

# JUVENTUDE(S) MOVIMENTOS GLOBAIS E DESAFIOS FUTUROS

Organização

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**JUVENTUDE(S)**  

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**MOVIMENTOS**  

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**GLOBAIS E**  

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# JUVENTUDE, POLÍTICA E GÉNERO NA ARGENTINA (2015-2020): COMO A MOBILIZAÇÃO DAS MULHERES RECONFIGUROU A JUVENTUDE DOS PARTIDOS POLÍTICOS

*Alejandro Cozachcow*

## Introduction

This paper examines the relationships between young people's political mobilization and political parties by analyzing women's mobilization effects on political parties' youth wings over the last five years in Argentina (2015-2020). The discussion raised in this article is part of a broader research focused on the Argentinean case that studies the production of "youth" as a central issue in national political parties during the last decade.<sup>1</sup> Some of the major questions posed here include: How does the youth get involved in partisan politics? Which positions –in governmental appointments or elected offices, in party leadership or others– can be held by young people? How do party organizations deal with young political commitments by creating separated branches or by defining what is considered "youth"? How is the receptiveness of youth wings to social and political activism?

On June 3rd 2015, massive women mobilizations against femicide and gender violence took the streets and irrupted into Argentinean publica arena with the

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1 "Young people and politics in Argentina: the production of the youth question in national parties between 2008 and 2019". Two-year Postdoctoral Fellowship granted by the CONICET (Nacional Council of Scientific and Technological Research). The study is part of the projects of the Research Group of Youth and Politics (Grupo de Estudios de Políticas y Juventudes – GEPoJu, Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires): PICT 201-0078 (2017-2010) "Youth militancy on democracy. A comparative study on political activism during democratic recovering (1982-1982) and the recent past (2008-2015)" PI: Melina Vázquez; UBACYT 20020190200397BA "Political cycles and youth militancy: political commitment figures and social and state productions (2008-2019)", Director: Melina Vázquez, Co-Director: Pablo Vommaro.

slogan “Ni una menos”.<sup>2</sup> This national experience became the epicenter of a *new wave* of feminism in Latin America during recent years, in countries like Uruguay, Chile, and Brasil as stated by Larrondo and Ponce (2019). These emerging activisms are also related to movements developed in other regions, like the *#metoo* movement started in North America. According to Elizalde (2018 & 2019), heterogeneous and broad women’s movement gained visibility and set a new gender-oriented agenda towards women’s rights with a marked presence of young women, who contributed to promoting this agenda within their political organizations.

Political parties and young people both play a critical role in contemporary democracies. Newer generations have been central in political mobilizations in Latin America and are also high on the agendas of national governments, political organizations, the academia, and the media, in terms of how they relate to politics. The relationship between young people and politics draws particular interest within the field of youth studies in the Ibero-American region (Benedicto & Feixa, 2015; Pampols & Castro Pozo, 2019). Research undertaken from a historical approach gathered valuable information on the rise of the youth. Works as the ones of Perez Islas (2004) or Martín Criado (2009) focused on the production of youth. Feixa (2006) takes account on the irruption of new generations into the public sphere. Moreover, over the last years, the study of young people’s political participation has been renewed by research into the emerging experiences of youth political activism in Latin America, as stated by Valenzuela (2015) and Vommaro (2019) in the broader context of global political mobilization (Pleyers, 2018). In Argentina, a specific configuration of youth politization was thrown into the picture over the last decade where the state settled as a legitimate sphere of militancy among young people in sharp opposition to previous periods in the country as pointed out by Vommaro (2013), Núñez (2017) and Vázquez (2015b). Vommaro (2013) points out that the field of youth studies in Argentina has a strong tradition in the study of political participation; yet, it was not until the last decade that researchers paid close attention to partisan activism. Research on recent youth participation in Argentinean political parties addresses issues such as the relation between militant practices and generations in different political organizations such as La Cámpora, studied by Vazquez & Vommaro (2012) or Propuesta Republicana, analyzed by Grandinetti (2015). Youth militancy in ruling parties was studied in Vazquez (2015), Rocca Rivarola, (2018) and Cozachcow (2020). Militants’ profiles from three political parties were addressed in Vazquez, Rocca Rivarola and Cozachcow (2018).

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2 “Not a single one less”.

This research is centered on youth studies in Argentina, contributing to the perspectives that take account of the social production of youth, carried on by researchers as Perez Islas (2004) or Feixa (2006), and the generational approach developed by authors as Martín Criado (2009) or Leccardi and Feixa (2011). According to Vommaro (2014), it puts forward a multidimensional and situational analysis of youth regarding gender, age, territory, and social class. This perspective takes us to the consideration of *youth* as a constitutive dimension of meanings, disputes, and practices. Regarding the studies of political parties, the research is based on the socio-historical approach developed by Offerlé (1987) which focuses on the sociological constructions of political objects and on the genesis and plural uses of each institution, as stated by Gené and Vommaro (2011). The question addressing the relation between youth political mobilization and parties is answered, on the one hand, following theories of social movements research on their relationship with democracy and political parties (Della Porta & Diani, 2020; Halvorsen, 2020), and research on Argentinean politics (Vommaro & Gené, 2017), from societal theories of the relation between social life and the political system (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Ostiguy, 2009; Sawicki, 2011). On the other hand, such a question is answered looking at subnational politics (Mauro, Ortiz de Rozas & Paratz, 2016), considering the multi-scaled production of young political commitments, at a subnational, national, and global level. Gender is conceptualized as a cultural and relational produced category as defined by Scott (1986), and as one of main social inequalities among young people in Latin America according to Vommaro (2019). The present research proposes an interdisciplinary approach from youth studies, sociology, and political science.

