

The Social Space between Border and Boundary: Is the Lockdown in Latin America a “State of Exception” or a “State of Social Exception”?

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Abstract

In this article, aspects concerning the dynamics that take place in a well-defined “social space” when factors that are partly or totally independent of individuals break into it (i.e., pandemics, wars, revolutions and similar) will be explored. The reference is to “social space” since, by placing itself in the meso dimension of analysis, this concept succeeds in overcoming the differences between the concepts of border and boundary by encompassing both the physical/material and socio-psycho-relational aspects that in it is realized. The aim of this article is to try to answer the question of whether social living space can be considered a “state of exception” and a “state of social exception” when the perception of individuals is subjected to a continuous tension that tends to deconstruct and redefine this space. In order to achieve this, the reflections will be supported by the consequences of the “confinement” (lockdown) due to the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic that started at the end of 2019 and that provided different scenarios in the world (here the reference will be to Latin America and Colombia in particular).

Keywords: *social space; border; boundary; lockdown; state of exception and social exception; Latin America.*

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The social space between “border” and “boundary”

Social scientists have pointed out that the complexity of sociocultural phenomena is determined by the fact that significant interactions take place between interdependent and inseparable aspects and elements; for this reason analyses of the common properties of sociocultural phenomena cannot be considered “simplest units” but an interweaving of personality (subject of interactions), society (set of interactions and phenomena and sociocultural processes), and culture (set of meanings, values norms, as well as the set of means that objectify, socialize and transmit these elements). There is no society without a culture and interacting individuals (personalities), just as there is no culture without interacting individuals (personalities) and a society. In this complex scenario in which contemporary society is configured, relationships (at different levels) assume a predominant role in what are social phenomena but in order to be able to study them better, in the social sciences certain dimensions of analysis are distinguished (Collins, 1988): the macro dimension, which relates to social systems and their forms of organization; the micro dimension, which deals with the individual/society relationship and the social actions; finally, the meso dimension, which, presenting itself as the effort to integrate the two previous dimensions, is related to the relations between the social system and the world of life (together of the meanings and representations of culture).

Having made this very brief premise in this article will explore the aspects that concern the dynamics that go on in “social space” which,

from the sociological and political point of view (the authors’ disciplinary fields of reference), is the object of study of the meso dimension of individuals’ daily lives. “Social space” constitutes both the “border” “The district lying along the edge of a country or territory, a frontier; plural the marches, the border districts”¹ both the “boundary”, “That which serves to indicate the bounds or limits of anything whether material or immaterial; also the limit itself”² (OED, 2022). In other words, it encompasses all physical/material aspects as well as socio-psycho-relational aspects. In particular, we will analyze the sociocultural changes that occur when within a well-defined social space factors break out that are partly or totally independent from individuals (i.e., pandemics, wars, revolutions and similar). To do so, we will bring to our reflections what happened as a consequence of “confinement” inside one’s homes during the most critical months of the pandemic due to the spread of SARS-CoV-2 that began at the end of 2019 (from here on, however, we will use the term lockdown with which we are all familiar). Consequences that have also seen very different ways and forms of applying lockdown in different geographical regions of the world.

In order to proceed, however, it is necessary that we clarify both in lexical and in theoretical order some concepts that are fundamental in explaining why our reference is to the “social space”. This concept, by placing itself in the meso dimension of analysis, is able to overcome the differences between the concepts of border and boundary, which although used as synonyms have different meanings (as seen above). In this way, the social space, by combining the different meanings, becomes

¹ This entry has not yet been fully updated (first published 1887; most recently modified version published online March 2022).

² This entry has not yet been fully updated (first published 1887; most recently modified version published online September 2021).

the first order –element for our reflections. In it goes the daily life of individuals consisting mainly of significant interactions.

From this initial differentiation, the key concepts useful for the reflection presented here are *Social Space*, *Social Distance*, and *Social Positions*. The latter, for our purposes will be related to the “lockdown” as the latter produced a scenario in which the perception of a state of continuous tension (created by the spread of the virus) was very strong. The effects of these dynamics simultaneously influence the construction of reality, a social problem and the actions of individuals by going to “break” what are the activities habitualization – routine (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) - of the social living space, going to redefine it. The concepts of *Social Space*, *Social Distance*, and *Social Positions*, although related to each other are also differentiated and in turn need to be defined. In order to do so, we turn to the classical sociological literature and, that is, to the book *Social Mobility* (Sorokin, 1927)³ in which these concepts find an attempt at definition for the first time. The first distinction produced is that between geometric space (length, width and depth) and social space.

According to the Russian-American sociologist this distinction is based on two types of reasons: 1) the concept of social space - at the time of his writing - had received few attempts at definition; and 2) the social mobility of individuals constitutes the phenomenon of movements within social space and not of geometric (physical) space.

From here a first distinction emerges strongly: the social space is not a “container” within which individuals move and/or simply experience but it is the Greek “agora” (ἀγορά)

within which religious daily life, civil, as well as politics of the inhabitants of the polis (construction of social reality) took place. Indeed, the “social space is a kind of universe composed of the human population of the earth [...]. Accordingly, to find the position of a man or a social phenomenon in social space means to define his or its relations to other social phenomena chosen as the ‘points reference’ (Sorokin, 1959, p. 4). The social space manifests itself in different forms, because diversified are the ways in which the subjective elements and propensities of local actors are related in both the political-economic and socio-cultural spheres. It follows from this that there is no unique approach of analysis (it depends on the ‘points reference’) and the tools that must be provided - to carry out a survey as exhaustive as possible about the social space and the identification of the placements of individuals within it - must necessarily be functional in exploring and understanding the interconnections that take place in it. It is not enough to verify the relationship of one individual to another, but of this individual with respect to many others.

Hence the development of a method of analysis that takes into account the following criteria: 1) the relationship of an individual with some specific groups; 2) the reciprocal relationship between these groups within the entire population; and 3) the relationship of this population with the other populations that make up the human universe.

Therefore, each social space is characterized by its own pattern of internal functioning that depends on history, cultural and social phenomena, on the combinations of multiple factors. The social is a complex space in which

³ It should be noted that the edition still referred to today is a reprint entitled *Social and Cultural Mobility* (1959) to which Sorokin adds as an appendix the Chap-

ter Five, *Genesis, Multiplication, Mobility and Diffusion of Sociocultural Phenomena in Space* of Volume Four of the book, *Social & Cultural Dynamics* (1941).

social networks find their closest relationship, according to the logic for which the sustainability of initiatives is addressed taking into account the multiple dimensions (sociocultural, environmental and economic) that in it they develop. This is because within the relationship between the social space and individuals (or their groupings) the multiple needs of the social system related to cohesion and integration are inserted and related.

