

**Social Movements From a Feminist Perspective: Methodological Tips for a non-
Androcentric Analysis of Social Action**

**Los movimientos sociales desde la perspectiva feminista: pistas metodológicas para
un análisis no androcéntrico de la acción social**

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Abstract:

Social movements play a determining role in the political landscape. They are agents of change that question and bring to light the power structures that the system on its own does not express. However, as power operates as a network, social movements are not exempt from harboring relations of domination and power. In this context, based on a feminist methodology and the use of categories for gender as a device of power, sexual division of labor, access to public space, and decision-making, the objective of this work is to provide methodological elements for the analysis of non-separatist or mixed social movements, whose main purpose is not related to breaking up power relations based on the device of gender. A feminist analysis makes it possible to show elements that, on the basis of an androcentric theory of the study of social movements, had not been considered as relevant. Ignoring these aspects produces and reproduces, in most cases, political violence against women. And in other cases, it contributes to making the sexual harassment and violence experienced by women activists invisible.

Keywords: gender and social movements, sexual division of labor and social movements, gender violence and social movements

Resumen:

Los movimientos sociales tienen un papel determinante en el espacio político. Son agentes de cambio que cuestionan y sacan a la luz los cotos de poder que el sistema no expresa por sí mismo; sin embargo, como el poder opera de manera reticular, los movimientos sociales no están exentos de albergar relaciones de dominación y poder. En este contexto, a partir de la metodología feminista y del empleo de las categorías de género como dispositivo de poder, división sexual del trabajo, acceso al espacio público y toma de decisiones, el objetivo de este trabajo es aportar elementos metodológicos para el análisis de los movimientos sociales no separatistas o mixtos, cuyo principal fin no está relacionado con romper las relaciones de poder a partir del dispositivo de género. El análisis feminista posibilita evidenciar elementos que desde la teoría androcéntrica del estudio de los movimientos sociales no habían sido considerados relevantes. Obviar estos aspectos produce y reproduce, en la mayoría de los casos, violencia política hacia las mujeres; no obstante, en otros casos abona a invisibilizar el acoso y la violencia sexual experimentados por las mujeres activistas.

Palabras clave: género y movimientos sociales, división sexual del trabajo y movimientos sociales, violencia de género y movimientos sociales

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Introduction

Social movements can be understood, according to Touraine (2006, p. 255), as “organized collective conduct by an actor struggling against his opponent for the social direction of historicity in a concrete collective”. Their main function is to bring to light what the system leaves unsaid: the preserves of silence, violence and injustice that are always latent in hegemonic powers, and whose role is to mediate between the disconnections of the system and the daily life of people; and they are seen principally in what they do, which is to exist and to act. They consist of three elements: their identity, their opponent and the social objective. The first of these refers to how the movement defines itself, what it is, and who it claims to speak for; the opponent is the main enemy of the movement and is openly and explicitly identified; while the objective is what the movement seeks to obtain within its historical horizon (Castells, 1999, p. 93; Melucci, 1999, p. 51).

Almeida (2020, pp. 17-18) notes that the study of social movements has increased significantly in the last 20 years, due to theoretical and empirical advances in sociology and other social sciences, and to the greater incidence of collective action in different parts of the world. He mentions that the study of social movements involves various different concepts and levels of analysis, and a classification of the activities they engage in from a macro down to a micro level. Nevertheless, the studies of collective action that have been undertaken focus their attention on formal and directive spaces as the object of study, that is to say, on public space, which has led theories of social movements to maintain an androcentric character (Alfama, 2009, p. 128; Florez, 2014, pp. 77-78).