Taking into account that between 2008 and 2010 there was a revitalization of youth militancy in the Argentinean political parties (Vazquez, Rocca Rivarola & Cozachcow, 2018:521), and the significant impact that women's mobilizations have made since 2015, this article attempts to explore the impact achieved on political parties' youth wings.

The temporary cut-off criteria are based on previous research which established that in Argentina, from 2008 to 2010, a specific youth politization process took place, noted for the revitalization of partisan militancy as it was analyzed in Vazquez, Rocca Rivarola and Cozachcow (2018). To advance on this idea, it is proposed that the change in the national government in 2015<sup>3</sup> and the emerging demands of the new youth since 2016 both influence how youth is produced. The research adopts a qualitative approach (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009) from a sociohistorical and

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3 Center-right Mauricio Macri was elected president in 2015 until 2019 against Daniel Scioli, the candidate of former Peronist president Cristina Fernandez (2007-2011 and 2011-2015).



sociopolitical perspective. This allows analyzing comprehensively the modes of youth production in political parties and in the state, by identifying the relationships established between organizational narratives, between meanings and militant practices, between the social background of militants, and between public and academic narratives. Data collection strategies include three semi-structured interviews to young militants and party leaders,<sup>4</sup> five observations of political events and a survey on 14 documentary and journalistic sources. Regarding case selection, an ideologically heterogeneous group of political parties is analyzed. This has allowed carrying out a comparative analysis of how youth is produced and of the generational characteristics of the militant youth at a national and subnational level. Political parties are: the center-right party Propuesta Republicana (PRO); the historical party Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), now in the center-right coalition CAMBIEMOS with PRO; the center-left party Partido Socialista; the Trotskyist left coalition Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores; the Peronist coalition Frente para la Victoria/Unidad Ciudadana/Frente de Todos, today's governing party (2019-2023).

This paper first gives a brief overview of the recent history of the relationship between young people's political mobilization and political parties' youth wings since the return of democracy in 1983 up to the present.<sup>5</sup> Then, it examines the emerging gender-oriented agenda between younger generations since the 2015 women's mobilizations. The third part discusses the main transformations observed on the political parties' youth wings in relation to this process, including organizational structures, internal agenda, generational experience of young women, actions taken to work against gender violence, ideological orientations and relationships between youth militancy and adult leadership during the 2018 abortion legalization debate at the National Congress, gender parity law, and young women running for elected office. The last section comments on the main findings revealed by the relations between social movements and political parties, and boundaries between political system and social life. The paper finally argues that, in Argentina, younger generations of women are reshaping political parties and advance on their ongoing struggle for social, economic and gender equity.

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4 Questionnaires includes: configurations and reconfigurations of young militant spaces inside the parties; meanings produced on "youth"; main youth demands and how the parties are processing them; young candidatures; representations on youth policies.

5 Argentina was under a military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983.

## **Young people's political mobilization and political parties' youth wings in argentina (1983-2020): a changing relationship**

Youth political participation takes place simultaneously and with varying intensities in multiple fields, such as partisan politics, social movements, and student organizations. Historical, political, and social contexts explain the characteristics of this participation in different regions and periods. According to Feixa, “20th century’s history can be seen as the succession of different generations of young people breaking into the public arena to lead reforms, revolutions, wars, peace, rock, love, drugs, globalization or antiglobalization” (Feixa, 2006:3). Similarly, Manzano (2017) develops a historical approach to understanding the relationships between youth and politics in Argentina, claiming that “youth” as a category and political actor had relative importance during first half of the 20th century; yet, the establishment of an “age of youth” can only be identified from 1950s-1970s onwards. To gain greater insights into the nation’s recent political transformations, and as youth wings have come to light in Argentinean political parties at least since the beginning of the 20th century, this paper focuses on the current democratic period that began in 1983 when, after an eight-year dictatorship, the nation’s democracy was reestablished. This sets a scenario to study the political participation of younger generations under democratic regimes for almost forty years. In the field of youth studies in Argentina, significant research has been conducted to study the relations between youth and politics. In relation to this lengthy democratic process, at least four periods can be identified to fully understand youth political mobilization in Argentina taking into account the periodization pointed out in Vommaro (2013) and Vázquez, Vommaro, Nuñez and Blanco (2017). In each, partisan politics takes on different meanings as a legitimated or rejected arena among mobilized youth.

