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## Latin American Spring: body and performance by Latin American women in protests of 2019<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article aims to understand how female bodies that appear in journalistic images of “Latin American Spring” protests can be understood as repertoires of political action. From the articulation between the notion of repertoire as performance (Tilly, 2008) and the performative theory of assembly (Butler, 2018), a visual analysis was carried out of photographs published on Brazilian journalistic websites about protests in different Latin countries that took place in 2019. We identified three types of recurrent repertoires: a) the vulnerability of female bodies in images of confrontations, especially involving the police; b) the vulnerability activated as a political power, based on performances, bodies in struggle and other symbols and c) the configuration of who the people are based on the inclusions and exclusions made by the images.

### Keywords

Protests; Latin America; Repertory as performance; Visual analysis.

## Introduction

Research on social movements in Latin America brought significant contributions, especially by presenting new perspectives that complexify this type of analysis, marking in the 1980s a discontinuity with functionalist and Marxist explanations (Escobar and Alvarez, 1992). In the same period in which the democratic transition took place in most Latin countries, the connection between culture and politics began to be understood by researchers as constitutive of collective action. The particularities of Latin struggles mark the contribution to the studies, putting into question the eradication of social inequalities, urban popular movements, gender, among others (Dagnino, 2000, p. 83).

In the context of Latin feminist movements, their significant role, especially during UN Conferences, is notable. Latin women are recognized for their deep familiarity with critical theories of gender and sexuality, especially when compared to feminists from the Global South. (Corrêa, 2018). They have a history of confrontation due to the deep colonial legacy left by Catholicism. Thus, the study in question seeks to understand the participation of women and their repertoires of action in the “Latin Spring” protests that took place in 2019, through the analysis of journalistic images.

An aspect that is not much explored, not only in Latin America, is the images of social movements (Doerr et al. 2013). Although in the 1990s the visual turn contributed to the discussion about the power of images in political conflicts, studies refer to them superficially to exemplify or illustrate their arguments. Systematic analysis of visual aspects and broader studies that consider the visual domain as a place of struggle in itself are rare (Prudencio, Rizzotto and Silva, 2016; Rizzotto and Prudencio, 2017). Like most of the social sciences, the analyzes are focused on the texts (Doerr et al., 2013; Feola, 2018). Images, performances and bodily acts in protest situations are often under-theorized by the democratic theory (Feola, 2018).

A second aspect, that also lacks attention, concerns the unfolding of the notion of repertoire as performance, developed by Charles Tilly (2008). Since the beginning of his work, in the 1970s, Tilly has pursued ways of comparatively analyzing conflicts from different places and different circumstances, in the same way as our study. The concept of repertoire was part of this effort in his last texts.

Through proposing a visual analysis of Latin American protests, this research aims to make three primary contributions. First, it seeks to enrich the cultural perspective within the realm of social movement studies, with a particular emphasis on the domain of visual studies. (Doerr et al., 2013). Furthermore, by bridging the concept of “repertoire” (Tilly, 2008) with the insights of Judith Butler (2018) in her theory of performativity (Butler, 2018), we aim to uncover fresh dimensions for the concept, applied within the Latin context. Thirdly, discussing how women’s bodies are considered repertoires of action contributes to studies on feminist movements, which have as one of the central issues the discussion of autonomy over their own bodies.

## Latin spring (or winter?)

The term “Latin Spring” was coined in 2006 to refer to the mobilizations of Hispano-Latino immigrants in the United States on migration policies (Suro and Escobar, 2006). The idea of spring was also used in the Arab Spring protests in 2010 and 2011 in the Middle East and North Africa (Qadirmushtaq and Afzal, 2017). In the case of 2019, the term was alluded to by impressed columnists and journalists before the concentration of protests in the second half of that year in Latin countries.

The conflicts reinforce the exhaustion of the cycle of the so-called “progressive governments” in Latin America, commonly called the “pink wave” (Silva, 2018), a period that elected the first indigenous leaders, women and workers. Although they are apparently not articulated with each other, what the protests have in common is the tension between neoliberal and popular perspectives and, most of the

time, the centrally or tangentially presence of feminist agendas.

In Chile, protests questioned proposals for social security, austerity, inflation and increased taxes and tariffs. The state's violent response resulted in around 30 deaths and blinded more than 200 people. The same reason led Argentines to the streets before a country in crisis and a conservative government. In Ecuador, the trigger was the end of fuel subsidies, followed by a national strike. The measures had the greatest impact on indigenous peoples, who also took the streets.

