

# FROM THE STREETS TO THE STATE (AND VICE VERSA)

## Strategies in the Struggles for SOGI Policies in Peru

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### Abstract

The adoption of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity SOGI policies depends on the strategies chosen by the activists that support or oppose them. Nevertheless, the conditions that explain why activists chose specific strategies are not evident. In Peru, the 2013 debate over civil unions favoured a strategic shift in which one group has adopted the strategies of the other. Why did this swap occur? We argue it occurred due to deeply divided electoral competition and the decay of the Catholic Church's moral authority. This article analyses the trajectory of these strategies across time to identify the conditions that contributed to the shift.

### Introduction

During the last decade, several countries in Latin America have made improvements in the recognition of LGBT+ rights, and introduced Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) policies to materialize them. Among those cases, Peru stands out as a country in which those advances have been significant, but modest relative to other cases. While other countries like Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Ecuador and Colombia have moved forward in the recognition of same-sex marriages and civil unions, Peru has systematically rejected such rights since the 1990s. In 2013, a civil union bill proposed in the Congress was rejected once again, but opened an important space for the development of other policies. Since then, the Peruvian executive power and some constitutionally autonomous institutions have been able to introduce progressive SOGI policy within their jurisdiction, as with the national education curriculum reform. Although some of those advances have been just partially implemented amid the national mobilisation of some Evangelical churches and the reaction of conservative representatives in the Congress, the advance is still important.

The comparative literature argues that such outcomes are usually conditioned by the strategies chosen by the activists and groups that either support or oppose these policies. For the sake of brevity, we frame both groups using the dichotomy progressive/conservative. While some research highlights the role of street mobilization and social activism to push for or back these policies and laws (Diez 2015; Corrales 2018), others focus their attention on state-driven, institutional strategies where activists use courts and lobbying to advance or block those initiatives (Mendos; 2019, Martel 2018). While these strategies are not mutually exclusive, and can occur at the same time, in certain contexts one set becomes more salient than the other. Nevertheless, the

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conditions that explain why activists use one set of strategies or another are not clearly visible. Our study aims to fill that gap.

The conditions present during the 2013 Peruvian Congress debate on civil unions catalysed the strategy swap of conservative and progressive groups. In the past, conservative interest groups –usually part of Catholic networks- had a stronger influence over the state, while LGBT collectives were concentrated with social activism and street mobilisation. Nowadays, conservative groups –including the Catholic Church and Evangelical churches- are more successful in their contentious repertoires, using street mobilisation to slow down the already fragmented advance of progressive policies and stop their implementation. Meanwhile the LGBT movement has replaced its preference for social mobilisation with a state-directed strategy focused in lobbying, the strategic positioning within state institutions, and the use of courts.

In contrast to their previous strategies, conservative forces have effectively used “the streets” to push for the blockage of policies regarding gender and sexual orientation. Simultaneously, LGBT activists have focused on identifying and placing allies in relevant positions within state agencies that are optimally situated to negotiate these policies. We argue that this strategy swap was largely shaped by two forces: (1) The outcome of a deeply divided electoral competition, and (2) the decay of the Catholic Church’s moral authority. Both conditions were crucial to understand the context of the debate on civil unions in 2013, an episode that set the strategic shift for both sides. This swap provides an important space to observe and identify the conditions that explain the strategic shift in this particular case.

First, the electoral outcomes in the past two presidential elections have been shaped by the strength of the liberal “Anti-Fujimorista” coalition, leading to the victory of presidents Ollanta Humala and Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in 2011 and 2016, respectively. The influence of such coalitions on those governments led to the appointment of an important number of progressive activists and experts as public officials at different levels. This situation has enabled LGBT activists increased access to the state, since those officials are more receptive to their demands. Second, the Catholic Church eroded its moral authority due to its role in the last authoritarian regime, as well as to the recent mediatisation of several sexual abuse scandals. Combined, these two factors have degraded the historical policy influence of the Church. The Church has then been forced to cooperate with –and in some senses pass the baton to- Non-Catholic Christian, mostly Neo-Pentecostal churches. These churches have shown greater capacities for mobilisation, effectively taking the conservative strategy to the streets.

