

# OBRA DIGITAL

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# OBRA DIGITAL

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we begin a new stage focused on  
communication, media studies and  
social processes.**

## EDITORIAL

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The journal *Obra Digital* was born in 2011 thanks to the joint effort of a group of enthusiastic academics and professionals in the field of communication. Over the years, many people have collaborated with the journal, some as part of its work team or scientific committee, others contributing their expertise in reviewing and writing articles and demonstrating their commitment to the journal's standards of quality and academic rigor. In addition, *Obra Digital* has provided a space for the growth and development of young researchers, who have found in this journal a platform to share and disseminate their work alongside other more recognized researchers. We are proud to say that we have grown and matured thanks to the dedication and passion of all these people.

Over the years, *Obra Digital* has addressed a wide range of topics related to communication, with the aim of inspiring and enriching research and critical reflection in this constantly evolving field. Among others, we have explored the impact of social networks on interpersonal communication and the formation of virtual communities, as well as the influence of digital media on public opinion and the adaptation of organizational communication to this dynamic and changing environment. We have also given voice to new forms of storytelling in the exciting territory of digital storytelling and reflected on the ethical and privacy implications that arise in the context of digital advertising and marketing.

Today, with this 23rd issue, we inaugurate a new phase in the journal, focusing on communication, media studies and social processes. The-

se three aspects are closely interrelated and cover a wide range of issues within the field to which this journal is dedicated. Communication is essential for the development of social relations, the transmission of knowledge and the creation of collective identities. Media studies, on the other hand, focuses on academic and critical analysis of the media, examining their structures, content, audiences and effects on society. These studies are based on disciplines such as sociology, psychology, communication theory and cultural studies, and aim to understand how the media influence public opinion, the construction of identities, the formation of values, and the representation of different social groups. Finally, social processes encompass the dynamics of interaction and relationships between people in a society, including everyday interactions, social norms, institutions, social roles and power structures. Communication plays a central role in social processes, as it is through communication that social relations are established and maintained, values and cultural norms are transmitted, and individual and collective identities are constructed.

For the editorial team of this journal, collaboration and mutual support based on constant communication are its hallmark, defining its identity. With an ocean in between and seven hours of time difference, we work in close cooperation with people linked to the University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC) and the University of Azuay, in Ecuador. We

would like to highlight the commitment of these institutions and specific areas within them, such as the Department of Communication, the Library and the ICT area of UVic-UCC, as well as the School of Communication, the Publishing House and the Open University Department of the University of Azuay. The current editorial team is honored to take over from those who preceded us and we hope to continue to be a space for academic reflection and collaborative work. Thank you for joining us on this path that today continues its course!

# Contemporary social processes and communication

## INTRODUCTION

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The first issue of the journal *Obra Digital* that was published, in the winter of 2011, was devoted to *Digital media convergence: content consumption and the use of new media by women in Catalonia*. The publication focused on the coexistence of new digital media with the rise of participatory culture and cooperative work that allow the creation and group recreation of content, and the creation of communities of users that use and reuse the new modalities of services. In particular, the focus was on the role of women in these processes.

This 23rd issue, whose monographic section focuses on analyzing the interrelations between *Contemporary Social Processes and communication*, is closely related to the journal's first publication twelve years ago. This time, the journal seeks to address how specific current social processes interrelate with specific communication platforms, contents and products. In a large number of these contemporary social processes, group behavior is affected by the media and social networks, elements that play an important role in shaping human interac-



tions. In addition, depending on the case, ethical, educational, physical and/or mental health issues, etc. are involved.

Thus, the monographic section of this issue, through a careful selection of articles, aims to examine these multiple dimensions in which communication and social processes converge. The aim is to present an enriching vision of these interweavings between communication and contemporary social processes. To achieve this, we have selected a variety of texts that address different aspects. Each article stands as a piece that contributes valuable reflections to the puzzle of our understanding of the influence of media and social networks in our society.

In the articles published, in addition to emphasizing group or collaborative elements of communication - elements present in many of the articles - the role of women in these processes reappears as a central element that highlights the social significance of gender issues in communication studies, media studies and contemporary social processes. These two elements are precisely the ones that connect with the main elements agreed upon in that first issue published in 2011.

