THE FEMINIST CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC POLICY IN ARGENTINA AND COLOMBIA.

FROM SOCIAL DEPENALIZATION TO LEGAL DECRIMINALIZATION OF ABORTION.

By

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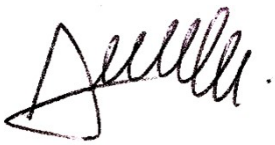
Signature: 

Abstract

This research compares the cases of feminist movements in Argentina and Colombia and their success to legalize the voluntary interruption of pregnancy. Globally, there is still strong polarization on the issue of abortion. This generates resistance from policymakers and political parties to advance legislation on sexual and reproductive rights that would improve the livelihoods of women, girls, and society as a whole. Thus, the importance of understanding the most recent success stories, the strategies used by these strong feminist movements, and the lessons learned from their interactions with governmental institutions. The research used broadly accepted conceptual frameworks for the analysis of the two case studies, such as critical mass theory, post-conflict transition to democracy, left-wing parties as allies, political opportunity structures, and strong feminist movements that mobilize support from public opinion. At the same time, the final aim is to understand the reality of these two South American experiences and their local specificities. With this, it would be possible to strengthen available theory on the matter, as well as to present a roadmap for civil society to advance women's human rights and gender equality.

To all the women in my life who had an abortion.

To all the women in your life who had an abortion.

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1. Introduction

If we try to understand what explains the success of feminist movements in pursuing decriminalization of abortion in Argentina in 2021, and in Colombia in 2022, it is important to revisit the recent history and the current context. In the past two years, feminist civil society in these two countries followed different strategies to reach a similar result, pushing for effective policy change on such a polarized issue as the one studied. In the first case, it was done through the legislative path, and in the second one, the road taken was the judicial, through the Supreme Court. This new policy scenario offered an interesting puzzle that needed to be better understood to gain holistic knowledge on the matter and to answer the research question of this thesis. The final aim here is to explore what explains the success of social movements in the legalization of abortion, from the perspectives of the women who worked at the front of both local coalitions.

These national experiences are part of a broader social phenomenon in Latin America, where organized groups of women and feminist movements are having an important presence both in the mainstream media and on social media. The region has seen massive protests across its largest capitals and smaller cities, emphasizing their demands for the eradication of gender-based violence, access to sexual and reproductive rights, and the political participation of women in parity with men (Madariaga, 2020). There have been some specific advances in legislation and public policies on those issues in countries like Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico (Molyneux, 2017).

The recent advances in women's human rights are aligned with international human rights commitments made by Latin American states. All the countries of the region are signatories of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which states that "unsafe abortions threaten the lives of a large number of women, representing a grave public health problem as it is primarily the

poorest and youngest who take the highest risk." In the same way, the region has also signed its commitment to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. This Agenda includes a specific goal to achieve gender equality (goal number 5), and a specific target to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all women and girls.

The following chapter will explore the various frameworks coming from the literature such as critical mass theory, level of democracy, left-wing parties as allies, and strong feminist that mobilizes support from public opinion, among others. Overall, this study looks at the mechanisms at work in the interactions between feminist civil society organizations with policymakers from the government through these theoretical lenses. The justification comes from knowing that there is still little in-depth information about what strategies were used to influence the agenda-setting to decriminalize or legalize abortion in the past two years in Latin America. There is also a gap of knowledge in identifying which strategies used offered more or less resistance from government officials and policymakers. The results could be beneficial not only for academic purposes but also for civil society and advocacy efforts.

One key puzzle to explore is if the changes in legislation and guarantee of women's rights could be related to a higher number of women in positions of political power. According to the theory of critical mass, when women reach a third of representation in electoral seats there are positive changes in the realm of gender equality (Childs & Krook, 2008). This could serve as an auxiliary tool to describe the situation analyzed in this research, especially when we observe that Colombia has reached a 28.8% of women in Congress, and Argentina has 44.8% of women parliamentarians (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022).

Another notion to be considered is the relationship between stronger democracies and active civil society. Following the research done by Viterna and Fallon (2008), when states move

toward more open democracies, the opportunity arises for women's movements to embrace a feminist framework of thought and action. This can happen when the democratic transition presents concrete openings to renegotiate the current structures of the state, together with an active civil society invested in transforming these structures.

In the case of Argentina, women's movements played an important role in the denunciation of human rights violations under the military dictatorship, evolving later into an organized feminist movement after the transition to the democratic period (Rivera Berruz, 2018). On the other hand, Colombia suffered five decades of internal armed conflict. In this case, women became key actors not only as guerrilla fighters but also as peacebuilders that lobbied to incorporate a gender perspective in the peace process. In 2016, the Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP included 100 measures that incorporated a gender perspective in the document, intending to end the conflict and build a stable and lasting peace (ONU Mujeres, 2018; Barometer Initiative et al., 2020).

At the same time, feminist social movements and their allies in the government encountered resistance and mobilizations from conservative political sectors, the Catholic and the Evangelical churches, and other actors from civil society (Molyneux, 2017; Moragas, 2020). This pushback stopped various initiatives to advance and protect the rights of women, girls, and LGBTI people in the region. In Colombia, conservative groups campaigned against the use of the word "gender" in the peace accords from 2016, having to be redrafted using "women" instead; in Argentina, this pressure meant that senators from conservative parties effectively rejected the first bill to legalize abortion in 2018 (Moragas, 2020).

This research aims to better understand how, despite the many challenges, there were still significant advances in these countries. The study analyzed the political situation that surrounded the recent decriminalization of abortion in Argentina and Colombia, their historical

evolution to a stronger democracy, and the strategies used by feminist movements to capture the social momentum to generate change in abortion policies. Although Mexico and Chile also advanced on this issue in a similar time framework, they have not yet guaranteed decriminalization throughout the entire territory or without specific circumstances, respectively. It is important to mention these countries because they could be included in future research that looks at the region in-depth.

The methodology followed an interpretative qualitative approach of comparative case studies. The data was sourced through semi-structured interviews with five key actors from the two nationwide coalitions that led the advocacy work in Argentina as well as Colombia. The participants represented some of the organizations that are part of "Causa Justa" (Just Cause) from Colombia, and the "Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito" (National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion) from Argentina. The data was then coded by themes and later analyzed in the discussion chapter. The final section includes the most relevant conclusions and lessons learned.

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1. Women's movements, feminist groups, and women's interests

Many authors analyzed what drives social movements to accomplish their goals. To understand the success cases of Argentina and Colombia to legalize abortion, this research will follow the distinction made by Ferree (2004) between organized women's movements and feminist organizations, using the two terms and acknowledging their distinctive meanings. For this author, the first ones can be identified by their constituency more than by the objectives they pursue because these are not necessarily related to gender issues. Feminist groups, on the other hand, will seek to challenge the roots and the systemic structure of all gendered relations. Similarly, Molyneaux (1985, 2001) highlights the need to differentiate women's interests from gender interests, the first ones having a practical nature, the latter ones being strategic in the realm of women's social policies.