This article analyses the trajectory of these strategies across time in order to identify the moment in which the shift occurred, as well as the conditions that contributed to its happening. To do so, we used a combination of data gathering methods. First, a systematic review of Peru’s most important newspaper (*El Comercio*), from 2007 to 2019, was conducted to identify the changes in the preferred conservative and progressive strategies over time. This information was originally collected with the help of a research assistant and then completed using an online database (Nexus Uni). This information has been complemented with secondary sources for previous years. Second, field observations of both groups’ mobilisation events took place between 2012 and 2016.

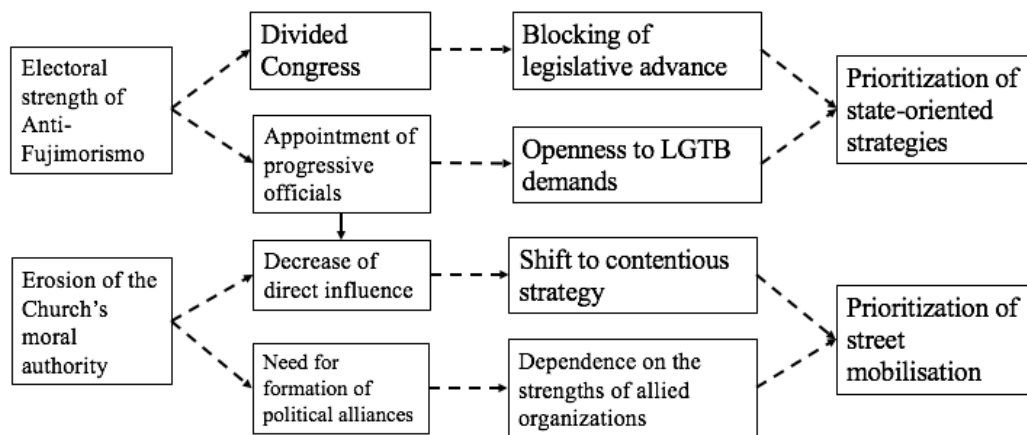
Finally, we conducted and analysed interviews with activists and organizers from both sides. Using this information, the critical junctures where these policies are discussed, are identified and described, as well as the conditions that explain the strategic shift.

The first section of this paper describes and illustrates the explanatory hypothesis developed for the case. The second section describes and analyses the strategic shift of the LGBT movement, while the third does the same for the conservative side. A final section concludes with some reflections about the prospects for these strategic decisions.

## Why strategic change in Peru?

Why have the preferred strategies of Peruvian conservatives and progressives changed across time? We argue that the combination of a polarized electoral landscape where liberal actors are more influential, and the decay of the moral authority of the Catholic Church are key conditions to understand the strategic decision of these groups. Both conditions generate causal logics that reinforce the effects of the other, in a way that pushes the antagonistic groups in different strategic directions, rather than forcing their competition in the same arena. This is not to say that either group uses one strategy exclusively, but rather that they have clearly prioritised certain strategies over others.

*Figure 1. The causal mechanism*



A polarized electoral landscape creates a double effect. First, it produces a more polarized Congress, which makes parliamentary coordination hard and favours the prerogatives of one group over the other. Usually this situation should lead to more contentious responses from the interested group (the LGBT collective); however, the limited mobilisation capacities and the presence of other opportunities are crucial to route the strategy towards direct influence on the state. Such opportunities appear in the form of the appointment of more sympathetic public officials at different levels, in various institutions. A polarized electoral landscape in multi-party systems requires coalition building both to win the election and to deal with the opposition in Congress once in power. There are several strategies to achieve this goal, one of those being the appointment of individuals that can provide technical and political assets for the

government. The degree of access to the state for activists depends on the political characteristics of such individuals, whether they are more or less sympathetic with their demands (see Htun 2003).

The main political division in contemporary Peruvian politics has been that between those who praise the achievements of the former dictator Alberto Fujimori, and those who oppose them on the grounds of the defence of democratic institutions (Tanaka 2011; Levitsky 2011; Dargent and Muñoz 2016). In the context of a two-round electoral system, the presidential election gets defined by those who are able to form credible centrist coalitions in the second round (Vergara 2007; Meléndez 2019). In 2011 and 2016, Fujimorismo lost the second round of elections against candidates supported by the Anti-Fujimorista coalition (Tanaka et al. 2017). As a result, despite their differences, both governments appointed ministers and other high-rank officials linked with the Anti-Fujimorista coalition, prioritising a more liberal profile receptive to progressive policies.