With regard to the second one, the centrality of studies related to women, the fact that the present issue is so rich in women's studies has been a pleasant 'unintended result' in its conception, since the call for papers made at the time was not specifically aimed at articles dealing with this topic. We cannot fail to highlight, in this sense, not only that the themes related to women are central to many of the articles published, but also that female authorship has

been the majority in a call for articles for the monographic section carried out by the journal's editorial team and which, we insist, did not specifically seek to address this theme.

Several articles delve into the complex representation of gender violence and its profound impact on society. Elena Oroz's article "Dissecting fear, politicizing rage. Spanish feminist documentaries against rape culture" delves into the myths rooted in rape culture, exploring their manifestation in three Spanish feminist documentaries that, inserted in current social and political debates, constitute tools for analyzing rape culture by addressing sexual violence against women: *Nagore* (Helena Taberna, 2010), *Tódalas mulleres que coñezo* (Xiana do Teixeiro, 2018) and *La cosa vuestra* (María Cañas, 2018). The formal strategies used to deconstruct the myths that sustain rape culture and their impact on the articulation of public space related to gender are analyzed. It also reflects on how these works promote affective solidarity to articulate a collective feminist politics.

The work of Esther Ferrer Rizo and María Pilar Rodríguez Pérez explores the representation of forms of violence against women through the analysis of two episodes of the audiovisual series ARTE *H24. 24 hours in the life of a woman* (2021). It offers a contextualization of the incipiently developed European legislation on violence against women and a review of concepts such as 'alternative cinematography' and 'feminist gaze'. Through a series of indicators drawn from the most relevant publications, it provides insight into how this series offers innovative models of representation for forms of violence

that are sometimes not perceived as such. These studies converge on the powerful importance of making gender-based violence visible and raising awareness through the media.

Continuing with audiovisual analyses, the article "Representation of Arab Muslim women in the series *La víctima número 8* and *Skam España* by Iylyiet Ventura-Kessel examines the representation as well as the consolidation of stereotypes associated with Arab Muslim women in fiction produced in Spain, specifically in the series *Skam España* and *La víctima número 8*. Using a qualitative approach based on the analysis of the characterization of characters and the identification of stereotypes, it is concluded that both series give importance to these women by providing them with alternatives to the activities and spaces in which they are usually stereotyped. Furthermore, these productions allow women themselves to confront and correct the stereotypes attributed to them, empowering them in the process.

With points in common with these empowerment processes, Ivana Campero Anguiano analyzes the relationship between social movements, feminist political action and information and communication technologies. To do so, she reviews current theories on cyberactivism and, in particular, cyberfeminism, with the aim of anchoring and understanding the phenomenon in a specific case: the 35th Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Transvestites, Intersexuals, Bisexuals and Non-Binaries in the province of San Luis (Argentina) in the year 2022. Using a qualitative methodology, the researcher's entry into the field as a participant

observer in the Organizing Committee of this event is described and analyzed, with the theoretical parameters gathered, in which diverse positionings and interactions are put into play, both in the face-to-face and virtual spheres. In this way, this case serves to shed light on the phenomenon of the influence and interrelation of social movements, specifically feminisms, with ICTs.

Exploring how new information and communication technologies shape feminist social movements, in this case negatively, the authors Diana Morena Balaguer and Maria Forga Martel, based a previous study on the violence that feminist women activists receive on Twitter, transfer this observation to women communicators (journalists, writers, influencers...) to observe the relationship of the attacks they receive with gender issues. This work undoubtedly sheds light on the violence suffered by women communicators on the Twitter platform, underlining the imperative need to understand and address gender-based violence in virtual spaces.

Several articles converge on the theme of identity construction and self-exposure in social networks. Sofía Moreno-Domínguez's article analyzes the collaborative art project on Instagram, *Me, Myself & I*. Entitled "Collective artistic work and digital ethnography: Identity and Perception on Instagram", this work highlights how digital platforms influence the configuration of personal identity through the analysis of this collaborative art project. The 126 user contributions to the open call that gave rise to the project demonstrate the power of the intan-

gible codes of social networks in terms of our self-exposure. By analyzing the personal image, virtual community perception is explored, where the boundaries between the digital and the physical become increasingly blurred. It shows how social networks have the capacity to show identity and generate community connection in a virtual environment.