In Brazil, during the first year of the Bolsonaro government, the cuts in education, the neglect of deforestation in the Amazon, indigenist policy and pollution on the coast were questioned. Other protests were against the end of important ministries and against violent police actions, such as the one that culminated in the death of Ágatha, in Rio de Janeiro. In Venezuela, international economic sanctions to pressure the departure of President Nicolas Maduro significantly impoverished the population that also objected on the streets.

In Bolivia, the protests were divided between supporters and opponents of President Evo Morales, accused of irregularities in the elections, which resulted in his resignation and subsequent verification of the election's fairness. In Peru, cases of corruption and the closure of congress – with a Fujimorist majority – by President Martín Vizcarra were some of the reasons for the population to take the streets in support or in opposition to the measure.

These were some of the numerous protests that emerged in Latin America in 2019. These agendas and contexts are diverse, yet they share common threads including a colonial history, experiences with dictatorships and subsequent democratization, rich cultural and religious influences, rapid urbanization, the process of industrialization, the emergence of an industrial bourgeoisie, wealth concentration, land ownership, and means of production, all accompanied by profound structural inequalities (Skidmore, 1989). It is the most unequal region in the world, with the highest incidence of poverty in rural areas and among indigenous and black people (Eclac, 2019; Undp, 2019).

Gender inequality is at the heart of Latin America's constitution. It is a central theme in some of the analyzed protests and transversal to all the others. Our task here is precisely to establish a thread of analysis from which it is possible to capture common elements among the images of women, from a perspective that understands Latin America as an analytical category (Gruzinski, 2006).

## Body, repertoire and performance: analytical axes that intersect

Women's bodies are, according to Susan Bordo (1997), a practical direct site of social control, a surface on which core norms and hierarchies are concretely inscribed and reinforced. The docilization of bodies, as defined by Foucault, is this process in which female bodies are subject to external control and to the discipline that maintains these hierarchies. The body turns to "femininity practices" that seek a supposed improvement of the body according to aesthetic standards, dedication to care work and sexuality that maintains relationships of domination (Mcrobbie, 2004; Bordo, 1997).

However, it is this same body that is potentially capable of confronting the mechanisms that sustain the oppression. Understanding political bodies as repertoires of political action involves discussing the vulnerabilities of these bodies that are transformed into political agency (Butler, 2018) and into a repertoire of action (Tilly, 1978). The notion of repertoire is at the core of the structure of mobilizations and is the cultural facet of confrontations, as it seeks to understand the ways in which culture shapes possibilities for action (Alonso, 2012).

Throughout his life, Charles Tilly focused on studies of political confrontations, seeking to explain them as part of political, cultural and historical processes that configure power relations in society (1978; 2005). Initially, Tilly (1978) defined action repertoires as a set of instruments and practices that "people can, in principle, employ when pursuing common ends" (p. 151). These repertoires, when described,

show the existence of patterns of collective action shared by different societies, such as strikes, for example. The definition was deemed rather structuralist (Cohen, 1985), as it portrayed the evolution of repertoires as gradual and emphasized the strategic aspect excessively. It lacked a detailed explanation of the appropriation and evolution processes of these repertoires and did not take into account their connection with values, beliefs, and the creation of meanings (Melluci, 1995). The criticism yielded some reformulations of the concept over 30 years, resulting in the 2005's version that interests us in this work: the notion of repertoire as performance (Tilly, 2005; 2006; 2008).

Rather than a set of practices and actions, gradually Tilly starts to discuss the collective action repertoire as a "variable set of performances" (Tilly, 2005, p. 216) conditioned by local culture, customs and values. The performances, understood as "groupings of repertoires of claiming routines" (2006, p. 35), become the unit of analysis, always possible to be captured from the interactions. Performances continuously alter repertoires, encompassing processes like selection, interpretation, comprehension, improvisation, and learning. This is done to account for the contexts of social microinteraction, lived experiences, and their contingencies. It is in the context of the protests that actions are performed or replaced and decisions negotiated.

"Participants improvise constantly in two different ways: discovering how to model the routines available to communicate their claims, and responding to other people's reactions [...]" (Tilly, 2008: 11-12). The singularity, the improvisation, the theatricality confer the capacity of agency and creativity in the confrontations and are configured as a set of actions in action.