The individual in the social space constructs his identity, which is the central aspect of himself, as representation and awareness of the specificity of his own individual and social being. This allows the affirmation of social commitment, respect for rights and freedoms, the balance between needs and civil responsibilities, the reconstruction of satisfactory relationships. These characteristics would also allow the defense against exclusion processes to which contemporary society does not remain immune. Identity becomes an instrument of action if considered as a central element of the “social space” to ensure the sustainability of development initiatives and the social protection of the community. It is the appropriation and definition, by the individual, of his specific characteristics and the position of his own self, in relation to others in the social space. The identity inserted in the social space is essentially the system of representations according to which the individual perceives his existence, accepted and recognized as such by others, by his group and by the cultural system. From this it emerges that individuals who belong to the same groups and within them perform the same functions, occupy the same social position, while individuals who differ from each other in these aspects occupy different social positions. The consequence is that the more similar the positions are, the smaller the (social) distance within the social

space, vice versa, the greater the differences, the greater the social distance between them. This idea of social distance is quite different from that provided by Bogardus who considers social distance as an element of a psychological nature since it constitutes the degrees and grades of understanding and feeling that persons experience regarding each other. It explains the nature of a great deal of their interaction. It charts the character of social relations. The measurement of social distances is to be viewed simply as a means for securing adequate interpretations of the varying degrees and grades of understanding and feeling that exist in social situations: Bogardus, 1925, p. 299). It is very well understood how during the pandemic the terminology “social distance” took on a totally different meaning from the original one - almost a completely new meaning – when compared to the “lockdown”. These theoretical aspects of social space (including the concept of distance and positioning) constitute for us the “points reference” (to recall Sorokin).

This brief reconstruction of a theoretical framework, which is inevitably affected by the disciplinary point of view of the authors, will allow an easier reading of what will be explained in the following pages. The questions we will try to answer are: what happens to the different “social spaces” that characterize everyday life when they are influenced by factors that are partly or totally independent from individuals belonging to a given society? What happened with the “lockdown”? In a simplistic way here we affirm that the dynamics change or are blocked within the social space and these also differ according to the geographical region that we are going to consider (in the following we will see what happened in particular in Latin America).

In order to make this explicit - as anticipated in the first lines of this article - the exemplary case that will be recalled is that of the “lockdown” due to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 - which since the end of 2019 has spread first to China and then to the rest of the world and whose effects have been and are still under everyone’s eyes. With the pandemic, the dynamics of sociality have undergone profound transformations and this because of the “enforced lockdown” inside their homes to minimize contagion, resulting in an inevitable transformation of space-size of the life biographies of each individual. One of the main consequences of all this - although perhaps the effects will be seen more in the medium and long term - is that the life of individuals has seen a further accentuation of individualization even in those spheres that were considered immune from such changes (family, love, friendship, etc.).

The process of individualization (Bauman, 2001; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002/1994) which had a previously produced the transition from the community to society with the relative replacement of mechanical solidarity with the organic solidarity of Durkheimian memory (Durkheim, 1960/1893), records further transformations both in the social representations (and beliefs) through which individuals interpret the society of reference, and in the values that guide action within the latter. Beck, already towards the end of the last century, had made it clear that “This concept implies a group of social developments and experiences characterized, above all, by two meanings. In intellectual debate as in reality these meanings constantly intersect and overlap (which, hardly surprisingly, has given rise to a whole series of misunderstandings and controversies). On the one hand, individualization means the disintegration of previously

existing social forms [...] the second aspect of individualization. It is, simply, that in modern societies new demands, controls and constraints are being imposed on individuals [...] Individualization in this sense, therefore, certainly does not mean an ‘unfettered logic of action, juggling in a virtually empty space’; neither does it mean mere ‘subjectivity’, an attitude which refuses to see that ‘beneath the surface of life is a highly efficient, densely woven institutional society’. On the contrary, the space in which modern subject deploy their options is anything but a non-social sphere” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002/1994, p. 2).

This condition with the outbreak of the pandemic has produced a sort of standardization of behavior which has resulted in a degree of freedom linked to the use of resources that are mostly standardized but not everyone’s possession.

This has exposed social life to new forms of structuring (and in some cases domination) that derive from the interweaving of market-media power or the standardization of behavior as a response to the anxiety produced by the fear of being infected. This can be justified in part by the fact that the freedom that individuals possess - regardless of age - in practice is not real, indeed it is linked to the degree of trust in relationships and perceived uncertainty that often turn into fear. Bauman, here, had hit the mark when he defined the “uncertainty society” in which he finds himself “the view of the future of the ‘world as such’ and the ‘world within reach’ as essentially undecidable, uncontrollable and hence frightening, and of the gnawing doubt whether the present contextual constants of action will remain constant long enough to enable reasonable calculation of its effects... We live today [...] in the atmosphere of *ambient fear*” (Bauman,

1997, pp. 21-22). In the case of the pandemic, for example, this last statement has become reality. Being faced with a further unexpected problem (in this case the pandemic) there is no solution to the problem of uncertainty that is also accompanied by a problem of consensus and this influences and conditions political choices, the economy, culture and the way of acting of individuals. The overall perception and interpretation has been - and in some nations it still is - that of a constant state of fear and an imperceptible state of alert. This is also demonstrated by the statements that many political leaders have made (in the period of greatest crisis) to draw public attention to the threat of the spread of the virus (Donato, 2020).

The spread of the contagion is to be considered first of all a threat to health but for many it was also a threat to freedom considering the restrictions of movement (confinement within one's own home) for each individual (from children to the elderly, no one excluded).

In this sense, the world has seen the affirmation of two positions: on the one hand, those of the exclusive protection of health with the application of the "state of exception" in a strictly legal sense (Schmitt, 2005/1922; 2007) - see, for example, in Europe the blocking of the Schengen Treaty and consequently the impossibility of free movement - and, on the other hand, those who claimed an abuse in the use of the "state of exception" such as the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben who considers the "state of exception" as a legal vacuum, a suspension of paradoxically legalized law (Agamben, 2005/2003) - not a dictatorship but an *iustitium* (suspension of private rights). Agamben interprets the pandemic crisis as a "branded sign" and he is convinced that contemporary society believes only in

"bare life" which does not unite men but separates them (Agamben, 2020a, 2020b) and nothing more. We are therefore willing to sacrifice everything, including individual and collective freedom. Recall that already with the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, which had had much more limited effects than the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, this theory was used to analyze the political response (Patton, 2011).

The Slovenian philosopher Žižek (2020), however, disagrees with Agamben, because he argues that things are much more ambiguous and less clear-cut than he makes them appear from the attitude of the mass media. During the most critical moments of the pandemic, they have continually called for personal responsibility and promote an ideology that is used to divert attention from a larger question, namely how to change the entire social and economic system.

From a sociological point of view there are those, however, in Italy - the first Western country that has experienced the catastrophic effects of the pandemic - spoke of a "state of social exception" understood as "a de facto situation, in which, due to one of the most heterogeneous circumstances, the conditions for a life completely different from the ordinary one are created. That is, a dimension of exceptionality becomes concrete, but it is not decided, but rather it is created by itself, within society itself and in a way not causally determined by external factors, as could be natural, political and economic ones" (Affuso, Parini and Santambrogio, 2020, p. 17). Here we are deconstructing and redefining the vital social space as a result of a lockdown that is divided between these two positions (state of exception and state of social exception).