To complete the triad of studies dedicated to social networks, after articles dedicated to Twitter and Instagram, the article signed by Sandra Peña Haro explores the characteristics of the activation of memory through the analysis of the Facebook social network of the Cristero National Guard. This study, which closes the monographic section, highlights the relevance of this platform in the reinterpretation and updating of community ties in the Cristero community. The characteristics of 381 publications disseminated during 2017 are examined in detail, following the approach proposed by Robert Kozinets (2015) in his work *Netnography. Redefined*, which allows for an exhaustive analysis of the content and its interpretation through theories of memory and post-memory.

In the miscellaneous section we present the work of Josep Jonàs Cortés, Jordi de San Eugenio Vela and Xavier Ginesta, which explores a different and socially relevant topic. This paper analyzes how trade fairs can help cities to differentiate themselves because they offer important possibilities regarding the relationship,

promotion and positioning of the territory's brand (de San Eugenio Vela & Jiménez Morales, 2009). In particular, it looks at the coordination between municipal decision-makers and trade fair organizers in the city branding strategy; comparing the cities of Barcelona and Milan.

The issue closes with the review "How to get to the second: interviews with contemporary Spanish filmmakers" by Marta Pérez Pereiro on the book *Entrevistas con creadoras del cine español contemporáneo. Millones de cosas por hacer*. This review highlights aspects that are linked to matters dealt with in some of the articles in the issue. For example, by addressing the role of women in film and the networks of collaboration and complicity that, in this case, are created between female filmmakers.

When examining the articles as a whole, the overwhelming influence of media, information technologies and digital platforms on contemporary social processes is highlighted. They act not only as mere channels of information and communication, but shape and drive human interactions and the behaviors of different groups in society. Their influence extends beyond the information sphere into the political, cultural and social spheres. The media agenda and dominant discourses shape public opinion, define topics of debate and determine social imaginaries. At the same time, they provide a space for interaction and participation with a significant impact on social movements and

citizen organization. Likewise, it is highlighted that we live in a digital era, where identity construction and self-exposure in social networks are central issues. Media and digital platforms play a fundamental role in the formation of personal identity and in the way we present ourselves to the world.

It is crucial to recognize the power of media and digital platforms in shaping contemporary social processes. This implies a critical reflection on the quality of the information we consume and the need to foster media literacy in order to consciously navigate this digital environment. In this sense, sometimes directly and sometimes less so, the articles published in this issue underline the imperative need to promote respect, gender equality and informed citizen participation in the digital environment, in the media and in communicative processes. They do so, for example, by outlining that digital gender-based violence is an increasingly recurrent reality and that it is crucial to address the issue by promoting safe and respectful digital environments. Or by exposing how violence against women or stereotypes in their representations are socially transcendent. Feminism is revealed, in these works, as a transformative force that uses communication to make gender-based violence visible and raise awareness, promote equality and fight discrimination. It also examines cyberactivism and cyberfeminism, focusing on how new information and communication technologies empower social movements and generate changes in societies.

In conclusion, this issue takes us into the intertwined paths of contemporary social processes and communication by providing insight into how social media and social networks influence our society and our lives. It invites us to reflect on the challenges and opportunities that arise in this context, as well as to consider effective communication strategies to address and improve contemporary social processes.

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## MONOGRAPH SECTION

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Contemporary social processes and  
communication

# OBRA DIGITAL

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# Study of gender violences against women communicators in Catalonia within the social network Twitter<sup>1</sup>

*Estudio de las violencias de género contra mujeres comunicadoras en Cataluña en el marco de la red social Twitter*

1

ARTICLE



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TRACTE and CEIG (UVic-UCC) member, has a degree in Audiovisual Communication (UPF) and has two Master's degrees: International Studies in Media, Power and Diversity (UPF) and Women, Gender and Citizenship Studies (UB). Currently, she combines her doctoral thesis in Gender Studies (IIEDG - UVic) with her academic work as a researcher on gender violence .