As a social movement, feminism has turned into a tsunami, provoked by the fourth wave of feminism, a phenomenon that shows how tired millions of women had

become of the oppression and discrimination that women have suffered in the course of history (Varela, 2020, p. 286), and especially sexual violence (Cobo, 2019, p. 138); feminism has spread around the world recognizing and confronting the crisis of heteropatriarchal capitalism in its current neoliberal form (García, 2018, p. 17). The potency of feminism or its desire to change everything are seen in this drive and it is seen to be an alternative theory of power. It consists of reclaiming the indeterminacy of what one can do, that is to say, displacing the limits that have been imposed. It has to do with common invention as opposed to expropriation, collective enjoyment as opposed to privatization and an expansion of what is desired as something possible here and now (Gago, 2019, pp. 13-14).

With regard to the presence of women in social movements, Alfama (2009, pp. 127-128) comments that the number is thought to be small, except in those movements that declare openly that they are feminist. But the problem is not that there is so little participation by women in social movements but in how it takes place. Studies that have been made of collective action concentrate on formal spaces and positions of leadership, so the contributions made by women are unseen to a great extent. A broader perspective has shown that even when women are in the majority and have an active and important job to do, their presence in visible and formal spaces is insufficient.

Taking as a starting point the massive mobilization in Mexico City on the 8th of March, International Women's Day, and the call for a withdrawal of productive and reproductive labor under the slogan of "A day without women" on the 9th of March (Portillo and Beltrán, 2021, p. 8), and the exploration that has been made of studies analyzing different social mobilizations from a feminist perspective, among which the most notable are those of Alfama (2009), Cortés, Zapata, Ayala and Rosas (2018), Dunezat (2017) and Palacios (2012), where the struggle by women is a determining

factor in the face of an extractive power (Navarro, 2019), or in which policies of disregard and plunder by the State are confronted by means of black Afro-Mexican feminist resistance (Varela, 2019), the purpose of this article, adopting a feminist methodology, is to provide methodological elements for the analysis of non-separatist or mixed social movements whose main aim is not related to breaking up power relations based on gender – mostly brought over to the political arena of what is public by women and other identities who disagree with processes that have turned gender into a binary question – and are set on the objective of resolving problems such as those of the environment, unions, students, citizenship, human rights, rural and indigenous struggles, and autonomy.

Of particular relevance is that with the adoption of the perspective of a feminist methodology, women who until recently were invisible as social actors, are placed at the center. This methodology has the peculiarity of focusing on the study and retrieval of past events that women took part in whether they thought of themselves as feminists or not, and whether or not they dedicated their work and energy to the liberation of women; it also allows the research to not be androcentric, which means that focuses and methods that make women invisible are avoided (Bartra, 2012, p. 68; Comesaña, 2004). Following this line of thought, the methodological variables that will be used, following the proposal of Salazar (2017, p. 52), are i) gender as a device of power between men and women, ii) the sexual division of labor and iii) access to public space and the taking of decisions.

Using a feminist approach to the study of social movements, as pointed out by Chávez (2017, p. 43), makes a different interpretation possible and allows us on behalf of those women who have been repeatedly disregarded and whose voices have been silenced to take a new look at them and see things from their point of view. To not

include this approach in the study of collective action, perpetuates the reproduction of patterns of patriarchal culture and androcentric power.

Thus, on the basis of these ideas and the categories mentioned, it is hoped to elucidate the connections that allow the production and reproduction of gender inequalities within social movements, and to de-romanticize them and think of them as forms that are searching for other options in the future, as long as they are always viewed with a self-critical eye.

Gender as an instrument of power

To think about power inside social movements and how it is spread between men and women, we have recourse to the Fauldian notion of power relations: a power that circulates transversally in all social relations and operates in a reticular manner. As noted by García (2017), power relations are inherent to any relations that exist in the realm of society; they trigger splits, break-ups and inequalities between subjects, as well as being the immediate effect of such break-ups.

According to Foucault, power is “a vast technology that traverses the whole range of social relations; a machine that produces effects of domination on the basis of strategies and specific tasks a particular kind” (Ceballos, 1994, p. 31). It is not something that is acquired, that can be grabbed or shared, something that you keep or let go of; power is exercised from innumerable points, and in a game of mobile non-egalitarian relations (Foucault, 2007, p. 114).