When the “state of exception” redefines the social space

The dramatic nature of the pandemic has enhanced the evocative and interpretative capacity of the risk paradigm (Beck, 1992a, 1992b/1986), of uncertainty (Bauman, 1997) and of the crisis, which have emerged in the last twenty years. The consequences have been and continue to be multiple and of such a magnitude as to force a serious questioning of the myth of globalization as well as a rethinking of boundaries and the articulation of the public sphere (Sorice, 2021)⁴. The impacts are obviously not only to be considered of a structural nature; the coronavirus has also triggered important consequences on the micro-social processes, which in fact are edifying of every society. Despite the alarm launched in China at the end of December 2019, the problem was initially underestimated and it will have to wait until February 20, 2020 (date of the first infection recorded in Italy) to understand that by now the virus had also infected the old continent. In the first months of the spread of the virus, the actions of individuals and institutions were an expression of the lack of awareness of the problem in terms of global health emergency. As Mangone writes, “only after the first cases in Europe is confirmed the strong need to address the problem in a decisive way directing communication to the containment of contagion. The urgency of the question is the expansion of knowledge for both experts’ and “laymen” that must affect the behaviors and attitudes of all”⁵ (2021, pp.

74-75). So, the day after the first infection, we see the development of a series of irrational behaviors (rushing to make food stocks, clog pharmacies to buy masks and disinfectants, etc.) which show a significant alteration of the sense that guides individual and social action. In other words, the intentional meaning that the actor gives to his own behavior became irrational: an irrationality that seemed to find justification in the irrationality of the situation that individuals found themselves defining and knowing (Merton, 1949). People’s life is generally organized around forms of socio-cultural routines and practices that guarantee a certain stability, a certain margin of predictability and sharing with other social actors (Goffman, 1959). Within this perspective, then, social institutions take on an even more significant importance, representing all those behavioral models endowed with a certain normative cogency and which serve to guarantee protection to the individual but also to limit their freedoms: this is how it ensures human and social life, providing stable dimensions of meaning and orientation for human growth and development processes. This process of construction of the meaning of experience is achieved through constant development and transformation, always mediating certain forms of continuity capable of endowing psychic and relational life with a certain level of stability and predictability but, at the same time, guaranteeing the possibility to introduce, support and accept transformations, development and change. The human way of dealing with future uncertainty is not merely

⁴ We understand by public sphere that space between the public, the seat of political power and collective demands, and the private as the area of production of individual orientations. It is the space of speech, of criticism, of rational argumentation in which civil society transmits signals and impulses to the sphere of political power to be processed and where the actions of public

power are subjected to the scrutiny of criticism and judgement.

⁵ Interesting, in this regard, is the application to the COVID-19 pandemic made by Mangone - in an earlier work (Mangone and Zyuzev, 2020, pp. 182-187) - of the four risk and knowledge issues proposed by Douglas & Wildavsky (1983).

reactive, rather purposefully proactive (Valsiner, 2011; De Luca Picione and Lozzi, 2021). The pathological cases in which the loss of sense cannot be compensated by the constant anticipation of the future relationships with the environment are rare (Valsiner, 2011). However, large-scale and lasting events such a pandemic challenge future-oriented purposeful sense-making to its extreme (De Luca Picione *et. al.*, 2021). And the challenge becomes even more difficult if not unsustainable with the declaration of the state of emergency and the enforced lockdown, which has led to a total disruption of daily routines and especially of our social space, as well as personal, which results in a reversal of the deep meaning of the relationship and social interaction: from stable, deep and cooperative relationships become suspect, if not conflict! (Simmel, 1950/1908).

It is true, distance is necessary to protect ourselves and others, but our social graph, although not in density, certainly loses in frequency and the other (the ego of the ego) suddenly becomes extraneous, close but necessarily to be kept at a distance.

The epidemic of fear is also an epidemic of suspicion, lack of trust, stigmatization and the search for the scapegoat: “there is the fear that I might catch the disease and the suspicion that you may already have it and might pass it on to me” (Strong, 1990, p. 253). This is how the embrace, the pat on the shoulder, the kiss (very powerful haptic forms of communication) are replaced by elusive and compliant smiles: isolation, quarantine, de-socialization (not only of the sick) become expression of “new social spaces”, whose borders change shape and are redesigned, in their double dimension of *limen* and *limes* (Martini and Vespasiano, 2021; De Luca Picione, Martini and Ciaschi, 2022; De Luca Picione and Valsiner,

2017), in a new situation of extraordinary exceptionality.

An exceptionality that, as already mentioned in the previous pages, leads Ambrogio Santambrogio (2020) to identify the quarantine period with the concept of a state of social exception. The author develops this hypothesis starting from the schmittian notion of the state of exception. During the pandemic period, Schmitt’s idea (2005/1922, p. 5) that “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception”, was recalled many times, to the point that it could almost be taken as a sort of manifesto of the emergency state, however, while often creating interpretative misunderstandings (as will be seen in the following pages, indiscriminate use has been made in Latin American countries exacerbating the longstanding diatribe freedom/ authority). In fact, continuing the reading of Schmittian reflections we note how the author, after having started with “Sovereign is who decides on the state of exception”, immediately adds “Only this definition can do justice to a borderline concept. [...]. This definition of sovereignty must therefore be associated with a borderline case and not with routine” (2005/1922, p. 5). It is clear, then, as in Schmitt’s thought, the state of exception is, first of all, a limit situation. It is that situation in which the normal legal rules are not observable; a situation in which the legislative instruments that had been used within a specific legal system, suddenly, they are no longer able to carry out their own regulatory function and guarantee the order. Stability. Certainty. Effectiveness: everything disappears in the state of exception (Rate, 2021) The exception brings out, in all its force, the excess of the political over the legal: in the case of exception,

“The state suspends the law in the exception on the basis of its right of self-preservation”

(Schmitt, 2005/1922, p. 12). Starting from these considerations that Santambrogio borrowed the concept of the state of exception from the juridical level to the sociological one, identifying in the lockdown the suspension of the “right to sociality” and the profound transformation of the common sense socially shared as well as of the daily routines. After having carefully outlined what Schmitt meant by his state of exception, as well as the scientific criteria by which the German author defined the concepts of sovereignty and politics, up to the point of demonstrating the purely sociological nature and logic of Schmitt’s approach, Santambrogio goes on to explain what is meant by the concept of a state of social exception. “This is a situation of collective contingency that requires collective self-determination. The role of subjectivity is quite different [...]: it does not act in a directly causal way, as predicted by the Schmittian decision-make foresees” (Santambrogio, 2020, p. 26). For this reason, the author continues, the state of social exception does not depend on a decision and it is not said that it is the moment when normality is opposed to an exception from which you can no longer get out. It is a factual situation in which, because of the most heterogeneous circumstances, the conditions for a life completely different from the ordinary one are created: a situation that is not decided, but rather is created by itself. Exogenous factors have their determining weight but the way in which the social fabric reacts to the conditions in which it is found remains decisive. In short, there is no social ruler who can decide about our social relations and how these determine the meaning of our being together (see Santambrogio, 2020, pp. 17-18). In these terms, the state of social exception (as in that of exception) is not a vacuum from which a new system emerges in support of the

fact that there is no normality without exception and that in sociological analysis even the most profound transformations can be read from the perspective of continuity (dialectic stability/change).