Although Tilly has not recaptured the vast existing literature on performance as an organizing aspect of social life, the latest version of the notion of repertoire was one of its main legacies (Alonso, 2012). It is at this point that we intend to articulate the contributions of Butler (2018) especially in the work *Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Streets*. Butler deals not exactly with performance, but with performativity, "a way of naming a power that language has to produce a new situation or to set in motion a set of effects" (p. 35). Centered on Arendt's idea of the right to appear as politics, language has a founding and creative role in performativity.

Butler advances and grants the body the same importance that the discourse and the plurality of opinions have for Hannah Arendt. The appearance field brings something into existence and, in turn, can challenge a set of norms in which "many are expected not to appear or are legally prohibited from doing so" (p. 42). In Butler, an "escape from corporeal existence" is impossible and political freedom in itself must be reconciled with the needs of the body. It is necessary to consider that the lives of some are shortened more easily than others and cannot even be within the sphere of appearance to claim livable lives. "[...] The body, or rather the concerted bodily action - gathering, gesticulation, permanence, all the component parts of the 'assembly' that are not quickly assimilated by verbal discourse - can signify principles of freedom and equality" (p. 55).

The collective body, which through its plural and performative bodily resistance, challenges or reinforces norms, resists while exposing its vulnerability, hunger, necessities, and pain. It strives to establish fresh modes and circumstances of visibility. For these, the battle to form alliances is fundamental, as it does not just seek a place in the sphere of appearance. Instead, "bodies in alliance produce a rift in the sphere of appearance" (p. 57), exposing the contradictions that determine who are the "disregarded and ineligible" or the worthy of being seen.

Evidently Butler starts from a philosophical reflection that differs from Tilly's sociological apparatus, but which complements it in some senses. First, both consider that collective action is an important way to overcome injustices. It happens "between" bodies, or in the micro-relationships pointed out by Tilly. In Butler, this is anchored in the recognition of interdependence and non-violent human cohabitation and in Tilly (2008), in conflictual interactions as a basic unit of social life. Second, both give relevance to the supports of embodied action, such as streets, squares and material environments; and the media,

with their symbols and signs, called by Butler “material conditions of appearance”. Performativity itself reconfigures these conditions, redefining what is public. Third, in both the senses are inseparable from the practices, so the best access to them is the analysis of performances – not discourses (Tilly, 2008) -, or even the consideration that bodies are discursive too (Butler, 2018 ).

Another contribution of the take on bodies in alliance as a repertoire of action is the definition of who the people are. No popular grouping or assembly represents the people in its entirety. The idea of the people is articulated and negotiated and tends to appear not only when the statement “we the people” is made or when it is numerically expressive. For Butler, “the assembly is already speaking before any words are uttered” (p. 173). The gathered bodies, their gestures, vocalizations and silences, their ways of acting together plurally have an expressive function and possibilities of political self-determination when there is freedom of assembly. And yet, they can be contested in their self-definition of people at the moment they appear: is this really the people? What are the operations of inclusion and exclusion?

Our focus is to emphasize that it can be fruitful to think of the body as a repertoire of action. Tilly helps us to think about the strategies from the cultural elements, customs and values that permeate the performances in a comparative perspective, while Butler grants language and the body this centrality. Comparing the thoughts of both enables access to sociological tools to think about the bodies in alliance of Latin women in a comparative way, at the same time that it presents us with conceptions in which we can consider the precariousness of the subjects not only in their damage or injustice, but in its political power.

## Visual analysis of social movements

To apprehend the bodies in assembly considering them as repertoires of action, as Charles Tilly proposes, it would be necessary to do so during the confrontational performances themselves, inevitably through images. Social movements inherently connect their expressions to the visual senses, either strategically or unexpectedly. The study of images produced by or about social movements is not something new.

Studies on political conflicts have only recently begun to recognize the realm of images as a battlefield with its own vitality. This is associated with an intricate reservoir of knowledge, cultural experiences, frameworks, and identifications. These elements are interpreted, framed, and reshaped by political actors. This is what Mirzoeff calls countervisualities (2011) or forms of struggle via images. These methods have in the framing analyzed most of the studies (Philipps, 2012).

For our analysis, we propose to carry out a content analysis that takes into account photographs from different Latin contexts. First, we embrace Barthes’ premise about the paradoxical relation of images to reality; considered to represent reality as it is (Barthes, 1977; Sontag, 1979), especially journalistic photographs that have a more documentary content. Photography is not only perceived or received – it is read, connected more or less consciously by the public in a sociological process that involves a dialogue, so to speak, between photography and society. The meaning of a photograph is always contextual and historical and therefore dependent on the reader’s knowledge. In addition, it must be considered that “no crowd photograph can represent the people when not all the people have the power to gather in the street” (Butler, 2018, p. 182). It is precisely the ways of selecting and editing that will tell who the people are. Therefore, we do not discard technological materiality and journalistic processes that interfere in the ways in which vulnerabilities and people are represented.