Although gender does not appear as a determining factor in Foucault’s analysis of power relations, his idea of power is suggestive because it considers aspects that go from the micro (a micro-physical view of power) to the macro (institutions, norms, values and structures to name but a few) and this makes it possible to identify different

aspects when conducting an analysis of gender (Piedra, 2004, p. 135). By means of reflections of this kind, an attempt has been made to understand from the point of view of feminist analysis, the power buttressed by the privileges of males as a group, deriving from the subordination of women as a collective and/or of the pre-eminence of the masculine over the feminine (Santa Cruz, 2010, p. 120).

Following the Foucauldian analysis, we can think of gender as an instrument of power, which in Foucault's own words is:

[...] a decidedly heterogeneous combination, that includes discourses, institutions, architectural constructions, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific pronouncements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic proposals; in short: the elements of the instrument belong as much to what is not said as to what is said. The instrument is the network that can be established between these elements. (1985, p. 128)

As explained by Amigot and Pujal (2009, p. 122), gender, as a device, carries out two fundamentally related operations: first, it produces a dichotomy between the sexes and the subjectivities that are linked to it; and secondly it creates and regulates the relations of power between men and women. This notion makes it possible to understand that in spite of the fact that power circulates in all social relations, the device of gender operates in different ways, subjugating women, something that is emphasized in certain analyses of power. On this subject, Scott (2013) mentions that gender is a primary form of significant power relations; and Townsend (2002) points out that power is exercised especially by men and groups of men over women. Power is the engine by means of which women in a large number of societies continue to be subjugated and excluded, and on some occasions it is established by force or with threats but on others its use is more subtle.

This form of domination has been able to exist thanks to the patriarchal system that prevails in the world. Historically it is the oldest form of power, geographically the most widespread and ideologically the most concealed and least recognized, whose chance agent was the biological order, and later it was raised to the economic and political sphere that crosses over from public to private. The patriarchy is supported by a set of political, economic, social, ideological and affective institutions that are produced and reproduced in everyday collective and individual practices (Carosio, 2017, p. 28; Sau, 2000, pp. 237-238). Following the same line of thought Segato (2016, p. 91) notes that the patriarchy is the column holding up all the powers – economic, political, intellectual artistic, and many others – and as long as its structure is not definitively cracked, there will be no relevant change in the structure of society.

This form of subordination through gender as an instrument of power also produces and reproduces itself and circulates inside social movements, and it is possible to understand it by means of the category of the sexual division of labor.

The sexual division of labor: a look at how to change the nature of gender roles

Following Brito (2017, p. 63), the concept of a sexual division of labor allows us to explain the differentiated assignation of tasks, roles, practices, functions and social norms for men and for women. It is based on people's sex, and the assumption of certain biological or natural features and "differences" that are attributed to each of these social groups. The division is neither innocuous nor is it random, and it produces serious and profound inequalities and injustices as it helps to create conditions for the subordination of women, which is far from being something natural; and it forms a part of complicated social, cultural, political and economic phenomena that are associated

with ideals regulating how men and women should be and the relations that ought to exist between them.

The sexual division of labor produces a set of activities that are necessary for the social reproduction of life, however, there is a distinction between activities that are considered to have prestige and others of no value that are kept out of sight. The former are conducted by men and are thought to be productive, while the latter are performed by women and others suffering from inequality, and are recognized as unproductive. In today's modern societies, the value given to productive work means the configuration of female identity is linked for the most part to being a housewife, mother or spouse (Serret, 2008, p. 105).

Every social movement has some tasks that its existence depends on, whether physically or symbolically, and the execution of these tasks is categorized specifically as militant work, hence assigned to male and female militants. The tasks are allotted the way they are because of male dominance, a dynamic that gives the movements their structure and forces people to adopt particular ways of participating (Dunezat, 2017, p. 402).