The definition and notion of women's movements have been in place for the last forty years as a response to scholars from the second wave of women's liberation activism in Western countries and their work from the 1960s and 1970s (Beckwith, 2013). It was observed later that women's movements contained within larger political organizations, such as political parties, or embedded within the structure of the state, face the challenge to position their problems as equally relevant to the broader institutional goals. Women's needs are frequently viewed as peripheral to larger organizational objectives or as a subsidiary, less important topic in these situations (Htun & Weldon, 2018).

Due to the widespread belief that "women's issues", such as violence against women and fair pay, are of specific relevance mostly to women, organizational priorities in political parties or state institutions often neglect these concerns. Here lies the essential importance of autonomous

feminist movements, because they do not need to struggle internally for the recognition of gender equality and gender mainstreaming as top goals (Htun & Weldon, 2018). They do not have to emphasize the importance of gender issues and their link to broader concerns with other matters affecting men and children, so they may be presented as essential on their own (Elman, 1996). Throughout time, feminist organizations evolved as a result of their own demands, the demands of the women they support, and the demands of the historical moments they went through (Ferree & Yancey Martin, 1995).

Other authors, such as Hill and Chappell (2006), also follow the same line and focus on the notion of women's interests to determine if the purpose followed by a group of actors is aligned with a feminist vision, beyond its constituency. This differentiation arises from the idea that a collective of women cannot be understood as a monolith, because on an individual level they have very diverse experiences, carry differentiated levels of privilege, and encounter different ways of oppression throughout their lives. This makes their interests at some points coinciding, and at other moments conflicting. Hill and Chappell (2006) warn that reducing the interests of women to an idea of universal womanhood presents the challenge of reducing women to a mere biological issue.

In the same way, Debra Dodson et. al. (1991) explore these so-called women's interests in the law-making process between "women's rights bills" and "laws concerning women's traditional arenas of interest". Once again, the division refers to the content and scope of these laws, the first ones referring to legislative labor that includes a feminist approach. In contrast, the traditional laws will be more related to the historically assigned gendered role that women carry as caregivers, and the stereotyped labor they perform in the policy world, limiting them to "feminine-seen" issues such as health and education.

There is the necessary issue of the context of the global South, and especially Latin America, to understand the way women's interests reach the policymaking agenda. As discussed before, the emergence of women's movements in this region, and later feminist movements, is tied to the social, economic, and cultural context (Rivera Berruz, 2018). Changes in policymaking can find their roots in feminist mobilization in civil society that even influence international standards, such as the framework to address violence against women developed in Latin America (Htun & Weldon, 2012). Feminist groups promote social reform through actions at the grassroots level, as well as maintaining a dialogue with the national government, politicians, international organizations, and international donors. This network of actors can also explain the advancement of gender-related policies even if traditionally political leadership remains male-oriented (Viterna & Fallon, 2008).

2.2. Strong feminist movements using good strategies in the right moment

For a movement to be effective, existing research reveals that a high degree of mobilization is necessary (Molyneux, 1998). Strong women's movements can attract public support and attention, whereas weaker movements have a difficult time convincing the media and others that their viewpoints and perspectives are worthy of public debate (Htun & Weldon, 2018). Nevertheless, strong movements are not the only element to be considered for effective change. Amenta et al. (2010) note that powerful movements do not necessarily impact policy outcomes and that strength, understood as the capacity for significant political mobilization and support, is conceptually separate from policy influence even if strong movements typically influence policy. The strength of a feminist movement is important but in the same manner, these organizations must build up technical knowledge and strategic planning to capitalize when they encounter a window of opportunity, also known as political opportunity structures (Kitschelt,

1986). This chapter will analyze strong feminist movements first, and then connect this notion with the timely and efficient use of opportunity windows.

A defining element for strong feminist movements is autonomy. According to Htun and Weldon (2018) for feminist movements to be autonomous, it is necessary to have independence from all political institutions, not only from the state. A women's movement is not independent if they only make part of women's bureaus or caucuses within the existing political parties. Autonomous groups are marked by independent actions, where women organize based on self-activity, define their own aims, and decide their own modes of organization and strategies (Molyneux, 1998, p. 70). Feminist groups that operate independently of larger mixed-gender organizations are beyond being just affiliates, subsidiaries, or wings of those organizations. Autonomy is critical to powerful movements (Htun & Weldon, 2018).

The effect of strong, autonomous, and independent feminist organizations on policy is similar to that of other social movements. Public and governmental agendas, as well as political will, are shaped to confront specific concerns generated thanks to social movements (Htun & Weldon, 2018). Additionally, they seek substantial institutional changes that have far-reaching effects (Beckwith, 2013). Their activities include cultural transformation, lobbying, strategic litigation, contribution of technical papers to international forums, networking events, and other initiatives to connect independent activists with government leaders and private sector (Bose & Kim, 2009). Protests and rallies are commonplace strategies to shape public opinion (Ferree & Yancey Martin, 1995). Public opinion and original perspectives are shaped by these movements' activities (Amenta et al., 2010).

In the same way, being in the right place at the right time can also be a key element to success in advancing a feminist agenda. The strong feminist groups of today and their accomplishments are the results of processes that are both situational and historical. In the process of self-

construction, feminist movements tend to reflect on their own history and previous developments, as well as the current opportunities and restrictions, both geographical and time-related (Ferree & Yancey Martin, 1995). In other words, successful feminist movements will be able to identify available political opportunity structures or opportunity windows and capitalize on them.

Research from Kitschelt (1986) shows that when good political opportunity structures emerge, there is an opening for strong social mobilizations to make a difference. Political opportunity structures are intersected by unique combinations of resources, institutional structures, and historical precedents for social mobilization, which in some situations encourage the growth of protest movements and in others impede it. Even though these opportunity structures do not dictate the trajectory of social movements, they can comparatively explain a great deal about the differences between social movements with identical demands in various contexts, assuming that other factors remain constant (Kitschelt, 1986).

One key period that occurred on a global level came when the United Nations (UN) provided a worldwide political opportunity structure that listened to women and encouraged transnational feminist activism. The political statement made by calling the period from 1975 to 1985 the "Decade for Women" gave start to a period of growth for feminist networks and collaborations across the globe (Friedman, 2003). The opportunity was seen and seized by many movements, especially during the four global conferences on women, as well as the Cairo Conference on Population and Development held by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 1994. The Decade of Women's continuous meetings and exchanges also resulted in more common understandings of global issues among representatives of civil society organizations who attended these forums. The formal meetings and the Plans of Action that

resulted from them offered implicit and explicit power to women who attended the sessions as well as those who participated in deliberations at all stages of the proceedings (Zinsser, 2002).