Second, it is a fact that photographs will not always promote social transformations expected by social movements. They can generate a certain numbness or apathy (Sontag, 2003). However, we believe that photographs of bodily suffering or social struggles that present symbols of injustice have a significant potential for transnational diffusion, which is important for our analysis of images from different countries.



Of course, the photograph of suffering or struggle is always local, but this diffusion capacity, unlike linguistic statements, allows these local experiences to be radically disaggregated in our global modernity (Sontag, 2003; Olsen, 2013) and that the analyzes pass through transnational filters, such as the way in which we Brazilians look at images.

Thirdly, we are pleased with the ambition of Tilly et al (2009), of trying to understand clashes of different natures and in different places. In the comparative analysis, Tilly (2005) defines “modular” characteristics – similar attributes found in confrontations in different contexts; but it includes a more culturalist look by also indicating “unique” characteristics found in each culture, the “local symbols and secrets” (Tilly, 2005, p. 223). In our study, we will focus on the modular characteristics of the protests - those that are repeated in different countries, since, as Brazilian researchers, we still do not have enough cultural immersion to identify the unique attributes of each country.

## Methodology

The unit of analysis is the photograph, selected from the explicit identification of the vulnerabilities of bodies performed as female bodies. In this case, we understand vulnerabilities in two ways, beyond the existential condition that Butler talks about. First, as “a socially induced condition, which accounts for disproportionate exposure to suffering, especially among those widely called ‘precarious’ for whom access to shelter, food and medical care is often quite limited” (Butler, 2018, p. 12). Second, as a power of creation and promotion of multiple forms of existence and resistance (Gilson, 2014, p.310). As this research deals with the body as a repertoire, we selected images whose female bodies were in a situation of collective protest, whether or not they were in a situation of damage or injury.

Only photographs published on Brazilian journalistic websites were analyzed, since the comparative analysis can only be done from a common ground of senses that can be captured by us, Brazilian researchers. From an online search on Google News for the keywords “protests” combined with “name of the country”, 96 photographs were collected and analyzed, distributed in 74 different articles on 27 protests<sup>2</sup>, published on 43 platforms. They are reference journalism sites, such as O Globo and Folha de S. Paulo; independent, such as Agência Pública; and public, such as Agência Senado, for example. Some defend more conservative positions, such as Jovem Pan, or more progressive ones, such as Carta Capital. The three media with the highest number of images collected are G1, Folha de S. Paulo and Exame, respectively with 9, 8 and 8 images. After excluding repeated reports throughout the search, the final corpus consisted of 6 photographs of protests in Argentina, 11 in Bolivia, 34 in Brazil, 26 in Chile, 9 in Ecuador and 10 in Venezuela. Colombia, Paraguay and Peru also had conflicts during this period, but the images of women in the demonstrations were not very expressive: one or two images per country

The first stage of the analysis consisted of developing a codebook to identify the countries, mediums, types of protests, the characteristics of these images and the explicit vulnerabilities of women’s bodies on the streets. The characteristics listed are a) the theme of the protest (whether or not it is gendered); b) type of protest (disturbing without confrontation, confrontation with violence, festive

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2 1) Protest in Argentina: against Bolsonaro in Argentina; against Macri; for the legalization of abortion. 2) Protests in Bolivia: against the candidacy of Evo Morales; against the election of Evo Morales; against the coup suffered by Evo Morales; after a coup against Evo Morales; before the coup against Evo Morales. 3) Protests in Brazil: International Women’s Day; against fires in the Amazon; death of the girl Agatha, in the neighborhood Complexo do Alemão, in Rio de Janeiro; against social security reform; against cuts in the education; Marcha das Margaridas in favor of rural women and in defense of Social Security; 1st March of Indigenous Women in defense of indigenous rights; Pro-Lula demonstration meets anti-Lula protesters in Brazil; Demonstration of women against forced childbirth/ Constitutional Amendment Bill of cesarean sections. 4) Protests in Chile: against police violence; against increasing subway fares; against Bolsonaro’s presence in Chile; against sexual violence; against the curfew in the country; against rising cost of living and rent inequality. 5) Protest in Ecuador: against austerity. 6) Protests in Venezuela: in support of Nicolás Maduro; against Nicolás Maduro; for rights.

disturbance); c) presence of police force (identified through the presence of police, military, police vans, tear gas, weapons), d) expressions of suffering, e) protest actions (performances, chants, etc.), f) presence of a group of people, g) presence of symbols and signs (flags, scarves, posters, t-shirts, ethnic or cultural elements, such as a “cocar” (feathered headgear) or a turban, artistic objects, masks and others, such as musical instruments, flowers, pots, etc.). The way in which the photograph framed the protests was also analyzed, considering facial or body expression individually framed; the action of confrontation or performance; foreground and background contrasts or panoramic framing.