The state of social exception breaks the interweaving between ordinary and extraordinary by creating something special: an extraordinary that produces normality, even if intrinsically unstable and precarious. If the pandemic represented an event that shook the world and our society, quarantine and confinement represent a state of exceptional normality. And the transformations that develop in this situation are spontaneous, that is, they concern that relationship, to which Schütz (1967) refers, between intentionality and reflexivity and which Santambrogio summarizes well with the expression “social actors are driven to redefine their routines by implementing an unforeseen dimension of reflexivity” (2020, p. 42).

Starting from the characteristics of the state of social exception just described it is possible, therefore, to develop more or less truthful hypotheses to read the situation created during the lockdown that in fact, imposed a redefinition of the social space. As Simmel (1950/1908) reminds us, the delimitation of space has a very similar importance for a social group to that which the frame has for a work of art. As the frame delimits and closes in itself the work of art, in the same way, in a society, “the relationship of the elements that compose it, the unity of the reciprocal action, acquires its spatial expression in the border that frames it: the border is a way of ‘cutting out’ the space through which we give meaning to social activities” (Mandich, 1996, p. 9). The bizarre imposition of domestic confinement has confined millions of people around the world to live in isolation, even if in the name

of their own health and the “other”. The frame of our symbolic universe, the boundary line of our own homes, until that moment perceived as a natural delimitation of its comfort zones, becomes a barrier that blocks the exit, losing that function of organizing the experience and interpretation of the meaning of events: the perception of the loss of our freedom leads us to experience extraneousness in the terms that Waldenfels (2011/2006) defines as being inaccessible to a specific area of experience and meaning, and not belonging to a group.

In other words, the order of forced social distancing (Tyrrell and Williams, 2020), on the one hand evokes a deep, primary anguish that everyone carries inside from birth: the anguish of separation, of the creation of the border that takes us away from the original protective situation; on the other hand, then, the quarantine has broken the dimension of irreducible sociality, outlining the line of isolation (not so much of loneliness) and imprisonment, often perceived as an abuse of the exercise of power. This is how man really experiences the limit of his world and faces nothing because he no longer knows how to transcend it (De Martino, 2016/1977). Faced with this existential displacement, both cognitive and corporal, the coordinates that allow us to live through routines an existence widely taken for granted, starting from those temporal spaces (Parini, 2020, p. 74) are put into tension. Common sense, then, is forcibly deconstructed and everyone puts in place strategies for redefining reality, survival strategies in front of the specter of alienation and the crisis of presence

(De Martino, 2016/1977) discovering unexpected resources, shortcomings and hopes and freedoms.

Therefore, in consideration of what has been expressed so far, how the state of social exception must be considered a period of “particular normality”, produced by a profound deconstruction of common sense and everyday life, so also the state of exception according to the parameters of Carl Schmitt must be re-read in the light of the distinction between defense and restoration of the legal order. “The sovereign, according to some, can intervene to defend or restore the legal order overtaken by the hiatus placed by the exception”⁶ (Tasso, 2021). Where the exception does not mean emptiness, absence of the order according to the authentic meaning that Schmitt wanted to give to his idea of exception: it is rather the daily struggle for its defense and reconfirmation. One thing, therefore, is the exception drawn by Schmitt (understood as a suspension of the legal order, as the origin of the new order); a different thing, however, is that contingent situation in which the legal system reacts with the hypertrophic production of legislation or even worse, as will be seen below, with serious violations and limitations of rights and freedoms of expression and protest.

It is worth recalling here the historical-conceptual reconstruction proposed by Honneth (2014) regarding freedom, classified as negative, reflective and social. For the German author, negative freedom is the first stage in the elaboration of freedom that is defined with Hobbes as “the absence of external impediments”: in this lies both its negativity - as it makes freedom depend on a “freedom from

⁶ These include Agamben, who points out that the Schmittian thesis envisages two different forms of dictatorships, both of which can be traced back to the concept of exception but are distinguished from each other by their different operational purpose. On the one hand,

“‘commissarial dictatorship’, which has the aim of defending or restoring the existing constitution, and ‘sovereign dictatorship’, in which, as a figure of the exception, dictatorship reaches its, so to speak, critical mass or melting point” (2005/2003, pp. 32).

impediments” (Honneth, 2014, p. 28). “Negative freedom therefore refers only to the isolated, ‘atomized individual’, in which his ability to self-determine is not questioned since the causality of his will is seen only in a sort of defense with respect to the outside” (Cugini, 2016, p. 85). Reflexive freedom, which in turn could be initially suggested by “freedom to” and it “focuses solely on the subject’s relation-to-self” that is, “individuals are free if their actions are solely guided by their own intentions” (Honneth, 2014, p. 29). Finally, the reflection shifts to social freedom, which is not an alternative to reflective freedom, but rather constitutes its extension or even its foundation.

In social freedom the institutional conditions, that is, the concrete dimensions of freedom in which mutual recognition and a stable satisfaction of vital needs take place, are not external additions to the concept of freedom but an element of the very realization of freedom (Honneth, 2014)⁷. In the author’s thesis, for individual subjects to be thought of as free, there must first be a “just” social order, that is, socially legitimized in reality.

As Cugini explains well, the priority of the social moment is to be understood as an interrelation and a mutual recognition and, in this sense, institutions should not be considered as organs capable of repressing freedom but to encourage it: where the first of the two cases just hypothesized occurs we fall into what Honneth calls social pathologies. Social pathologies deriving from the application of the first two reconstructed concepts of freedom - negative freedom and reflective freedom - in legal freedom and in “a purely private disclosure of their own will” (Honneth, 2014, p. 72)

⁷ Honneth’s reference to mutual recognition expanded in a later work (Honneth, 2020), expressed in the formula “being-with-oneself-in-the-other”, which not only proposes an enlargement of reflexive freedom into

and “in this lies its own limit because, in order to become effective, it needs intersubjective or communicative institutions that it itself excludes with its private conception of the individual, who, indeed, runs the risk of withdrawing from the network of existing social relationships” (Cousins, 2016, p. 88).

Hence, two forms of social pathologies: the subject a) is conceived as the mere shell of the legal person or b) as a personality only in accordance with the law. In essence, legal freedom would only make freedom possible, but without however realizing it. The reflections on social freedom are very useful for rereading in a critical form the relationship “state of exception-paradigm of government-law of resistance” during the pandemic period, and particularly useful for interpreting how this relationship, in some parts of the world, has been the subject of distorted use or outright abuse.