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Professor in Journalism and Communication at the University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia. Graduated in Law and a PhD in Communication from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, she investigates ethics applied to journalism and communication, with special attention to documentary film and gender studies, having participated in European projects such as the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) on the presence of women in the media (2015 - 2020) or studying the presence of women behind the cameras in Spanish soap operas (2013). She is the author of the Guide for university teaching with a gender perspective in Communication studies.

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## Abstract

Based on a previous study addressing the violence that feminist activist women receive on Twitter, it was proposed to transfer that methodology to the field of women who, due to their profession (journalists, writers, influencers...) we have called communicators. All of them share both professional public visibility and presence and activity on Twitter. To measure the relationship that these online attacks have with gender-related issues, the study was carried out during the weeks leading to and departing after the International Day of Women. Among other results, the investigation concluded that 1 out of 5 tweets aroused some form of aggression and a significant increase in violence during the 8th of March.

## KEYWORDS

Aggressions, harassment, women communicators, gender, twitter, digital violence

## Resumen

Partiendo de un estudio previo sobre la violencia que las mujeres activistas feministas reciben en Twitter, se planteó trasladar esta observación a aquellas que, por su profesión (periodistas, escritoras, influencers...) se ha decidido llamar comunicadoras, ya que convergen en ellas visibilidad pública profesional y presencia y actividad en Twitter. Para observar la relación de estos ataques con cuestiones de género, el estudio se planteó durante la semana anterior y la posterior al Día Internacional de las Mujeres. Entre otros resultados, se observó que 1 de cada 5 tuits originó agresiones y un incremento significativo de violencia durante la jornada del 8M.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

Agresiones, acoso, mujeres comunicadoras, género, twitter, violencia digital

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2021, a research on digital aggressions directed towards feminist women activists was published (Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021). In that study, 462,281 aggressions were collected on Twitter towards 50 feminist activists over the course of a year. The results were shocking, although expected, insofar as they coincided with what other recent studies had concluded. Amnesty International's Troll Patrol report (2018) found 1.1 million abusive tweets sent to 778 women -politicians and journalists- during 2017. At the Spanish level, Calala's study (2020) found that 82.61% of the women surveyed in their research had received some form of digital violence. At the same time, it concluded that Twitter was the most aggressive social network (72.73%).

Twitter turned out to be a markedly violent space for feminist activists. Morena-Balaguer *et al.* (2021), observed the preponderance and special virulence of collective attacks, initiated from a specific account and massively joined by other profiles. It was determined that changes or events in the context caused the number of attacks to fluctuate; that the greater public visibility of women as well as the fact that they were more active in networks were clear risk factors. In addition, there were topics such as feminism or racism that aroused most of the aggressions (Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021).

In view of these results, the need for further progress in understanding the functioning of digital violence was identified. Gender-based digital violence is a problem that still requires



the development of specific legislation. Additionally, work needs to be done on prevention and protection tools to make the networks an accessible and safe space. In order to continue in this direction, the question arose as to whether the same situation affected other groups or with what particularities. To answer this question, it was decided to partially replicate the research in a new case study focused on women communicators who do not necessarily define themselves as feminists and/or activists, but who have a public presence and who carry out their work -or part of it- in a manner which is linked to one or more media outlets.

Unlike the research that precedes this paper, in this case the sample was limited to the Catalan context. In the previous study, which covered the whole country of Spain, it was observed that, sometimes, political particularities arose that were difficult to understand given the magnitude of the study and the diversity of situations to which the digital violence responded. For example, there used to be aggressions against Catalan and Galician activists that, although was gender-based, usually referred to the specific socio-political context of each autonomous community, so they did not share characteristics with the rest. This made it difficult to draw meaningful general conclusions. On the other hand, in order to further define the sample – and having observed in the preceding study that a smaller sample yielded similar results – it was decided to limit the investigation to two weeks; the week before and the week after March 8, which is the International Women’s Day. This was because it was of interest to analyze to what extent gender issues are at the origin of these aggressions.