Nevertheless, the Congress of the Republic has been populated by conservative representatives that gained access mainly as Fujimorista candidates. These situation, along with the coordination problems in Congress due to the extreme weakness of political parties have been crucial for the impossibility of legislative advance in SOGI laws. Although some initiatives have been discussed in the parliament, the conservative groups have been able to prevent their approval, or even reverse them. In this scenario, LGBT collectives have made use of contentious politics in reaction to these outcomes, despite their limited mobilisation capacities. However, some collectives and individual activists have turned their strategies towards a direct influence of specific state agencies, especially given the window of opportunity provided by the appointment of progressive officials. These two configurations have pushed the centrality of the LGBT strategies from the street to the state, relying on the formation of policy networks oriented to particular policies rather than on social mobilisation (see Htun 2003).

The trajectory of the conservative movement has developed inversely following their loss of direct policy influence. The conservative wing tends to be dominated by religious groups that use their moral authority to gain political influence. As Grzymala-Busse (2015) argues, the most influential churches do not rely on elections or political coalitions in order to influence policy, but in the direct institutional access granted by such authority. This authority usually arises from historical developments in which nation and religion are fused as a popular identity. However, moral authority can be eroded, especially in those cases where the church acts in a partisan way or against the moral standards they promoted (Grzymala-Busse 2015, 12). In the case of erosion, not only the direct influence decreases, but also the church is required to seek for political alliances to maintain their prerogative on these issues. When the influence is not only decreased but the orientation of state officials changes against the church's preferences, then a shift to contentious strategies might be required if the topic is sensitive enough. Moreover, the erosion of the moral authority might also affect the church's mobilisation capacities, forcing them to rely on proxy organisations or other allies to fulfil these tasks, and then relying in their preferred strategical choices.

Historically, the Catholic Church has been one of the most important tutelary institutions, and Catholicism a key part of the Peruvian national identity (Nugent 2010).

This situation secured the influence of the Church over policies, with a clear conservative agenda regarding moral issues. Nonetheless, the role of the Church in the Internal Armed Conflict (1980-2000) and the involvement of the clergy in Fujimori's regime partially eroded the political credibility of the Church. On top of that, the recent sexual abuse scandals across the region have contributed to this erosion. In Peru, the revelations of cases like those related to the Sodalitium of Christian Life have been particularly important. Moreover, the promotion of progressive policies by liberal officials has led the Church to use more contentious repertoires, forcing an alliance with *Evangélicos*. In consequence, the strategies of the conservative group have moved from their privileged direct influence on the state, to the streets.

The reconstruction of these point to the debate on the 2013 civil union bill in the Congress of the Republic as the critical juncture for this strategy swap. This debate, and its aftermath, made evident the need and opportunities for a strategic redirection for both groups, particularly for the conservative coalition. Without the direct engagement of the Church, the mobilisation capacities of *Evangélicos* demonstrated to be highly effective. Moreover, while they succeeded in blocking the civil union bill, it was clear that having allies and representatives in the Congress was not enough. For the LGBT movement, this juncture revealed the limitations of social mobilisation and the impossibility for legislative advances. However, it also revealed the disposition of state institutions and officials to engage with more inclusive approaches in their specific policy domains. Besides, this moment was crucial for the crystallisation of new leaderships and trends within the movement. Particularly, a new generation of young activists introduced a more liberal and state-oriented strategy, compared to the previous left-wing and contentious orientation of the movement.

### **Street to state: LGBT activist strategy change**

The Peruvian polity has been historically dominated by socially and economically conservative forces. Even though homosexual acts between two consenting adults were decriminalised in 1924 (Cáceres et.al 2008, 50), homosexuality, as well as non-normative gender identity and gender expressions are still stigmatised, although, this seems to be changing at a slow pace in the last six years. According to Ipsos (2019), 49% of the population have a positive opinion about homosexual individuals, being stronger among women and people between 18-39 years of age. Nonetheless, media outlets and state institutions continue systematically perpetuating stigma against these collectives, the later having omitted and even contributed to the social exclusion, discrimination and violence experienced by LGBT individuals (No Tengo Miedo, 2016:110-112).

