State*, Moura de Oliveira and Dowbor (2020) characterize it as a "rejection of the state's *modus operandi* – its hierarchy

and institutional channels of interaction” (p. 54) This form of autonomy is built upon the construction of a horizontal identity with extrainstitutional mobilization, where there can be a diversity of actors collaborating towards a particular goal. Regarding *embedded autonomy*, the authors argue that “we observe that the social movement rejects the characteristics or consequences of a given policy or denounces the absence of a given policy and constructs an action, a project, of its own” (p. 55). In these cases, the social movement will be cooperating with the State to implement a more adequate policy or a new one, formulated by the movement to fill the gap for something that was lacking or to improve a certain policy. Therefore, the authors associate this type of autonomy with forms of institutional activism, which are reflected on a dialogue with the State to pursue the reforms and changes needed.

I am using the combination of these two types of autonomy described in the last paragraph (extrainstitutional political confrontation with the State and embedded autonomy) because we can associate characteristics of the *marea verde* with both strands. Accounting for its relation to autonomy in extrainstitutional political confrontation, we can point out an evident and massive mobilization of people in the streets to rally the depenalization and legalization of the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy, which reached a federal level. Additionally, the movement also included all kinds of art expression, condemned the State for the lack of response, and was built upon the collaboration of several associations, collectives and organizations which formed the Campaña. According to Moura de Oliveira and Dowbor (2020), the use of art is something typical of social movements inscribed in this type of autonomy with extrainstitutional action.

The Campaña was also using lobbying tactics that can be linked to a more institutionalized form of activism in which there is contact between the movement and State institutions (Moura de Oliveira & Dowbor, 2020). This represents characteristics associated with embedded autonomy. The combination of both strategies made the work of the Campaña influent in the streets and within the centers of political decision. For several of my interviewees, the sanction of the law would not be possible without both these tactics. Therefore, I decided to join these two concepts to offer a more comprehensive analysis of the abortion movement in Argentina.

I found these formulations about autonomy useful for my analysis because autonomy is a big mark of the feminist movements in Argentina (Rangel, 2012) including the abortion mobilization. It is important to understand what kind of autonomy was built by the movements and how it worked in opposition to the State, also considering that at the same time there were tactics created to promote a specific project at an institutional level. Furthermore, autonomy also seems of relevance for nowadays studies on citizen’s political activity. According to Vráblíková (2014), “participation in nonelectoral political activities has grown dramatically in recent decades and protesting has become a ‘normal’ conventional activity similar to the panoply of other nonelectoral activities such as signing petitions” (p. 205). The author says this is potentiated by the political context of a society, advocating that a more open political opportunity structure defined by decentralization of power has a big role on influencing



citizen activism. This is because there are “more options and access points for influencing politics” (p. 206) and “a higher chance of being successful if they decide to participate” (p. 206).

## **5.2. Context of political opportunities: the variables at play**

Eisinger (1973) defined structure of political opportunities as the factors in an environment which can restrain or open the gates for certain forms of political activity. Gamson and Meyer (1992) highlight the fact that the concept of political opportunity rather than defining a variable, represents a cluster of factors that influence certain behavior. The authors reflect on the fact that often this concept is used as a univocal variable which does not require specificity, but in fact they argue that its operationalization only offers explanations if used with specific variables applied to the context being analyzed (idem).

This theory has been used for instance to understand the influence social protest mobilization can have on a public policy, in the way these protests can propel governments' concession on some issues (Meyer, 2004). Nonetheless, as pointed by Meyer (idem), it is important to distinguish between a context with opportunities for mobilization and with opportunities for influence. According to the author, who recaps a series of factors that can influence opportunities for mobilization, “unwelcome changes in policy”, open party systems, political and activist culture are major forces driving citizen mobilization. Opportunities for influence often are associated with the way a social movement can provoke governments' discussions or reflections over a topic, making it dominant in the public agenda, or contribute for policy reform (Meyer, 2004, pp.135-138). In the case of this thesis, I will be mostly focusing on the opportunities for influence, since the history of social movements in Argentina shows a strong mobilization for human rights, workers' rights, women's rights, etc. and therefore that part is not as relevant for what I am trying to assess here.

Political opportunity also originates a discussion between structure and agency in the context of opportunities (Gamson & Meyer, 1992; Meyer, 2004). While some scholars define a more passive view, in which a movement's actions (or agency) are defined by the political environment comprised by political structure, governmental openness to dialogue with civil society, social structure and stability (Eisinger, 1973) -, others say it is the other way around (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996). This approach defines a movement's agency as the builder of the structure, creating the opportunities, rather than reacting to them (Gamson & Meyer, 1992).

Political opportunity structures will also welcome institutional action and extrainstitutional action differently (Gamson & Meyer, 1992). This means that while some political conjunctures might be more prone to be influenced by more institutionalized activity – like in the case of the Campaña by the *cabildeo* parlamentario – others might have a context in which extrainstitutional activity can have a stronger influence. At the same time, some scholars argue that a symbiotic model is also possible, in the case that the structure of political opportunity welcomes institutional activism better than an extrainstitutional one. In these cases, a dialogue between both types of activism may occur, with the more institutionalized ones working in articulation with those who militate outside the institutions to

arrange channels of influence for those working from that extrainstitutional sight (Gamson & Meyer, 1992). Basically, an articulation between activists working in different sites will surge to reinforce the strength of a certain claim through those who have a closer access to the centers of power – something that has happened with the articulation between lobby and street protest in the Campaña.

As previously explained, the political opportunity structure can only be useful if a set of variables is defined to understand a certain context. According to Gamson and Meyer (1992):

Relatively stable elements of political opportunity are useful in comparing the incidence and success of social movements in different settings. The volatile elements, however, are more useful in understanding the process of interaction between the opening and closing of political space and the strategic choices of movements (p. 289)

In this case, the variables I am going to use are not only defined by my interviews, but also by the referred literature. Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) define countermovements as “a critical component in the structure of political opportunity the other side faces” (p. 1633). Based on that, I am defining the *ola celeste*/antiderechos movement as a volatile variable, because it surged as a countermovement to the *marea verde*. Even though the religious and conservative speeches have been present since before the *marea verde*, as I have explained before they have gained another strength when the feminist movements started gaining more influence in the political agenda. They showed another organization in comparison with previous decades, and they represented a counter speech.

Another aspect worth of consideration is the strength of the opinion of the President in a presidential regime. According to Meyer (2004), the mobilization of social movements decreases when a President is vocal and supports the aims of social movements. But the opportunities for influence in this case have not been considered, and that is exactly what I intend to focus on. In 2018, Mauricio Macri, the President at the time, approved the discussion of the abortion bill presented by the Campaña for the first time. Even though he was not pro-abortion, he enabled the debate after a strong mobilization in the streets. In 2019, the citizens elected a President who had declared himself pro-abortion since the electoral campaign. In 2020, his executive board presented a bill for discussion in the Chambers – which had some differences in comparison with the Campaña’s bill, but still was supported by the movement.

The cultural climate is another important aspect of the political opportunities structure to be taken into account (Gamson & Meyer, 1992), because it defines ideological trends and, in this case, the *marea verde* was acting in the surge of the fourth wave of feminism, which was marked by an historical mass mobilization, reflected on great support from the streets to the entertainment and media world.

With my analysis, I intend to use this concept to understand how the feminists perceive the opportunities opened for influence of the public agenda and the legislative discussions, as well as how they understand the impact the street mobilizations had on the approval of the new abortion law. Therefore, for this I have to take into account the factors displayed in the last paragraph: the *ola celeste* as a countermovement, the cultural climate of the fourth feminist wave, and the influence that a pro-abortion President has.

Both concepts – autonomy and political opportunities structure –working intertwined will allow me to understand how the abortion mobilization in Argentina defined its unique form of autonomy – defined by an articulation of more and less autonomous forms of feminism - and succeeded in promoting change within a context that favored them but was also built by them.