## 1.1. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to analyze the attacks received by women communicators on Twitter in the catalan context and their main characteristics. The specific objectives are:

- To count the number of aggressions and determine whether they are punctual or respond to a collective attack. The aim is to observe the functioning of the social network facilitates group attacks that are particularly harmful due to the amplification they imply.
- To observe whether the 8th of March, International Women’s Day, represents an increase in attacks and to establish whether aggressions increase as a function of the socio-political and cultural context.
- To observe to what extent the variables of greater public visibility (number of followers) and greater participation (number of publications) of the assaulted women influence aggressions, in order to determine the degree of correspondence between their greater or lesser presence in the social network and the number of attacks.
- To check which topics are most likely to provoke aggressions against women on Twitter.
- To assess whether age is a determining factor regarding the number of assaults received.

## 1.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hate speech directed at women journalists and activists is not a new phenomenon. Harassment that use to materialize in handwritten letters or with calls to landlines is now in full view of everyone through social networks or online sections of the media (Landsverk, 2016). In this sense, violence in social networks is the new front of journalistic insecurity, and it is particularly dangerous for women, as harassment and abuse are used to silence them (Possetti *et al*, 2020).

Misogyny and online violence are a real threat to women's participation in the public sphere in the digital age. Journalists increasingly live their professional lives online, as they rely on social networks to report and disseminate news, interact with their audience and build their profile. Thus, "the suggestion that journalists facing online threats should simply stay away from social networks is impractical and may even amplify abuse" (Radsch, 2016, p.36).

According to a study conducted in Norway, approximately 1 in 4 female and 1 in 20 male journalists have received sexualized comments or threats. Age also plays a role: almost twice as many young female journalists (aged 26-35) report having experienced harassment compared to their male colleagues of the same age. When looking at older journalists, the results are reversed (Landsverk, 2016).

Internet anonymity and actions such as *trolling*, aimed at boycotting someone, pose a threat to freedom of expression online, especially in the case of women. This was already denounced by journalist Pamela Paul (2015) in her article *She Sounds Smart, but Look at Her Hair*, published in the New York Times.

The first step in combating this violence is to understand it in depth. In order to do that, in 2020, the International Center For Journalists [ICFJ] was commissioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] to conduct a study on online violence against women journalists. This study included a large survey of women communicators conducted in conjunction with the Center for Freedom of the Media [CFOM] at the University of Sheffield. The study covered 15 countries. Among its first results, Posetti and Shabbir (2022) detected that there is a worrying spillover from online to offline violence, materialized in several cases such as that of the Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, murdered in 2017.

Some characteristics that converge in online violence against women journalists emerge from this study, which are synthesized in three main characteristics: it is often organized, frequently by misogynist groups that carry out campaigns; this violence radiates to women in their own families and their environment as their sources or their followers; and it concerns

intimacy, as the attacks are personal and are usually highly sexualized (Posetti *et al.*, 2020). In addition, three types of attacks were identified. The first was misogynistic harassment and abuse, which is usually highly sexualized, ranging from gendered insults to those directed against her appearance, sexuality and professionalism; these were designed to diminish their confidence and tarnish their reputation. This abuse could come from individuals, as well as become an organised network attack by misogynist groups. A second typology was organized misinformation campaigns with misogynist narratives (fake porn videos, ridiculing memes, etc.) which aimed to undermine the credibility and trust of the journalist to get her to withdraw. The third consisted of threats to digital security and privacy that increased the physical risks associated with online violence (Posetti *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, levels of hostility and violence against women journalists have seen a rise during the pandemic, reflected in another global survey also conducted in 2020 by ICFJ and Columbia University's Tow Center for Digital Journalism as part of the Journalism and Pandemic project. 16% of female journalists claimed that online abuse and harassment were worse than usual (Posetti *et al.*, 2020; Bell *et al.*, 2020).

Women journalists cannot be left alone in the face of online threats and violence as if physical and sexual harassment were acceptable professional risks for women. Nor should they be burdened with the responsibility of preven-

ting them or dealing with them alone (Posetti, 2020; Harrison *et al.*, 2020). The International Women's Media Foundation has created the Coalition Against Online Violence [CAOV]<sup>1</sup>, which offers help and strategies against online violence.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative methodology following the counting matrix (Table 1) proposed in the report by Morena-Balaguer *et al.* (2021) has been proposed to carry out this research.