Next, we identify patterns and recurrences in the images. The systematization of the results is presented quantitatively, with insertions of graphs and images that illustrate the recurrence, in order to offer an overview of the material. Then, an analytical discussion was carried out based on three axes: a) the configuration of who the people are from the bodies on the street; b) vulnerability as suffering or as an unequal distribution of precariousness c) vulnerability triggered as political power.

## Repertory bodies: crowds, symbols and vulnerabilities

In 17.7% of the photographs, the protests were directly related to gender issues, such as the March of Indigenous Women and the March of the Daisies in Brazil and the Demonstration against sexual violence in Chile, among others. In 17.7% of the images, the protests were gender-themed together with other issues, such as the manifestations against the coup suffered by Evo Morales, in Bolivia, or the Brazilian manifestations against the burning of the Amazon, among others. In 25% of the images there was the presence of women in protests with different themes from gender and in 39.5% it was not possible to identify the centrality or not of the gender agenda. Table 1 summarizes the data on the types of protests and expressions of vulnerability, such as expressions of suffering and police action:

Table 1: Characteristics of the protest in the images, expression of suffering and police presence

Characteristics of the protest in the images	Tension disturbance 56,2%	Direct confrontation 27%	Festive disturbance 9,3%	Others 7,5%
Expression of suffering				
Presence of police force				
<div> <div>YES</div> <div>NO</div> <div>NOT IDENTIFIED</div> </div>				

Source: Produced by the authors

Regarding the characteristic of the protest in the images, most of the material predominantly reveals a tension between the women and the occupied context, what we call a disturbing tensioning confrontation, 56.2% (Table 1). These are photographs that seek to destabilize order without necessarily promoting direct confrontations (Figures 1, 4 and 8, for example).



Figure 1: International Women's Day - Brazil



Source: El País (March/2019)

Second, there are a large number of images in which direct and violent confrontations are more evident (Figure 2), which appear in protests in all of the countries analyzed. Mainly physical and facial expressions of the women framed in the photographs were analyzed. In the images from Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador, this was more frequent, at 50%, 68% and 75%, respectively. Considering the total number of images of suffering, almost half are from Chile. Likewise, almost 70% of the images with the presence of police force are of protests in Chile, in particular, against the increase in the cost of living and income inequality and against police violence. Of the total, in 80% of the images that show expressions of pain or suffering, there is the presence of police force.

Figure 2 – Protest against rising cost of living and income inequality - Chile



Source: O Tempo newspaper (October/2019)

Figure 3 – Protest against Bolsonaro - Argentina

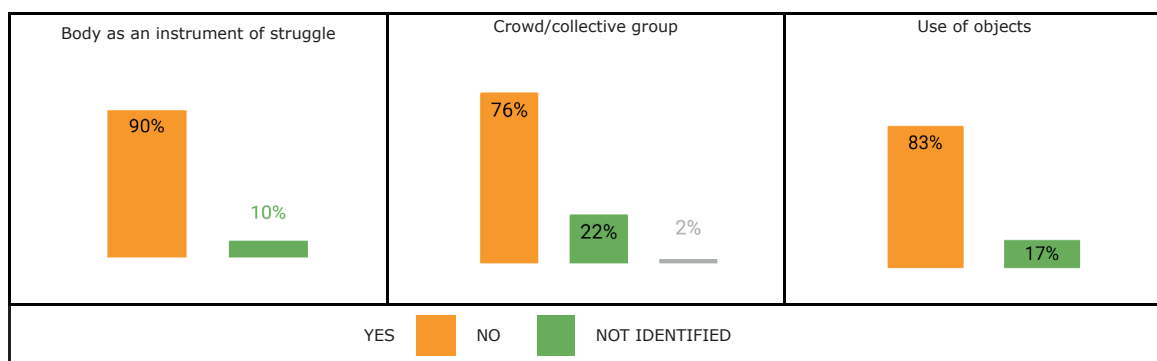


Source: Forum Magazine (June/2019)

In third place, images of unsettling protests with a festive character appear, as in Figure 3. These images were found only in Brazilian and Argentine manifestations. There was no expression of distress or the presence of police force on them.