## 6. Methodology

To conduct an analysis over the topic of my research, I departed from an initial research question constructed as follows: *How did the Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito conquered the legalization of abortion on demand in Argentina?* This explorative empirical start had three distinctive goals: to understand how the movement reached an historical influence, what strategies they have combined in order to achieve this, and the perceived extent of the influence of the work of Campaña in creating a context prone to influence, where other factors also have a say.

To analyze this case, I followed a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interview with 15 different activists linked to the pro-abortion feminist movement in Argentina. They are associated with more autonomous forms of feminism, namely independent militants, people militating in collectives, associations, or national networks of support.

Participants were from six provinces (Córdoba, Salta, Tucumán, Entre Ríos, Formosa and Buenos Aires) and from the federal capital – Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (CABA). They have different years of feminist militance engaged in different moments of the feminist action in the country, but all involved in the abortion struggle.

The semi-structured interview guide allowed the participants to develop other issues that might show as relevant for our conversation, for instance, specifics of the places where they are militants. My analysis of the discourse followed an inductive approach of thematic analysis methodology as established by Braun and Clarke (2012), which the authors define as “a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across data set” (p. 57). The inductive approach means that the codes and themes identified will derive directly from the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 58).

The interviewees perception of the reality defined my analysis as I followed a decolonial feminist theoretical framework. This framework is essential to sustain the thematic analysis I conducted, since it cannot be done “in a theoretical vacuum” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p.337) and because I am aware of the fact that I am a white woman producing academic knowledge about non-white feminist history, which represents an unequal power relation I must acknowledge and take responsibility over. Furthermore, I followed Donna Haraway’s view of situated knowledge (1995), which states that feminist knowledge production should offer an enriching detailed view of an experience, entailing a critical and reflective work about our relationships with others and levels of privilege.

As pointed by Narvaz and Koller (2006), the feminist movement nowadays is leaving its original roots of being predominantly intellectual, white, and middle-classed; now it is moved by diversity of speeches and trends. According to these authors, feminist epistemologies are also currently more engaged with social change, therefore impartiality, neutrality or objectivity are to be avoided (idem). It is important for me as a white woman not to make this study another opportunity for white women to take on non-white experiences and give opinion or frame their speech under my experience, but to let

this study be a platform to write about Latin-American feminism, Argentine feminism, through the words of those who are part of it.

Authors argue that conducting an investigation about feminist issues does not come without a responsibility for the results produced which can potentiate social transformations (Narvaz & Koller, 2006; Neves & Nogueira, 2005). These authors also point out the fact that reflexivity is key in these studies and criticize an objective or neutral position, as it might refrain the process of change in society (Narvaz & Koller, 2006). Taking this into account, I wanted my investigation to be transparent and produce conclusions that can contribute to the deepening of the studies of Argentine feminism through the eyes of those who live it. I do not wish to “speak for” or “on behalf” of those who are the subjects of my thesis, but rather use their words to write their own reality. Because of this, since my interviews are going to be held in Spanish, I will maintain the original language of the speech and add an English translation in footnotes. Translation is an issue in many investigations, because as described by Roulston (2014), “there are no ‘right’ ways to transcribe and/or translate interview data, but the choices made in the processes of transcription and/or translation allow certain kind of analytic questions to be asked” (p.301). Manning (2018) says that translation is a kind of “in-between space of multiplicities, exchanges, renegotiations and discontinuities” (p.316) which can revert to an old colonial idea of language superiority. Because I am assuming a decolonial framework, I will not let the translated speech dominate my analysis, especially because it might obliterate some rich expressions and cultural aspects of the Argentine Spanish.

Interviews were conducted from March to June of 2022. When I arrived in the capital, luckily the International Women’s Day was about to happen, and while wandering around the streets of San Telmo, I met a woman who was distributing flyers announcing the March 8<sup>th</sup> celebrations. This woman had been militating for years in the feminist movement and was then part of a collective of women and dissidences connected to a leftist party. After chatting for a few minutes about my thesis, she told me she could get me in contact with her *compañeras*<sup>10</sup>, and a couple days later I got a text from her with my first contact for an interview. From there, I usually asked the person I was interviewing if they had any other contact that they thought could serve the purpose of my thesis, following the snowball sampling method. I also got in contact with some militants through Instagram pages of feminist collectives and through other people I met because of my supervisor.

From the 15 interviews conducted for the purpose of this investigation, six of them were conducted face to face, while the rest was via Zoom, because of geographical distance or time constraints. Four of the interviewees participated in paired interviews instead of individual ones. This happened because the participants were able to be in the same place at the same time and agreed to be interviewed alongside another person. The questions revolved around the discussion between autonomous and institutionalized

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<sup>10</sup> Inclusive term used in Spanish to designate people who are one’s militating companions.

feminist identities, agendas and strategies, the relevance of that discussion in the work of the Campaña and the importance of this movement in the approval of the abortion law. I also questioned participants about the relevance of other factors for the approval of the law and specifics of what they did in their militance. I have elaborated a table that has been added in the annexes including a summary of the profile of each interviewee and added the script for the interviews. The Table 6.1 includes their militance experience related to the movement, the approximate time of militance and in which province they militate. The project was submitted for review to the Ethics Committee and was approved. All interviewees signed an informed consent and kept my contact in case they wished to withdraw their testimony from the investigation. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees and were transcribed with the help of Microsoft Word's voice feature and corrected by me.

I followed thematic analysis method six-steps process suggested by Terry et al. (2017), which starts with familiarizing with the data, seconded by an initial phase of coding. Since I had reviewed the transcriptions before, I had already taken the time to read the interviews and underline some parts that stood out. Nonetheless, I read it once more to take note of some patterns and write notes on the margins of the sheets. I decided to carry all the process manually, as I believe it will provide a more trustworthy analysis, and of course a subjective lens, because what we see in the data also reflects our opinions, our interpretations, and our position in relation to the issue (Terry et al., 2017). Then, I passed on to the third step of TA, which is the creation of themes. the I moved on to the last phases of this methodology, , in which I reviewed the themes and defined their limits. Initially, I had eight themes and went on to work on their relevance to the research question and understanding if these themes could be considered within others. The final themes can be seen on the Table 6.2 in the annexes.

Instead of using the interviewees' real names and trying to preserve their anonymity, I have decided to refer to them as "compañeras", which is a term used by mostly all of them, which refers to their companions in the struggle for the legalization of abortion. This term not only maintains autonomy, but also reflects a denomination commonly used in the interviews and reverts to a sense of companionship felt in the process. Since, all the interviewees identify with the feminine pronoun I will keep the word in the feminine form. I will give each "compañera" a number from 1 to 15, which represents the total of militants participating in this study.

In the next chapter, I will present my analysis of the data, according with what is briefly described in the table in the annexes, which contains the final themes, their description and the codes associated. I have maintained the themes on the original language of the interviews since they are not included in the text; their translation is offered in the Table 6.2. The codes are presented in English in the text to facilitate the reading. Bigger quotes will be maintained in Spanish, and I will add an English translation to the footnotes at the end of the dissertation.





## 7. Analysis of the interviews

### 7.1. La Campaña como eje fundamental de unión de los feminismos

The Campaña turned out to be an *articulation of different feminisms and feminist practices*, which dialogued with each other in order to achieve one common goal: access to abortion on demand. In this quest, it was important to acknowledge the contribution that different strategies had and the role played by the Campaña in these regards, creating a vision of autonomy of its own that combined extrainstitutional political confrontation with the State and embedded autonomy.

Horizontality, plurality, democracy, and federalization are some of the words that describe the Campaña, according to Compañera 9 and Compañera 12. The horizontality and democracy of the movement are reflected on the assemblies in which decisions are made based on a consensus, plurality is seen on the diversity of actors and feminisms that converge in the movement and the federalization is observed on the networks created between territories to represent the specifics of communities.