The sexual division of labor leads to men, for the most part, engaging in activities that are thought to be valuable in social movements, such as making speeches as leaders and spokespersons of collective action. It is they who decide on the direction of the protest and the actions to be undertaken; and even when the discussion is in a group, they have the final say. The fact that their faces and voices are the ones that are seen, makes them seem to be the movement itself, and also, the demands that women tend to make are not treated with urgency and are not considered necessary for the social reproduction of the movement. When this occurs, women go through the process of being "minoritized", and according to Segato (2016, p. 91) this is a process where

they are looked down on and their interests are relegated to personal matters, to the private, and in particular to things of interest to a minority and therefore of minor importance.

In line with this, women who are part of collective action perform activities related to the provision of care, which include the preparation of food and all that is involved in that (from obtaining ingredients and raw materials to cleaning saucepans), the bringing up of sons and daughters, organizing logistics, and even providing emotional support, and so many other activities that sustain a social movement.

These activities are fundamental because they allow the reproduction of social movements and their continuity within their historical horizon; however, to a great extent they are hidden away and the traditional focus of studies of collective action has passed them by. Alfama (2009, p. 121) points out that in the field of political participation, of particular significance is the way in which tasks are distributed for the daily functioning of the social protest, something that is decided on the basis of the gender of the activists, and its intersection with other categories (their age, education and previous history as an activist, which are important elements). Observing the differences in the assignation of tasks helps identify which responsibilities are assumed by men and by women, and which positions of power, recognition and prestige they occupy in the structure of the organization.

Two important elements of the sexual division of labor that were formed and still prevail in Western societies are the *domestic fiction* and the formation of social spaces. The former refers to a discourse that has created the notion that all women, through all history, have always been wives, mothers and housewives on the basis of the *model of the domestic woman*. The latter are the three spaces formed on the basis of the sexual division of labor: public, private and domestic (Brito, 2017, p. 70).

Access to taking decisions: the public, the private and the domestic

Gender has formed the backbone of the configuration of spaces. Limits imposed on women culturally have a spatial correlation: a woman's place has traditionally been in the home, the kitchen, the church, the market, the brothel, for example; the main characteristic of these places is that they are confined, unseen and unheard (Soto, 2017, p. 77).

Public refers to the social space where citizenship is exercised, where matters of collective interest and the connections and workings of the State are discussed; public space is one of recognition and is found to be intimately linked to power. However, this power has to be shared out, it is a pact, a system of power relations, a distribution network (Amorós, 1994; Brito, 2017, p. 73). What conceals the central position of gender relations in history is just the binary character of the structure that makes the public sphere all encompassing, the totality, subordinating its residual other: the private, personal, domain, that is to say, the relation between political life and life outside politics. This binary structure brings into existence a whole world with its practices, knowledges and truths that are granted universal value and general interest, whose utterance is imagined to emanate from the male subject, and whose other qualities are thought to be of particular, marginal or minor importance (Segato, 2016, p. 23).

Private means different things when applied to men and to women; what is private refers to privacy, the shelter for intimacy, what belongs to the individual and cannot and should not be limited by society: it is the area for reflection and personal intersubjectivities, and also the space for formally recognized work. Nevertheless, the concept of private has a different connotation for women as it does not mean privacy but deprivation. They have been deprived of their autonomy, their intimacy, of a space

of their own as persons, which is why they are not thought of as being individuals but as domestic creatures: wives, mothers and housewives, subject to the male authority of the father/ heads of the family/ husband (Brito, 2017, p. 73; Serret, 2008, pp. 111-112).