Beyond the lockdown: the Latin American landscape

As De Luca Picione (2021a) points out, borders play a fundamental role in the construction of human experience and psycho-relational development processes, and the related semantic representations act as a mechanism for building a system of relationships with the surrounding environment. In fact, through the concept of modal articulation (De Luca Picione, 2021b) the processes of affective, identity and relational construction are dynamized, shaping themselves in consideration of the tension between stability/change and between normativity / resistance.

an intersubjective freedom, but of the latter, in turn, into a social freedom, makes these observations very much akin to the thesis on the state of social exception and the lack of natural sociality experienced during it.

The split between the terms of these two binomials was strongly manifested in Latin America during the COVID-19 pandemic because, with reference to the first equation, a limit was set between a before and a after, creating a breaking point that with the sudden change in forms of social coexistence has involved not only the representations of the common sense and shared space, but also all levels of the public and private sphere accelerating economic crises and challenges in terms of national and supranational governance. The pandemic has imposed a rethinking of the “social space” in line with Foucauldian theories relating to the nationalized “arrangement of the bodies” (Foucault, 2000) through social space control techniques. The limits to “spatiality”, understood as the freedom to “live the social space” (Lindón, 2007, p. 72) have raised uncertainties and invented a “real virtuality” (Castells, 2009) whose dynamics are affirmed in the context of actual living conditions to the point of normalizing the exceptionality and the emergency, almost making them “permanent”.

In this sense, the second split occurs, since the exception is part of the life of a legal order just as the rule is part of it, because, if this represents the possibility of predictability, that represents the possibility, unavoidable, of unpredictability (Campanale, 2008). As Resta writes (2006, pp. 25-26) about emergency, however, it seems that social systems (with particular evidence in the Latin American case) tend to regulate emergency laws, producing a kind of “self-immunization” through the incorporation of the emergency mechanism, rather than through its removal, making it a problem of self-regulation.

For the purposes of analyzing the Latin American scenario, it is essential to introduce another element - which has probably been little

considered in the context of the sociological and political considerations themselves - relating to the “territorialization” of the pandemic and the emergency, since “during the pressing of epidemic diseases, the social divisions that cross the urban dimension are clearly highlighted, the importance of living in one place or another” (Petrillo, 2021, pp. 42-43). In fact, in Latin America the COVID-19 pandemic has severely tested the fragile political-institutional systems, reaffirming structural weaknesses, shortcomings and, consequently, the inability to face the crisis. It was in fact a situation of “extraordinary exceptionality” aimed at the invention of a “new normal” and which, in consideration of the case object of this study, has rekindled the complex socio-political debates about the possibility of reconciling freedom and authorities (Agamben, 2005/2003) in highly vulnerable societies such as those in Latin America in which, with particular reference to the adoption of measures relating to the prolonged establishment of the state of exception/emergency and the consequent concentration of power in the hands of the executive, they register worrying affectations about the correct functioning of the democratic order.

The region is in fact characterized by deep social scissors, high levels of poverty and extreme poverty, informal work that, evidently, makes unsustainable the boundary expressed by the constant and repeated motto *quedate en casa* [stay at home], by violence and structural discrimination whose rates have risen expo-

nentially during the long months of rigid lockdown⁸, and by repeated human rights violations that have exposed vulnerable sectors such as indigenous communities and social leaders to further risk, more easily identifiable by paramilitary actors given the confinement, making Colombia an emblematic case in this sense⁹. Moreover, these gaps cross all Latin American systems, including problems related to severe environmental contamination and living conditions significantly lower than human dignity in terms of access to drinking water, basic health services and care, education (in most cases privatized) and housing structure.

The pandemic evidently represented an even greater challenge for the region than in other areas of the world, both in consideration of health policies and measures and for the socio-economic response. In this sense, it seems appropriate to move the analysis through the intersection of two variables that are strongly mixed in this context, namely the measures relating to the state of exception for the health emergency, which we will analyze in this paragraph, and the almost automatic of the same to social protests, which as we will see in the next paragraph results in serious violations and limitations of rights and freedoms, in disproportionate violence and repression, but also in a counter-response action by society aimed at breaking this state of exceptionality.

⁸ According to data from the *Comité Internacional de Rescate* (International Rescue Committee) and *Open Democracy*, since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic there has been a dramatic increase in intra-family violence and feminicides. Rapidly, between March and May 2020 in El Salvador there was a 70% increase in domestic violence reports, during the same period, in Colombia rates reach 90%; in Venezuela in April 2020 alone there was a 65% increase in feminicides (in comparison with the same month in 2019), in Honduras a weekly increase of 4.1% of women killed during the first months of the lockdown (Open Democracy, 2020).

In a region characterized by *coups d'état*, dictatorships and long internal armed conflicts, the constituent spirit of the neo-constitutionalist wave that developed during the nineties tried to guarantee, in accordance with the international and inter-American framework of human rights, anchors protection against arbitrary abuses of power by the ruling elite by also establishing extensive catalogs of third and fourth generation rights (Picarella, 2018). The Latin American constitutional texts provide for a wide regulation of measures of exception, with a certain similarity in the nomenclature of such situations of “abnormality”, in particular as regards *el estado de sitio* [state of siege] (which is activated in the event of a threat or war aggression), *el estado de excepción* [state of exception] (suspension of the ordinary functioning of the system due to serious upheaval of public order and internal stability, also called *estado de conmoción interna* [state of internal shock]), and *el estado de emergencia* [state of emergency] (serious disturbances of the social and economic order of the country, serious public disasters). With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, Latin American countries have implemented very similar measures and in line with what has been recorded in other parts of the world, also in compliance with the guidelines dictated by the OMS, specifically using exceptional powers to address the emergency situation (García Montero, Barragán, Alcántara,

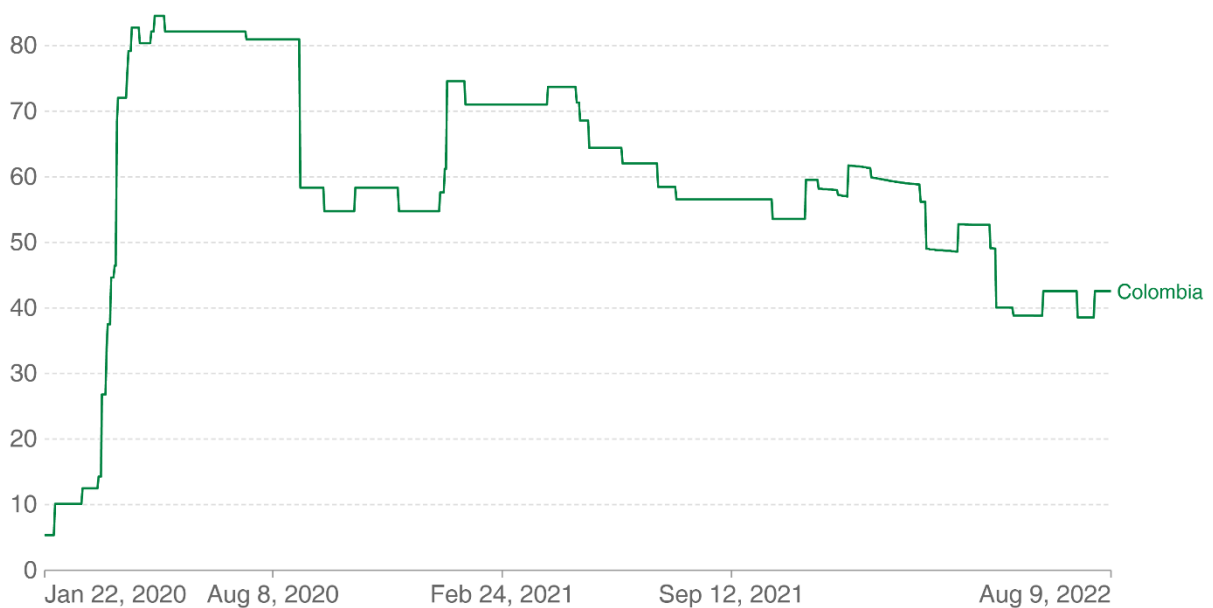
⁹ Data published by the NGO *Global Witness* in July 2020, highlight the record of 212 environmental and social leaders murdered, placing Colombia as the first country in the world at risk for social and environmental activism. Confirming these data, the complaints of the *Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Paz de Colombia* (Indepaz; Institute for the Development of Peace of Colombia) which underlined a 30% increase in the killings of social leaders in the first months of the pandemic compared to 2019 (Indepaz, 2020).