The movement positions itself as independent from the Government, in confrontation with it to be able to demand change. As highlighted by Compañera 12, it would be hard to “demand change from a government that one belongs to” and therefore independence was important. The strategy of street protest defined the extrainstitutional political activity of the Campaña. In the streets, the movement demanded change and showed a massive popular support for the proposed bill. Some Compañeras defined the “estrategia callejera” as the most important part of the Campaña. As a strategy that imply a confrontation with the State and a “rejection of its modus operandi” (Moura de Oliveira & Dowbor, 2020, p. 54) the estrategia callejera was crucial for the success of the Campaña. According to Compañera 4:

Si no hubiésemos sido más en la calle, la ley no salía, no hubiese salido, ya venían bajando la caña, como dicen acá, en dos o tres oportunidades anteriores y no salía (...) si no hubiésemos copado las calles no iba a salir.<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, the necessity of articulating strategies that implied a more institutionalized approach were also recognized by the Campaña. This meant that the Campaña had to create another set of strategies to be able to generate change. From inside the movement, a Lobbying Commission – “Comisión de Cabildeo” – was founded to guarantee contact and representation of the interests of the Campaña in the centers of political decision. This Commission was responsible to work directly with legislators with the aim to convince them to support the proposal of the Campaña. In this strategy, it is possible to recognize another form of autonomy as defined by Moura de Oliveira and Dowbor (2020)

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<sup>11</sup> Translation: “If we had not been more in the streets, the law would not have had been approved, they were already losing interest in it, in other two or three previous opportunities and the law did not pass (...), if we hadn’t taken the streets, it wouldn’t have been approved.”

which is embedded autonomy – the Campaña acknowledged the fact that a certain reform was needed and understood that to achieve it the State institutions had to be involved. As Compañera 9 stated,

No es que estás haciendo una revolución social, estás luchando por una ley, que tiene una significación muy importante que modifica de manera radical la vida de las personas. Es una ley lo que hay que conseguir, o sea, que tienes que trabajar dentro del Congreso.<sup>12</sup>

According to the compañeras interviewed, this strategy was usually conducted or mostly defended by the more institutionalized feminists like CDD or feminists closer to the Government, belonging to traditional parties and Government's institutions. Even though the interviewees mostly agree that this strategy was of the utmost importance, they also highlight that it did create tension regarding what strategy should be paramount. According to Compañera 8, while some focused on the *estrategia callejera* as explained before, some militants defined the *cabildeo parlamentario* as the most relevant strategy and relegated the street protest:

La Campaña hizo cabildeo, pero bueno las Católicas que están dentro de la Campaña sólo querían hacer cabildeo, no quería que nos movilizáramos. Ahí bueno, 'está bien ustedes hacen cabildeo, nosotras hacemos la calle'. Eso fue lo que pasó y se terminaron combinando, porque obviamente sin la discusión en el Congreso no iba a salir el proyecto, pero con sólo la discusión en el Congreso el proyecto no iba a salir y eso digamos creo que quedó muy demostrado.<sup>13</sup>

As pointed by Gamson and Meyer (1992) extrainstitutional activity and institutional activity can have different levels of influence depending on the structure of political opportunities. In this case, we see the symbiotic model which was explained on the theoretical chapter of this research, Dialogue between types of activism that serves the aim of reinforcing the claim for the legalization of abortion on demand. In the spaces, where more institutionalized forms of activism have a stronger potential, the *cabildeo* was present to be a platform for what was being demanded in the streets.

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<sup>12</sup> Translation: "it is not like you are trying to make a social revolution, you are fighting for a law, which has a very important meaning and radically changes people's lives. It is a law what we wanted to achieve, that means we had to work inside the Congress"

<sup>13</sup> Translation: "The Campaña lobbied, but the Católicas who belonged to the Campaña only wanted to do that, they did not want us to mobilize in the streets. There we said 'well okay, you will do the lobbying, we will do the street protest'. That was what went on and they ended up reinforcing each other, because obviously without the discussion in the Congress the bill would never be approved, but only that would not make it either and I think that was visible."

The Campaña is praised for its ability to combine these different perspectives and strategies – callejera and cabildeo - turning into a *space for encuentro*<sup>14</sup>, unifying their differences in a common speech:

Lo que tiene de fantástico la Campaña es que coordina un espacio, donde podemos articular, debatir, incluso si estamos en desacuerdo en estrategias, las debatimos, pero tenemos un sentido en común, que es este derecho democrático, que era el derecho al aborto. (...) Yo creo que el rol de la campaña fue fundamental, como ejemplo de coordinación entre organizaciones. Podemos opinar distinto en muchas cosas, pero tenemos un punto en común y vamos con ese punto, hasta que salga. (Compañera 10)<sup>15</sup>

For Compañera 3, the Campaña allowed feminists “to see” and “to find” each other, and for Compañera 1, the Campaña was important because it transformed the struggle for legal abortion into a federal act, combining the idiosyncrasies of the country in the most accurate way possible. The Campaña became the most prominent actor in the field exactly because it did not prioritize one strategy over the other, included the diversities of the territory in the struggle, promoting articulation, as pointed out by Compañera 9. It vowed to achieve the access to abortion on demand to all people able to carry a pregnancy and did so with all the instruments it had available, as Compañera 12 said

[La Campaña fue] Un potencial que es más que la suma de las partes, digamos. No es que, por un lado, estaban las que hacían acciones callejeras y, por el otro, las que iban y discutían con les candidates, varies funcionaries y, por otro lado, las compañeras que ponían el cuerpo en los centros de salud y, por otro lado, las docentes que de la ESI se peleaban para que se trabajara el aborto.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, we could even discuss a new kind of autonomy created by the Campaña, which results of a combination of strategies that suits the context in which they militated. As Compañera 2 described it, these strategies became different “layers of power and struggle”, because there did not have to be just

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<sup>14</sup> I have decided to keep the word “encuentro” in Spanish, because I believe it gives a better representation of what the campana meant for feminists. A meeting space does not quite picture the physical and ideological “encuentro” that the Campaña propelled. The Campaña created a common ground for feminists that reunited, once again physically and ideologically, in order to achieve abortion rights.

<sup>15</sup> Translation: “what is fantastic about the Campaña is that it coordinates a space where we can articulate, debate, even when we are in disagreement regarding strategies, we debate them, but always have a common goal, that is this democratic right, the right to abortion. (...) I believe that the Campaña’s role was fundamental, as an instance of coordination between organizations. We can have different opinions in a lot of things, but we have that goal in common and we will fight for it, until it is achieved.”

<sup>16</sup> Translation: “it is a potential that is more than adding up parts, let’s say. It is not that, on one side, are the ones that did street protests, and on the other side, the ones that went to discuss with the legislators, or other representators, an on another side, the compañeras that were in the hospitals, and then, the teachers who were fighting for abortion to be included in sex education”

one way to militate abortion rights, each different strategy added strength to the abortion rights movement. In the Campaña, each type of militance had the possibility to work towards the approval of the bill in the spaces where they had access to, be it peripheral neighborhoods, communal libraries, middle and high schools, universities, workers' unions. But they also reunited in common strategies like the pañuelazos, which were a kind of performance that usually took place on martes verdes and involved hundreds, thousands, and even millions on the streets raising their pañuelos to show support for abortion rights. The pañuelo became an identifying object for all the people militating the abortion law and in the words of Compañera 8, sometimes it gave people confidence to speak their truth and share stories related to abortion, because it identified those who supported the cause and that would not project negative judgements, allowing people to open about their experiences:

Íbamos nosotras pegando afiches en la calle y pasa una señora y te toca, te volvías y te decía “nena, nena, ¡yo aborté!”. Pero ¿por qué me lo está contando a mí que no sabe quién soy?, no me conoce, ni nada. Evidentemente, tenía que ver con que algo se habilitó a nivel social en la posibilidad de poner en palabras cosas que no estaban dichas. (...) Por ahí traía el pañuelo o sabía que era una activista y entonces se sentía como habilitada para hablar del tema.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond interconnected strategies that are rooted in different feminist agendas, *the militances overlapped*. The testimonies from the militants interviewed showed that autonomy and institutionalization do not have defined boundaries. Most of Compañeras have experiences of activism that cross different spaces, being it the streets, workers' unions, medical offices, schools and universities, neighborhood assemblies, or political parties. Compañera 14, who militates in a collective, but also in the university where she teaches, addressed the specific case of the province where she is an activist since the 1990s:

