

**SINERGIAS ENTRE LA CULTURA EN MOVIMIENTO Y EL MOVIMIENTO
(TRANS)FEMINISTA ACTUAL EN ARGENTINA**

**SYNERGIES BETWEEN CULTURE IN MOTION AND THE CURRENT
(TRANS)FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN ARGENTINA**

Resumen

Los movimientos sociales (trans)feministas de la última década argentina han generado prácticas y narrativas que ponen en tensión las cuestiones sociogenéricas -y lo político- con *la identidad y la diversidad* de distintxs actores. En el campo de la cultura, ciertas experiencias artísticas/culturales de base territorial comulgan con dichos movimientos en la demandan por la visibilidad de diversas formas de ser y estar en el mundo, sus derechos culturales y la equidad social. Este artículo, desde un enfoque socioantropológico transversalizado por una perspectiva de género(s) analiza la sinergia entre ambos -en el marco de una investigación llevada a cabo entre el 2015 y el 2020- a partir de entrevistas en profundidad, observaciones participantes y no participantes, informantes clave y la sistematización de un trabajo colectivo que se ha hecho con 40 experiencias culturales/artísticas de base territorial entre 2019 y mediados de 2020. Se reflexiona hacia el final como las trayectorias observadas dan cuenta de los procesos en-generizados del poder en las experiencias de creación y expresión de la cultura y el arte en la (re)formulación de los movimientos sociales y las políticas públicas implementadas a dicho campo, de su gestión y de un proyecto de Estado. Asimismo, se plantea el desafío interseccional para dar cuenta de la cultura viva de nuestra América Latina.

Palabras clave: Cultura, (Trans)feminismos, Movimientos Sociales, Interseccionalidad, Argentina.

Abstract

The Argentinian (trans)feminist social movements of the last decade have generated practices and narratives that put socio-generic – and political – issues in tension with the *identity* and *diversity* of different actors. In the cultural field, certain territorially based artistic, or cultural, experiences have coincided with these movements in their demands for making diverse ways of being and being in the world more visible, and for cultural rights and social equity. This article analyzes the synergy of the one with the other – in the framework of an investigation carried out between 2015 and 2020 – from a socio-anthropological approach colored by the perspective of gender(s), in-depth interviews, participant and non-participant observations, key informants, and the systematization of a collective work that was conducted on 40 territorial cultural/artistic experiences between 2019 and half way through 2020.

The article ends with reflections on how the observed trajectories account for the engendered processes of power in the experiences of creation and expression of culture and art in the (re)formulation of social movements and public policies implemented in this field, their management and that of a State-run project. Likewise, the challenge of intersectionality is proposed as a way to explain the living culture of our Latin America.

Keywords: Culture; (Trans)feminisms; Social Movements; Intersectionality; Argentina.

Introduction

This article¹ presents a study of certain territorially based² cultural or artistic activities that account for the synergy of social movements in Argentina, of women, (trans)feminists, diversities, and dissidences, in combination with the formulation of public policies centered during the last ten years on expanding rights.³ Experiences of this kind refer to initiatives, proposals and/or actions by individual or collective artists/promoters, of any sexual identity (*artistas/gestorxs*),⁴ who have succeeded in mainstreaming a critical point of view on the inequalities and inequities linked to questions of gender(s) in their artistic or cultural practices (involving dance, circus, music, writing, organizing performances, formation of casts, promotion of cultural projects, poets, publishers, training, etc.). The aim is to politicize such initiatives, proposals and actions, laying a particular emphasis on the spaces that cultural and artistic creation offers for the generation of other political positions in relation to the body/genders/sexualities. Following the same line of thought, the idea of synergy – as an analytical tool – makes it possible to bring into view certain strategic convergences that occur between some groups and at certain political conjunctures, as well as accounting for a series of contingencies and connections that have concrete effects on the cultural field of Argentina. These experiences, which require various forms of existence and being in the world for them to come into sight, have, with their cultural rights and social equality, created practices and narratives that put socio-generic questions – and the political – into a state of tension with the *identity* and *diversity* of the various cultural actors whatever their sexual identity (*lxs distintxs actores*). This is where *identity* emerges as an analytical category to account for the historical processes in which subjects of any sexual identity are determined, in the play of multiple strategies of identification in relation to the social space that they occupy at a particular moment. In the same way, strategies of identification account for certain practices

that have been (re)shaping the actors, whatever their sexual identity (*lxs actores*) in their relations with others (*otrxs*) whatever their sexual identity, and these move and vary in connection with the representations that we shall be producing, of and from these other actors (*esxs otrxs*, of any sexual identity (Penna, 1992, Autora, 2011, *i.e. the Author*).