2021), differing mainly in the time duration of the measures adopted. After the first case recorded at the end of February in Brazil, the region tried to deal with the emergency by immediately implementing drastic measures - along the lines of what was being applied in Europe, where the numbers of intensive care and deaths were already splashing - thus avoiding way a sudden overload of health infrastructures, evidently aware of their incapacity to receive them. However, as early as May, the OMS declared Latin America as a pandemic epicenter.

Undoubtedly, the longer you maintain strict limits to the status quo, the more complex it becomes to overcome the exceptionality. The following graph (Chart 1) clearly illustrates the feeling of “infinite quarantine” perceived in Colombia (country we will deal with in the next paragraph) and the tendency to internalize a “state of social exception” the intensity and duration of the restrictions.

COVID-19: Containment and Health Index

This is a composite measure based on thirteen policy response indicators including school closures, workplace closures, travel bans, testing policy, contact tracing, face coverings, and vaccine policy rescaled to a value from 0 to 100 (100 = strictest). If policies vary at the subnational level, the index is shown as the response level of the strictest sub-region.



Source: Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford – Last updated 16 August 2022
OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

Chart 1 – Coronavirus Government Response Tracker (Colombia)

From the data provided by the Oxford Coronavirus Government Response Tracker (Ox-CGRT) project¹ between countries that for many months have imposed greater limits on the sharing of social space, with virtually uninterrupted closures of airspace and educational and commercial institutions, the establishment of red zones and curfew, the possibility of alternating days only for urgent reasons established on the basis of the personal identification number, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, followed by Colombia, Chile, Argentina and the Dominican Republic. These two last countries, together with Mexico, Uruguay and Nicaragua, have a particularity, relating to the actual non-activation of the mechanism of the state of exception, but to the use of ordinary administrative mechanisms to address the health emergency. It is also evident that Uruguay has not implemented a real lockdown, limiting only the large agglomerations in enclosed spaces, while in Mexico it has been considered almost from the beginning an alternation that has limited to a minimum the real quarantines; Nicaragua and Brazil remain special cases with the decision of their Presidents not to activate any measures - that publicly admitted not to believe in the existence of Covid-19.

In consideration of what has been analyzed in the previous paragraphs, the nuance between border and boundary, and between state of exception and state of social exception, in the Latin American context seems to slip dangerously into a “permanent normality”. As Durk-

heim (1995) reminded us, the nature of normality is mainly social, and within it the set of shared representations, or collective consciousness, make society a great collective subject founded on the coercive power of social norms, from which compliance with and compliance with the laws proceeds. According to the Durkheimian view, it is necessary to distinguish sociological (descriptive and quantitatively appreciable) from ethical (qualitative and related to philosophical and religious speculations) and juridical normativity (resulting from the sharing of its own foundation, namely social representations), these latter two categories coincide instead in the perspective of Schmitt. The famous opening book *Political Theology*, “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception” (Schmitt, 2005/1922, p. 5), has been suggestively applied, to tell the truth often indiscriminately, in the Latin American case. Although we do not dwell here on the many disputes of an interpretative nature, for the purposes of the analysis of the case presented in this paper it seems appropriate to focus attention on the assumption in the same Schmittian vision of this definition as of “borderline concept”, which therefore coincides with a sudden “borderline case” that would give rise to a new order, which can restore the previous or create a totally original one, without prejudice to the ambiguities related to the autonomy of the sovereign. The hypertrophic production of presidential decrees, continuous press releases and months of afternoon broadcasts to unified networks, with the president and the ministers on

¹ This project implements a database (Hale et al., 2021) that measures various indices, here the one used is the Containment and Health Index, a composite measure of thirteen of the response metrics. This index builds on the Stringency Index, using its nine indicators plus testing policy, the extent of contact tracing, requirements to wear face coverings, and policies around vaccine

rollout. It's therefore calculated on the basis of the following thirteen metrics: school closures; workplace closures; cancellation of public events; restrictions on public gatherings; closures of public transport; stay-at-home requirements; public information campaigns; restrictions on internal movements; international travel controls; testing policy; extent of contact tracing; face coverings; and vaccine policy.

duty grappling with the explanation of the “exceptional nature” of the measures adopted and the importance of acceptance and compliance with the restrictions imposed, focused attention on the aforementioned freedom/ authority diatribe and on the dangerous possibility - but always a lively hypothesis in the geographical area analyzed - of slipping into an authoritarian tunnel with no way out.

The lability of the boundary between the self-proclamation of extraordinary powers and the need to deal with the health emergency is in fact masked behind theoretical-legal speculations and permanent states of exception, and the Overton Window² theory to legalize the unjustifiable seems to take on ever more real forms. The COVID-19 pandemic has evidently exacerbated the historical structural and systemic problems and the perception of disconnection between the people and the elite in power, but undoubtedly even before the health emergency the chasm in terms of low growth and economic contraction had opened in the region (about 0.2% per year)³, increasing social insecurity, political corruption, strongly populist strategies. If the need to address the health emergency has reinforced the trend of hyper- presidentialism, however, the concentration of power in the hands of the leader and its unilateral use is a rather traditional practice in the region (Carey and

Shugart, 1998) and, if it is true that COVID-19 has subjected democratic governance to greater pressure, undoubtedly the indicators of Freedom House or Varieties of Democracy have already registered for at least a decade a constant relegation in the levels of democracy. In the political-institutional context, therefore, the pandemic has strengthened the pre-existing dynamics and, its health and socio-economic consequences (with an average drop in GDP of 9% and the further widening of the social gap) have channeled the malaise already underway since time. In fact, the counter- response was not long in coming, generating, as we will see below, a mix between *pandemia y paros* [pandemic and strikes] characterized by the transition from a state of emergency to that of a state of social exception, which was opposed by a strong action of social resistance that started from a sort of state of social exception.