En Córdoba teníamos la particularidad de que éramos pocas y que las mismas que estaban armando las ONGs para hacer llegar la ayuda a los barrios eran las mismas trabajadoras sociales, que se recibían en la facu, que intentaban armar un espacio en la Universidad para dar cátedras o dar una perspectiva feminista y eran las mismas que marchábamos. Entonces, esas discusiones digamos o, por lo menos, ese feminismo de las ONGs de los 90 tenía esa particularidad, ¿no? Entonces no

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<sup>17</sup> Translation: “We would be out putting stickers on the streets and a lady passes by and touches you, you turn around and she says ‘Sweetheart, I had an abortion’. But why was she telling us those things, she doesn’t even know me, nothing. Obviously, it had to do with something that was enabled on a social level, the possibility of putting into words things that were unsaid. (...) Noted the pañuelo or knew that I was an activist and felt like she could talk about the issue.”

podemos decir que las feministas institucionalizadas, en nuestro caso, las de las ONGs, porque eran las mismas compañeras que estaban en la calle, las mismas que iban al barrio.<sup>18</sup>

The interviewees understand the issue of autonomy and institutionalization as a debate, but they argue that in real life it is not as linear as that, not as separated, not as dichotomic, because one can belong to different spaces, even though they might prefer certain kind of practices that can be linked to autonomy, like Compañera 7:

Para mí tiene que ver mucho con la verticalidad o la horizontalidad que tampoco es dicotómico. (...) Mi feminismo siempre fue muy desde lo personal, (...) muy desde el deseo y algunos eran más... creo que eran más territoriales. Creo que coincide, entre todos los espacios donde estuve, que eran más de acciones concretas, ninguno de los espacios que estuve fueron solo juntarse a debatir qué tal cosa o el otro. Todos los espacios siempre fueran de la acción, de 'que vamos a hacer en concreto con esto' (...) pero el feminismo para mí es un ejercicio de práctica cotidiana en cualquier espacio, incluso en el consultorio donde trabajo.<sup>19</sup>

Compañera 13 also raised another aspect in the discussion about autonomy, because in her opinion it is impossible to reach full autonomy when funds are needed:

Compañera 13: Creo que hay muchas organizaciones autónomas y creo que nunca hay una autonomía total.

Bárbara: ¿Por qué crees en eso?

Compañera 13: Porque siempre hay algún tipo de financiación, siempre hay digamos un tejido que se arma y uno no puede ser autónomo, completamente, porque necesitas sacar fondos de algún lado y me parece que está bien, digamos, me parece súper lógico, porque también es necesario demandar.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Translation: "in Córdoba, we had the particularity of being very few and the same that were forming the NGOs to take help to the neighborhoods were the social workers, that graduated from university, that tried to organize a space in the university to teach specific seminars with feminist perspectives and were the same ones that marched in the streets. Those discussions about NGOs feminisms of the 1990s had that singularity, no? So, we cannot say that the institutionalized feminists, the ones from NGOs, in our case, because they were the same compañeras that were in the streets, that went to the neighborhoods."

<sup>19</sup> Translation: "for me it has a lot to do with verticality and horizontality, which is not that dichotomic either. (...) My feminist experience has always been very personal, (...) coming from desire and some of them were more... I believe they were more territorial. I think it coincides, in every space I have been, that they were all concrete actions, none of the spaces was just about discussing one thing or the other. Every space was more about acting, 'what are we gonna do about this' (...) but feminism for me is a daily exercise in any space, even in the doctor's office where I work."

<sup>20</sup> Translation: "Compañera 13: I believe there are many autonomous organizations and I believe that there never is a complete autonomy. Bárbara: Why do you believe that? Compañera 13: Because there always is some kind

Financial aid was a topic of concern for the Campaña that restricted the origins of the funds to funders who supported and respected its work without compromising any of the Campaña's principles, in order to guarantee that other interests did not influence their work. According to Compañera 12, "the only guarantee that movements have to achieve [their] goals, of sustaining them has to do with political, economic and ideological independence and autonomy." The importance of maintaining autonomy is highlighted by other compañeras, because it keeps feminists away of falling into a political system that does not represent people (Compañera 13), while institutionalized feminism loses its potential for interpellation, because their action is limited by Governments, debilitating the mobilization in the streets:

Porque todo el movimiento que lucha por los derechos, por terminar con la opresión, en este caso visión de género, en la medida en que tener algún tipo de compromiso político con un Gobierno limita su capacidad de acción, ¿no? (...) creo que el feminismo institucionalizado pierde su carácter de potencia que permite digamos discutir en todos los niveles, por todos los límites que tiene. (Compañera 8)<sup>21</sup>

As we can see with what has been disclosed before, the compañeras highlight a very important role of the Campaña in the whole abortion struggle. Since 2005 it was responsible to unite all the differences between feminisms, gathering a panoply of militances to work towards a new abortion law that recognized the right and guaranteed access to the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy. This combination of militances results in the articulation of different strategies, some more autonomous and others more institutionalized. Nonetheless, as the interviewees pointed out this autonomous and institutionalized practices intertwine in their militance, because feminists take their activism wherever they can, be it the streets, the schools where they teach, their family gathering, their work offices, etc. Because of these idiosyncrasies of the movement in Argentina, we can talk about a new form of autonomy – one that results from the combination of extrainstitutional political activity and embedded autonomy. My suggestion is to refer to it as a blended autonomy, one that occurs when the previously mentioned types of autonomy work in simultaneity. The use of the word blended suggests the emergence of a link between the extrainstitutional political activity in relation to the State and the embedded autonomy, that does not mean that one replaces the other at times. Rather, they function articulated and in simultaneity, as the militances overlap.

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of financial aid, there always exists a certain layer which does not allow for total autonomy, because you need to get funds from somewhere and I think that's okay, it's logical, because you also need to demand."

<sup>21</sup> Translation: "Because every movement that fights for rights, to end oppression, in this case gender one, if they have any kind of political compromise with a government, their action is limited, no? (...) I think that institutionalized feminism loses its potential for discussion, because of every limit it has."

## 7.2. Una construcción de hegemonía: concientizar, presionar y despenalizar

Interviewees agree that there was a structure of opportunities in which the bill was approved. This structure was constructed by the Campaña, based on working towards the social legitimation of the abortion rights and the support in the centers of decision. One of the Campaña main aims was the legalization of abortion by creating the promotion of social acceptance regarding it, in order to do not to have a law that was unclear/unknown or supported by society in general (Compañera 5). In this sense, *the “coming out” of abortion* or, in other words the normalization of an issue in big public debates and in smaller daily discussions that used to be taboo for the majority of the Argentinean society, was of extreme importance in the approval of the law. To generate this acceptance, it was critical that militants talked about it and made visible the need to guarantee abortion:

Desde el comienzo, el trabajo fue un trabajo de concientización, de difusión, de educación y de debate. (...) Tuvimos mucha fuerza como para lograr eso, tuvimos que construir mucho para poder tener ese espacio (...) Sacamos al aborto del clóset, se lo sacamos, lo llevamos a la discusión en la calle, en las escuelas, en los sindicatos. Les niños preguntaban y se les hablaba y, por supuesto, [lo llevamos a] la agenda política. (Compañera 5)<sup>22</sup>

For the compañeras, the fact that the debate in the Chambers was broadcasted on national television offered a different perspective on the matter, because it allowed people to hear different arguments regarding abortion. These different arguments focused on health issues, on guaranteeing the possibility of choosing in case of an undesired pregnancy, on preventing deaths, and so on. Compañera 1 agrees that this was of the utmost importance, because “when the debate arrives at your dining room, or at the kitchen where you have a television, something of what is said sticks with you, you listen to it.” This media coverage brought the discussion closer to people that might have been not aware of the issue or had other opinions about it.