Most of these meetings inspired national and international collaboration, facilitated more transnational networking, and allowed feminists to frame women's rights and empowerment as domestic and global priorities (Zinsser, 2002; Friedman, 2003). The right to a life free from violence was successfully placed on the international legal agenda, reproductive rights were established on the international population strategy, and issues on women's schooling and poverty became part of the international development agenda by feminist organizers (Bose & Kim, 2009). These achievements acted as a strategic force to persuade local leaders to implement programs that would help strong feminist movements achieve their objectives (Ewig & Ferree, 2013).

It is important to keep in mind that the opportunities to make an impact on the political agenda for feminist organizations will change over time. Some groups found an opportunity to recognize themselves and grow as part of anti-colonial or socialist revolutionary projects in the 1960s and 1970s. Others arose as part of democratic transition movements in the 1980s and 1990s. This indicates that the time and history of different contexts have major importance as an opportunity window for feminist collectives (Bose & Kim, 2009). In Latin America, groups that appeared in the later period drew resources from transnational feminist advocacy networks as well as from theories produced elsewhere (Perea Ozerin, 2020). Therefore, we see that feminist organizing is shaped by specific opportunity structures that can happen at the global, regional, national, and local levels (Ewig & Ferree, 2013).

2.3. Critical mass theory and feminist alliances within the state

The critical mass theory has been generally accepted as the guiding framework to promote women's representation in political bodies to advance gender-related laws. This theory describes the behavior of women in policymaking or as legislators and tries to explain why when there are low numbers of women, they may not be able to affect the legislative outcomes and include their perspectives. This concept is used as a tool to understand the link between the percentage of women holding seats and the passing of legislation beneficial to them as a collective (Childs & Krook, 2008).

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) describes that there is an overall agreement in the policy world about this theory, making its target of 30% or one-third of women elected officials a minimum standard for electoral quotas globally and across parties (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008). Research has shown that women supporting women in politics can also have a positive effect to reach a critical mass. When women's movements demand women's inclusion in representational political institutions, such as political parties, there are better possibilities for female politicians of obtaining a place on electoral lists and later in elected positions (Beckwith, 2013).

Nevertheless, the challenges are still present once women are elected, especially when the electoral system in place does not ensure a quota to reach at least a third of the positions. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (2008) highlights that there is extra pressure on women in parliaments when they hold seats in small numbers. According to their most recent global survey of members of Congress on the matter, female parliamentarians indeed report feeling the burden of having to promote gender-related issues as their main responsibility compared to men. At the same time, they also report a feeling of isolation when trying to make an impact on these topics (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008).

Although this theory has been prevalent in the work of domestic and international organizations, in recent years it has encountered criticism both from academia as well as from experts in democracy and gender specialists. This critique comes from the observation of legislatures where, despite the higher numbers of women, the policy outcomes do not end up being as expected. Childs and Krook (2008) also describe the growing questioning about the optimism of the texts that fail to analyze that even at larger numbers, women still find resistance from men both from other parties as well as from their own, and sometimes are even penalized for pushing a gender-related agenda.

2.4. Left-wing parties as allies to promote gender-related policies

In more democratic societies with a multiparty system, parties will care to construct a reputation that is used to engage with their electorate throughout their political life and differentiate them from their opposition. When positioning on certain cleavage issues, parties create subjective evaluations in people's views, therefore building their distinctive party image in the social imaginary (Dubrow, 2012). As in other regions, Latin American left-wing parties constructed an image usually related to the promotion of social policies for rural and indigenous communities, poverty alleviation, social justice, and human rights (Friedman, 2018).

In the case of women's rights, there tends to be an association of being the left-wing and more progressive parties the ones who are taking the lead to advance these issues. The perception from the general population about these parties, namely the party image, is to link women's interests to the political labor done by them and to hold the opposite view about conservative parties. But one thing is the perception of the general population, and the other is the real impact that parties have. In different contexts, studies have shown that the power of left parties sometimes affects policy outcomes but that at other times, party ideology is irrelevant (Hartmann, 2019; Htun & Weldon, 2010).

Still, research shows that progressive parties seem to be more inclined to address inequalities between women and men, at least in their discourse. This is especially true for socialist parties, which frequently promote welfare policies that are aligned with feminist goals (Viterna & Fallon, 2008). Such encounters of agendas can happen, for example, when advancing policies directed at overcoming the double workload women face because of the burden of productive and reproductive labor or to boost female political and economic inclusion (Caul, 1999; Chinchilla, 1990). Though ideological feminism is rarely fully adopted in practice (Hartmann, 2019), some contend that the expressed objectives may allow women to make more successful demands to party leadership (Chinchilla, 1990). Others have observed that socialist principles could in fact lead to real increases in women's influence and power in the political field (Waylen, 2007).

Research also suggests that the significant relationship of the ideological left as an ally to gender-related policies comes from the intersection of feminist movements and female legislators from left-wing parties, this is thanks to the alliances of the last ones with other legislators (McBride & Mazur, 2010). Finally, in addition to party support, the success or failure of gender-related policies is influenced by the electorate's level of support or opposition. On this, research from Molyneux (1985) observes that most countries that implemented socialist development strategies also have a level of qualified support for women's empowerment. Advances in women's rights and gender equality are not only a byproduct of the larger ideological goals but are pursued to help achieve them. The goals of female empowerment are interdependent with the growth and goals of socialist states, thus in the early stages of political transition, incoming left-wing governments tend to recognize the need of improving the status of women and act accordingly (Molyneux, 1985).

2.5. Democratization frames post-conflict

According to Htun and Weldon (2010), under authoritarian regimes, civil society is either less developed or altogether non-existent. Because elites in power have more control over the government's decision-making, the ideology and preferences of the party in power will be the decisive element in shaping policy outcomes. In this scenario, women who are part of these political elites and other progressive reformers, such as international donors, may have privileged access to power under autocracies (Htun and Weldon, 2010). Although this can lead to surprising advances in women's rights under conservative governments, it is still a constraint for the work of the feminist civil society.

Regarding accountability and representation, women's movements tend to become more influential in democratic regimes than in authoritarian regimes (Beckwith, 2013). The more democratic the government, the more varied the strategies used by feminist organizations. Stronger democracies are correlated with a more developed civil society, therefore, when a state is advancing toward democracy, women's movements are more likely to have an impact (Htun and Weldon, 2010). To ensure that new democratic institutions are gender-balanced, women's movements must be ready for the transition. This means that organized feminist collectives must be active actors in civil society, organize in advance of the change, and form coalitions with other democratic activists (Beckwith, 2013).