A dangerous “permanent normality”: the case of Colombia

With Bulletin 046 of 6 March 2020, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection confirmed the first case of coronavirus in Colombia, which was followed by a series of provisions⁴. This meant that even in Colombia, as

² The *Overton Window* seeks to explain the mechanisms of persuasion and manipulation of the masses through the study of a precise sequence of steps that progressively push towards the transformation of a completely unacceptable idea to its peaceful and legal acceptance by society. This dynamic, in short, consists of six precise steps: 1) *Unthinkable*. It is the window opening phase characterised by rejection; 2) *Radical*. It is still a phase of prohibition and non-acceptance, but the debate on motives and ideas opens up; 3) *Acceptable*. It corresponds to the window's entry phase into the socially relevant sphere and public opinion begins to shift towards more neutral positions; 4) *Sensible*. Corresponds to the normalisation phase of the initially unacceptable idea; 5) *Popular*. The window shifts to the

level of broad popular acceptance and political consensus; 6) *Policy*. Complete reception in the state system. ³ According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2020), the period 2014-2019 saw the lowest growth rate observed since 1950.

⁴ The first of these provisions was Presidential Directive 02 of 12 March 2020, through which the 'Measures to cope with the contingency caused by the Covid19 virus' was issued (this Directive established the use of masks and preventive hygiene measures, the prohibition of public gatherings, the use of digital and teleworking platforms, preventive isolation in case of suspected contagion) and, only a few days later, by Presidential Decree 417 of 17 March 2020, former

well as in the whole region more generally, the “government” of space during the pandemic acted in terms of the contraction of the social space, in such a way that the border defines directions and paths between what we must and what we must not do, impacting on lives and redefining their trajectories (Lefebvre, 1991) not only of borders but also of boundaries and, consequently, of the social space of each individual. If we assume that social space as a condition of possibility of social relations generates effects as much as the latter reconstruct and re-signify spatial configurations, we return to the previously mentioned Foucauldian vision, where social relations are to be understood as relations of power in a specific space, and therefore “governing” refers to techniques intended to direct human conduct in the multiplicity of contexts, with the awareness that a synchronous direction represents the very device of globalized society (Foucault, 2011). In this sense, it is also fundamental to recall Bourdieu’s (1977) perspective on the incessant process of interaction and reciprocity between norms and social action, within which the role of *limen* is emphasized

above all, that is, in tracing the line that produces a space delimited the cultural act is fully expressed.

The neoliberal logic of emergency management, centered precisely on the governmental direction of the boundary, has had an implosive effect in the territory. At the political-institutional level, Colombia fully confirms the trend towards a strong imbalance of the check and balance principle, and the pandemic has fueled the possibility of further concentration of power, allowing the president to play an increasingly prominent role through the use of extraordinary powers⁵. Practically, the need to “govern” the pandemic has established a logic of policy making made up of presidential decrees having the force of law released from the political control of the Congress of the Republic and from the a posteriori control of the Constitutional Court⁶.

The latter fact, in fact, makes us reflect on the blurred border between the border of lockdown, and the boundary of the permanent extension of the exceptionality. In accordance with Escobar’s reflection (2007), the contradiction inherent in the concept of natural “borders” relates to the fact that naturalness is the predicate of their political nature, in which

President Iván Duque Márquez established the “State of Economic, Social and Ecological Emergency” throughout the entire national territory, making use of legitimate, extraordinary and special powers conferred on him by the Constitution of Colombia and the laws in force, in particular Law 1801 of 2016 and 137 of 1994. And this although the 1991 Constitution establishes that the states of exception are (i) the external state of war (ii) the internal state of unrest and (iii) the state of economic, social and ecological emergency, it is the law that clearly defines the formal and material requirements necessary for each of these circumstances and that regulates the state of exception in Colombia, also determining its powers, controls and guarantees for the protection of human rights once declared and throughout the duration of the provision (Muñoz, 2002).

⁵ The concentration of power is so high that even the supervisory bodies (Attorney General’s Office, Auditor

General’s Office, Attorney General’s Office and Ombudsman) are subject to the executive, and their representatives during the presidential term, or even before, have been part of the president’s personal circle, have served in the same political party as him or have declared themselves to be akin to his ideology.

⁶ In support of this statement, the report presented by the Colombian Commission of Jurists shows that 164 extraordinary decrees were issued in the first 60 days of the proclamation of the state of emergency - protracted, with cycles of three and six months, until the end of June 2022 (Consider that in the 29 years of the current Colombian Constitution, a total of 270 decrees have been issued during periods of states of exception) - none of which have been discussed in Congress and, above all, out of 164 only 11 extraordinary decrees refer specifically to the coronavirus emergency (Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos Democracia y Desarrollo, 2020).

stability and duration are blurred; in fact, the extraneousness of this logic of “government” of the emergency in search of a space of mutual “care”, and the strategy of naturalization of the state of exception and politization of social issues used for the cancellation of the social space, has created a horizon of social bonds instead of divisions between the individual and society. In fact, this strategy has succeeded in pushing towards the implementation of what Salvatore et al. (2021) define as “intermediate scenarios” characterized by social practices through which interpersonal relationships are reactivated, thus pushing social development beyond the anthropological crisis itself (derived from the prevailing individualism of our societies) and socio-institutional, making distancing social not as a detachment of social ties, but by re-signifying it in terms of strengthening them. The reaction capacity of Colombian (and Latin American in general) society has allowed us to glimpse the possibility of stimulating alternative trajectories that have developed at the local and community level and within which there is a potential for social change aimed at exerting pressure on the State through the action of social and progressive collectives and movements.

The creation of a dystopian state of social exception was opposed by the creation of a new

social space of political struggle, which evidently resists the imposition and distortion of the limit of the extraordinary: in fact, as Benjamin (2003) suggests when the exception becomes the rule it simply “is no longer such”. This space originated from below, from the suburbs and from difficult and hopeless urban neighborhoods, which in the long months of quarantine and total restrictions socialized their condition of marginalization through the so-called *trapos rojos* [red rags] affixed to the windows and doors. A sort of slogan, a cry for help⁷ that soon became the symbol of social inequality, mixed with the anger of the resistance and the explosion of anti-systemic and anti-exceptionalism protests, and activated the network of community solidarity and the re-appropriation of the social space through numerous initiatives that have simultaneously crossed the whole region⁸. The extended restrictions and quarantines, in fact, only initially blocked the wave of protests that started at the end of 2019, which generated a *caliente otoño* [warm autumn] (Picarella, 2020) of student and union mobilizations that demanded access education and social programs in almost the entire region. Starting from the second half of 2020, there are new cycles of massive protests especially in Chile and Colombia, which lasted for over a year and which demonstrate the assertion of

⁷ Sandra Ramírez, a resident of the south-western hill area of Bogotá, tells us: “We have to stay indoors, they don’t allow us to go out to work, at home we have no food and no money”. (La historia de los trapos rojos, *El Tiempo*, 19 April 2020).