The compañeras underscore that the cultural change in the general society in terms of what abortion signifies, how it stopped being penalized socially and perceived as a right that needed to be guaranteed by the State was massively seen in younger generations:

Soy un poco pesimista en ese sentido [del cambio cultural] y digo para cambiar la mentalidad tienen que pasar creo varias generaciones, que ya tengan esos derechos, que no los acaben de conquistar

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<sup>22</sup> Translation: “since the beginning, we work on raising awareness, spreading information about the issue, educating and debating. (...) We had to have a lot of strength to achieve that, we had to fight a lot to have that space. (...) We took abortion out of the closet, we took it out and took it to be discussed in the streets, in the schools, in the unions. Kids asked questions and they were replied to, and of course, we took it to the political agenda.”

como nos pasa a nosotras, que ya los tienen incorporados en sus vidas cotidianas (...) Yo lo que noto que pasó fue que hubo un ingreso al feminismo y a la Campaña de jovencitas y adolescentes en la lucha, que están persiguiendo la ley, la vigilia, ... adolescentes del nivel del secundario, jovencitas. Lo que veía y las que tenía a mi alrededor, veía ya una actitud más segura, más informada, un poco más contestataria y de poner límites. (Compañera 6)<sup>23</sup>

This cultural change particularly seen among younger generations is associated with the emergence of NUM, an event that goes back to 2015, highlighting the importance of tackling the issue of gender violence in Argentina. Its creation followed a series of cases of feminicides that shocked society. NUM started articulating with the Campaña, framing the illegality of abortion as a form of institutional violence – which is another lens of argumentation that supported the claim for abortion rights, that brought several new militants to the Campaña and is responsible for the massification of the movement for abortion. Unlike abortion, gender violence did not generate an ethical debate, because it is something that is already perceived as wrong and a situation to be tackled, already achieved a consensus:

La violencia feminicida es una cosa que no tiene discusión. No es un debate ético, no se plantea como debate ético, es de más fácil accesibilidad (...) A partir de ahí, [se genera] un proceso de pensamiento, de información a través de poder discutir y debatir se logró mucha adhesión a la lucha por el derecho al aborto, porque había que vencer barreras mucho más fuertes. (Compañera 5)<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, NUM propelled the politization of a new generation of feminists, especially those in middle and secondary school ages, which massively joined the NUM and the Campaña, as they articulated with each other. This phenomenon of massive support for abortion rights generated what is known as the marea verde, reflected on thousands and million people on the streets demanding the recognition of the right to interrupt a pregnancy:

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<sup>23</sup> Translation: “I am a bit pessimistic when it comes to that [cultural change] and I think that for mentalities to change generations have to pass, in which they already have those rights, that they haven’t just conquered them, like it happened to us, that they already have them integrated in their daily lives. (...) What I notice is that there was an introduction to feminism and to the Campaña of young girls and teenagers that are demanding this law... teenagers from high school, little girls. What I saw around me what a more secure stance, more informed, more demanding and limits-setter.”

<sup>24</sup> Translation: “Femicide violence is something that does not raise discussion. It is not an ethical debate, it’s more accessible. (...) From there, a process of thinking [is generated], of information through discussion and debate, we arrive at a point of bigger support for the right to abortion, because there were stronger barriers to be taken down.”



Lo crucial fue como fueron las estudiantes de los secundarios, de las escuelas medias que convencían a sus profesoras, a sus familias en su casa, como iban a el debate defendiendo que el aborto era un derecho legítimo y que había que pelear para conquistar el derecho. (Compañera 10)<sup>25</sup>

The interviewees argue that between 2018 – when the bill was first discussed in the lower Chamber - and 2020 – when the law was approved -, abortion became a constant issue in the public agenda, in the media, at family reunions, in chats during school breaks, in classes, and of many university projects and essays (Compañera 6 and Compañera 15). Here we can understand how the movement installed the issue on the public agenda, provoking social debate and the discussion of the proposed the bill, creating a context of opportunities for influence, as established by Meyer (2004).

In order to make abortion come out of the closet and end the social penalization of this issue, the compañeras say that finding *the right arguments for each situation* was also very important for the Campaña. For instance, exposing the dangers of its illegality by placing abortion under a health issue frame also allowed to take this debate spaces that were dominated by religious or conservative speeches:

Yo creo que nosotras no hubiésemos podido obtener las discusiones y poder discutir, incluso en los barrios que son sumamente evangelistas, entrar en estas discusiones si nosotras no hubiésemos dicho ‘las mujeres que se mueren, se mueren porque no tienen acceso a la salud’. (Compañera 14)<sup>26</sup>

The Campaña also framed their speech around social justice, because the illegality of abortion affected people in different ways, being a particular problem for impoverished groups. Before being legal and free, the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy was conducted in some private clinics where the procedure would cost around 40,000 Argentinean pesos, while the average wage was 30,000 pesos, as Compañera 11 pointed out.

For Compañera 15, the Campaña built a speech that was “socially digestible”, meaning that it was not too provocative, focusing on social justice, human rights, and public health, generating greater acceptance in society. Furthermore, the movement also had the motto – “Educación sexual para Decidir, Anticonceptivos para no Abortar y Aborto Legal para no Morir” -, which was another “great public strategy”, as defined by Compañera 2. It was catchy and highlighted the concerns of the Campaña: giving people options before choosing abortion but guaranteeing access to it in case they needed it. even

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<sup>25</sup> Translation: “the crucial part were the female students from high schools, middle schools that convinced their teachers, their families at home, and went to the debates defending abortion as legitimized right and that there was a need to fight to conquer it.”

<sup>26</sup> Translation: “I believe that if we would not have been able to install discussion and be able to debate, even in the neighborhoods with strong evangelic influence, we would not have been able to enter discussion if we did not frame the speech in the following way: ‘the women that are dying, are dying because they don’t have access to healthcare.’”

though the Campaña acknowledged that abortion is inseparable from people's autonomy over their own bodies, it deliberately focused more on the fact that guaranteeing abortion is to prevent deaths, because it enhanced the support for the law. According to Compañera 9:

Sí creo que, si bien los fundamentos de la Campaña tienen que ver con la problemática de salud pública, con la problemática de justicia social y con la problemática democrática, sí creo que hubo una acentuación fuerte en la problemática de salud pública y la cuestión más constitucional, ¿no? Porque me parece que era lo que permitía tener mucho aval. (...) Yo creo que en la calle no se bajó nunca eso, ¿no se bajó nunca! En las negociaciones puede ser que se haya bajado un poco, pero no desapareció esa discusión.<sup>28</sup>

The political debate is a strategic one, according to Compañera 3, because negotiations and moderation are often needed, meaning some concessions need to be made in order to achieve certain things. "The [Campaña's] discourse not always was one of confrontation", stated Compañera 3. It was important to reach some agreements with ministries, local governments, and legislators in order to expand the support to the Campaña. This Compañera also highlighted that generating a common discourse – advocating the right to abortion based on health rights, on body autonomy and the possibility of choosing, on preventing deaths, summed up in the Campaña's motto – for all those who militated in the movement was paramount, because it unified the *marea verde* that consecutively filled the streets all over the country:

Logramos un discurso común, como explicaron y como decir que es necesario tener el derecho a la interrupción voluntaria del embarazo. (...) Entonces ese discurso unificado fue decisivo, porque nos llevaba juntas, íbamos juntas e íbamos haciendo exactamente lo mismo en todas partes.<sup>29</sup>

As a corollary of all these strategies and networks of action, the movement constructed a context in which the chances of approving a new abortion law were high. Compañera 3 said that it was a "*window of opportunities* [for the *marea verde*]." Not only it was the result of the work of the Campaña, but also of all the discussions previous to that, the massification of the movement that concurred in a great social pressure, especially since 2015 with the emergence of NUM:

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<sup>28</sup> Translation: "Yes I believe that, even if the core principles of the Campaña have to do with public health, social justice, and democracy, I believe the focus was on the public health and the constitutional lines, no? Because it seems to me that it was what allowed for a stronger support. (...) I believe that in the streets that was never a problem, we never stopped fighting for all the questions related to abortion. In the negotiations it might have happened that some levels were not as considered, but in the streets that never happened."

<sup>29</sup> Translation: "We achieved a common speech, how it was explained, and how we expressed the necessity of having the right to the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy. (...) That unified speech was decisive, because it took us together, we were together and we were doing the same everywhere."