During democratic transitions, women's movements will establish the circumstances to improve women's citizenship in terms of women's access not just to civil and political rights but to broader social and economic ones as well (Waylen 2007, p. 199). However, this does not mean that democratic transitions create universally gender-neutral policy results; rather, evidence from transitions to democracy shows that women's movements can obtain the best

political prospects under these circumstances when actively taking advantage of this political opportunity (Beckwith, 2013).

After the transition to democracy, women who engaged in pre-transition activities that bent gender (e.g., guerrilla fighters or political leaders) are regarded to be more likely to lead successful feminist groups (Chinchilla, 1990). Movements that make part of transitions to competitive electoral systems also broaden the spectrum of different political and civil society stakeholders; they do this by engaging in efforts to alter the status quo of women's rights through the process of policymaking (Viterna & Fallon, 2008). During the post-transition phase, various players emerge at the forefront inside the state, both in the electoral and bureaucratic spheres. Once elected to government, political parties' willingness to include gender equality issues as part of their platform is of crucial relevance (Waylen, 2007).

3. Methodology

The research question of this thesis is what explains the success of feminist movements in pursuing the legalization of abortion. To analyze this, the research design required a qualitative approach, using a comparative case study on the experiences in Argentina and Colombia to legalize the voluntary interruption of pregnancy. As Simmons (2009, p. 21) points out, the case study serves as an "in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a real-life context". There is plenty of research done on feminist movements and their impact on policy change, but a change in abortion policies is still an issue that divides societies and creates resistance from policymakers, that is why these cases in Argentina and Colombia present a unique opportunity to be studied. That is also why the approach of a comparative case study made the best cut to be used as an analysis toolkit.

Following Thomas (2011) and the typology of the case study presented by him, this research sought to identify the practical, historical unity of the subject and the analytical or theoretical frame of the object for these two case studies. As it can be seen in Figure 1, here the subject can be understood as the key cases of legalization of abortion that happened almost in parallel in Argentina and Colombia, in the past two years. In the same sense, the object would be the exploration of the process that developed to result in the policy change. In other words, the comparative analysis of feminist movements in Argentina and Colombia and the strategies used, the historical context in both countries, their opportunity windows, and their interactions with policymakers. The approach used sought to understand the differentiated contexts of these Latin American countries, and through this to help build and enrich the theories available that were part of the literature review and conceptual framework.

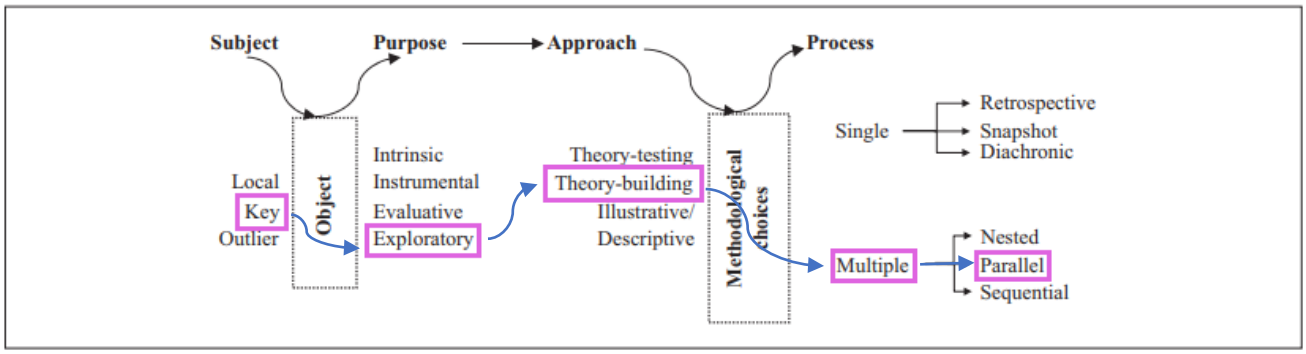

Figure 1. Thomas' typology of the case study (2011) applied to the current research

Although it is important to mention that the use of case studies has come under increased scrutiny in recent years since it is not always obvious how the findings of case studies may be generalized, in the case of this policy research, the objective was not the one of generalization of outcomes but of understanding a specific context in-depth. That is why, in order to be compelling, the choice of case studies of Argentina and Colombia that are used here were selected in a sensitive manner. The main considerations to choose these cases were that both countries share similar characteristics such as strong and decentralized feminist movements, a transition to strengthen democracy that included stronger constitutions in the past three decades, and policy changes around abortion that were radical. In both cases, the outcome was the full legalization of the procedure and not just decriminalization.

Other cases were also considered but finally discarded. Although in the past five years other countries in Latin America also moved toward making abortion legal, such as Chile and Mexico, these case studies were not selected to be part of the research because of the limitations still present despite strong feminist movements pushing effective policy transformation. In the case of Chile, abortion was legalized through new legislation in 2017 only on three grounds and remains a crime beyond these circumstances (Maira et al., 2019). In the case of Mexico from 2021, the Supreme Court declared that abortion could not be considered a crime in a state-based lawsuit. To put it into effect on a national scale, it will either require legal challenges in

each of the 28 states in Mexico that continue to criminalize the procedure or a change in the law passed by state legislatures (Kitroeff & Lopez, 2021).

The research methods used for sourcing data in this study were, as a first step, an analysis of previous academic literature, followed by a collection of primary data by conducting five semi-structured interviews. Additional qualitative and quantitative data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on women in parliaments were also included. The interviews took place with key actors from feminist movements in Argentina and Colombia who actively worked in strategic advocacy to decriminalize abortion, and eventually succeeded in this goal. When mapping potential participants, it was necessary to consider their role in strong feminist movements in the studied countries, their level of participation in the advocacy and strategic processes, and their final impact on policy change. From April to June of 2022, thirteen potential participants who were actively involved in their national processes were contacted. Because of their high-level profile, scheduling the interviews became challenging and many could not be arranged, this is an issue that should be considered when planning similar research.

Another element to consider is the positionality of the researcher and the access to the sources. In the case of this study, previous work experience in international organizations working with gender issues and women's rights in Latin America, plus a decade of activism in feminist civil society organizations in Paraguay facilitated a network with key actors in the field on a regional level. This also creates the potential for subjective interpretation of the data collected that can be beneficial to the research, because the technical experience of the researcher is aligned with the literature and the data that were analyzed. On the other hand, this situation poses the risk of increasing bias because of the closeness of the research with the life experience of the researcher. In this case, it was seen as an added benefit that improved the quality of the analysis.

The interviews were conducted with two representatives of the coalition Just Cause, from Colombia, and with three representatives from the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion, from Argentina. As suggested by James and Busher (2006), contact with the interviewees was done individually to maintain higher levels of privacy. This initial contact served to explain the purpose of the research, its scope, and to build rapport. The interviews were done online and individually through Zoom and had a duration of approximately 40 minutes each. All the interviews were recorded with express consent given by the participants to facilitate the transcription. The transcriptions were done using "Pinpoint", free software from Google's Journalist Studio. After this, it was necessary to move from the literal transcript to build a narrative using the two stages described by McCormack (2006), viewing the interview transcript through multiple lenses, and then developing interpretive stories.