In social movements, while the figure of father/head of the family/husband does not permeate their spaces as the main figure of authority, because there is a confluence in collective action of people with different life histories, family, socio-economic positions and a variety of types of cultural capital, there does exist an authority called a moral figure: the social leader. This embodiment of the leadership is what is called charismatic domination by Weber (2002, p. 193) and it is produced by feelings of devotion towards the person of the master and his supernatural gifts or charisma, and especially, to his intellectual or oratorical power. Their exceptional character, the fact that these things have never been seen before and the emotional surrender they provoke, are the source of personal devotion to the leader. Charismatic authority is one of the greatest revolutionary strengths in history, but in its purest form it is authoritarian and dominating.

The figure of leader is connected to values that are associated, in Western culture, with masculinity: the ability to control and command, impositions, rationality, the masculine as the measure of the world, and others. These normative and regulatory ideals of what it means to be a man, permeate the leaders and construct their frames of interpretation, as well as delineating their particular imaginaries, in which mythical figures of social struggle are evoked, such as that of the heroic warrior or the “new man”, popularized in the first years of the second decade of the twentieth century by reference to Ernesto “Che” Guevara. As mentioned by Groosess (2001, p. 216-219), this figure is one that still keeps patriarchal ideas because it does not propose a new human being, but embodies ideas of disciplined, military, ideals of masculinity, and the

qualities of a warrior such as formality and honor, not showing fear, self-control and being an exemplary fighting hero.

Political leadership expressed in a charismatic and authoritarian way, with all the varieties of it embedded in a strictly patriarchal culture, has limited the scope of action for women, as the predominance of the masculine is also seen in who sustains the authority of the organizations: which is mostly men (Cortés, Parra y Domínguez, 2008, p. 41; Vidaurrázaga, 2015, p. 15). It is as a result of this type of leadership, that we get the deliberate overlooking of women, and political violence against them.

In order to be recognized as leaders within the collective action group women tend to encounter many obstacles to reaching these positions of political representation: the small or non-existent participation of their male spouses in reproductive activities, double or triple time working days, being discredited by their own companions – on the basis of prejudices and stereotypes for reaching directive positions – as well as internal impediments that dissuade them from joining the space of political discussion, and others.

Jiménez (2012) notes that men tend to intervene more in the assemblies, and that their participation tends to last longer than that of their female companions; women's interventions in discussions are undervalued and their speeches are always being interrupted, and their proposals do not have the same resonance as those of their male companions; there is inequality in the roles of spokesperson and representative; the tasks they are given reproduce stereotyped gender roles; women are commodified and a patriarchal ideal of beauty is promoted³.

Inequalities of this kind found in the social movements go together with a biased view held by their own members, who cannot see other forms of injustice that are practiced in their own ranks. Their sense of rightness about their main objective usually

leads them to have a myopic, exclusive, view, as the very cause that the movement originates from becomes unchallengeable by any other. This characteristic is evident in the context of gender relations, because the subordinate position of women, the sexual division of labor, the privileges for taking decisions and leadership, are deeply rooted and normalized in the fabric of day-to-day life, and only come to light when consciously looked for (Batliwala, 2013, p. 3).

Sexual violence against activist women

Violence against women has economic, psychological, symbolic, physical and sexual dimensions: and shows various forms of coercion, practices that range from the most minute and unperceivable to cases of extreme violence like feminicide. International bodies like the United Nations Organization recognize gender violence as a worldwide pandemic; and Mexico has been classified as one of the worst places to be a woman in Latin America and the world, with an average daily rate of 10 women killed just for being women.

This violence, practised mainly by men or groups of men, is based on three suppositions: the predisposition of human beings for venting their irritability and frustration; an affirmation of male authority over women as chattel; and an affirmation of the male desire for and the right of property over women's bodies (Juliano, 2006, p. 70; Sau, 1993, p. 106).

In the case of sexual violence, the use and abuse of the body of the female other without her participation in compatible consent and desire, is a sign of the destruction of her own will, whose curtailment is seen precisely in the loss of control over the action of her body, and the instrumentalizing and appropriation of the same at the will of the aggressor. The victim has the control of her body-space taken away from her.