Bárbara: ¿Te parece que el logro fue solamente un trabajo influenciado por la Campaña o viene de otro lugar?

Compañera 15: Yo creo que tiene que ver con 15 años de Campaña, tiene que ver con toda la genealogía anterior de los feminismos y la lucha por el derecho al aborto, la Comisión por el derecho al aborto... Tuvo antecedentes, tiene que ver con que el 2015, con Ni Una Menos en Argentina (...) mucha juventud, muy muy grande y masivo. (...) Hay un montón de estrategias que hicieron ocupar un montón de espacios, además de las redes sociales y la comunicación que nos dimos toda una tarea. Fue como un despliegue.<sup>30</sup>

Other compañeras define the achievement under a construction of hegemony enabled by the work of all the actors involved. This concept that is usually used to think about the world system and is linked to a geographical conceptualization (Chase-Dunn et al., 1994), can also be applied to understand a particular society. In this case, drawing from Vanden's analysis on Latin American social movements (2007), we can understand that the hegemony created by the Campaña and the marea verde is something that challenged the regular ways of doing politics, extrapolating the political institutions. This hegemony translates into an influence from below and is seen on the relevance the marea verde assumed in society, carrying a huge support for a new abortion law, and on the constant talks around abortion on the media, at universities, in the family gatherings – the issue was everywhere. This construction of hegemony is due to all the events and strategies that resulted of years of work, but also because of the diversity of feminisms that characterized this struggle:

La construcción de la hegemonía es posible en torno a que no le dieron a uno solo [a un actor] el territorio del aborto, creo (...) que nucleaba a todos los feminismos, incluso los feminismos de otros partidos políticos, los académicos y los territoriales. (Compañera 7)<sup>31</sup>

Compañera 7 added that beyond not being the claim of a sole actor, the debate and conversations on abortion crossed different and several spaces of society. The militants had a role in this, taking the issue to all the arenas they had access to, militating in the spaces that had less reach as well:

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<sup>30</sup> Translation: “Bárbara: Do you think it was an achievement of the Campaña only or does it also come from another place? Compañera 15: I believe it has to do with fifteen years of Campaña, it has to do with the genealogy of feminisms and the fight for the abortion rights, the Comisión por el Derecho al Aborto... It has to do with previous things, has to do with 2015, the Ni Una Menos in Argentina (...) a lot of young people, very big and really massive. (...) There is a lot of strategies that made us occupy a lot of spaces, beyond social media and communication, which was an extreme work for us. It was an array of things.”

<sup>31</sup> Translation: “The construction of hegemony is possible because the issue was not in the hands of a sole actor, I think it joined all feminisms, including feminisms of other political parties, academic ones and territorial ones.”

Creo que ninguna de las personas que estábamos en espacios asamblearios, discutiendo ya sea donde sea que pertenezcamos, que no hayan llevado eso a sus espacios más micro. O sea, me da la sensación de que todes se lo llevaban a sus espacios micro, (...) cuando se juntaban a ir a comer y encontrarse en algún lado que nada que ver, y compartir algo sobre el aborto. (Compañera 7)<sup>32</sup>

The support of the President Alberto Fernández was very important, according to other interviewees, who highlighted the influence of his opinion on the members of the Chamber and the Senate:

En un régimen presidencialista, el aval del presidente es muy fuerte (...) por el efecto que se produce en sus propios diputados y son mayoría en las Cámaras. Entonces, sin lugar a duda fue muy importante que Fernández dijera que iba a apoyar. (Compañera 9)<sup>33</sup>

For Compañera 7, there has also another factor important for the context that was built around the approval of a new abortion law. According to her the strong presence of the antiderechos with a speech that presented itself as opposite to the Campaña also shaped the abortion debate. Abortion was a taboo issue, avoided by the antiderechos who put this procedure on the same level as murder. Nonetheless, in order to confront the Campaña they had to voice the issue of abortion; they ended up publicizing it:

No sé si podría decirlo, pero no sé si no convino un poco también la reacción del pañuelo azul, ¿no? Porque de algún modo le dio más publicidad al hablar del aborto. Es muy tosca la militancia del otro lado, o lo que yo veo no es una militancia de la construcción. Entonces, como permitía que la palabra esté, ponga la palabra aborto estaba en cualquier espacio donde podíamos estar trabajando, desde la educación popular, que te lleva en un momento a saber que hay gente que la pasa mal y que se puede morir. Y bueno después una niña o una adolescente, que venía de un discurso y que, de golpe, comienza en el espacio de debate a pensar otras cosas. (Compañera 7)<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Translation: “I believe that all of us that belonged to assemblies, discussing the issue wherever we belonged to, also took the issue to our micro spaces. I have the feeling that everyone took their militance to micro spaces, (...) when they got together or met randomly somewhere, they shared something about the issue of abortion.”

<sup>33</sup> Translation: “in a presidential regime, the support of the President is very strong (...) because of the effect he produces in his own representators which are the majority in the Chambers. So, without a doubt, it was very important that Fernández supported the abortion rights.”

<sup>34</sup> Translation: “I don’t know if I could say it, but I don’t know if the reaction of the blue pañuelo wasn’t convenient, no? Because, in a certain way, they publicized the abortion issue. Their militance is very clumsy, or at least what I see is not something organized. It allowed for the word [abortion] to be present, so the word was everywhere where we could work, in popular education, which allows you to know the case of people that have gone through tough experience and could have died. And then, you have a little girl or a teenager, that came with a determined though and then stars to think about it in another way, because of debate.”

Taking into consideration the testimonies of the interviewees, we could say that the *marea verde* was proactive in the construction of a context prone to legalize the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy. A context in which a big part of society supported this claim, the President was in favor of legalizing it, it became a hot topic not only on media, but also on smaller and intimate groups. This agrees with the perspective that highlights the agency of a movement as crucial for the structure of political opportunities, as presented by Gamson and Meyer (1992). The *marea verde* took advantage of this context, pressuring the dialogue to happen in 2020, after a government change that was in favor of approving a new law, but it was something that resulted out of years of work, as noted by Compañera 5:

No es un regalo de los gobiernos en aquel momento, ni el de ahora, son productos de lucha de muchos años, que algunos gobiernos reconocen y quizás aprovechan. Cuando Macri autorizó la discusión, muchos decían que quiere una cortina de humo para otros problemas. A lo mejor sí, pero lo que nosotras decíamos, yo se me ocurrió decir que, en ese momento, esa cortina de humo la transformamos en humo verde y eso no lo esperaban.<sup>35</sup>

As highlighted on the theoretical chapter of this dissertation, the structure of political opportunities only makes sense when looked at a set of variables, and not as a sole concept that is significant by itself. And that is reflected on the discourse of the interviewees, which have described the context in which the new law on abortion was approved on the basis of different factors, all associated with a more volatile nature (Gamson & Meyer, 1992). The volatile elements of a structure of political opportunities are those that shift regularly with events, the policies and political actors that are involved. They are not fixed or considered as stable, like the political regime or the political institutions that conform it, for example (idem). According to the same authors, volatile elements in the political structure are important “to understand movement outcomes as involving structures which shape and channel activity while, in turn, movements act as agents that help to shape the political space in which they operate” (Gamson & Meyer, 1992, p.289). The cultural climate which is defined by Gamson and Meyer (1992) as an important variable to take into account was also highlighted by the compañeras. This cultural climate is shaped by the big concerns of a certain epoch and in this case, we can talk about a growing concern about feminist struggles, not only in Argentina, but also all over the world. The compañeras argue that the social legitimation of abortion rights – the fact that abortion rights were accepted by a great part of society -, represented by the *marea verde*, associated to the emergence of a new feminist wave, was definitive for

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<sup>35</sup> Translation: “It is not a governments’ gift in that moment, neither now, because it is the product of years of fighting, that some governments recognize and maybe take advantage of. When Macri authorized the discussion, a lot of people said it was a smoke curtain for other problems. Maybe it was, but we feminists said, and I thought in that moment, that we turned that smoke curtain into green smoke and they didn’t expect it.”

the approval of the bill in the Chambers. The social pressure ended up defining the vote of many legislators, as stressed by Compañera 12:

Digo llega un momento en el que el desarrollo es tan fuerte, tan intenso, que ellos mismos, estos personajes los dinosaurios, así como los llamamos, en el Senado (...) tuvieron que votar a favor. Incluso manifestando a veces que no era una decisión personal, sino una cuestión de evaluación política. También están quienes explicitaron que modificaban su voto por presiones de sus propias hijas.<sup>36</sup>

The presidential support was another relevant variable pointed out by the militants interviewed, who have recognized its importance for the voting intentions in the Chambers that form the Argentinean government. The opinion Alberto has on abortion rights defined the voting of many legislators that belong to his party. His support for the legalization of the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy since the electoral campaign also shaped the opinions of those who supported him. Lastly, the ola celeste was linked with a possible positive influence on the work of the marea verde, as an opponent which did not let the debate on the abortion end, giving stage for discussion.