The so-called “transition” period can be dated between 1982 –a year before the end of the military government– and 1987. As stated by Vazquez and Larrondo (2020), young people’s political commitment has been reconfigured during that period. In 1982 the Argentinean military government declared war on the United Kingdom for the Malvinas Islands. The defeat against the UK accelerated the ending of the dictatorship, with a call to elections in 1983, where Raúl Alfonsín, the leader of Unión Cívica Radical<sup>6</sup> party, was elected president. Such atmosphere was marked by joy and enthusiasm with cultural and social liberalization and the reestablishment of political rights and freedom. The younger generations channeled this enchantment with democracy into political parties, human rights organizations,

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6 UCR, along with Peronism, is one of the historic political movements in Argentina.

and student mobilization at schools and public universities. Lots of young people joined “Juventud Radical”, the youth wing of the ruling party at the time. Also, the youth organizations from the main political party of the Peronist movement, Partido Justicialista, was reestablished, and third parties formed during the period, such the center-left Partido Intransigente and the center-right Unión del Centro Democrático, were also meaningful to young people politically engaged. In addition, as was analyzed in Larrondo and Cozachcow (2017), a unique cooperation between the young leaders of almost all political parties was evident in those years: the Political Youth Movement (MOJUPO), which organized massive mobilizations supporting democracy or disapproving liberal economic reforms. The enchantment ended by 1987, where the government freed, under a general amnesty, imprisoned military officers convicted of human rights abuses. The economic crisis also contributed to citizen’s frustration with democracy. This led youth people to be politically disengaged with partisan politics, until the first years of the 21st century (Vázquez *et. al*, 2017).

The 1990s, where a Peronist government forced an ideological change of direction towards neoliberal policies, turning its back to the party’s traditional doctrine (Levitsky, 2003), partisan politics divorced most relevant youth mobilization experiences. As stated by Vázquez and Vommaro (2008), research produced in the period revealed that young people’s representations of traditional politics were negative, but those were years of political resistance to the state and criticism of representative democracy between young people politically mobilized. Political party’s youth wings were present during those years but were generally reduced to the selection of leadership in some cases, in a context where political institutions were discredited or lacked legitimacy. Even left parties, traditionally against a capitalist state and a representative democracy, were subject of this criticism voiced by young people, who preferred creating left-wing independent political organizations (Vommaro & Picotto, 2010). This prolonged neoliberal period lasted until the 2001 crisis, where youth political expressions led protests against the government, the state, and the parties.

After the economic crisis and the transitional government of Peronist leader Eduardo Duhalde in 2002, during the presidential period of Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007), political parties’ youth wings were not as important as in subsequent years. However, the re-legitimation of state authority and political institutions that characterized the presidency of Nestor Kirchner –a Peronist leader–, laid the foundations of what would happen later with young people’s political mobilization.

During the presidential periods of Cristina Fernández<sup>7</sup> (2007-2011/2011-2015), research on youth political participation shows that the newer generations

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7 Current Argentina’s vice-president (2019-2023).

built a positive relationship with traditional political participation such as the that in political parties, as stated by Vazquez and Vommaro (2012), Grandinetti (2015), Mutuverría (2016), and Cozachcow (2020). According to Vazquez (2015), “youth” became a category that mobilized political commitment among young people. The government of Cristina Fernandez (2007-2015) also promoted, on the one hand, the creation of youth political organizations such as La Cámpora; on the other hand, youth public policy promoting youth political participation. Previous research on this period shows that between 2008 and 2010 there was a revitalization of youth militancy in Argentinean political parties, as stated in Vazquez *et. al.*, (2017). Some of the main relevant events of the period, such as the public funeral of former president Nestor Kirchner in 2010, where young participants had a major presence, showed that newer generations established different relationships with the government, the parties, and state institutions, compared to previous periods. This process was extended not only to the national ruling political party, but also to other major national political parties in the opposition. Main results of a previous study on youth militants in ruling parties during the period pointed out in Cozachcow (2020), showed that the form taken by the youth politization process inside the political parties in their articulations with the state led to a thematization of youth characterized by nominating “youth” as a positive value that can be assumed as a legitimation attribute and as a sign that expresses a juvenilization process. These articulations between party and state, that take on specific configurations regarding the opposition or government role of each party, express on legislative body with the promotion of “young” candidates and projects on youth policies. In addition, in the executive branch of the Argentinean government, youth policy offices tend to be disputed and assumed by the young militants of the governing parties as showed the research of Vazquez (2015) and Liguori (2019). This common characteristic can be observed in two opposite governments: that led by Peronist Cristina Fernandez (2007-2015) and that led by right-wing Mauricio Macri (2015-2019), revealing changing interrelations between militancy, youth, government, and party. Also, youth demands emerging in the period reshaped the internal agendas of the political parties in two sub-periods. Between 2008 and 2015, young militants made demands for the rights of institutionalized political participation, specifically since the enactment of an Act in 2012 aimed at extending the right to vote by lowering the voting age to 16 (although voting is only compulsory for those over 18). This led to a rise in legislative proposals on youth rights at the National Congress as stated in Cozachcow (2016). Since 2015, according to Elizalde (2019) efforts have centered on the public debate of gender violence, equality between women and men, gender parity, and the legalization of abortion for any reason up to 14 weeks of pregnancy.

This youth demands also influenced generational relations between young militants and adult leaders based on intergenerational tension or cooperation, as evidenced in the 2018 debate on abortion in the National Congress.