Aggressions against the physicality of women, and especially those of a sexual nature, are sexually perpetrated rather than sexually motivated crimes (Segato, 2012; 2013, p. 20).

Sexual violence against women has been one of the weapons of repression used by the State, through their security forces, to demobilize collective action. The logic is that women's bodies represent disputed territory that can be controlled and is the epicenter of male honor; they have been used as a battlefield and as conveyances for patriarchal messages (Hernández, 2015, pp. 81-82). This is what happened to the Community Front in Defense of the Land, *el Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra*, FPDT, in San Salvador Atenco, in the state of Mexico, where women belonging to this movement against the construction of the new Mexico City airport (which was cancelled by the Federal Executive in January 2019) and their bodies became spoils of war and were sexually violated. During this conflict, 47 of the 217 people detained by the public security forces were women, and 27 of them made public accusations of sexual violation and sexualized torture (Carrillo, 2010, p. 85).

However, sexual violence does not always come from the outside – through the State and its forces of repression – as it is also exercised by male fellow activists in the form of insults, messages sent by technological devices, lustful looks, insinuations, touching without permission and rape. Some of these aggressions were found in the work by Cortés, Zapata, Ayala and Rosas (2018, p. 42-44), and occurred in the broad front against the San Xavier mine, *el Frente Amplio Opositor a Minera San Xavier*⁴, where female activists suffered incidents of harassment through e-mails, discomfort from snide references to their bodies and even a pederastic aggression on the daughter of one of the female activists. Something similar is addressed in the work by Jiménez (2012), where witnesses reported that they had not expected to find aggressions and

harassment in spaces of that kind; but that there had been cases of rape in squatted houses, sexist and degrading verbal attacks on women, and tolerance of aggressions in spaces considered anti-fascist.

To think that harassment and aggressions do not occur in social movements is to underestimate the way in which power circulates through social relations and to adopt an uncritical view, as well as romanticizing spaces of this kind and figures like those of social leaders. In terms of the collective imaginary built around the person guilty of harassment or rape, Biglia and San Martín (2009, p. 9) and Pichot (2014, par. 3) point out that those who are responsible for harassment or rape are thought to be people with drug or alcohol problems, a low level of education, ignorant and rude, or failures who were treated badly as children: people beyond the well-meaning normal. But the man who commits this kind of aggression is not someone with mental problems, and should also not be compared to a pariah or a psychotic living outside social norms, he is not a sick son of the world but a healthy child of the patriarchy. The culture we live in has swallowed misogynist attitudes of domination over women's bodies whole.

A further point is that these violent practices tend not to be made public within the collective action group, out of fear, or shame and especially due to the discrediting of women and belief in their word, which leads to a process of re-victimizing those who have been hurt. Torres (2004, p. 17) says that the public accusation of violence against women, especially when it is sexual, faces a number of difficulties. Generally there is an attitude, based on different myths of sexual violence against women, that tends to blame the victims, because of the way they dress, the place where or time at which the aggression took place, their previous relation to the aggressor, or other things. On the same subject, Juliano (2006, p. 68) warns that the patriarchal structures come to put the blame on them to such an extent that they themselves tend to mistrust their own

perception of the problem, fearful of judging the aggressor's intentions wrongly. With the facts of harassment, violence or aggression, it is they who have to assume the burden of proof and establish the facts, which makes it harder for them to take the measures necessary for their defense.

Another element that makes a public accusation of these practices of violence impossible, is the external threat to the collective action group by its adversaries. There may be resistance to admitting that one of the activists behaved badly, which would later make the group a target of criticism and provoke disparagement of the social movement from other spaces. The wrongdoer might block the charges and justify himself by an assumption that real or imaginary danger is entailed in his activism, or by invoking the repression he is suffering or might have to live with, or the stress that comes with his position as a superhero (Biglia and San Martín, 2009, p. 12).