As part of the same dialectic exercise, it can be seen how, in the present cultural field, strategies of identification – whether subjective or collective – (Giménez, 2007) that socio-generic questions have brought into the mainstream – and their forms of development – appear in the form of complex networks that challenge our past, our present and our future (the reconfiguration of non-sexist images and accounts, re-significations of anti-patriarchal narratives, the use of inclusive language, and others). As a result, such strategies unfold like a field for understanding the *political* in and from the processes of building ethnic, racial, age, sex-generic, and any other diversity or diversities, that subjects engage in in order to demand and guarantee access to citizenship, and in many cases, for their very survival. However, in recent years these histories have re-activated, deepened, and expanded conservative, *macho*, racist and fundamentalist movements that seek to legitimize biologicist and moralist discourses in different forms of State-making through public policies that are designed and applied to maintain the *status quo* of all life (Autora and Suarez, 2019a). This tension has highlighted, for us, the field of culture as a field of study where *sexualities* and *power* are expressed in various different creative and socio-cultural movements (Zapata Jaramillo, 2011; Gargallo Celantani, 2014; Hernández Herse, 2016; Author and Igarzábal, 2021, among others). Much like asking (ourselves) whether identity politics, in so far as they are an instrument of multicultural liberalism do not also create tensions (like those mentioned) by recurring almost exclusively to the production of differences that are *attended to* by bureaucratic management (Hernández Castillo, 2003; Fraser, 2009)

In this situation, the social movements in Argentina of women, (trans)feminists, diversities and dissidences have demanded (directly or indirectly), of public cultural policies – and their application – that they encourage *action in community*, territorial processes of organization and *action in a network* as ways of making social transformations visible; and in the words of Celio Turino (2011), that they highlight and accompany the living culture of the *pueblos*. Taking this step, has made the cultural sector⁵ feel *uncomfortable* with its own job (Zapata Jaramillo, 2011; Vich, 2014; 2011; Autora, 2019b). In this turbulence, the territorial cultural, or artistic, experiences that were being developed by women, dissidences, diversities, non-binaries and (trans)feminist collectives, have multiplied since 2015 in Argentina and started to converse with other practices in the region – and the world – empowering the political links between artistic or cultural experiences and (trans)feminist social movements (Gargallo Celantani, 2014; Hernández Herse, 2016; Spataro, et al. 2018; among others (*otrxs*)).

Particularly in this work, it is possible to see the synergy of certain territorially based artistic or cultural experiences combined with the (trans)feminist social movements of the past decade in Argentina; and it may be observed how such a symbiosis has demanded: that other socio-generic identities in the cultural sector be made visible, that cultural policies involving the inclusion of such identities be formulated and that there be a profound transformation of the practices of these groups.

To achieve this, first a revision is made of some results from a research project conducted between 2015 and 2020, from which various voices have been recovered, chosen for the wealth of their individual and/or collective experiences, or else for the recognition received in the artistic field where they operate.⁶ These have been the product of a non-probability sampling technique – between 2015 and the middle of 2020 – known as *snowball*

sampling in which the author of this writing, as a participant in the Argentina Network for Cultural Management, RedArGC (*Red de Gestión Cultural Argentina*) and researcher into the field of culture, began to contact various artists/promoters (*artistas/gestorxs*) for the study, who in turn brought in new artists/promoters that they knew, and these again, others (*otrxs*). One of the products of this work was successfully systematizing 40 territorially based cultural/artistic experiences whether individual or collective with the aim of bringing into sight and mapping the collectives and the artists/promoters (*artistas/gestorxs*) that have been strengthening the demands of present day (trans)feminism in the cultural/artistic field (Author and Igarzábal, 2021).

These voices have made it possible to account for the historical processes analyzed in these lines, processes that have been reconstructed on the basis of: a) in-depth interviews with different (trans)feminist militant artists and promoters (*gestrxs*) who do not necessarily identify themselves as (trans)feminists, and artists/promoters (*artistas/gestorxs*) who have taken part in (trans)feminist collectives in order to re-assess their careers in relation to the topics of interest to the study. They have all (*todxs ellxs*) developed as either circus performers, writers (*escritorxs*), poets, cinema script writers (*guionistxs*), promoters (*gestorxs*), musicians (*músicxs*), actresses, artisans (*artesanxs*), dancers (*bailarinxs*), female clowns, journalists, publicists or teachers; b) observations made as participants or non-participants with the aim of taking part in the organizational and/or decision making moments of artists or promoters (*artistas/gestorxs*) and of the collectives, as well as to record dialogs, attitudes, practices, and gestures of the various people in different spaces, cultural events, talkshops, workshops and courses; c) formal and informal chats with key interviewees from the cultural sector (representative of named cultural activities, of feminist collectives and of the promotion of cultural policies) in order to identify problematic areas in the field linked to

socio-generic questions; e) these experiences have been analyzed qualitatively – for the research project referred to – with the purpose of observing the various strategies that the groups and/or artists/promoters (*artistas/gestorxs*) developed individually in order to bring into the mainstream the (trans)feminist demands of their time in the cultural sector where they develop.