The next step was the coding of the transcriptions with eleven categories that were related to the theories described in the literature review and the conceptual framework. These categories were: women's movements; feminist groups; women's interests; strong feminist movements; opportunity window; critical mass theory; feminist alliances within the state; left-wing parties as allies; democratization frames post-conflict; public opinion; and strategic actions. The thematic analysis after coding the transcriptions focused on possible strategies adopted by feminist movements such as the interactions between organized women's and feminist groups with policymakers and/or government officials; the mobilizations and protests in the year before the decriminalization of abortion; strategic advocacy to inform and influence public opinion as well as stakeholders' views; communications campaigns; among others that were not expected and that were discovered during the interview. The research was conducted between April 2022 and June 2022.

4. Historical context in the region

From the late 1950s until the late 1980s, right-wing dictatorships and left-wing guerrillas sprouted in Latin America and, in some cases, even shared the public arena. This context gave origin to many women's movements demanding basic human rights and peace from the armed conflicts. Some movements used the position they were placed in by the patriarchal societies in their role of mothers, while others took traditionally seen masculine roles and joined armed guerrillas. Although the identification of these women's movements with feminism did not happen until later, by the time of the First Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Meeting, held in Bogota in 1981, there was a new self-awareness of the existence of a feminist movement that had continental proportions, and its diverse ways of social mobilization (Rivera Berruz, 2018).

The 1990s marked a time of change with a new wave of democratic transitions reaching the region. This decade saw constitutional reforms that sought to guarantee human rights as well as the strengthening of governance, with the support of international organizations (Uprimny, 2011). With new legal frameworks, an opportunity opened to promote the participation of civil society and social movements, also helping women to push the agenda of political representation as a matter of democracy. A fundamental policy tool for this process was the legislation of quotas, later transitioning to parity laws, with 18 countries having approved legislation of this kind in the continent to this day (Llano & Roza, 2015; Reformas Políticas en América Latina, 2022), effectively increasing the number of women in elected positions in parliaments across the hemisphere (Piatti-Crocker, 2019).

4.1. Argentina

Social movements in Argentina have a long history of resistance and political participation, even during the military regime from 1976 to 1983. In the last years of the dictatorship, there was a strong presence in the streets of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (the mothers of the Mayo Square), who denounced the disappearance and illegal detention of their daughters and sons by the government. The reopening of the democratic era under the government of Raúl Alfonsín meant the restoration of civil and political rights and gave a boost to social mobilization nationwide. The Secretary of Women was created during this period, nowadays known as the Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity.

In parallel and since 1986, the Argentine women's movement held the National Encounters of Women yearly. This space served as a place to debate, articulate among organizations and activists, organize to demand rights, and develop inclusion policies. In 2005, the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion was launched in one of these Encounters, gathering signatures that were delivered to the National Congress in parallel to a large march attended by people from all over the country with the slogan ´Sexual education to decide, contraceptives so as not to abort, and legal abortion so as not to die', which continues to this day. In 2006, the Campaign formulated a bill, which was the first of eight attempts.

In the words of the interviewees, the National Campaign, which is a federal, intersectional, intergenerational, intercultural, and transversal movement, became a milestone in the ways to make politics in Argentina, as. The Campaign is formed by more than 700 organizations from all over the country, following basic agreements that all actors must follow to maintain the dialogue in a coalition characterized by its diversity. This coalition has a horizontal and participative working structure, with yearly national plenary sessions attended by regional representatives. The plenary is the forum that gives the work mandate to the National

Campaign. Because of the horizontality of the Campaign, some of the movements involved are not traditionally feminist movements, such as unions or political parties, creating active articulation among groups that could be seen as contradictory between them.

The National Campaign had the mandate to pursue the legalization of abortion through legislative reform. They presented a new bill before Congress every two years since 2006, accompanying the process with public mobilizations and strategic advocacy with policymakers. In 2018 there was a window of opportunity to pass the law, with the approval of the bill in the Lower Chamber. Later, the Senate rejected the project. Still, the movement had grown to such proportions that it had created a change in public opinion. Politicians had read this context and became more open to supporting a following attempt from the movement. After more than fifteen years of feminist work, the bill finally passed as the Law of Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy, fully legalizing abortion until week 14 without grounds, and legalizing it without a time limit in the cases of rape or risk to the mother's health.

4.2. Colombia

Feminist organizations in Colombia had been growing in strength for the past three decades. This coincided with the peak in the institutional and security crisis from the 1980s and the subsequent approval of the Political Constitution in 1991. The National Constituent Assembly in charge of drafting the new constitution included civil society groups representing women, students, religious minorities, and even demobilized guerrilla leaders (Rojas, 2004). This moment in history opened a space for social movements and became a new social contract between the society and the state (Echandia, 2001). The goal of strengthening the judiciary was not just to make it more efficient and independent, but also to increase the protection and safeguard of human rights, keeping any public agent from acting arbitrarily (Uprimny, 2011).

Important figures included the tutelage action (acción de tutelaje) and the right to petition (derecho de petición), judicial guarantees that any person can file to request the protection of fundamental rights. It also created the Constitutional Court, in charge of the legal review and analysis of the constitutionality of laws and other legal norms, as well as for deciding in cases of the appeal of judicial decisions such as the tutelage action. According to Ruibal (2001), this allowed a greater recognition of rights, participation, and claims by women's organizations shaping the legal discussion on abortion in terms of rights.

The work on the issue of decriminalizing abortion had its first results in 2006 when the organization "Table for the Life and Health of Women" presented a lawsuit before the Constitutional Court. The intention was to fully decriminalize abortion, but at that moment the magistrates ruled for the legalization only on three grounds: sexual violence, a risk to the mother's health, or fetal malformation incompatible with the life (Ruibal, 2001). In 2020, the Constitutional Court was beginning to show that it was willing to debate the merits of the situation more progressively. As a response, activists from the Table contacted a network of feminist organizations and together launched a coalition named "Just Cause" (Causa Justa), formed by more than 100 organizations and more than 150 activists. This new movement promoted a lawsuit to pursue the full legalization of abortion in Colombia in September of 2020. The legal fight was led by five organizations: the Table for the Life and Health of Women (Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres), the Medical Group for the Right to Decide (Grupo Médico por el Derecho a Decidir), Women's Link Worldwide, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and Catholics for the Right to Decide.

The Constitutional Court spent two years and five months studying it and in February of 2022, in a historic decision, decriminalized abortion up to the 24th week of pregnancy. In addition, it declared that, after that time, if a woman seeks an abortion, she can do so without incurring a

crime, as long as it is under the three grounds allowed since 2006 (El Espectador, 2022). Although the movement had asked the Court to fully legalize abortion without the restriction of weeks, the participants of this research coincided that the final decision was celebrated as if the decriminalization had been total.