The examples of violence cited, just like symbolic, psychological or sexual violence, amount to political violence against women, as they are designed to demobilize their participation in spaces of representation and the taking of decisions after breaking into public space; so their participation is not under the same conditions as that of their male fellow activists. This kind of violence, as declared by Cerva (2014, p. 122), can be placed as much in interpersonal relations as in collective dynamics that keep up stereotypes and reproduce subordination as a function of gender, which they disguise under natural day-to-day relations and are an obstacle that it is hard to identify and label as such.

To the extent that the participation of women in the political sphere increases, so does the risk of their suffering different types of violence, as their arrival defies the *status quo* and requires a redistribution of power (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2012).

It should be noted that the aim of the reflections made here is not to underrate or discredit the struggle by social movements, but to contribute through making a critical analysis, to making visible and taking to pieces the structures of power found within them; as well as offering a less unjust horizon for them from a feminist perspective.

We agree with Castells (1999, p. 93) when he says social movements are neither good nor bad, and that they should be understood as part of the symptomatology of society. We therefore state that as they exist in a patriarchal world and as gender is a device inherent in power relations, social movements cannot escape the logic that builds the social world as we know it. We further believe and propose that people who are part of a collective action, especially men, should start to look at their daily practices of power and domination, because, as mentioned by Palacios (2012, p. 64), a sizeable proportion of social movements have taken the economic and political dimension as their focus of analysis, ignoring the cultural dimension and within that the variable of gender as a structural component of social inequality. We also do not wish to provide a victim's view of participation by women, because historically they have demonstrated agency and the capacity for rebellion against micro and macro power structures. To give an example, we shall now mention the development of capacities shown by women participating in collective action.

Activism and empowerment: subverting the order of genders

As noted by Foucault (2007, p. 116), where there is power, there is resistance. Thus the participation of women in social movements has also implied a break with gender impositions, as in the contravention of public and private spaces, which we can translate into the capacity for agency and empowerment. According to Batliwala (1997, p. 195), the latter consists of defying a patriarchal ideology built on male dominance and the

subordination of women, in order to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality.

Among the actions taken by women to crack and undermine hierarchy of gender, the most outstanding is their participation, seen more and more, though still meager, as spokespersons of discourses at the head of social movements and as interlocutors with the representatives of States, both nationally and internationally. Other equally significant changes can be found in activities within movements, such as the performance of deeds that defy gender stereotypes and re-signify them – doing stereotyped jobs that require physical effort like building work or plumbing – and also at a personal level, such as becoming conscious of social inequality and the perception of it, when before they joined the activism its existence was not even suspected.

These incidents are interesting because not only are other experiences gained and personal relations broadened, but the activists are made to transcend the traditional role of women as spouses or housewives, moving from the domestic space to public space and to proclaim themselves political subjects capable of developing agency in the process of social struggle. On this subject Vidaurrázaga (2015, p. 10) mentions that the mandates of the sex-gender socially hegemonic system are encroached on and you get the participation of women in political affairs, that are closely related to a public space traditionally regarded as male.

Finally, it is important to note that looking at the hegemonic power relations that go on in within social movements, implies producing evidence to show whether these reflect or self-evaluate in terms of their actions and their capacity for questioning and transforming their practices. It also leads to a recognition that as they are inside a hegemonic system of power, they can contribute to reproducing and perpetuating relations of inequality and oppression inside and outside the organizations. To identify

the obstacles, the results and the advances that the movements have experienced, enriches the transformation of their own structures, with the aim of its being useful for their own self-reflection and for that of other collectives, in the search for qualitative leaps when they take action (Santa Cruz, 2010, p. 120).

Conclusions

This article has shown that it is possible through the use of variables of gender as an instrument of power, for the sexual division of labor, of access to public space and taking decisions, to conduct a feminist analysis of social movements, by means of which the logics and mechanisms of patriarchal power that cannot be perceived from a traditional and androcentric perspective are revealed. These mechanisms and logics produce the marginalization, silencing and omission of the contributions of women and their participation in collective action, as well as concealing the acts of violence that social movements have experienced on the inside.