Images were also analyzed in which women place their bodies as performers of political action, either as an instrument of struggle (in almost 90%), as a collective or with the use of objects (Table 2).

Table 2: Body as an instrument of struggle, collective images and use of objects



Source: Produced by the authors

About 76% of the images – whose frames were panoramic or wide – identified a small, medium or large crowd of people (Figure 4). In most of the images, 83%, objects of protest were used, such as posters (30.2%), flags of countries or regions (28.1%), artistic or performance objects (19.2%) – especially in the protests in Chile scarves were used, as well as in Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina (Figure 5). Ethnic or cultural elements (13.5%) and T-shirts with messages (8.3%), in addition to other elements (11.4%) such as flowers, pots, masks and musical instruments, were also used.

Figure 4 – Protest against education cuts – Brazil



Source: Folha de S. Paulo Newspaper (August / 2019)

Figure 5 – Protest for the legalization of abortion - Argentina

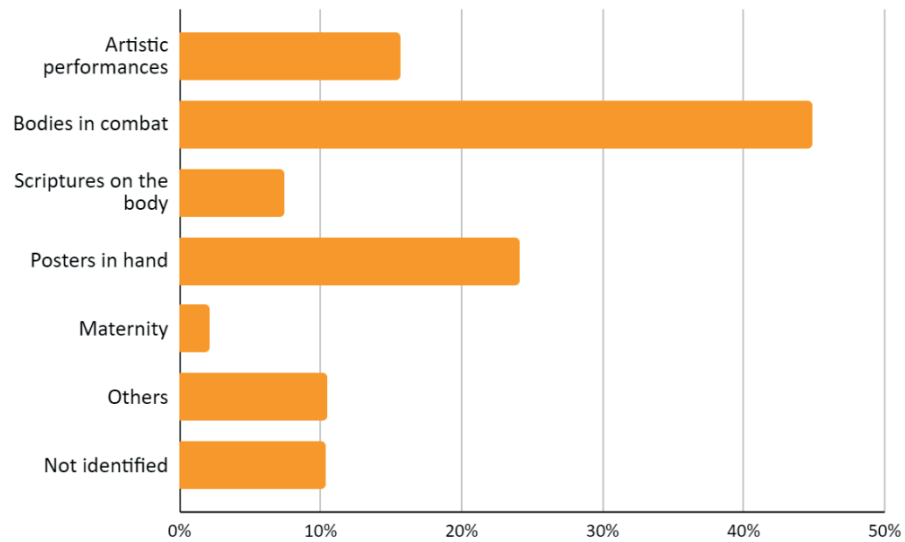


Source: El País Brasil Newspaper (February / 2019)

To categorize bodies as instruments of struggle, we list performances, bodies in struggle, writings on bodies, posters in hand, children in arms, among others (Table 3). We considered bodies in struggle images that showed hands in fists (Figure 4), holding hands (Figure 6), palms, signs of booing, or the simple presence of a fighting attitude (Figures 7 and 8). It's crucial to emphasize the images captured during the coverage of the 1st March of Indigenous Women. These images showcase the diverse ways in which these women employ their bodies as a means of resistance, including performances, dances, rituals, and more.



Table 3: Characterization of bodies as instruments of struggle



Source: Produced by the authors

Figure 6 - 1st March of Indigenous Women in defense of indigenous rights – Brazil



Source: Exame Newspaper (August/2019)

Figure 7 - Protest against Evo Morales' coup



Source: Poder 360 (November / 2019)

Figure 8 – Protest against austerity - Ecuador



Source: Exame Newspaper (October/2019)

Especially in the Chilean scenario, in addition to the generalized violence by the police and actions that left demonstrators blind, the performance “Un violador en tu camino” or “El Violador Eres Tú” became very well known. In the lyrics of the song there are the words “the oppressive State is a male rapist” (Figure 9). A similar protest was held in Argentina (Figure 5).



Figure 9 - Performance "El violador eres tu" - Chile



Source: Huff Post Brazil (November/2019)

## What do the pictures tell us?

In the 96 images analyzed, we sought to identify "modular" characteristics – similar attributes found in confrontations in different contexts (Tilly, 2005). From the recurrence of elements, we draw three analytical axes to understand the presence of women's bodies as repertoires in performativity.