5. Analyzing the key factors for the success to legalize abortion in Argentina and in Colombia

This chapter analyzes the interviews held with the five representatives from the National Campaign and Just Cause. The conversations led to an enriching collection of data and factual information on the history of the movements, their internal operations, their struggles, and the work done to legalize abortion. In both cases, the successful change in policies was thanks to a long process that was built through decades of feminist activism. Here, the research looks deeply into the personal perspectives of these important actors and their observations of their local context, the challenges they faced, and their interactions with policymakers. Finally, this chapter tries to synthesize the findings of the strategies used such as decentralization of the advocacy campaigns, the strength required to mobilize public opinion, the use of political opportunities, the impact of women in positions of decision-making, and the support received from left-wing parties.

5.1. Decentralization of the campaigns

The findings from the collected data show that strong feminist movements have better outcomes when their work is done through consensus and using a horizontal structure. Both cases prove the importance of geographical decentralization within their coalitions to include the voices of all members in all their diversity. It is not sufficient for social movements to have resources; it is also necessary to distribute them justly to local and regional organizations. In the two case studies, it was noticeable to see the emphasis given on expanding the movements beyond the capital cities as fundamental to success. The five respondents highlighted decentralization as a central part of their movements' strategies. This is done through: the active participation of local and regional grassroots organizations in the decision-making process;

coordination of public mobilizations across the country; unification in communications and social media messages; and redistribution of resources to regional actors, among other actions.

In the case of Argentina, the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion (Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito) had its origins in the provinces and not in the capital city. The initiative started at the 19th National Encounter of Women that was held in Mendoza, in 2004, but the internal debate over abortion happened the year before at the National Encounter in Rosario (Diario Digital Femenino, 2016; Dillon, 2004). It was in Rosario, in 2003, where the slogan of the campaign had its origins, as well as the use of the color green to symbolize the claim for legal abortion. "The basic agreements made us understand that we are a horizontal organization, and that horizontality not only has to do with decision-making, but also with the allocation of resources and the planning of activities." (Arg. 2)

Argentina is a federal country; therefore, public healthcare is also decentralized, meaning that each province manages the financial, structural, and human resources for health services provided in that territory. Because of this, and despite Argentina having established legal abortion on certain grounds before the most recent law from 2021 -that legalized it entirely until week 14- the experience for activists who accompanied abortion was that, in many cases, the resources were not available despite being a legal right. These local experiences enriched the legislative debate in Congress and helped shape the current Law No 27,610 of Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy.

"It depended on where in the province you were located to access a legal interruption of pregnancy (under the legal grounds). For example, misoprostol was only provided by the State because its sale to the public was prohibited. These types of experiences that are particular to each region also fed the discussion of abortion because we considered, when we were lobbying

for the law in the National Congress, to be very attentive to see how the regulation of abortion was going to be. How misoprostol was going to be distributed throughout Argentina, who was going to produce it, if it was going to be imported, and where were they going to import it from. All those debates that we raised in Congress were precisely thanks to this territorial diversity that the Campaign has." (Arg. 2)

In Colombia, the coalition Just Cause (Causa Justa) had its roots in the work done by the Table for the Life and Health of Women (Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres). Later, Just Cause expanded, and other organizations joined. By 2020, when the movement was officially launched to the public, it included more than 100 organizations and 150 activists from all over the country, present in 15 different cities. (Col. 1, 2) Five organizations were in charge of the drafting and the legal process of the lawsuit before the Constitutional Court in 2020. However, the other organizations of the movement worked on strategies of social mobilization, communications, awareness, and taking the conversation and information to other regions of the country, beyond Bogotá. (Col. 2)

The mobilizations in Colombia were combined with local strategies; here, the local organizations had the support of the movement from the national level. Demonstrations were held in Cúcuta, Pereira, Pasto, and Huila, among other cities. "Throughout the country, we held demonstrations (plantones), shared information and flyers (volanteadas), had talks, and painted murals. We had more than 33 actions in different parts of the country that were made visible through social media, showing how it was not just a question of Bogotá, but that the entire country had a mobilization around the issue." (Col. 1) In Argentina, the massive protest known as the 'pañuelazo' in 2018 was a key moment for the movement, this is when it became viral and experienced exponential growth throughout the country. For the activists within the National Campaign, it was unexpected. "We had no idea how viral the movement had become.

We went from marches of 200 people to marches of 5,000 or 6,000 people in the provinces" (Arg. 2).

5.2. Strong feminist movements mobilizing public opinion

Public opinion can be seen as a measurement of the strength of a social movement. As was discussed in the literature review, strong and autonomous feminist movements will have the capacity to attract the support and the attention of the public and mainstream media, making their arguments heard and shared in the public societal debate (Molyneux, 1985, 1998; Htun & Weldon, 2018). Both in Argentina and Colombia, activists made use of well-planned actions to mobilize public opinion, targeting the general public as well as different specialized audiences. Some of the strategies included communications campaigns, large public demonstrations, strategic dialogue with the media, and the use of social media.

The National Campaign, in Argentina, and Just Cause, in Colombia, had **communications specialists** organized in groups that worked on their plans of action. In both cases, the strategy targeted different fronts simultaneously and empowered them to be visible and convey their arguments clearly. One of the Colombian participants explained how this helped "to articulate ourselves in a single voice that asked for the same thing, maintain the narrative, the same discourse, and the same arguments. That allowed us to be united and reach the Court with greater force." (Col. 2)

In Colombia, the communications strategy thought of ways to create key moments from the time of the presentation of the lawsuit to the final sentence, to keep the conversation alive and flowing. To do this, they used important events such as the launch of publications and reports. One example was a report on how decriminalization would benefit girls and adolescents. "We turned it into a moment for younger audiences. We released a song with a challenge on how to

dance to the song, which was key to engaging girls, adolescents, and younger women who are on TikTok" explained one of the interviewees. (Col. 1)

Social media played an important role in both cases. It facilitated the sharing of complex information broken down into simple messages so that people could easily understand and see the seriousness of the matter. During the pandemic, this was even more crucial (Arg. 3). "We spent the whole year advocating from our homes. It was very difficult to reinvent and rethink the strategy, but we did not stop intervening in the streets and online. We did virtual mobilizations via YouTube with an agenda and a program of hours and hours of transmission. We did everything we could in the media, on Twitter, and social networks." (Arg. 1) All participants agreed that the use of easy social traffic messages was also connected with the in-person mobilizations.