### **The emerging gender-oriented agenda and the new generations in argentina (2015-2020)**

On June 3rd, 2015, a massive demonstration joining over 300 thousand women was held in downtown Buenos Aires. The protest was organized on social media under the hashtags #NiUnaMenos (“Not one less”, meaning not one more woman lost to male violence), marching against the growing problems of gender violence in Argentina after a 14-year-old girl was found buried underneath her boyfriend’s house. According to Elizalde (2018), since this demonstration took place, calls for effective actions on crimes against women and calls for a cultural change were particularly visible. The author also states that this movement transcended the country’s borders, reaching other Latin America and European regions where massive marches were also held, positioning the concepts of femicide and feminism at the core of public discourse, in mass media, but also in social meetings. Also, that this movement gained full acceptance among young women, especially among middle-class high school and university students from urban areas. This new gender-oriented agenda that includes issues ranging from the legalization of abortion to the promotion of inclusive language as part of the struggle against gender inequality is produced in a context:

permeable to a discourse of rights – which girls live as their own – in the field of gender, sexual dissidence, pleasure, autonomy of bodies, and sexual and reproductive health, their participation in the social and media scenario has thus gained undoubted centrality [an increasingly prominent role] (*Idem*, 2018:173).

The author also underlines that this step forward results from the struggles waged by previous generations of mobilized women, and also from the collective action of this new generation concerning “street harassment, harassment and sexual harassment in social networks, at schools and universities, micro-machisms, and the enactment of an Act legalizing and decriminalizing abortion” (*Idem*, 2018:173). This emerging new generation views itself as a heiress of previous generations, and this process was conceptualized as/referred to as “the daughter’s revolution” (Peker, 2018 on Elizalde, 2019). According to Elizalde (2019), new female political genealogies

are emerging as part of the outcomes of this mobilization process. One of the public arenas where this process takes part includes political organizations, such as parties. This issue will be addressed in the next section.

## **Women's mobilization and transformations within political parties' youth wings**

Andrea, a 29-year-old leader from the Juventud Peronista, youth wing of the Peronist Partido Justicialista from Buenos Aires city, explains in an interview held in 2020 that her self-identification as a feminist is linked to the process described on the previous section:

At the beginning of the process were feminism become more central on the agenda, it's not that one day I said 'I felt like a feminist'. But one day somebody asked me, 'Are you a feminist?', and the truth is that if you ask me today, I say yes. First, I feel Peronist. As Peronism talks about living in a fairer society, so inevitably for me it is included.

The effects of this emerging agenda on political parties' youth wings can be seen in organizational structures and militant practices. Those are heterogenous processes that have been going through over the last years, with a different impact depending on each political party. Transformations are identified according to six dimensions related to what happens inside or outside youth wings.

### *Changes in youth wing structures*

The first one, in the structures of the youth wings, where two issues can be addressed: a) the election of female authorities, and b) gender parity in organizational leadership. The historic political party Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) has two youth branches: Juventud Radical and Franja Morada. The partisan Juventud Radical presidency was traditionally held by a man since 1983. In 2017, and for the first time, a woman was elected for a two-year period, and in 2019, a woman was again elected. The student organization Franja Morada is the most important political organization in Argentinean state-owned universities, as the presidency of the national federation of public university students, Federación Universitaria Argentina (FUA), has been in their hands since 1983. Women were not elected as main leaders; yet, note that in 2016, for the first time, a woman, Josefina Mendoza, was elected as the president

of the FUA, until 2018.<sup>8</sup> The center-left Partido Socialista (PS) also has two youth organizations: Juventud Socialista and Movimiento Nacional Reformista. In the student organization “Movimiento Nacional Reformista” (MNR), a young woman, Gisel Mahmud,<sup>9</sup> was elected for the first time in 2018 as the National Secretary. In 2021 she was elected as the first woman leading the partisan youth branch, Juventud Socialista, settled since 2010. In the center-right party Propuesta Republicana (PRO), also in 2018, a woman, Camila Crescimbeni, was elected as the national president of the youth wing Jóvenes PRO. Regarding the second transformation referred to above, i.e., gender parity in organizational leadership, a more complex issue though, some organizations such as the Juventud Socialista are moving in this direction. Its National Council has two members from each province; in most cases, one man and one woman. In other national youth wings, such as that of Partido Justicialista, reorganized at a federal level in 2019, this is an issue under discussion. In La Campora, since its foundation, main leaders comprise men and women. In some national parties, at a sub-national level, parity is also found among youth leaders, such as Nuevo Encuentro<sup>10</sup> in Moron<sup>11</sup> district, until 2016. The party managed to appoint two youth leaders (one male and one female) per neighborhood. Afterwards, the organization was unable to sustain parity regarding its passage to opposition. This led to a reorganization of the youth branch with one young leader for each vicinity, fundamentally because young activists had less time to engage in partisan tasks.

*Growing emphasis on gender-oriented issues in the internal agenda*

This second dimension is related to the internal agenda, where gender as an issue has become increasingly important. To illustrate this process, evidence from interviews and event observation in youth factions of the Partido Socialista (PS) will be examined. This center-left party has a long tradition of organizing specific youth events to train them as activists, such as week study groups or annual national and regional camps, where political discussions take place in workshops, debates, lectures with specialists and adult political leaders. Close links between young militants are also built. From 2014 to 2020, the gender issue has grown in importance when organizing the camps.<sup>12</sup> Between 2013 and 2015, gender was part of specific