### *Vulnerabilities: a new colonialism?*

By placing their bodies as repertoires of action, Latin women at the same time reveal their vulnerability in the face of state violence in its most ostensive expression: the police. In 27% of the images there was direct confrontation, and among these, in 96% the confrontation was with the police and in 68% there was an expression of suffering of these women. Even in the 56.2% of the images of indirect confrontation, the number of police presence was significant: 55%, and in 35% there was an expression of suffering. Especially in the Chilean case, women's bodies were subjected to sexual abuse, rape and physical violence by police, resulting in many of them being injured or blinded.

Two aspects can be discussed here. The first one is the historically forged vulnerability of women (Bordo, 1997). It is in women's bodies where hierarchical relationships are inscribed in a more concrete way, in which control and norms are asserted, whether by sex, maternity, standards of beauty, among others. The naturalization of the use of force by the state, as revealed by the images, reinforces these practices of domination over bodies that dare to challenge norms by protesting. The idea of female fragility turns against women themselves through the ostensible strength of the State.

Second, the context of vulnerability in which these protests erupt must be considered. The increase in social inequalities, mainly motivated by the austerity measures of most Latin governments in 2019, go against the grain of previous policies, with important achievements among women. The images allow us to see that many claims demand basic living conditions – as in Bolivia and Chile. The unequal distribution of precariousness is denounced by the bodies in protest, which reveal state violence through both the police and the very absence of public policies. There is an instrumentalization of insecurity through neoliberal policies against which protesters fight to make the population manageable, subservient and complicit (Lorey, 2015). In this way, the Latin American elites, with an important contribution from the



State, perpetuate colonization either through the domination of these women's bodies, or through the impoverishment of the population.

Butler (2018) will say that the entrepreneur's neoliberal fantasy of himself in conditions of accelerated precariousness creates the assumption that everything is an individual matter. The protests indicate that, on the contrary, this is a shared and unjust social condition of an entire group.

Thus, disproportionate exposure to suffering is revealed in the brutality of the police, but also in the posters and writings on women's bodies that denounce injustice and impoverishment. It is also women – in particular poor, black and indigenous women – who suffer from precarious education, lack of security and basic infrastructure. It is not without reason that in all the protests of 2019 the female presence was remarkable, even if the theme was not related to gender.

On the other hand, it is important to consider that these photographs of suffering or that express symbols of injustice have a significant potential for transnational dissemination (Sontag, 2003) and can also promote a fight for images (Mirzoeff, 2011).

#### *The body as a place of struggle*

Most of the images (90%) identified the presence of bodies in struggle, mainly with actions such as hands in fists, holding hands, booing, screaming or singing. We argue that, at the same time that vulnerabilities are revealed through violence, they can be transformed into strength from bodies in alliance. The body, the objective terrain of politics, takes its precarious condition as a stimulus for struggle. The indexical force of the body, together with other bodies, will say that they are not disposable and that they need food, housing, employment, social security, tax reduction, and the right to abortion. Together, these bodies will denounce the false individualizing morality by saying that precariousness is shared.

Attendance, permanence, breathing, movement, stillness, and silence are aspects of political performativity that happen before any speech, discourse or dialogue (Butler, 2018). The alliance is also a way of saying that we are dependent on each other and that this constitutes resistance. Hand in hand, indigenous women sing their songs, dance their rituals, carry their children. The concerted action functions as a performance that brings together different repertoires of action, whether in the use of posters, objects, or the simple presence of the body.

The use of signs that refer to violations was also recurrent. Chilean women wore blindfolds in their performances, in a nod to the violence suffered in previous days. In demonstrations for the right to abortion and on International Women's Day, Argentine, Chilean and Brazilian women wore exactly what criminalizes them, such as short and low-cut clothes, with their naked bodies on display. Others painted the pelvic region with red paint, simulating injuries. Femininity practices, at the same time that they appear, they challenge norms. The women apply lipstick, undress themselves, and carry their children, all in the context of their activism and resistance..

The flags, utensils used in certain cultures, clothing and other elements that appear in the photos reveal at the same time the materiality of the struggles (Butler, 2018) and the cultural aspects that put these struggles in motion (Tilly, 2008). The struggle for images operates on a visual level, to be witnessed (Feola, 2018, p. 200). The body is an articulating agent of meaning that generates new conditions of appearance by orchestrating performances, bringing people together, chanting slogans collectively. When faced with these images, people can be sensorially involved (Feola, 2018). Therefore, the performativities of the assembly are captured by the images and can function as repertoires of struggle.