This is a good moment to put into words the fact that the *method* used to reconstruct the anthropological datum in this article has been enriched or limited by the *pause* related to sanitary measures worldwide which has made physical contact impossible with the other people doing the work, while the territorially based artistic/cultural events that we have been talking about have found themselves suspended. However, they have brought me, as a researcher, new challenges in virtual space.⁷ Secondly, the complexities that were (re)signified from our analysis of those processes combined with an intersectional look at the design and application of the cultural public policies that arise from the histories narrated, have been highlighted. Finally, and as a last reflection, some questions linked to the disruption of socio-generic demands in the field of designing and implementing public policies for the cultural sector, have been taken up again, and these are in a dialog with my research procedures in this field and fortify them – research I have been conducting since 2009 adopting a socio-anthropological approach traversed by the perspective of gender(s),⁸ of which this article is a corollary.

The precariousness of life makes the body, and women subject to precariousness make the culture

Since the recovery of the democratic State (in 1983) the Argentine Republic has been operating in a national conjuncture characterized by citizen participation and the demand for

rights. After the last military dictatorship in Argentina (24 March 1976 – 10 December 1983) our nation began, slowly and not without difficulties, a period of transition towards democracy.⁹ In this context, a number of individual and collective demands by women (*re*)appear, concerning specific problems of participation and citizen rights whose inclusion on the public agenda they insisted on. Thus, starting in the 1980s, women collectively take up again, and go more deeply into, topics or problems that had begun to come into view in previous decades and the military dictatorship had managed to silence: the participation of women in the fields of higher education and politics, incorporation into the labor market, etc. These transformations took into account women who not only wished to occupy public spaces but also produce practices and create decisions of their own separately from the traditional roles associated with family and motherhood. This is when topics or problems associated with women/genders/feminisms in the areas of society, health, reproduction, work, education and of course also of the cultural field began to be re-signified (Di Marco, 2003; Jelin, 2009; Grassi, 2009; Rodríguez Gustá, et al., 2010; among others (*otrxs*)).

On this subject there is a vast bibliography that addresses the design, implementation and successes/failures of the public policies mainstreamed by these approaches. The studies in it allow us to observe how – in the process of transition towards a democracy under Dr. Raúl Alfonsín in the presidential administration of the country in the 1980s (10 December 1983 till 8 July 1989) – the social, cultural and political areas were characterized by a hopeful awakening in relation to the *conquest* of women's rights; for example, in 1985, National Women's Congresses began to be held (*Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres*, ENM) recognizing the context that made the participation of women in the social, cultural and political fields possible in Argentina (Aguilar, 2011; Jelin, 1990; Anzorena, 2013; among others (*otrxs*)).

With a complete disregard for what had been achieved in the previous decade, during the 1990s (8 July 1989 till 10 December 1999) with Dr. Carlos Menen in the presidency, the links between women and the State went on to be reshaped. In the context of neoliberal policies through which inequalities were deepened, women were among the most affected groups. As a result, the impoverished living conditions of that decade led to different public policies focused on women (Fraser, 1997; Grassi, 2003, 2009; Falquet, 2003; Rodríguez Gustá and Caminotti, 2010; among others (*otrxs*)). Then we get to the start of the new century, marked by an economic, social and political crisis (the term in office of the president Dr. Fernando de la Rúa began on 10 December 1999 and ended abruptly on 21 December 2001) that would deepen the inequalities of the whole of society in Argentina while the most impoverished groups (among them women in general) came into view in public space by means of strong social/cultural demands and above all through political participation (Di Marco, 2005; Rauber, 2002; Merchán, 2001; among others (*otrxs*)).¹⁰ It was in this decade that a political process with its origins in Peronism, called Kirchnerism, began to take form.¹¹