The recent debate over SOGI policies and laws in the Congress has opened a window of opportunity for the renewal of the LGBT movement, however internally diverse. Nonetheless, one of its commonalities is their differentiation from groups like that formed in the 1980s, given their individual rights-based framework and new strategic approach. These movements have been combining street-oriented strategies like social mobilisation and *artivism*, with state-oriented strategies like the institutional penetration of state agencies, the judicialisation of LGBT rights through disputes in constitutional courts, and the formation of alliances with private enterprises that are prone to support some causes like equal marriage. The changes in the framing of demands, as well as the

diversification of strategies, respond in great part to the opportunity opened with the placement of liberal officials in state agencies, especially given the almost impossibility to obtain the recognition of rights through the Congress.

### ***The limits for LGBT social mobilisation and policy influence***

The emergence of the Peruvian LGBT movement did not happen until 1980, during the democratic transition from military rule. From 1981, a series of organisations, like the Homosexual Movement of Lima (MHOL) were founded by largely elite gay men (Mezarina, 2015, 48). MHOL was the most prominent of these and was informed by social theory, influenced by the ideas of activists and academics from Europe and the United States, especially from post-Stonewall gay movements (Cáceres et. al., 2008, 49). Consistently, its leaders were left-oriented and recognised organised social mobilisation as the main mechanism to obtain citizen rights that they considered systematically denied to homosexuals. However, MHOL's elitism fettered its potentials for significant grassroots mobilisation.

The social and political context of the 1980s made social mobilisation even more difficult. First, the AIDS epidemic –and the state policies designed to control it- increased social stigma against LGBT people, discouraging their political visibility (Cáceres et al. 2018). This shaped the agenda of LGBT groups, including MHOL, which became a non-profit organisation in 1985 in order to receive external funding, limiting its membership and the possibilities for social mobilisation (Cáceres et al. 2008). Second, LGBT groups were also military targets during the Internal Armed Conflict, especially in the eyes of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. This subversive group engaged in a so-called 'social cleansing' strategy that targeted "homosexuals and drug addicts" (CVR 2003, 444-445). Third, the repressive nature of Fujimori's government decreased the incentives for mobilisation (Cáceres et.al. 2008, 50; Mezarina, 2015, 52).

The democratic transition of 2001 opened new opportunities for activism and social mobilisation. From 2001 to 2006, the demographic characteristics of LGBT organisations changed, being composed mainly by diverse groups of young gay and lesbian students. Some of these groups, like the Front for the Right to Be Different (FREDIF), and the Peruvian LGBT Network, were formed in national events organized to promote new leaderships in the movement; consequently, these groups had members in several regions of the country (Mezarina, 2015, 55). Henceforth, the movements started to ramify, both in terms of new organisations founded by these young activists, as in terms of the introduction of new approaches due to the emergence of academic programs on gender, sexuality and sexual health, and the formation of alliances with different actors, including women's and human rights organisations (Rosas, 2018).

This period provided new opportunities to push for the recognition of LGBT rights, given that there was a renewed dialogue on human rights after the failures of the Fujimori regime, the installation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) and the social impetus for constitutional reform. However, as LGBT groups lacked experience and social stigma persisted, the movement was not able to mobilise enough support to access decision-making processes at different levels of the state. During those years, the LGBT movement and its allies presented a number of initiatives to the Congress, including the introduction of "sexual orientation" into the text of the Constitution, and a

law to prevent sexual orientation-based discrimination, among others (Cáceres et. al. 2008, 51; Mezarina, 2015, 56; Mendos, 2019). Despite some advances, most of these initiatives were blocked, since conservative forces still dominated key committees in Congress and maintained influence on the Executive through ministers like Luis Solari, a member of the Opus Dei.

From 2006 to 2011, the Alan Garcia administration continued an openly conservative approach, minimising the opportunities for political mobilisation. However, some important advances from within the state took place, without the direct intervention of the LGBT movement. For example, the Constitutional Court ruled in 2009 that some articles of the Organic Law of Military Justice were unconstitutional, among which there was one that criminalised homosexuality within the military forces. This demand was started by the Ombudsman's Office and supported by several human rights organisations. Likewise, by August 2010, the first civil union bill was surprisingly presented by congressman member of the ruling party, Jose Vargas. This project, which lacked support of LGBT, was dismissed by the Congress' Justice Commission in 2011. Then, legislative seemed the least promising path towards advance.