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<sup>36</sup> Translation: “there is a moment in which the unfolding is so strong, so intense, themselves, these characters or dinosaurs, as we call them, in the Senate (...) they had to vote in favor. Sometimes explaining that it wasn’t a personal decision, but a political evaluation. Also those who said that they changed their vote because they were pressured by their daughters.”

## 8. Conclusions

I started this thesis with the aim of answering the following question: How did the Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito conquered the legalization of abortion on demand in Argentina? The Campaña fought for fifteen long years to achieve the legalization of the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy in 2020. Throughout this time the Campaña put in place a set of strategies and a conjuncture that allowed this to happen.

The Campaña created an autonomy of its own, articulating different strategies, some more autonomous – like the street protest – where others more institutionalized – like the *cabildeo* parlamentario. Furthermore, its work was based on pillars like horizontality, plurality, democracy, and federalization which generated a national network demanding the right to legally interrupt pregnancy, involved in the process from decision-making to put matters into hands. The compañeras interviewed recognized the importance of each of these different strategies, acknowledging that it was not an easy process, because different perspectives generated tension. Nonetheless, the Campaña thrived exactly because of that. By being able to combine extrainstitutional political activity with an embedded autonomy (de Oliveira & Dowbor, 2020), the Campaña reinforced its claim for abortion rights in the streets and guaranteed influence in the centers of political decision.

Furthermore, as my interviewees highlight in this articulation, different kinds of militance overlapped, as autonomous and institutionalized forms of feminism can cross ways in the experiences that activists have. According to them, militance is a daily exercise that can happen in one's workspace, which can be a hospital, a school or university, it can be a political institution or a political party, and therefore, the limits are hard to define. Beyond that, social movements' full autonomy is something hard to achieve when militating in a world ruled by a capitalist logic, in which money is needed for everything. For a movement to be totally economically independent is hard, because it does not work to generate money, it survives on voluntary work of its activists and external funds from the government as well as other allies. However, guaranteeing some level of autonomy – for instance political, and ideological – is crucial for the movement, so it can continue demanding change to those who have the political power.

This set of characteristics that shape the identity and behavior of the Campaña have led this investigation to reflect on a new concept of autonomy. Based on the experience shared by the militants interviewed for this thesis, the denomination suggested was blended autonomy, that results from the combination of extrainstitutional political activity and embedded autonomy. The use of the word blended suggests a link between these two types of autonomy defined by de Oliveira and Dowbor (2020), that does not mean that one replaces the other at times. Rather, they function articulated and in simultaneity, as the militances overlap. For the compañeras, it is more important to articulate tactics, and militate wherever they can, be it a more autonomous or more institutionalized space. Rather than sacrificing some spaces in order to maintain a position solely autonomous or strictly institutionalized, they prefer to take the spaces accessible to them.

The “layers of power”, as Compañera 2 described, created by the articulation of strategies allowed the Campaña to generate a narrative supporting the legalization of abortion rights that became dominant in the discussion and set the path for a context prone to be influenced by the movement. These “layers” provoked the coming out of abortion – with the introduction of the debate on abortion in the public sphere and daily lives, through the media, through family chats - and the social legitimation of the claim by society and upheld the movement. The Campaña forged alliance with movements that shared similar goals in order to achieve the legalization of abortion on demand. The NUM is one of those cases that has focused on spreading information and raising awareness about gender violence and feminicides, and contributed to the abortion rights movement by framing the illegality of abortion under a gender violence lens. The NUM in articulation with the Campaña started denouncing the deaths of cis women, trans women and non-binary people who carried abortions in illegality, with no medical supervision. The work of the NUM articulated with the Campaña resulted in a growing support for abortion rights, specially coming from younger generations, and a massification of the movement that was fighting for the recognition of these rights which has unfolded and transformed into the “marea verde”. Moreover, it was also important to adjust the discourses that promoted abortion rights under different framings and find the right arguments to gather people’s sympathy and support for the cause. Thus, public health issues were a highlight in the Campaña’s narrative, opening the doors for its presence in spaces that were dominated by religious influence. As it was possible to understand, focusing on the illegality of abortion as a public health issue enabled a bigger support for the legalization, in society and in the centers of political decision as well, according to the interviewees. Nonetheless, the Campaña never stopped considering that making abortion on demand legal was also a matter of guaranteeing autonomy to all bodies able of carrying a pregnancy; that it also was a matter of social justice, because clandestine abortion practices were particularly dangerous for low-class people, who did not have financial means to pay doctors that would perform the procedure under illegal circumstances.

After years of work, the Campaña constructed a window of opportunities for influence in the political agenda (Meyer, 2004) that resulted in the movement achieving its goal of legalizing the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy in 2020. It was a hegemonic context that meant a logic of influence from below that challenged the regular ways of doing politics, by comprehending strategies that were intensely carried outside the political institutions. It was composed by the social legitimation of the Campaña’s claim for legal abortion on demand, the relevance and recognition of the Campaña’s work, and the strength of the marea verde on the streets. The constant presence of the abortion debate for two years in the media, in universities, in family gatherings, in offices, in friends’ conversations built up this context in which the Campaña and the marea verde associated with it, were the main voice of the abortion discussion. Even though the ola celeste had a great influence as an oppositor, it was never able to reunite as many as the Campaña did on the streets and failed to overthrow the social legitimation of the abortion rights claim achieved by the Campaña. The ola celeste had a role as a countermovement, which in the analysis of the interviews we understood they might have ended up publicizing the debate



over abortion, while trying to oppose the claim to legalize abortion on demand. This context of hegemony was also supported by the fact that Alberto Fernández, the president, was favorable to the legalization of abortion on demand. Even though the Campaña managed to place itself as the main interlocutor between the Government and society, and influence political agenda, political debate and the consequent change in the law, the compañeras recognized the importance of the support of the President. This is because his stance regarding the issue also influenced the voting trend in the legislative institutions.

Despite the fact the Campaña succeeded in achieving the legalization of abortion on demand, its work is not finished, and this is something highlighted by the compañeras. The voluntary interruption of the pregnancy is a right recognized by law, but it is not in full force, according to the interviewees. People are still being prevented from undergoing the procedure and some professionals are being persecuted for carrying out abortions. The compañeras have stated that it was important that abortion on demand became a right defended by law, they are also aware of the State's importance towards guaranteeing this right. This needs to be done through directing funds to public hospitals and health centers, to ensure that there are infrastructures where these procedures can be conducted, and by monitoring the cases of conscientious objection and forced pregnancies, the interviewees have said. In several provinces, many do not have access to abortion, because all doctors in their provinces declared themselves as conscientious objectors, something that was not predicted in the draft elaborated by the Campaña, but that was proposed by the Government. This is now creating obstacles for people, especially those under aged and from complicated social economic backgrounds that do not have means to travel to other provinces where they could have access to it, who want to have an abortion and are not able to do it because the doctors refuse to do it under the grounds of conscientious objection. This part of the law does not force doctors to carry an abortion procedure, if they do not agree to it, declining the possibility of doing it to someone who reaches out to them wishing to terminate a pregnancy. In this instance, the Socorristas en Red – a network that was part of the Campaña – are still being the heroes, because they have not stopped working to provide assistance to people seeking an abortion, even though it has already been legalized. This assistance is based on hot lines, which ensure people who call the Socorristas are aware of their rights, they also provide pills that provoke abortion or arrange an appointment between a doctor who they know will carry the abortion procedure and someone seeking help and organize talks to raise awareness.