#### *Who are the people?*

The third axis of our analysis indicated that the performativity of women in assembly is capable of shaping an imaginary or understanding of who the people are. As Butler (2018) explains, the definition of people is discursive and part of a constitutive exclusion. The idea of a "we" configured by images includes

some and excludes others, but has the advantage of making visible precariousness that was once outside the sphere of appearance. In this way, strategically or not, women visually make use of alliances on the streets in order to seek to be part of the space of appearance and, thus, to be included among those who are considered as people. These are images in general with an open plan, which delimit who is recognizable and counts as people.

Our analyzes show that the performativity of the alliance between these women is a powerful repertoire of collective action. In 76% of the images this repertoire was identified either in the form of small or large groupings. In particular, the idea of people was recurrent in two types of images: in those whose performances are in evidence and in those with emphasis on cultural objects. For instance, in collective performances like those involving Chilean, Argentinean, or Ecuadorian women, we can see them raising their fists, using flags, or incorporating cultural artifacts from indigenous communities as part of their activism. Additionally, it's noteworthy that approximately 30% of the images prominently feature flags, while cultural elements are present in 14% of the images.

In particular, the constitution of a "we" through images can be observed in a significant way among native people from Latin America. Indigenous women played an important role in the Latin Spring demonstrations: national protests in Ecuador; the protagonism of cocalera and indigenous women farmers from various parts of Bolivia, in the case of the overthrow of Evo Morales; Brazilian indigenous women in front of the Ministries Esplanade and Mapuche women, native people originally from Chile and Argentina, known for their resistance against land expropriation. They are groups of people who were or are, in general, outside the sphere of appearance, the "ineligible" (Butler, 2018) marked by the colonial past of Latin America. The policy of alliance undoubtedly results in a reconfiguration/resumption of the idea of people as those ancestors who first inhabited these lands.

Bodies in alliance, Butler (2018) will say, also operate as gaps in the sphere of appearance. Freedom of assembly lies precisely in being able to propose new forms of appearance and new reconfigurations of the right to appear. The tension over the definition of people – or peoples, in Bolivia – questions who the people really are. And the photographic framings in the newspapers offer answers, at least provisional ones. Even though only images of women were analyzed, in protests related to gender or other themes, the senses constructed about who the people are remain in the photographic framing.

Not only the repertoire bodies, but the cultural symbols reveal the cultural and historical facet of the protests (Tilly, 2006). They articulate beliefs and values by producing meanings about these people. Women reinforce belonging to a people by breaking the sphere of appearance with their clothing, hats, colorful objects, decorations, flags and musical instruments. They promote alliance through dances and other performances, holding hands or holding children. The assembly speaks before the word (Butler, 2018).

## Final remarks

This study aimed to identify the ways in which Latin American women employ performances as action repertoires in the protests of the Latin Spring in 2019. We are not interested in thinking about the immediate results or political effectiveness of these protests, but about the possible conditions for their emergence that make previously isolated subjects capable of promoting new regimes of visibility. As Butler (2018) says, protests do at least two things: they allow people to gather and to move together, claiming a certain space as a public space.

The research results show the relevance of considering Latin America as an analytical category that holds many similarities in the cultures of the countries, capable of revealing inequalities and social injustices with common roots and horizons, such as colonization and neoliberalism. And what is interesting is that the results show that very similar action repertoires are used by Latin women.

An analysis that considers the visual aspects of women's struggles was also able to reveal this common ground of injustices. The images demonstrate their power by revealing the alliance policy engendered by women. They are capable of a) defining who the people are, b) showing vulnerabilities as a result of the unequal structure and authoritarian power of the state and c) using that same vulnerability to perform their struggles.

The agendas against budget cuts and austerity policies were also recurrent. In Brazil, the agendas of reform and contingency of social policies did not minimize the crisis in the Temer and Bolsonaro governments, the latter defeated by Lula in 2022. In Bolivia, policies to renationalize basic services such as sanitation were threatened by the country's economic elite with the departure of Evo, who ended up electing a successor in 2020, Luis Arce, and proving the regularity of the elections. In Chile, the problems reached social security and basic sanitation, which gave strength to Gabriel Boric, from the left, to be elected in 2022. In other words, the political transformations in the continent are cyclical, which, in fact, demonstrate a relevance of the analysis of Latin America.

Whether the set of these protests meant a spring for Latin democracy is not yet possible to predict. The fact is that Latin women, in a very similar way, summon their repertoires and their struggles against patriarchy and against the colonial heritage of inequality, promoting a crack in the sphere of appearance

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