During the period 2003-2015, certain programs, projects and lines of action were outlined, and these were characterized in general terms by discourses that rejected the views of neoliberalism, developmentalist economic policies and free trade treaties. Public policies were promoted (of varying shades, naturally) designed to defend Mercosur, the international alignment of Latin American nations and a revaluing of Human Rights. In the latter area, certain government actions and/or programs guaranteeing the rights of injured *minorities* such as migrants, indigenous people, young people, women, sexual diversities, LGBTTTIQ+¹², and others, were renewed. During these years a large number of laws were designed and applied that had to do with certain demands made by women's movements and by some of the (trans)feminist movements – that began to acquire greater visibility than they

had ever had in our country before. – Laws, public policies, projects and/or programs would put, onto the agendas of states and institutions (Guzmán, 2001), basic rights that brought into high prominence the *political* aspect of sexuality (Rubin, 1989): the Comprehensive Sex Education law, *Ley 26.150 de Educación Sexual Integral* (2006) – whose predecessor was the law for the Creation of Sexual Health and Responsible Reproduction, *Ley 25.673 de Creación del Programa de Salud Sexual y Procreación Responsable* (2002) – ; the law of Comprehensive Protection to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate Violence Against Women in Areas Where They Develop their Personal Relations, *Ley 26.485 Protección Integral para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia contra las Mujeres en los Ámbitos en que Desarrollen sus Relaciones Interpersonales* (2009); the modification of Article 2, *artículo 2* (2010) of the Civil Marriage law, *Ley 26.618 de Matrimonio Civil* – known as the law of Egalitarian Marriage –; the law of Gender Identity, *Ley 26.743 de Identidad de Género* (2012); the law of Prevention and Sanctioning of Human Trafficking, *Ley 26.842 de Prevención y sanción de la trata de personas* (2012) and assistance for victims; and the law of Medically Assisted Reproduction, *Ley 26.862 de producción Médicamente Asistida* also known as the law of Assisted Human Reproduction, *Ley de producción Humana Asistida* or the National Law of Assisted Fertilization, *Ley Nacional de Fertilización Asistida* (2013).

In the cultural field, these struggles are reflected in a *search for equilibrium* between policies of recognition and those of redistribution in pursuit of Social Justice (Falquet, 2003; Fraser, 2009; among others (*otrxs*)) where *identity* (ethnic, racial, sex-gender, geopolitical, etc.), together with certain political reforms for *diversity* have kept *questioning* – at a global level – the neoliberal regimes, insisting on guarantees for life itself and/or on conservative attempts to “restore order” that could be seen in different countries of the continent.

It was during this period that the territorially based artistic or cultural experiences that I have been working on, began to take form. They were born of the necessity to transform the hetero-standardized, patriarchal and violent logics that kept certain women out of cultural, recreational and/or leisure spaces. In one part of her interview, K remembered how at the start of the new millennium lesbians found they permanently suffered “(...) *rudeness in bars and outside the toilets, Latin music with sexist lyrics almost without exception, the predominance of cis-men and bodies sculpted in gymnasiums*” (K: Coordinator of an LGBTTIQ+ Civil and Cultural Association through which she and a group of women friends began to think of making a space of their own where each of them “*would be able to express themselves freely and meet others (otrxs)*” (*idem*). In the same vein, and in the framework of mapping cultural actions, M remembered the need to have a “*critical view of the Tango*” (M: female Organizer of the Argentine Queer Tango) where it was impossible for a woman to “*command*” the steps of the dance; and where “*they had to sit and wait till someone, out of the few men that there sometimes were in the milongas (dancing venues), invited them to dance*” (*idem*). From these inconveniences would arise an LGBTTIQ+ Civil and Cultural Association, and the Queer Tango, *Tango Queer*, as places where you did not have to feel out of place, that you were “*de otro palo*” (from another suit) (K: Coordinator of an LGBTTIQ+ Civil and Cultural Association).

However, not only did the spaces constrict, but the narratives, the images and the depictions that shaped “cultural products” (in the framework of the cultural industry or in alternative, self-made practices) reproduced stereotypes of gender(s)¹³ and sexist ways of seeing the world that began to upset even the protagonists of the stories they told. Thus female writers, script writers, painters and musicians started to “militarize” their productions: “*I became aware of the colonial, Anglo-Saxon and European vision of sexual dissidence, and*

of the dangers of its commercial and vacuous use (...) the aesthetic hegemony of the binary, so oppressive for bodies” responded A (A: A queer poet (*cuir*)) in answer to the question: “*How was your curiosity about the gender perspective awakened?*”. Further, P summed up in her response that “*(...) it awakened with the lack of a gender perspective that could be seen in the Fairs and Music Markets in Latin America*” (P: First lesbian woman to occupy a position in the Directory of the National Institute of Music of Argentina, *Directorio del Instituto Nacional de la Música de Argentina, INAMU*).