At the level of **social mobilization**, it was important to be seen in the streets. Both cases established mobilization groups that coordinated efforts with the regional organizations that made part of the coalitions. These groups were in charge of coordinating the presence in the streets, the demonstrations, the local actions, etc. In Colombia, the mobilization in the streets was carried out with grassroots organizations that organize the actions on March 8 (International Women's Day) and November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women). They carried out key mobilization moments such as the Global Day of Action for Safe Abortion (September 28). "I think it was the first time that we have seen such a large demonstration, we almost filled the Plaza de Bolívar with girls wearing green scarves. I have worked on this for more than nine years and had never seen so many people on the street as on that occasion." (Col. 1)

The Argentinian participants also expressed the surprise of the activists when they encountered massive demonstrations with thousands of young women wearing green scarves, before and

during the legislative debates on abortion. “I think that the unexpected was this support that was made public and that we did not know existed” (Arg. 2). These demonstrations reached numbers of women and girls in the streets that had not been seen before, and their impact was that “even without the law having been approved in 2018, we had socially decriminalized abortion” (Arg. 1). The social pressure was so strong that abortion became the main issue on social media and in mainstream outlets, “it had filtered into all the shows on television” (Arg. 3). It also became part of the day-to-day conversations within the families. “Suddenly, all the grandmothers who had remained silent for 50 or 60 years, shared their own abortion stories during family lunch on Sundays” (Arg. 1), and these stories became viral on social media.

As part of the communications strategy, both the National Campaign and Just Cause sent experts to interviews with the media, to discuss the issue and share their arguments. Also, in both cases, there was a **strategic dialogue with journalists and mainstream media**. These actors had some particular interests to engage with the feminist movements, some of them because of affiliation with the cause, and others because the issue had become so present that it was impossible to ignore it. After the large mobilizations and public debates in Argentina and Colombia, “there was no journalist on the planet who did not want to cover the issue” (Arg. 1).

As the debate and the engagement from the public grew, the interactions with the media changed. The issue of abortion and the activists who advocated for its legalization went from being marginalized to being covered seriously. One of the Argentinian participants expressed that “years ago, we had two or three key journalists from large media outlets who always accompanied us, the rest were just alternative media outlets.” In the case of Colombia, “there has been a gradual transformation in the way the media covers the issue. If we talk about the years 2004 or 2005, it was very common for the entire narrative to be very stigmatizing” (Col.

1). Over fifteen years of constant advocacy in both countries, there was finally space for new spokespersons, new arguments, and different ways of framing the issue as a matter of public health, social justice, and human rights.

It is indisputable that the media is a powerful tool to create and promote debates. About this, all the Argentinian participants mentioned a particular incident that ignited the public conversation on abortion. It was the spontaneous testimony about a personal abortion story made by a celebrity on primetime television that fueled the fire. "With just that phrase 'I also had an abortion, what is the big problem?', everything exploded on social media. That was one of the triggers that came after the marches we had in September and November of 2017" (Arg. 1). Once this viral moment started, the interviewees recalled the increased participation of feminist colleagues in open television shows to talk about abortion and feminism, something that had not been achieved in the past at that level.

5.3. Riding the wave and taking advantage of the political opportunities

Moments of serendipity cannot be discarded as a matter of good luck only. The experiences of Argentina and Colombia show that the feminist movements in those countries saw the wave coming, and they got ready to surf it and capitalize on it. The preparation built up beforehand together with a good eye to identify key windows of opportunity makes a difference to achieve policy change (Kitschelt, 1986), sometimes in unexpected ways. From openness to dialogue from conservative political leaders to opportunities created by actors who were challenging the right to abortion, there are similar stories in both contexts that leave lessons to be learned.

In 2018, former Argentinian president Mauricio Macri publicly announced that he would promote the debate on abortion, despite being against it (Bravo, 2018). This opportunity was a call of attention to the National Campaign, signifying that their claims were being listened to

at the highest level. One of the participants described this moment "as a clear warning that the political class was listening to us and that we were obviously making ourselves heard even in those sectors that we thought were more reluctant" (Arg. 2). This sudden attention from the political class was the crest of the wave, a change in the political opportunity structure from closure to more openness, created over fifteen years by the National Campaign. "We held one of the largest demonstrations, the 'pañuelazo' of February 19 (2018). After that, it was already imminent that the president at that time, Mauricio Macri, would enable the legislative debate. That was when we presented the bill again" (Arg. 1), although that time was again rejected by the Senate. It was not until the following presentation of the bill in 2020, the eighth time, that it became a law.

In Colombia, the activists from Just Cause did a reading of the political context and saw that the best opportunity was through a claim of unconstitutionality before the Constitutional Court. Historically, the Colombian Congress had been reluctant to legislate on the issue of abortion. Bills had been presented both to advance decriminalization as well as to penalize more or create more access barriers. "Of 33 bills that sought to both liberalize and ban abortion, none has been successful in even passing the first debate, when at least four debates are necessary, two in the House of Representatives and two in the Senate." (Col. 1) "We already had the experience that the Court was the forum where we could find better results and that Congress was not active on this." (Col. 2).

In 2006, the Table for the Health and Life of Women (who later formed Just Cause), achieved the decriminalization of abortion under three circumstances through an unconstitutional claim before the Court. In 2020, activists from Just Cause saw a new window of political opportunity to fully legalize abortion. This time the Constitutional Court ruled against a new lawsuit from a conservative lawyer that sought to push back the existing framework and increase the barriers

to accessing the service. “We analyzed the Court’s decision and the individual arguments of each Justice and saw that some were expressing a need to advance and fully decriminalize abortion” (Col. 2). The coalition of Just Cause identified that some Justices could be convinced through legal arguments to declare the unconstitutionality of abortion as a crime. “This case, in particular, showed us an openness to a broader conversation, and based on this, we got greater clarity on the position of these magistrates.” (Col. 1). It was after this that the coalition launched a new advocacy strategy together with a new lawsuit to fully legalize abortion without grounds.

5.4. When more women reach power

Having more women in spaces of decision-making has been a claim by women’s organizations and feminist movements alike. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2008) highlights that quota and/or parity legislation eliminates gender disparities in politics and guarantee that women's political rights are realized. As a result, Latin American countries that moved in this direction had seen the gender gap in political involvement narrowed, particularly in the legislative branch. A critical mass of female representatives in elected positions can serve as leverage to advance gender-related legislation and strengthen democracy (Child & Kook, 2008; Beckwith, 2013). In the case studies analyzed here, there is a trend in having more female representation and an increased legal framework for women’s rights and gender equality. According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (2022), Colombia has reached a 28.8% of women in Congress, and Argentina has 44.8% of women parliamentarians.