### ***From social mobilisation to institutional penetration***

Amid this discouraging environment between 2001 and 2011, a new generation of activists started to assist and participate in the gatherings held at the MHOL headquarters. Many of these activists would later form their own groups and organisations, gaining more visibility after 2013. The strategic focusses of these new groups changed throughout the years --especially after the realisation that changes were difficult to achieve through Congress. These groups rejected a political alignment to leftist discourses and proposed a greater repertoire of strategies that ranged from social mobilisation to placing activists and allies in strategic state institutions, as well as engaging private companies in supporting their demands. These strategies have had some impacts in the advance for the recognition of LGBT rights as well as in the agenda-setting of media outlets. However, these advances have been fragmented and driven by non-legislative initiatives, specially coming from the national Executive power or constitutionally autonomous institutions.

The election of Ollanta Humala in 2011, supported by the Anti-Fujimorista coalition (Levitsky 2011; Tanaka 2011), lead to the appointment of liberal experts and activists as officials in high-rank positions within the government. In Congress, Carlos Bruce, a prominent politician who served as minister in the Toledo administration, was the first openly gay representative; although he made this information public in 2013, two years after being elected. Before that, Bruce moved forward law projects on LGBT rights in the Justice Committee, including a proposal to include sexual orientation and gender identity as causals of hate crimes in the Penal Code, and the same-sex civil union bill in 2013. The latter was developed with the help of Giovanni Infante, then-president of MHOL; George Hale, the director of the Centre for Promotion and Defence of Sexual and Reproductive Rights (PROMSEX); and Helmut Kessel, of the Secular Humanist Society.

However, the civil union project was not officially promoted by MHOL. Nonetheless, it represented a critical moment for the LGBT movement, leading to the foundation of new groups that became crucial in the struggle for SOGI policies, such as *No Tengo Miedo* and *Union Civil Ya* (currently known as *Más Igualdad*). These were

formed by students and young professionals who had previously participated as volunteers in human rights organisations, assisted to gatherings and discussions at the MHOL headquarters and/or were student representatives in various universities. These activists were critical of the way MHOL framed the demands for LGBT rights, particularly regarding its alignment with radical leftist discourse. They considered it alienated right-oriented and apolitical people, resulting on very limited support from the wider LGBT population. They also were aware of the limits of social mobilisation strategy in the past (Interview with Gabriela Zavaleta Vera, 2015; Interview with Gabriel de la Cruz Soler, 2017).

These new organisations framed their demands as struggles for individual rights, generally avoiding aligning with radical political discourses, instead foregrounding other strategies like placing strategic allies in state institutions. Although some of these collectives were originally formed to back Bruce's civil union bill through social mobilisation, their criticism towards this strategy led them to combine it with new strategies, like lobbying with politicians, seeking for alliances with private companies, and the use of traditional and online media. It is important to highlight the work of *Union Civil Ya*, whose information campaigns through social media and issuing of statements supporting the bill, led to modest, but sustained demonstrations in the streets, that lasted from the presentation of the bill in a press conference in 2013, until the beginning of 2016, almost one year after the filing of the bill.

The central demonstrations, which went by the name of 'March for Equality', reinforced the message the organisation wanted to transmit, in line with the 'Love wins' campaign in the United States. The organisation framed the campaign in terms of equality rights, appearing as a liberal platform without any political affiliations (Interview with Gabriela Zavaleta, 2015). This allowed them to gain increasingly larger support, particularly from a younger, mainly middle-class population. However, one of the downsides of this framing, was the loss of support of other LGBT groups, that argued that same-sex unions lacked an intersectional approach, as it would benefit only a privileged group of gays and lesbians, but not those with more urgent demands, such as the transgender population. At the end of the day, they were unable to exert enough influence to accomplish the passing of the bill from the Constitution Committee to the Congress plenary.

However, this experience demonstrated that some officials within the government were keen to support the advance of more progressive policies. Hence, the newer LGBT organisations started to identify and place potential allies in diverse state agencies, like the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI), the Ministry of Justice, the National Registry of Identification and Marital Status (RENIEC), and the National Electoral Tribunal (JNE). With the help of these allies, they negotiated the formation of working groups to discuss the implementation a series of programs and guidelines to protect LGBT populations from social discrimination in regards to their policy domains. Moreover, they gained allies for their legal strategies, since some of these institutions started to provide favourable opinions for legal demands or law projects that benefited these populations.