The variables of gender as an instrument of power, for the sexual division of labor and access to public space and taking decisions, are methodological elements that shed light on the study of collective action, making it plain that patriarchy, the most widespread, ancient, subtle and normalized system of domination, runs through all the structures of social movements: spaces, actions, and most of all, social relations.

It was also possible to demonstrate that whatever the objective sought, social movements are not exempt from reproducing on the inside and within their historical horizon, the exercises of power that they have to face on a daily basis, whether from the State or by private and mercantile organizations. This is not to disqualify collective action, but to emphasize that power relations are present in all social relations and spaces. At the same time, we consider social movements to be viable alternatives for

building a possible and less dystopian future, as long as their members, and especially the males, maintain a self-critical eye.

Gender as an instrument of power shapes practices and spaces defined inside the social movements; it is a social controller that produces and reproduces different types of inequality within movements. While power is exercised in these spaces, where women have had to face episodes of violence by their male companions, they have also served as a platform that has allowed women to break away from the device of gender acting as a regulator of social space, bringing them onto the public plane; this is where they have reclaimed their agency as subjects, as the women who come together in social movements have various social, economic and cultural capitals, that produce heterogenic effects on them and have also helped them to endure and resist. This makes the gender device a regulator but at the same time a field where traditional gender roles can be disputed, re-signifying them and undermining them, thus cracking the patriarchal system and not leaving it unscathed.

Through understanding the sexual division of labor it is possible to make it clear that inside social movements there is a set of activities that are conducted that it is considered natural and proper for either men or for women to do. This category of analysis shows us that in collective action a sexist logic is reproduced that historically has considered men to be “natural” leaders and women as care-givers and in charge of reproductive work. It should be noted that without the latter, social movements themselves could not exist.

With regard to the sexual and political violence against women within social movements, these are acts of violence that should not be underrated and neither should the testimonies of the women themselves be doubted, as this would give more fuel to patriarchal domination. Here not only do women have to face the violence of the State

and of private and delinquent agents, or the costs of exclusion from their families or the community for having overstepped the traditional mandates of gender, but also they have to face gender violence coming from their own male activist companions. Spaces need to be opened up to question these practices and to produce a deep analysis of the problem, so as to prevent these spaces from recreating other forms of oppression that might be added to those that are supposedly questioned in various political arenas.

To continue with an androcentric analysis focused on formal spaces, of direction, and on the political strategies undertaken by the collective action group, without taking into account that the cultural and social elements of hegemonic patriarchal power also run through relations inside the movements, would only be to keep feeding and relegating political, psychological, physical and sexual violence experienced by activist women. Thus the political commitment adopted by social movements and their demands for justice, should also imply being able to look at the acts of violence that take place in their own ranks.

Finally, it is right to point out that anyone who wants to study social movements or make an assessment of collective action from the space they are currently in, should consider – without fail – the feminist perspective. If not, they will leave out the same elements and factors that produce inequality and exclusion, that those in these spaces are fighting against. It is urgent for social movements to adopt a feminist perspective, as feminism provides an armory of political, methodological and epistemological tools that makes it possible to challenge the power of the different systems of power that cross us, like the patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, classism and others.

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³ One example is the phrase “pretty woman the one who fights”, which has mostly circulated on social networks. With this idea a dichotomy is created between women who fight in the collective action movement or in daily life, who are *desirable* or *admirable*, and those who do not, who are *undesirable* or *resigned*. This dual conception replicates once again a valid or socially accepted side and another that is invalid, constructing antagonistic ideas and spaces between women, and, as a result, nourishing the patriarchal logic that sets them apart and gets some to confront others.

⁴ Socio-environmental movement of opposition to the extractive Project of a Canadian mining Company in the municipality of Cerro de San Pedro, San Luis Potosí.