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8 Annex, Table 2, No. 1

9 Annex, Table 2, No. 2

10 Nuevo Encuentro is a center-left Peronist oriented organization, part of present-day Frente de Tod@s.

11 Moron is a local district on the urban metropolitan area surrounding Buenos Aires city.

12 List of events on Annex, Table 3.

optional workshops in national camps. Gender was also part of the wider subject “Social and Environmental Welfare” in one of the most relevant subnational youth factions of the party, from Santa Fe Province,<sup>13</sup> in the political program of 2014<sup>14</sup>. In the 28th national camp organized at the beginning of 2018, one of the resolutions of the plenary session was: “To encourage learning and stimulate discussion with male members with the aim of forging a more feminist Juventud Socialista”.<sup>15</sup> At the second national meeting also organized in 2018, women mobilization was central in lectures and debates. That year, at the youth camp in the province of Santa Fe, plenary lectures were given by eminent women who led those mobilizations. This process that here is described in the changes of the subjects of the events can also be seen from the perspective of young militants: “I completely disagree with gender committees on political parties”, says Anabella, a 30-year-old militant from Rosario city. From her viewpoint, the debate over gender must be held with party leaders, not in special committees: “I am against quotas for women. It does not have to be a PS discussion about the percentage. Let us no longer include gender workshops in the camp. Instead, let us do a workshop on abortion legalization, no more on gender. This broad perspective of “gender” started to grow in importance in the organization of debates.

### *Gender as a generational experience*

The third dimension refers to the generational experience of young women in political parties. In the words of Lucía, a 31-year-old former young leader of Partido Socialista from Rosario city, the idea of being part of a beginning of a change process is one of the main elements: “We are in a transition of having all male leaders. We are the transition; we are the generation where women begin to occupy those places”. Another key element of this process is the widespread perception that women are placed at a disadvantage in relation to men. According to Lucía: “It is much easier for male companions who carry out the same tasks as I do. You can feel and see that. This is discussed a lot within the party, and we talk about it”. This sense of disadvantage is linked to the idea that doing what is politically correct is not enough. Anabella agrees with Lucía on the persistence of gender inequalities: “I think there are certain positions for women because there must be, as an obligation. But gender discrimination remains there”. This generational identification

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13 Partido Socialista controlled provincial government between 2007 and 2019.

14 Annex, Table 2, No. 3

15 Annex, Table 2, No. 4



is also based on the perception that younger generations –she is 31 and talks about younger people between 16 and 20– have different experiences in their militant practices, as expressed by Lucía: “I think young people from 16 to 20 is experiencing another way of doing politics”. The debates mentioned by Lucía also lead to greater understanding of the meaning of “gender”.

### *Measures against gender violence*

The fourth dimension relates to the actions taken in the organizations to fight against gender violence: internal protocols for violence detection and prevention, and measures such as expelling members if violence is perpetuated by them, and public communication of those events. This kind of measures seems to be relatively new in Argentinean partisan politics. In 2018, a female member of La Cámpora publicly reported that one of the leaders living in the province of Buenos Aires and member of the provincial senate committed sexual abuse against her. The young woman also accused the organization of covering up.<sup>16</sup> The accused leader replied through the mass media; he did not deny the charges, and was willing to accept the organization’s protocol, requesting leave of absence at the Senate. La Cámpora explained on its website the application of an internal protocol for the “detection of and approach to gender-based violence”, which aims at transforming practices in the organization: “Assuming a spirit that does not seek to be punitive, but to profoundly transform the structures of power relationships, men must go through processes of reviewing their practices, raising an awareness which allows starting a process of real/true deconstruction”.<sup>17</sup> The organization also publicly emphasizes the collective decision to advance on the process, regardless of the individual choice of the accused to communicate his intentions:

We assume the seriousness of the situation and have the political will and responsibility with our militants and the society as a whole to deepen the transformation of our organization, so that we can advance on the essential social changes; we need to consolidate true social justice in feminist terms.

The idea of a long-term process is also informed:

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16 Annex, Table 2, No. 5

17 Annex, Table 2, No. 6

Understanding that, like any paradigm shift, this is a very difficult, hard, and painful process, which requires a general debate with a strong and real political will, not merely declarative, to eradicate male chauvinist practices once and for all. We recognize that all female militants have suffered the consequences of patriarchal logic. That is why we work on the deconstruction of men within the organization to advance on a generational transformation, so that no one else suffers from any kind of violence.

In Trotskyist left parties such as Partido Obrero, Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores or Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores Unificados (PSTU), a public debate over this issue was held in 2017. An anonymous blog posted the message “No more sexist violence in leftist parties”, in relation to sexual harassment accusations made against male members within the Partido Obrero.<sup>18</sup> The statement accused the organization of covering, due to the decision of not publicizing the names of the accused. Partido Obrero issued a statement with a response entitled: “A response to a provocation against Partido Obrero and its women workers plenary”.<sup>19</sup> Later, other parties such as the PSTU issued a statement regarding sexist violence on left Trotskyist-oriented political parties: “Regarding the cases of male chauvinism on left”.<sup>20</sup> This debates in connection with measures taken within political parties must be understood in terms of a wider phenomena where young women, such as actresses or band followers denounced gender-based violence.

### *The 2018 abortion debate: an emerging cleavage?*

The fifth dimension involves the abortion issue within political parties’ youth wings. As described before, in 2018, abortion legalization was debated and rejected in the National Congress after massive women marches.<sup>21</sup> Those pushing for reform wore green handkerchiefs which became the campaign’s recognizable flag across the entire region, as part of a pro-abortion “green wave”, in clear opposition to the “blue wave” of activists wearing the light blue of the Argentinean flag, who believe that allowing abortion is tantamount to murder. Indeed, four types of positions were laid out among youth wings: the “green ones” totally in favor (the majority); the ones who decided to officially include green and light blue (Jóvenes PRO, the youth wing of the center-right party PRO); organizations that intentionally decided not to adopt

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18 Annex, Table 2, No. 7

19 Annex, Table 2, No. 8

20 Annex, Table 2, No. 9

21 In December 2020, after this paper was presented for review, the bill was approved.

a public position, such as the Juventud Peronista of the Partido Justicialista, where green and light blue ones co-exist; and, to a lesser extent, organizations against abortion.