⁸ Quickly, among many, the projects of the Colombian peasant world come to mind, *Construimos el futuro, la solidaridad se cosecha e Nuevos espacios para la paz territorial* [We build the future, solidarity is harvested, and New spaces for territorial peace], both aimed at guaranteeing food security and sovereignty, to the action of the Brazilian Sin Tierra (the movement has implemented a policy of distributing food to the needy, in both rural and urban areas, emphasising that in contexts of extreme poverty “eating is a political act”), to the

Chilean resistance of the *olla común, vecinos en acción* [common pot, neighbours in action], these are spaces for social action, where women in the neighbourhood organise community demand in a self-managed manner), to the Argentine campaign *haciendo voluntariado desde la casa* [volunteering from home] which includes not only the community production of masks but also donations of food, blankets, books and school supplies, to the Venezuelan project *Madres líderes* [Mother leaders] of the working-class suburbs of Caracas where the mother leaders work to get food (groceries but also directly a lunch cooked by some other mother in the group, water and medicine to the infected people in quarantine).

Guillermo O'Donnell (2008) regarding the idea that contemporary democracy can take on multiple features, because the state element of control and supervision initially accepted by the population to face and contain the health emergency almost immediately leads to the criminalization of the protest, in an unprecedented violence and repression in the response of the state to the peaceful demands of the citizenship that demanded basic essential rights and services and dignity.

In a short time, the new peaceful and colorful demonstrations - which were added to the protest of the last months of the previous year against the famous *paquetazos tributarios* (tax reform packages) - a series of demands and proposals in the fields of basic income, subsidies, health and public education, respect for human rights and the repeal of emergency decrees - have turned into nights of terror, with arbitrary arrests, disappearances, sexual violence, killing of demonstrators and cities on fire. As the protest progressed, and the limits enforced by the citizens, the cities were militarized. More than a year after the protests, there is a clear discrepancy between official sources and data published by ONG and alternative media. The Colombian government deployed more than 50,000 soldiers to ensure "public order" during the demonstrations (more than 4,000 in Bogotá alone), practically always integrated by the criticized ESMAD (Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios [Mobile

Riot Squad]), to whom the greatest abuses are attributed, so much so as to push former President Iván Duque to announce a transformation of the police forces during a meeting with the Inter-American Court of Derechos Humanos (CIDH) centered precisely on complaints of excessive use of public force during the Colombian *estallido* [outbreak]⁹.

The curfew and the deployment of special forces, the elite's myopia in closing the doors to dialogue with the trade union representatives and the action movements that have been created (eg *Primera Linea* [First Line]), the permanent declaration of exceptionality, opposed the social explosion *de los nadies* [of the nobodies], of the excluded who live on the edge of everything. The intent to block the protest with a curfew was forced through the famous and peaceful *cacerolazos*¹⁰ summoned on social networks which become a privileged space for empowering action and mobilization - which turn into anger when governments rather than seek answers to the root causes of social malaise decide to act "exceptionally" as if it were a war, authorizing repression through military forces and definitively opposing the possibility of negotiation. Although it was a peaceful dispute (implemented at first in compliance with the lockdown, then making pots and pans tinkle from their windows and balconies at the same time in all the cities of the country as a sign of dispute, and later transformed into a means to

⁹ In December 2021, United Nations documents reported a figure of 63 deaths during the protests, 28 of which were attributable to law enforcement, while according to the *Fiscalía* (Public Prosecutor's Office) there were 29 murders during the protests, a figure significantly lower than the Indepaz figure of 80 deaths, not counting sexual violence, eye injuries, arbitrary arrests, *desaparecidos* - some 627 people reported as "disappeared" (UN, 2021). The situation is no different in Chile, where Amnesty International (2020) has documented the serious violations and abuses committed by the *Carabineros* during demonstrations, recording

more than 8,000 victims of state violence, 400 cases of eye injuries, 246 cases of sexual violence, and 134 complaints of torture since October 2019. In both cases, these are data demonstrating an entrenched and generalized behavioral pattern aimed at silencing protest.

¹⁰ *Cacerolazo* is a form of protest that originated in Chile during the 1970s and has since spread throughout the region to the cry of "*Cuchara de palo frente a tus balazos, y al toque de queda, cacerolazo*" [A wooden spoon against your bullets, and a curfew, cacerolazo].

break the exceptional nature of the continuous prolongation of the lockdown and above all of the state and the decrees of exception¹¹) the state responds to hunger with repression and prolonged clashes for whole nights between special forces and citizens. The definitive slide towards the imposition of a permanent state of social exception manifested itself in the crucial and difficult moment of the request by the then center-right party in government to establish *el estado de conmoción interior* [state of internal shock]), (art. 213 and 241 of the Constitution), a mechanism that allows the unilateral suspension of legislation and the wide use of armed force to disperse demonstrations and force roadblocks

In the end, the president decided not to officially resort to this measure, even if de facto he imposed an unofficial state of exception (thus avoiding the control of constitutionality): specifically, by decree 003/2001 it is declared that the roadblocks do not fall within the legitimate exercise of the right to peaceful protest and, therefore, can be repressed by public force. With this measure, in the first place a sentence of the Supreme Court of Justice which obliged the government to consider new guidelines in order to avoid abuses by the police forces is violated and, secondly, the provisions of the Inter-American System of Human Rights and the Constitution itself, as the exercise of the right to demonstrate peacefully is severely limited and the content of a right is defined through an ordinary decree, an action that is typical of a situation of state of exception.

The modality of “governance” of space during the pandemic define social and governmental

implications. With reference to the social consequences, the decisions of the political actors drag the country, already heavily in crisis, to the brink of collapse, triggering the explosion of harsh protest, of collective social action, of the realisation by a people - traditionally linked to a right-wing ideology - of the need for a sensitive change that guarantees human rights and social justice. The strong resistance on the part of subjects at the margin, the latter not to be understood as a limit (Balibar, 1994), demonstrate that in the Colombian case this marginality has expanded to the point of assuming the form of place, of alternative space, of counter-hegemonic and anti-systemic action, which and, for the first time in the country’s history, the victory of a progressive government determined to change the face of Colombia with the implementation of a political programme based on the institutional strengthening of democracy through the definitive internal pacification and through progressive reforms allowing equity, inclusion, social and environmental justice. In this margin, therefore, the tensions between body and power have been challenged, and the boundary has changed into a space in transformation, in which power and dissent are mixed.

Authors’ contributions

This article is the result of active collaboration and exchange of thoughts and ideas between the authors. In the final version of the article, Emiliana Mangone wrote paragraph, *The social space between “border” and “boundary”*, Elvira Martini wrote paragraph, *When the “state of exception” redefines the social space*, and Lucia Picarella wrote paragraphs,

¹¹ In this sense, following the summons on social networks, at the established time for the start of the curfew (almost always 18.00), the streets and squares were

flooded with people who simultaneously rang their kitchen utensils to protest against the lack of economic aid from the local and state administration.

Beyond lockdown: the Latin American landscape, and A dangerous “permanent normality”: the case of Colombia.

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