The introduction of a gender perspective in the national curricula has been the most important and controversial achievement of this kind of strategy. This proposal aimed to fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identities in the school by including those topics as part of the education material to be covered in classes. Although this decision was taken without the participation of these collectives, the design and implementation was led by groups in which activists and allies played an important role. The importance of this policy is made evident by the reaction it motivated among conservative groups, described below.

In the same fashion, *Unión Civil Ya* and PROMSEX, obtained the endorsement of the JNE for the creation of the LGTBI Political Training School 'EMPODERA' in 2017. This initiative allowed national activists to make connections among themselves, and with sympathetic transnational organisations, politicians and government (Interview with Gabriela Zavaleta Vera, 2015; Interview with Alexandra Hernández Muro, 2017). This is, perhaps, one of the most important and reaffirming contributions of this new strategy. It has further contributed to the strategic positioning approach, allowing some activists to occupy positions in state agencies at the local and national level, that would allow them to access decision making processes.

Although these strategies do not definitively replace the use of street mobilisation, they have become more important within the movement, especially given their results. There are clear limitations in terms of the scope of the policies and initiatives being promoted, but they remain important advances in a hostile environment. Some recent events seem to contribute to the pronouncement of this trend. For instance, the recent crisis -originated by the confrontation of the Executive and the Legislative powers- has made the parliamentary discussion of these issues difficult. Even when some progressive politicians favourable to the LGBT demands were able to gain seats in Congress for the period 2016-2021, the bills they proposed never got to be discussed in the Justice Commission given the adverse climate in Congress and the prioritisation of other issues, such as the Justice System reform.

## **State to street: Conservative strategy change**

Through the history, the Peruvian conservative movement has been articulated and led by the Catholic Church. Traditionally, the Church has had a 'cosy relationship with the state' in Latin America (Hagopian 2009, 35). Peru is typical of this kind of relationship (Nugent 2010). While other countries in the region have seen sustained challenges to the Church, Peru remains a case where state policies followed the clergy, particularly regarding SOGI and sexual and reproductive issues (Middlebrook 2000, 24-26). Although this situation started to be challenged in the 1990s, it was the transition from Fujimori's regime in year 2000 that opened the space for a more democratic contestation of such influence. After a timid liberal experience with the Toledo administration (2001-2006), the election of the Aprista candidate Alan García in 2006 settled back the balance in favour of conservative groups.

Nonetheless, the revival of Fujimorismo with the presidential candidacy of Keiko Fujimori (Alberto's daughter) in 2011 opened the space for the influence of liberal groups

over state agencies. While the Fujimorista and Aprista presence in the parliament granted the blocking of progressive legislation regarding SOGI issues, the presidential victories in 2011 and 2016 were backed by Anti-Fujimorismo, contributing to the appointment of liberal ministers and officials. Amid these political rearrangements, the Catholic Church has been forced to multiply its set of strategies to influence over policy, especially in front of its loss of moral authority (Alemán 2018). While it started the use of street mobilisation with the organisation of the March for Life since 2013, the debate over civil unions and the introduction of a gender perspective in the national curriculum have given the *Evangélicos* a leading role in this struggle, making contentious repertoires the main conservative mechanism for indirect influence over policy.

### ***From direct influence of the Church to the March for Life***

The Catholic church has historically enjoyed a direct influence over otherwise secular policy issues. The Catholic alignment of most political authorities –despite the inexistence of a confessional party- and the cultural hegemony of the Church in the nation were key elements to secure its privileges (Nugent 2010). However, the origins of such influence can be traced back in history. The Church was a crucial piece in the colonial project in the Americas, in a relation that benefited both the Church and the Spanish Crown. As a result, the Church benefited from its embedded status with the state, while the latter benefited from the Church's maintenance of social order (Cotler 2005[1982], 60; Gill 1998, 19-25; Hagopian 2009, 35). Although the Independence process shook the foundations of this relationship, the Church crafted alliances with new elites, with a special focus on the landed elite (Prokopy and Smith 1999, 4). Despite some variations, Peru exemplifies Catholic cultural and political hegemony.