It is also interesting to highlight the fact that in nearly all of the 40 experiences explored in the mapping conducted between 2019 and 2022, in the context of the general research that this article is derived from, a number of words and phrases were repeated, such as: “sexist practices”; “patriarchal paradigm and imaginary”; “oppression”; “discrimination”; “inequality”; “belittling”; “silencing”; “lack of opportunities”; “injustices”; “abuses of power”; “being pushed out of sight on the stages and in the texts”; “economic abuse”; “hetero-patriarchal behaviors”; among others that questioned precariousness and making people’s situations precarious (Butler, 2009) in reference to those cultural life histories that would *meet up* with others (*otrxs*) in the socio-political space that was created by the *#NiUnaMenos* of 2015 (Not One Female Less, as we shall see in the next section). It is in these *memories* that have been re-signified by the men and women interviewed (*lxs entrevistadx*s) that we can feel/think/understand the complexities that social relations have been showing in the day-to-day lives of these women (in particular) to whom may be added the differences or diversities present, not only cultural but also generic, erotic, ethnic, religious, economic, of health, political, educational and of age (among others) that create permanent inequalities in a world where life itself is *precarious*.

Going a little deeper into this idea, we can take a lead from Judith Butler (2009) who defines precariousness as “a new form of regulation that characterizes our historical epoch” (p. 13). Following Butler, Lorey (2016) maintains that “greater precariousness is not an exception, but the rule” and says it means “living with the unforeseeable, with contingency” (p. 17). Starting from the idea of Biopower that she gets from Foucault (1978), Lorey maintains that greater precariousness (*precarización*) is a process that shapes subjects, and also produces insecurity as their main concern, as may be seen in the quoted accounts.

According to Isabell Lorey, we find there are three aspects to “the precarious” – none of which arises separately from the rest –: firstly, for her a *precarious condition* is the sign of the aspect of bodies having existentially shared vulnerability, which is a socio-ontological aspect. Secondly, she defines *precariousness* as a category of organization that designates the political, social and legal effects of a generally precarious condition, that is, social positionings differentiated by insecurity. Finally she defines the dynamics of greater precariousness (*precarización*) as *governability*, meaning the workings of the government that never stray from bourgeois ideology, and involve uncertainty in lifestyle, in bodies and in ways of subjectivizing. It is in the fabric of these three aspects that, at least in this article, it can be understood that in the Argentina of recent decades the demands by women’s movements and (trans)feminisms were taking on new forms in the day-to-day lives of the women we were working with, on the basis of politicizing the personal and bringing it into play in the cultural dispute for equality of rights. In this synergism, these artists and cultural performers took up a new position in the context of a shared social movement that is currently empowering particular artists and/or collectives who promote a political (*de*)*construction* of and from the cultural. In Argentina, the 3rd of June 2015 has come to be one of the milestones for explaining the fabric.

#NiUnaMenos in the cultural/artistic field

In an informal interview, A remembered that in the first decade of the new century “*their stories told of women’s lives, and were told by women*” but neither she nor her protagonists “*knew that they were feminists*” (A: script writer, actress).

Likewise EP told us that they realized the plot of their clown show was “*feminist*” because “*the feminists told us it was*” (EP: member of a Collective of Clowns (*payasxs*)).

In our account of the individual and collective histories of territorially based cultural or artistic experiences that we have gone over, the 3rd of June 2015 emerges as a milestone. Something happened on this date that would end up taking the form of a social movement unlike any other in Argentina (and would resonate all over the region and in the world: called *#NiUnaMenos* (“not one female less”). Artists, journalists and intellectuals called for violence against women that *had become intolerable* with an increase in femicides in the country, to be made visible. I shall quote from my fieldwork notebook what C told us in an informal chat:

(...) my awakening to the gender perspective was due to a personal experience I went through, by means of which, thanks to meeting with others (*otrxs*) I was able to recognize the complexity of the many ways in which gender violence takes form, and starting from this

incident and keeping on with others (*otrxs*), I was able to get over the shock and carry on”

(C: General Co-ordinator of the Cultural Council of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires,

Coordinadora General del Consejo Cultural de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires)

Just like C, the other people interviewed let their emotions run, (remembering) the bodily experience of “*being there*” with others (*otrxs*), the hugs, the tears and the need to shout “*enough!*” The anxieties of the body would be expressed in the artistic and cultural practices of all the members of the collectives that we were interviewing: the dances, the drawings, the murals, the poems, photographs and other exercises that would go on weaving bonds of sisterhood and mixing generations (both C and A insisted on the “*revolution in their children (hijas)*” as points of inflection in their own lives).