The relationship developed between generations is a main issue dealt with in youth studies, as showed Leccardi and Feixa (2011). In political institutions and organizations, age is one of the main dimensions that structure power relationships between its members. Being *young* or *adult* depends on the political culture of the organization, its statutes, etc. Political debate in Argentina over legalizing abortion in 2018 and 2020 introduced a new ideological and social divide among generations. Argentina has a Bicameral Congress. The lower house the Argentinean National Congress, the Chamber of Deputies, is made up of 257 members elected for a four-year period with a proportional representation system every two years, where each province is allocated a certain number of representatives according to its population. According to the National Constitution, the minimum age to qualify as an elected member of the National Congress is 25. The upper house, the Senate, consists of 72 members elected to six-year terms, renewing its third part every two years. Members need to have reached at least 30 years old. Each province has three members regardless of population density, two for the majority and one for the second list with more votes. The Senate is a more conservative chamber, where the smaller provinces have more bargaining power. In some provinces, the constituency's values are more oriented to catholic religion. This was reflected in the 2018 voting, where the project was approved in June in the lower chamber but rejected in the Senate in August. Congress sessions were accompanied with massive mobilizations outside Congress in favor and against the bill seeking to legalize abortion. During these debates, the relation between youth wings and the adult leadership of political parties were characterized, in some cases, by *generational dispute* and, in other cases, by *generational articulation*.

During the lower chamber debate, the youth wing of the Partido Socialista, along with its adult leadership, organized a public campaign urging the representative Luis Contigiani to vote in favor or resign from his position.<sup>22</sup> The congressman voted against the project due to his religious position/beliefs. Young leaders of Partido Socialista organized a campaign in Twitter with the hashtag #LuisVotaAFavor with the aim of changing the vote, without success though. During the upper chamber debate, the youth wing of the Unión Cívica Radical also organized a campaign urging senators to vote in favor, where only three of the twelve senators of the party

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22 Annex, Table 2, No. 10

voted in favor.<sup>23</sup> In both cases, during the public mobilizations outside Congress, the youth wings were protesting in favor of legalizing abortion, while most of their representatives voted against, clearly expressing this kind of *generational disputes*. In other cases, also during this debate, there was agreement between adult leaders and youth demands. During the Senate session, former president Cristina Fernandez (2007-2015) decided to change her historical position to vote in favor of the bill, arguing that the mobilization of young women made her change her mind: “It was the thousands of girls who took to the streets that made me change my mind”, she stated. Also, former senator Fernando “Pino” Solanas, who was historically in favor, expressed: “I speak on behalf of an Argentina that wants to end all fears and does not want a repressed youth. That glorious youth in the streets: a green wave of girls fighting for equal recognition of their rights”. And he added: “No one will be able to stop the wave of the new generation. It will be law; a law will be passed against all odds”.<sup>24</sup> A sort of *generational articulations* can be seen here between adults and young people, where younger generations can make senior leaders change their positions.

#### *Young women and their legislative careers at a national and subnational level*

Has this process opened up more opportunities for young women when starting their legislative careers during the period? Although this is a very complex question to answer, and further quantitative research is will be required, this sixth dimension attempts to show some key elements from a preliminary analysis of the political careers of young women at a national and subnational level in the 2017 and 2019 elections. During previous elections, from 2011 to 2015, leaders of the youth wings of the governing party on those districts were elected mostly because of their previous career as youth leaders rather than because of their gender. In 2017 Josefina Mendoza was elected to the lower chamber as part of the CAMBIEMOS governmental coalition, as the youngest representative in the history with the minimum age of 25. As explained before, she was a young leader in the Unión Cívica Radical party, and former president of the university student’s national organization.

At the end of 2017, the National Congress passed a law on gender parity in representative institutions, stipulating that: “political parties must run as many women candidates as men, guaranteeing 50 per cent female representation at the National Congress and Mercosur Parliament”.<sup>25</sup> As Freidenberg (2020) stated on the

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23 Annex, Table 2, No. 11

24 Annex, Table 2, No. 12

25 Annex, Table 2, No. 13

analysis of the Mexican case, gender quotas improve women political representation. This new institutional basis for the representation of Argentina lawmakers at Congress must be considered regarding the access of young women to legislative careers.

In 2019, in the CAMBIEMOS list for the national lower chamber, Camila Crescimbeni, a pro-choice representative of Buenos Aires province and former president of Jóvenes Pro Nacional, and Dina Rezinovsky, a pro-life representative of Buenos Aires city, were elected. In the Frente de Tod@s list of Buenos Aires city, Paula Penacca, a member of La Cámpora, was elected in the second position of the list. At the subnational level, in Buenos Aires city legislature, in the Frente de Tod@s list, Lucía Cámpora, member of La Cámpora and a former Peronist student youth leader, and Ofelia Fernandez, were elected. Ofelia is the youngest member of the city legislature in Argentinean history, with only 19 years old. She was a former high school student leader and was elected in 2020 as one of the most important youth leaders of the world by Time magazine with the heading: “*Latin America’s Youngest Lawmaker Is Fighting to Expand Abortion Access—While Working Out of Her Mom’s Living Room*”.<sup>26</sup> In the lower chamber of the province of Santa Fe, youth leaders of the Partido Socialista were elected: Gisel Mahmud, 10th position and Lionela Cattalini, 15th positions in the candidate list. Recently, a gender parity project was approved in this provincial lower chamber.