This domination began to change in the 1990s. On the one hand, Alberto Fujimori seized power with a coalition that included non-Catholic Christian churches, who obtained representation in the parliament for the first time in history (see Freston 2001, 237-249; Barrera Rivera and Pérez 2013; Pérez 2017, 128-146). Interestingly, Fujimori's authoritarian government also had a complex but fruitful relation with feminist activists and organizations, introducing important reforms to solve different gender gaps, including the promotion of contraceptive methods (Blondet 2002; Rousseau 2006). Yet, Fujimori maintained the sympathy of Church, especially by securing social order after the intense period of political violence (Pásara 2015). This situation partially changed with the democratic transition, when this sympathetic relationship contributed to the delegitimation of the Church's moral authority. While conservative groups were able to maintain influence over important institutions such as the Constitutional Court (Loaiza 2013), this new scenario required the introduction of more contentious strategies to secure the influence over policy decisions.

In 2013, the first March for Life was organized, as part of a global conservative movement against the legalization of abortion. This has become a yearly event, largely directed by the Catholic Church in conjunction with *Evangélicos*. These marches relied mostly on the Church's mobilisation of its networks of Catholic Schools, which oblige students and parents to participate as part of mandatory extra-curricular activities (Moncada 2015). Different youth Catholic organisations also play a crucial role in organising the logistics, and procuring the material and symbolic resources for the march.

Along with the access to economic resources, these young activists, formed in international leadership schools sponsored by the Church, have developed an important mobilisation know-how, as well as having access to the materials and experiences retrieved by the networks of young activists across countries (Interview with anonymous informant, 2016). By doing so, the Church showed that it was able to take the streets in defence of their policy preferences.

### ***The March for the Family and the rise of *Evangélicos****

When the legislative proposal to recognize civil unions was introduced in 2013, it was clear that the direct influence of the Church over policy was eroded, but also that having likeminded representatives in the Congress was important but not sufficient to block these initiatives. Hence, it was expected that these Catholic groups would lead the reaction taking social mobilisation to a next level. However, the Church was already in the middle of the controversy due to the public debate on sexual abuse scandals involving the former director of the Sodalitium of Christian Life, Luis Figari, who was initially supported by the clergy against those accusations (Salinas and Ugaz 2016). In this context, the direct involvement of the Church in the political debate could have been counterproductive to their interests, and so they chose a more low-profile involvement (Interview with anonymous informant 2018a). The space was therefore left open for *Evangélicos* to take the lead in the mobilisations, who also had representatives in congress such as the former Fujimorista congressman Julio Rosas (Alemán 2018, 46; Tello 2019).

During the March for Life, part of the Catholic mobilisation expertise was shared with the other groups involved as allies. However, *Evangélicos* also had an important access to these kinds of resources due to the global nature of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, which are also involved in similar contentious dynamics world-wide (see Staggenborg 1991). So, Evangelical movements started a new campaign, framed as the “March for the Family”, in order to show their opposition to the introduction of civil unions in the legislation. The most important manifestation occurred the day of the parliamentary debate of the civil union proposal, when thousands of *Evangélicos* crowded the sidewalks of Abancay Avenue, where the Congress is located. While the LGBT collectives were able to mobilise a group of heterogeneous protesters that covered one block of the avenue right by the side of the Congress, the March for the Family took over several blocks in an impressively well-organized demonstration. At the end of the day, the Congress dismissed the proposal, but *Evangélicos* kept mobilising in the next weeks as a response to the protests organized by the LGBT movement.

However, the introduction of SOGI terminology in the national curriculum in 2016 took this strategy to the next level. As a response, the movement started a new campaign named ‘*Con mis hijos no te metas*’ or ‘Don’t Mess with my Children’, which aimed to block the introduction of what they unsympathetically called gender ideology. According to their views, gender ideology is part of a global leftist conspiracy to gain cultural hegemony (Márquez and Laje 2016), or, in more plain words, to ‘homosexualise’ society through the indoctrination of children (Aguayo and Rosas 2019). With this framing, *Evangélicos* clearly aimed to mobilise people beyond their parishioners, using cultural threat as the catalyst for reaction (Motta and Amat y León 2018; Lecaros 2018). They were relatively unsuccessful to recruit spontaneous protesters; yet, their

mobilisation capacity was clearly superior compared to many other Peruvian social movements, including those who deal with “material” necessities (Sosa-Villagarcia 2018; Tello 2019). Not only they were able to call for several, massive street mobilisations since 2016, but also to organize other contentious repertoires such as sit-ins, rallies, pamphleteering, and picketing. It was clear that the conservative strategy was taken to the streets.