These steps forward would be repeated in subsequent years, but now it would be with the imprint of the tensions within the feminist movement itself and that of the arrival of a state administration that had started to implement political, economic and socio-cultural actions in the frame of discourses of a liberal, developmentalist and conservative tint. On the 10th of December 2015, the presidency of the Argentine Nation was assumed by Mauricio Macri, representing a political coalition called *Cambiamos* (Let’s Change). This administration continued until the 10th of December 2019.¹⁴ Paradoxically, it was during the term in office of this government that the *feminist green wave* that had been growing for the past few years reached the level of a *tsunami*, in 2018.

The debate so dreamed of by generations of feminists on the need for a law of voluntary termination of pregnancy, *Ley de Interrupción Voluntaria del Embarazo*, IVE, that had been denied for so many years – in spite of the previous progressive governments – became a reality during the first half of 2018 (the project having been systematically

presented since 2006). The national campaign for the right to a legal, safe and free abortion, *La Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito* (created in an ENM (National Magistrates School) in 2005) presented the project that was admitted into our country's parliament, and those taking part kept on with their *Green Tuesdays*, which continued from the beginning till the end of the discussions. MG told me in the course of an informal chat that the first Tuesday they called a gathering for was in "*February 2018 and then they were held from when the parliamentary term began (around April) till the 13th of June (...) and then they held them again sporadically on different occasions.*" (MG: Member of the Campaign)

These weekly encounters, we were told in an interview by B – who is an artist and militant feminist in a union of workers (*trabajadorxs*) – were a "*fiesta*" for the movement of women, (trans)feminisms and others, as "*they occupied the streets*", and "*invaded the social networks*", with militants from the movement appearing in tv programs like the news and "*even the program of spectacles.*"¹⁵ The Green Days succeeded in getting the topic on the public agenda: "*going out with my daughter on the Tuesdays was incredible*", NF told us, also in an interview (NF: Editor and journalist). We also observed in the field how: the collective Np (that started in 2017) gave various performances; the collective of Argentinian Actresses, *Actrices Argentinas* gave readings of plays and poems; and, feminist journalists invaded the newspapers and audio-visual media with stories and images of the weekly events. Further, this context in which generic inequalities came into view and became more complex, began to require with greater force a management of cultural agendas that would make visible and concrete the cultural and ideological practices that sustained and reproduced gender stereotypes in the same sector. We saw how collectives like *Fieras* (wild beasts or fierce females), *Mujeres por la Cultura*, women for culture, *Espacios Sindicales*, union spaces, and

National Universities among others, went, with their actions, into their respective spaces of intervention in greater depth. We were able to record in the field how circus artistes (*las artistas*) dreamed of “*tents free of acts of violence*” and that is how they described the experience of the creation of their collectives to us (G and C: members of the collective with the same name (*carpas libres de violencias*), and how the Feminist Book Fair, *Feria del Libro Feministas*, was organized in 2018, which proposed in its first edition, as PD reminded us in an interview:

“to promote the exhibition, circulation and acquisition of productions related to feminism, gender studies and sexualities, and to make visible in the literary field women, lesbians, transvestites, trans people, non-binaries, and other corporalities and non-hegemonic sexualities. A plural and democratic space for learning and reflection with a view to building a more equitable society for all (*todes*). In each of its editions and special events it has been open to all and free of charge.” (PD: one of the organizers of the fair.)

Also the number of protocols against acts of violence and discrimination based on gender, increased, more cases of harassment and/or abuse were reported to the authorities, struggles for quotas on stage for women and trans identities went deeper, equal pay with that of male artists was discussed; people started to demand special rights for dancers and actresses who were mothers, etc., etc., etc.

In this situation, more than at any other time in recent Argentine history, cultural policies would re-signify as central, for a society that expressed through political decisions (laws of gender identity, egalitarian marriage, prevention and sanctioning of people trafficking and assistance to victims of it, violence against women, among others), the need

for transformation of a cis heteronormative and patriarchal system while at the same time the feminist movement would be appealed to in greater force by various women, dissidences/diversities/(trans)feminisms, and others (*otres*) who did not feel they were included in many of the demands that were getting onto the agenda.