## Conclusions

The analysis developed in this article advanced on analyzing the impact of recent women’s mobilization in political parties’ youth wings from Argentina, examining six dimensions: 1) *transformations in the organization structure*; 2) *growing emphasis on gender-oriented issues in the internal agenda*; 3) *gender as a generational experience*; 4) *measures taken against gender violence*; 5) *the abortion legalization debate as an emerging social divide*; 6) *young women and their legislative careers*. Each of those dimensions has allowed describing empirically the impact exerted by this mobilization process, a necessary step towards the settlement of some key issues related to youth studies, political science, and sociology.

In the first place, following Della Porta & Diani (2020) and Halvorsen (2020), social movement theory inquiries about the relation between contentious politics and the state, political parties and democracy. Women’s mobilization in Argentina

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26 Annex, Table 2, No. 14

since 2015 started with the protest against the assassination of a young woman and continued with massive and sustained collective actions for the last five years, promoting transformations at the core of political organizations, such as the youth wings of parties that we have analyzed in this paper. This leads to the question of the relationship between youth and politics, and more specifically, to the question of political engagement and the relation between young people's political mobilization and partisan politics. As described in the second section of this paper, *Young people's political mobilization and political parties' youth wings in Argentina (1983-2020): a changing relationship*, the connection between political parties and young people is dynamic and changing, in view of the historical context studied. Over the last five years, the interaction between the internal dynamics of political parties' youth wings and women's mobilization shows that contentious politics and youth collective actions are not divorced from partisan politics.

In the second place, the boundaries between political system and social life – following Vommaro & Gené (2017) can be addressed/can be further examined. The actions taken against gender violence mostly represent a response to accusations from young women of the parties against adult/senior male leaders. Such accusations were made in other settings, such as rock concerts, where young fans accused musicians of violence; television and theater settings, where young actresses accused actors and directors of sexual abuse; or at universities, where female students reported crimes committed against them by other male students or professors. Those boundaries can also be analyzed in connection with the abortion legalization debate that took place in 2018, where personal, moral, and political positions on this issue sparked off a dispute that can be analyzed as an emerging generational divide. The abortion debate is particularly relevant as the Argentinean president Alberto Fernandez, who expressed himself in favor of the abortion act during his presidential campaign in 2019, brought a new bill to the floor in December 2020, similar to the one rejected in 2018.

In the third place, a classic subject of youth studies can be dealt with: political mobilization of younger generations and their ability to produce social transformations. Adultcentrism and patriarchy are key elements to characterize asymmetrical power relations between young and adults and men and women in general, particularly, in partisan politics. The description provided in this paper shows that young women's mobilization is reshaping political parties; however, many inequalities and disputes remain unchanged. This can be seen in the relations between generations in different parties, leading, in some cases, to *generational articulations*, where adults/senior leaders changed their positions or endorsed youth militancy, and in other cases, to a *generational conflict* between youth and adults, and also between the

youth militancy of some parties with different positions, as in the abortion legalization debate.

In the fourth place, this paper leaves some pending issues for further research. The analysis of the reactions against women's mobilization among young people, specially between the light blue ones and catholic and evangelic youth, and also between libertarians, against this gender-oriented agenda, must be highlighted to gain greater insights into the complexities of the phenomenon. A thorough analysis of gender inequalities and the roles played in the political parties' youth wings is required to advance on the study of youth people's political participation from a multidimensional approach as the one described by Vommaro (2014 & 2019), and on the persisting gender-oriented demands within partisan youth activism during pandemics, especially the approval of the abortion legalization bill in December 2020.

To sum up, this paper attempted to approach political mobilization from a national perspective, related to regional and global youth activism in a gender-oriented agenda, which allowed, in this case, advancing in the study of the relation between young people's demands and political parties, as a key issue in contemporary democracies.

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## Annex

Table 1: List of interviews

Interview	Name	Date	Age	Party	Role
1	Andrea	July 2020	29	Partido Justicialista	Youth leader
2	Lucía	July 2016	31	Partido Socialista	Former youth leader
3	Anabella	July 2016	30	Partido Socialista	Youth militant