In all these manifestations, it was obvious that the organisation was clearly centralised, and that the organisers had access to important resources. Not only did they use consistent, centrally-designed banners, posters, and pamphlets, but also different collectives provided refreshments and transport for the protesters. This was crucial and likely anticipated because of demographic composition of the event, mostly composed by poor, indigenous-descendant internal immigrants. However, rather than being mobilised as a ‘*portátil*’ –a term used to describe a group that is hired or recruited to demonstrate in exchange of favours or resources-, these groups are clearly devoted to their faith, following the authority of their religious leaders. Yet, the provision of these resources is key since they are dependent on daily-earnings to subsist and sustain their families. For instance, one protester commented that these events were organized for the family, and that they themselves contributed with their “scarce money” to organise the provision of refreshments. However, it is clear that these efforts were sustained with more than voluntary contributions, especially given the organisation of these churches (Interview with anonymous informer, 2018b). At the end of the day, their mobilisations –along with the actions of conservative politicians in the Congress- have partially succeed in blocking the implementation of this policy.

This new strategy is not exclusive, since other state-oriented tactics are also in place both by the Church and *Evangélicos*. This second group of tactics aims to recover influence policy through representatives and officials. Since 2011, these groups were able to make alliances with Fujimorismo, which became the main force in Congress in 2016 (Tanaka et al. 2017). From that moment, this party has been responsible of blocking bills and other mechanisms related to gender equality, gender identity and sexual diversity. Likewise, it is during this period that this force –along with the street mobilisation of *Evangélicos*- was able to press the Ministry of Education to withdraw the gender approach from the national curriculum, achieving the veto of two education ministers. However, the recent crisis and the dissolution of the Congress by president Martín Vizcarra in 2019 might reverse these advances. This crisis has constrained the possibilities of Fujimorismo to keep that amount of power in the recent future. This situation could force *Evangélicos* –along with other conservative groups- to pursue the formation of an independent electoral vehicle. Nevertheless, the positions about this kind of strategy are currently deeply divided within the movement, while social mobilisation remains the most important approach (Interview with anonymous informant, 2018b).

## **Conclusions**

The struggle for SOGI policies in Peru is still dominated by conservative groups. Their direct influence over the state has declined due to the victory of anti-Fujimorista coalitions and the erosion of the Church’s authority, but they have managed to recover some space with the help of the mobilisation capacities of *Evangélicos*. Alternatively, LGBT

collectives have shifted their strategy towards the strategic positioning of allies in the state, given the pitfalls of their previous mobilisation and legislative-oriented campaigns. Following that direction, these groups have been able to promote and implement fragmented, but important initiatives with some success. The strategic choices of these antagonistic groups appear today inverted: Conservatives in the streets and the progressives in the state.

Two conditions have contributed to this outcome. First, the participation of a competitive Fujimorista presidential candidate in the last two general elections created a scenario of polarisation that resulted in (1) the victory of candidates with the support of the liberal, Anti-Fujimorista coalition, and (2) the over-representation of Fujimorismo in Congress. Those two settings have shaped a peculiar governmental context in which conservative movements have more power on Congress and progressive movements have relatively more access to Executive policies due to the appointment of liberal public experts and activists in different state agencies. Second, the recent erosion of the Church's moral authority has led the conservative movement to rely more and more in *Evangélicos*, whose strategic strength is in street mobilisation. Altogether, both conditions reinforce each other, leading to the observed "swap" of strategies between the antagonistic groups.

A final word has to be said about the prospects and limitations of these strategies, particularly regarding the advance of progressive SOGI policies and laws. It is clear that the new strategy has brought advances for the LGBT agenda, but such advances are limited both by the scope of the policies and by the difficulties to implement them. Moreover, while it is clear that some advance is preferable than none advance at all, the scope of the policies promoted through the state-driven strategy are clearly insufficient to improve the life conditions of the broader LGBT community. Thus, more radical policies are required, mainly those that aim to deal with the inequalities and stigmas that affect this population. The success of such policies requires the existence of a vibrant social movement that could be able to back them and push for their implementation. In that sense, the LGBT movement should not cease to aspire to be able to use both the state and the streets.

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