At the same time, Afro, indigenous, popular and/or community collectives, and different groups of religious women, denounced on (and on the basis of) the same Green Days, “State oppression” against non-white populations and those in vulnerable sectors of society, who were more numerous than those in the hegemonized movements of white women, from middle class, educated, etc. sectors. Following the same line, as the political-identity collectives linked to gender rights came into view, such as might be those of women, trans people (*lxs trans*), lesbians, etc. – and of course the demand for the State to guarantee their historically violated rights – came to be profoundly challenged by “new” inequalities within the movement itself. On this subject, one of the girls in the Afro-feminist collective told us that “*In art what continues to be universal is the hegemonic. We see an anti-racist education of the audience and agents of art, as being urgent*” (KK: member of the collective). Therefore, the *feminist movement* itself should start to give more room in the artistic/cultural field to the manifestation of tensions, resistances and the permanent negotiations for recognition of the identities adopted by *women* who do not feel they have much of a profile in the demands made in, and coming from, the cultural/artistic field: indigenous women, *marrones* (i.e. brown skinned people), rural people, *villeras* (“slum kids”, in this case women from so-called low income housing settlements), immigrants (especially from neighboring countries to Argentina), refugees, and many others.

The voices of these women, dissidences, diversities, non-binaries, and others (*otres*) present “new” challenges for a cultural field – which in the words of R, making a comment

in the mapping that we conducted –: where “*it has not yet been possible to (de)construct the sexism and acts of machismo*” (R: cultural promoter). In this situation the complexities of promoting the cultural policies *directed* at women, diversities, dissidences, non-binaries and others (*otres*) through various projects, plans and/or programs, were taking shape – since the return of democracy to our country – among the paradoxes that link civil society to the State; the economy to politics; the body to politics; distribution to recognition; structural aspects to historical transformations; and the already instituted to what is being instituted in unstable and ambiguous scenarios (Anzorena, 2013). These complexities have brought into sight or pushed out of sight particular forms of the links between public cultural policies, the approaches of women/genders/(trans)feminisms, and the living culture that resides in our lands.

Final reflections

At a time in history when for the first time ever Argentina has a Ministry for Women, Genders and Diversity as a political response to decades of demands by movements of women, feminisms, diversities and dissidences, it is necessary to observe territorially based cultural/artistic experiences politically. These allow us to see various tools of participative and network action as powerful ways of transforming everyday power relations; they allow us to understand the intrinsic struggle between the life histories of people brought into or excluded from view (*sujetxs (in)visibilizadx*s) and the power of social movements; they let us see the dialog, the discussions, the negotiations, and the disagreements over diversity, in the framework of homogeneity, and allow us to imagine creative ways of doing and being in the world.

The various cultural/artistic experiences that we have shared build bridges, links, and make cross references where they meet in inequalities, in oppressions, in their links to others (*otres*), forming collectives, associations and new organizations, and in many cases taking part jointly in concrete actions that mobilize public policies for widening rights (Autora and Igarzábal, 2021). The life histories observed account for the engendered processes (*engenerizados*) (Bonder, 1998) of power in the processes of creation and expression of culture and art in the (re)formulation of public policies applied in that field and their promotion, and in the (re)formulation of a State project. The territorially based cultural/artistic experiences studied in the field of Argentine culture, going more deeply into the processes of inequality and the increased precariousness of life, the problem of identities/subjectivities, sexuality and sexualities and the male or female body (*el cuerpo/la cuerpa*) have become an intersectional challenge (Crenshaw, 1989; Viveros Vigoya, 2016) for explaining the living culture of our Latin America.

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² “Experience” is understood by Joan Scott (1988) as being a historical, social and cultural product that is the result of a complex interweaving of the social representations that circulate in society and culture. In the same vein, we can reformulate the category of *territorial cultural/artistic experiences* as an analytical category that accounts for these interweavings, which are reproduced in a state of permanent tension, through resistance and negotiation in the cultural and/or artistic practices that arise and are followed through in, and from, the community.

³ Using (trans) in the expression *feminists* we re-signify two questions: 1) the transfeminist approach, as an “(...) epistemological tool that is not just for including the transgender discourse into feminism, and does not claim to set itself above feminisms (...), [but] implies a network that takes into account various states: of changed gender, of migration, of being of mixed race, of vulnerability, race and class, in order to join the people in these conditions together as inheritors of the historical memory of social movements of insurrection (Valencia, 2018: 31); 2) and by using the plural we operationalize the existence of different theoretical-methodological currents that find themselves in discussion/tension/agreements within “feminist theory”. At the same time we understand the term sexual dissidence as referring to those sexualities that do not accept the physical, chromosomal and gender conditions of heterosexuality as being the only legitimate ones. That is to say, they are made up of subjects who question the norm even if they are heterosexual themselves, as they recognize other forms of identity than the hegemonic and other forms of procreation than by vaginal coitus.