Table 2: Documentary sources

N	Title	Publisher	Date Published	Link	Access-date
1	Quién es Josefina Mendoza, la diputada nacional más joven de la historia	Infobae	Dec-17	<a href="https://www.infobae.com/politica/2017/12/10/quien-es-josefina-mendoza-la-diputada-nacional-mas-joven-de-la-historia/">https://www.infobae.com/politica/2017/12/10/quien-es-josefina-mendoza-la-diputada-nacional-mas-joven-de-la-historia/</a>	Oct-20
2	Gisel Mahmud Diputada Provincial	Partido Socialista	2020	<a href="https://dipsocialistas.org/diputado/gisel-mahmud/">https://dipsocialistas.org/diputado/gisel-mahmud/</a>	Oct-20
3	Programa Político – Juventudes Socialistas Santa Fe	Partido Socialista	Nov-14	<a href="https://issuu.com/juventudsocialistasf/docs/prog_pol_js_santa_fe_2014_pdf">https://issuu.com/juventudsocialistasf/docs/prog_pol_js_santa_fe_2014_pdf</a>	Oct-20
4	Balance político del 28 Enero Socialista en Yala, Jujuy	Partido Socialista	Jan-17	<a href="http://www.partidosocialista.com.ar/balance-politico-del-28o-enero-socialista-en-yala-jujuy/">http://www.partidosocialista.com.ar/balance-politico-del-28o-enero-socialista-en-yala-jujuy/</a>	Oct-20
5	Finalmente, pidió licencia el senador de La C�mpora denunciado por abuso sexual	Tiempo Argentino	May-19	<a href="https://www.tiempoar.com.ar/nota/finalmente-el-senador-de-la-campora-denunciado-por-abuso-sexual-pidio-licencia">https://www.tiempoar.com.ar/nota/finalmente-el-senador-de-la-campora-denunciado-por-abuso-sexual-pidio-licencia</a>	Oct-20
6	Comunicado de La C�mpora	La Campora	Dec-18	<a href="https://www.lacampora.org/2018/12/18/comunicado-de-la-campora-2/">https://www.lacampora.org/2018/12/18/comunicado-de-la-campora-2/</a>	Oct-20
7	Basta de violencia machista en los partidos de izquierda. Con violadores en nuestras filas no vamos a construir el socialismo	Anonymous	Sep-17	<a href="https://porunaizquierdaantipatriarcal.wordpress.com/">https://porunaizquierdaantipatriarcal.wordpress.com/</a>	Oct-20
8	Respuesta a una provocaci�n contra el PO y el Plenario de Trabajadoras	Prensa Obrera	Sep-17	<a href="https://prensaobrera.com/mujer/respuesta-a-una-provocacion-contrael-po-y-el-plenario-de-trabajadoras/">https://prensaobrera.com/mujer/respuesta-a-una-provocacion-contrael-po-y-el-plenario-de-trabajadoras/</a>	Oct-20
9	Ante los casos de machismo en la izquierda	Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores Unificado	Aprox 2017	<a href="https://www.pstu.com.ar/ante-los-casos-machismo-la-izquierda/">https://www.pstu.com.ar/ante-los-casos-machismo-la-izquierda/</a>	Oct-20

10	#LuisVotáAFavor Carta Abierta al Presidente del Bloque del Partido Socialista de la Cámara de Diputados ante la votación de la Ley de Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito	Juventud Socialista	Jun-18	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/JuventudSocialistaArg/posts/1678296008951089/">https://www.facebook.com/JuventudSocialistaArg/posts/1678296008951089/</a>	Oct-20
11	La Juventud Radical reclama a sus senadores que voten a favor del aborto legal	Perfil	Aug-18	<a href="https://www.perfil.com/noticias/politica/la-juventud-radical-reclama-a-sus-senadores-que-voten-a-favor-del-aborto-legal.phtml">https://www.perfil.com/noticias/politica/la-juventud-radical-reclama-a-sus-senadores-que-voten-a-favor-del-aborto-legal.phtml</a>	Oct-20
12	El histórico discurso de Pino Solanas en el debate por el aborto que se hizo viral: "Será Ley, contra viento y marea"	Infobae	Nov-20	<a href="https://www.infobae.com/politica/2020/11/07/el-historico-discurso-de-pino-solanas-en-el-debate-por-el-aborto-que-se-hizo-viral-sera-ley-contra-viento-y-marea/">https://www.infobae.com/politica/2020/11/07/el-historico-discurso-de-pino-solanas-en-el-debate-por-el-aborto-que-se-hizo-viral-sera-ley-contra-viento-y-marea/</a>	Nov-20
13	LEY 27412 PARIDAD DE GÉNERO EN ÁMBITOS DE REPRESENTACIÓN POLÍTICA	Argentinean State	Nov-17	<a href="https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/ley_27412_paridad_de_genero_en_ambitos_de_representacion_politica.pdf">https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/ley_27412_paridad_de_genero_en_ambitos_de_representacion_politica.pdf</a>	Oct-20
14	Latin America's Youngest Lawmaker Is Fighting to Expand Abortion Access—While Working Out of Her Mom's Living Room.	Time Magazine	Oct-20	<a href="https://time.com/collection-post/5896373/ofelia-fernandez-next-generation-leaders/">https://time.com/collection-post/5896373/ofelia-fernandez-next-generation-leaders/</a>	Oct-20

Table 3: List of events observed in the Socialist Party

N	Date	Type	Event	Place
1	Jan-13	National Camp	24 Campamento Nacional de las Juventudes Socialistas de Argentina	Paraná, Entre Ríos
2	Jan-15	National Camp	26 Campamento Nacional de las Juventudes Socialistas de Argentina	Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires
3	Sep-16	Provincial Camp	Campamento Provincial JS Santa Fe	Cañada de Gómez, Santa Fé
4	Jan-17	National Camp	28 Campamento Nacional Juventudes Socialistas de Argentina	Yala, Jujuy
5	Sep-18	Provincial Camp	Campamento Provincial JS Santa Fe	Venado Tuerto, Santa Fé

**English language edition & review:** Carolina Mosconi