With this research, it was possible to understand that the work of the Campaña created a window of opportunities to influence the change in the law. Nonetheless, this understanding is shared mainly by feminists who I interviewed and who identified themselves or have experience that is more associated with that identity with more autonomous practices. Therefore, an analysis of who have institutionalized experiences of militances, belonging to NGOs, traditional political parties or even legislators is lacking. Likewise, the absence of other actors' views on the process – politicians, NUM members – narrows our comprehension of the approval process. Against this background, further researcher on this issue could

look at how the work of the Campaña or its influence in the approval of the law is perceived by feminists on the other side of the militance spectrum. The relevance of media coverage on this issue is another aspect that can be investigated further. Interviewees have said that the fact the debates were broadcasted, that the abortion theme was recurrent on news and TV shows had a massive role in taking this conversation to more private spaces and has possibly influenced the opinion of many. Another point that deserves deeper research and could be the topic of a new investigation is the importance of teenagers engagement in the abortion rights movement, as represent a new generation of activists who have in their first years of militance behold an achievement that took decades to conquer. Thus, it would be valuable to analyze why they felt compelled by this claim and took this fight as well.

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## Annexes

Table 3.1 - Chronology of the abortion movement and discussion in Argentina

<b>1921</b>	Penal Code criminalizes abortion procedures except for two situations: when the woman's health is at stake or if the pregnancy resulted from rape
<b>1971</b>	The Movimiento de Liberación Feminista takes the abortions issue to the streets for the first time
<b>1975</b>	The Frente de Lucha por la Mujer and the Agrupación de Mujeres Socialistas write a program which already includes the fight for free and safe abortion
<b>1988</b>	Creation of the Comisión por el Derecho al Aborto
<b>1991</b>	Creation of the Foro por los Derechos Reproductivos
<b>1994</b>	Formalization of the Mujeres Autoconvocadas para Decidir en Libertad; first public discusión on abortion with the redaction of a new constitution in the post-dictatorship era
<b>2002</b>	Assamblea por el Derecho al Aborto en Buenos Aires
<b>2003</b>	Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres in Rosario - Workshop and debate about strategies to have effective action on the fight for the right to abortion
<b>2005</b>	Foundation of the Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito After stating that the abortion decriminalization was necessary to reduce maternal deaths, Ginés González García, Minister of Health in the Kirschner government, gave instructions to all hospitals across the country to offer help and care to any women seeking help after going through illegal abortion procedures
<b>2015</b>	First Ni Una Menos mobilization which marks a turn in feminism in Argentina, attracting new generations and new sectors to the fight against gender violence which includes the violence perpetrated by illegal abortion
<b>2018</b>	The Campaña presents for the seventh time the constitutional reform project and it was approved by the Low Chamber, but did not gather the Senate's approval
<b>2019</b>	The project to alter the abortion law was presented for the eighth and last time
<b>2020</b>	The voluntary interruption of the pregnancy is approved and the law changes. The Ley 27.610 regulates the access to abortion and to post-abortion support to all people with reproductive abilities. It is possible to undergo the procedure up to the 14 <sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy, including that week, in any case without exclusions, including in cases of rape or life risk.



Table 6.1 – Profile of the “compañeras” interviewed for this research

	<b>Experience of militance</b>	<b>Years of militance</b>	<b>Province of militance</b>
<b>Compañera 1</b>	Socorrista	Since the 2000s	Buenos Aires and Tucumán
<b>Compañera 2</b>	Socorrista	Since the middle of the last decade	Entre Ríos
<b>Compañera 3</b>	Socorrista	Since the 1990s	Formosa
<b>Compañera 4</b>	Independent militant	Since the middle of the 2000s	Salta
<b>Compañera 5</b>	Founder of the Campaña	Since the 1990s	CABA
<b>Compañera 6</b>	Militant in a local feminist collective	Since the middle of 2000s	Salta
<b>Compañera 7</b>	Militant in a local feminist collective	Since the last decade	Formosa
<b>Compañera 8</b>	Organizer of cátedras libres in universities; Articulator of the Campaña; Women’s movement	Since the 2000s	CABA
<b>Compañera 9</b>	Founder of the Campaña; academic researcher	Since the late 1980s	CABA
<b>Compañera 10</b>	Militant of the Izquierda Socialista; Women’s movement	Since the 2000s	CABA
<b>Compañera 11</b>	Women’s movement; Union leader	Since 2015	CABA and Buenos Aires
<b>Compañera 12</b>	Ni Una Menos assembly; National articulator of the Campaña; local women’s movement	Since the 2000s	Córdoba
<b>Compañera 13</b>	Socorrista; academic researcher	Since the last decade	Córdoba
<b>Compañera 14</b>	Socorrista; Articulator of the Campaña	Since the late 1990s	Córdoba
<b>Compañera 15</b>	Organizer of cátedras libres; National articulator of the Campaña; neighborhood assemblies	Since the 2000s	CABA and Buenos Aires

Table 6.2 - Identification of themes, their description and the codes associated for the analysis of the interviews

Themes	Description	Codes
<p><b>La Campaña como eje fundamental de unión de los feminismos</b></p> <p><b>(The Campaña has the main articulator of feminisms)</b></p>	<p>The Campaña was highlighted by the interviewees as the main actor in the abortion movement. Not only it was responsible to reunite all feminisms, agendas and strategies, but it also became the most important actor in the relationship established with institutional power. In this, it was possible to recognize more autonomous and more institutionalized strategies, but the relevance of the articulation of tactics is highlighted.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulation of different feminisms and feminist practices</li> <li>2. A space for encuentro</li> <li>3. The militances overlapped</li> </ol>
<p><b>Una construcción de hegemonía: concientizar, presionar y despenalizar</b></p> <p><b>(A construction of hegemony: raising awareness, pressuring, and legitimizing)</b></p>	<p>The Campaña was able to generate a social and cultural change, gathering a massive support for abortion rights that was a result of successful strategies that installed the debate on abortion on different levels of society. It was a victory of the Campaña who knew when to negotiate, when to be moderate, when to use certain arguments. Taking advantage of a conjecture that was built on the basis of years of work, they were able to influence the approval of a new legislation that legalized the voluntary interruption of the pregnancy.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The “coming out” of abortion</li> <li>2. The right arguments for each situation</li> <li>3. The window of opportunities</li> </ol>

### **Script for the interviews with the militants**

1. ¿Está de acuerdo en que existe una división dentro del movimiento feminista argentino entre activistas autónomas y institucionalizadas? ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre estos dos grupos?
3. ¿Cuál es su experiencia de militancia en el movimiento feminista argentino?
4. ¿Cree que la división fue muy relevante durante la campaña de legislación sobre el aborto en las últimas dos décadas? ¿Sigue siendo relevante?
5. En su opinión, ¿la institucionalización del discurso feminista ayudó a la discusión en torno a la legislación sobre el aborto? ¿Cómo? ¿Por qué?
6. ¿Cree que la percepción que tiene la sociedad argentina sobre el aborto ha cambiado en las últimas dos décadas? ¿Cómo? ¿Cree que influyó en la alteración de la legislación en 2020? ¿Por qué?
7. ¿Qué contribuyó en gran medida a ese cambio de mentalidad?
8. ¿Qué considera más importante para el camino hasta que se apruebe la nueva legislación y por qué?
10. ¿Qué cambió en el 2020 que hizo posible que se lograra la despenalización legal de la interrupción voluntaria del embarazo?
13. ¿Qué importancia atribuye a la Campaña en el proceso? ¿Por qué?
14. ¿Y sobre el movimiento Ni Una Menos? ¿Cómo ve su influencia desde el 2015? ¿La forma como se articuló con la Campaña del aborto fue importante?
16. ¿En algún momento le pareció que la Campaña tuvo que limitar o moderar su discurso para tener más influencia?