As distinct from so-called sexual diversities, that are made up of those subjects (*aquellxs sujetos*) who do not identify themselves with the identities formulated as female or male (Maffía, n/d), and whom we recognize as non-binaries.

⁴ The written language is a way of making gender demarcations visible, so we use x (*in the original Spanish*) to refer to the universally applicable, which can include all persons whether they are recognized as women, men or trans. (*Translator's note: it is difficult to translate the Author's distinctions consistently into English, because the definite articles "los", "las" and "la" and "el", for example, are all the same word in English ("the") and it is not usually necessary to coin a new, more "inclusive", word like "lxs". The English article "the" covers all genders and numbers as it stands.*) Though the use of "x" is rather informal, not to say awkward, in formal environments, such as academia, it is used as a tool to make explicit the hetero-standardization written into the language. The use of "x" can be applied to each person without reproducing, through the power of language, the belief in two genders or sexes, that, according to Wittig (1986) is a fundamental basis not only for sexism, but also for homophobia and hetero-standardization. It is also sometimes useful to use the letter "e" in a word ending, and both these examples of inclusive language are found in the text. (*Translator's note: so, for example, in the original Spanish, instead of writing "nosotros" meaning "we men" or "nosotras" meaning "we women", the author might write "nosotres" meaning "we of either sex", or "we irrespective of any sexual identity". Whenever it is not clear from the translation into English that the word is an example of "inclusive language", the original Spanish has been retained in brackets.*)

⁵ By *cultural sector* we mean the coming together of "(...) the activities themselves and the subjects who develop them (so-called cultural companies and industries) or those who enjoy them (the *lxs*) consumers, whether individually or as the public), public actors who intervene

in them (government administrations, legislators, various public bodies, etc.) and the problems raised by each of the specific markets that sustain the cultural activities that are developed and the cultural goods that find themselves affected” (Arroyo Yanes, n/d).

⁶ For reasons of confidentiality I do not give their names in the text and will identify the speakers by their initials. However, I do give the real names of the artistic and militant Collectives mentioned.

⁷ Argentina underwent a long period of compulsory preventive social isolation, called ASPO, *Aislamiento Social, Preventivo y Obligatorio* which led to us continuing our field work basically in virtual space. The situation imposed great challenges for us, such as having to organize interviews on line, conversations through WhatsApp, synchronous talkshops and workshops, among other strategies. It did also allow us to join up with people who were not in Buenos Aires and to converse with key providers of information from all over the country. In spite of which, the physical distance between us meant that we had to understand the body and its emotions on other, hitherto unexplored, planes. The benefits and limitations of these new practices we will only be able to appreciate looking back from a certain distance in time.

⁸ We refer to “genders” to get over a female-masculine duality and to include Trans identities that imply manifesting certain forms of being, and feeling oneself to be, a “woman” or a “man”.

⁹ The military regime of those years had instigated a systematic bloody repression of political and unionized democratic processes of both a social and cultural type, through State terrorism. This situation left a historical count of 30,000 people of both sexes who had been forced to disappear (who were kidnapped (*secuestradxs*), and murdered (*asesinadxs*)) and thousands who were exiled (*exiladxs*).

¹⁰ The process known as the “2001 Crisis” revealed the capacity among women to struggle and organize, which could be seen to take shape in communal kitchens, labor co-operatives, childcare networks, “*piquetero*” (unemployed worker) movements, etc.

¹¹ It was called Kirchnerism because of those who led the movement (naturally, with differences in each administration): on 25 May 2003 Dr. Néstor Kirchner came in to power, and his mandate continued in 2007 under Dra. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, till 10 December 2015.

¹² The abbreviation LGBTTTIQ+ means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Transvestite, Intersexual, Queer and Others; the first 3 letters (LGB) are for sexual orientations or preferences; the next two (TT) refer to gender identities; the next T is an expression of gender, and Intersexuality refers to a biological condition.

¹³ We are thinking of the “female” and “male” characteristics that naturalize social inequalities covered by anatomical differences between people, that are (re)produced or tightened up in the different bodily performances of trans groups, campaigns against sexual violence, homophobia, etc., and in theatrical, photographic, and television shows, and in complaints through social networks, etc.

¹⁴ It was replaced democratically by a Peronist government under Dr. Alberto Fernández (who was accompanied by Dra. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner when he was vice-president) that was running the country when this article was being written.

¹⁵ To go deeper into this, we recommend reading: De la VDG a la IVE: de los sillones chimenteros al parlamento, (Spataro, et al., 2018) – see bibliography.