Argentina adopted a gender quota law for electoral lists in 1991, which proved to be very efficient in increasing female representation in the Lower Chamber from 8.7% in 1989 to 35% in 2005 (Krook, 2008). In 2017, and after a long legislative process that took over a year, Congress passed a gender parity law (Piatti-Crocker, 2019). “The incorporation of the female

quota law for the participation of women in Congress, and later the parity law, allowed our issues to permeate or be present in both chambers. Although we know that the fact that there are women does not guarantee that they are feminists, in this case, they could push some issues." (Arg. 1)

One key strategy for the National Campaign in Argentina was to identify feminist allies to pass the bill to legalize abortion. All the participants agreed that the Legislative offered the best political support. They also mentioned how deputies formed a women's caucus across parties, and how despite being from different blocks they "supported us in favor of the right to abortion, in favor of passing the law. They were the ones who also influenced their own blocks" (Arg. 3). Although this support did not come without consequences for them, who were later penalized by their own parties. "I believe that many legislators who led the debate on abortion during 2018 did not have their seats renewed by their own political parties in 2020 because of their feminist militancy. There was even a lot of reticence in the provincial governments, and even in the national government." (Arg. 2)

In the case of the Just Cause lawsuit, the Constitutional Court was formed by 44% of women at the time of the sentence, almost in parity with men. Despite critical mass having been reached in this case, of the five votes in favor, four were from men and only one from a woman magistrate. This meant that three of the four votes against were from women. The reflection shared by the interviewees was one of caution. "This shows us that the fact that there are women in positions of making decisions that affect us does not necessarily mean that they are going to promote what we think is feminist" (Col. 1). They also expressed the need to push for more women as decision-makers who also include a gender lens in their work. "Although women in power do not imply that they will fail in accordance with the human rights of women, it is

undoubtedly important that women are in these positions of power, that they get there, and that women participate in politics, but it is not only about that." (Col. 2)

5.5. The role of political ideology

In the case of Argentina, there was clear support from the incumbent left-wing government to pass the law that legalized abortion in 2020, in line with assumptions made in the literature reviewed (Htun & Power, 2010; Waylen, 2007). The scenario in Colombia presented a different horizon with a conservative government in power that openly positioned itself against the legalization of abortion. Here the advance in the legal framework was possible because the policy change happened in the Judiciary, this is thanks to the constitutional mandate to maintain impartiality regarding politics and independence from the Executive governments. In both cases, the participants recalled some support from political actors who were not seen as politically progressive.

In the case of Argentina, the 2018 debate was enabled by former president Mauricio Macri from the conservative center-right coalition "Cambiemos", although the bill was rejected in the Senate. One of the participants expressed that what might have been seen as unexpected alliances from more traditional parties or conservative movements to the general public, were actually the results of active dialogue and advocacy labor that was done from the inside by the National Campaign. Finally, in 2020 left-wing president Alberto Fernández opened the debate again as part of one of his electoral campaign promises. This time the difference was that he accompanied the project "and made some votes of the ruling party turn towards a yes." (Arg. 1)

In Colombia, the issue of abortion had frequently arisen in electoral contexts. "It is like a rhetorical use that is made in electoral, presidential, or legislative campaigns, and also in the specific case of the Peace Agreements as part of a demagogic strategy of some candidates."

(Col. 2) On the side of the more progressive parties in the context of the campaign to decriminalization, "we also found a certain reluctance to be forceful and say 'yes, I support this right to abortion, due to the issue of electoral calculations." (Col. 1) The participants also found that many people were at least willing to say that prison is not the way to regulate the issue, even in parties that would not traditionally be associated with progressivism or feminism in Colombia.

The Colombian government of the president Iván Duque is a "conservative government that opposes sexual and reproductive rights, particularly abortion. This influenced how healthcare providers position themselves." (Col. 1) The influence from the Executive cabinet seemed to have negatively affected the guidelines established by the Ministry of Health to provide abortion as a matter of public health, in line with the legalization of abortion on grounds in 2006. Following the political ideology of the current Executive cabinet, "the Ministry of Health produced a document in 2020, contradicting its own previous guidelines and taking a posture against abortion as a right, even saying that it should be further limited." (Col. 1) Because of the controversy caused by this situation, the institution eventually corrected its statement following the legal framework established by the Constitutional Court in 2006.

Despite this, the Colombian participants agreed that it is possible and necessary to keep an open dialogue with actors across the ideological spectrum. "It is important not to put people in a box and believe that because at some point they thought in one way, then they will necessarily continue to think the same. Or because they belong to this party, we cannot talk to them, and we have to block them without starting a dialogue. Part of the work to advance these rights and destigmatize the issue includes a dialogue that involves all sectors of society as well" (Col. 2). There will still be many challenges to the implementation of the Court's decision to legalize abortion in Colombia, as well as to the Law of Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy in

Argentina. Maintaining an open dialogue and building bridges across the ideological spectrum could serve to strengthen the feminist advances in both countries.

6. Conclusion

This research explored the many strategies used by feminist coalitions in Argentina and in Colombia to legalize abortion in the past years. By doing this, this thesis has encountered that a high scale social mobilization is necessary to address such a polarized issue, although this is more closely related to the level of support from public opinion than to the resources of the organizations. Another important factor is time; both experiences built their efforts on the work done by women's movements and feminist organizations that came before, recognizing their leadership and connecting with their history.

This connection was seen in the symbolic identification of the green bandana from the National Campaign with the similar white ones worn by the Grandmothers of the Mayo Square in Argentina. In the same way, the representatives from Just Cause highlighted the previous achievements from the Table for the Health and Life of Women in 2006 as their starting point to advance their lawsuit before the Constitutional Court in 2020. This indicates that successful feminist social movements work on a continuum, and that they use the awareness of it to impulse the narrative of their trajectory and epic.

Many of the findings from the interviews are in line with the theoretical frameworks explored. In both countries, women's movements were active during periods of institutional crisis, demanding respect for human rights under the military regime in Argentina, and the end of the high levels of violence and security crisis in Colombia. The scenarios of transition from conflict to democracy, expressed in the constitutional and legal reforms to guarantee civil and political rights, also opened the space for feminist civil society to regroup and rethink their goals, as well as their strategies. The global political opportunity created by international organizations such as agencies from the United Nations, and their promotion of women's rights and gender equality permeated the local feminist agendas and national policymaking. At the same time,

these local feminist movements that participated in transnational feminist networks, such as the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters, contributed to international women's human rights standards.

Finally, the are important differences that should be mentioned. In the case of Argentina, the interviewees remarked the ties of the activists within the National Campaign with political activism. This was not mentioned in any moment in the Colombian case, and from the data collected, support from political parties did not seem to be as crucial. In this case, it was the constitutional framework and its guarantees to make individual claims before the Constitutional Court, together with a tradition of judiciary independence that defined the window of opportunity to legalize abortion. Further research could build up on the results from this thesis to compare in more depth these two cases with the experiences in other countries in the Latin American region on this issue, especially to identify other possible paths pursued by feminist movements to reach similar outcomes.

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