Two complementary tables were also created. In the first, the age and digital indicators (visibility and participation) of the users were related to the cadence of the attacks (Table 2).

In the second table, the attacks were broken down by days and users to detect when the aggression was individual or collective, a so-called pack attack (Bonet-Martí, cited in Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021) or flaming (Donestech, 2017; Martínez, 2020). This attack consists of "a coordinated attack, usually instigated by one or several accounts (...) in which tens, hundreds or thousands of users target [a woman's] profile to harass, insult, threaten or make fun of her" (Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021, p.26). We categorize as collective aggression when a single tweet receives five or more attacks; it is labeled as individual when the same tweet receives four or fewer attacks; it is also labeled as individual when there are more than five attacks but they are scattered among different tweets of the user, even if they are issued on the same day.

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1 CAOV: <https://www.iwmf.org/our-programs/coalition-against-online-violence/>

**Table 1**

Analytical matrix for research

Subject of the tweet originating the attack	Subtopic	Date	Total Responses	Total Mentions	Responses with aggressions	Mentions with aggressions	% Aggression in responses	% Aggression in mentions
COVID								
Feminism								
Transfeminism								
Sexual Orientation								
Policy								
Racism								
Aesthetic canons								
Others								
Own initiative tweet								
Total			0	0	0	0	-%	
			0	0				

**Source:** Own elaboration based on Morena-Balaguer et al. (2021).

**Table 2**

Triangulation of demographic, digital and attack cadence data

Age	Number of followers (Digital Visibility)	Total Tweets (Digital Participation)	Total Attacks Responses	Total Attacks Mentions	Total Aggressions	Percentage of aggression by interaction
User name 1						
Total		0	0	0	0	-%

**Source:** Own elaboration

**Table 3***Breakdown of the number of attacks per day and user.*

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15	Total Attacks
User name 1																0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Source: Own elaboration																

## 2.1 SELECTION OF THE UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE POPULATION

Among all the available social networks, the work focuses on Twitter because it is the social network most used to express political opinions (Larrondo *et al.*, 2019) and because of its communicative design proposal, facilitates the proliferation of hate speech (Núñez-Puente and Fernández-Romero, 2018). Moreover, the study by Morena-Balaguer *et al.* (2021) showed that Twitter was a markedly violent space for feminist activists.

The research sample consists of 20 Twitter profiles of women communicators -who work or are recognized as journalists, writers, actresses or influencers- in the Catalan territory. We included communications from traditional media -press, radio and television- but also digital platforms. For the selection of the sample, we used the snowball technique without the intervention of the participants. In the first phase, a list of women communicators in Catalonia was drawn up. Subsequently, four selection variables were established:

- **Origin:** ensure the representation of racialized women in the sample.
- **Age:** incorporate a broad spectrum of ages.

- **Digital visibility:** select profiles with a high, medium and low number of followers.
- **Digital participation:** choose women who participate regularly, occasionally and sporadically in the social network.

It was decided to limit the time frame of the study to the weeks between March 1 and 15, 2022. These dates make it possible to place March 8 (8M), International Women's Day, at the centre of the sample, which will make it possible to observe whether there is an increase in aggressions as this day approaches and whether they decrease thereafter. March 8 was chosen because of its significance and symbolism, which tends to translate into greater participation in the networks.

## 2.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data was collected and classified in an analytical matrix (see Table 1) that contemplates two types of attack (responses to specific topics, and self-initiated). Thus, the tweets that have originated attacks are organized by themes, specifically eight, which were selected deductively according to the ethnographic study carried out in the aforementioned research (Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021):

- **COVID:** the user takes a public position or reports on the COVID-19 pandemic, containment, precautionary measures, vaccines, or any other pandemic-related topic.
- **Feminism:** the user speaks or informs, directly or indirectly, about feminist movements, gender equality or discriminations suffered by women in the patriarchal system.
- **Transfeminism:** the user gives an opinion or reports on the inclusion of trans and/or non-binary people in the feminist movement, or the rights of trans people.
- **Sexual Orientation:** the user talks about gay, lesbian or bisexual rights or discrimination, or makes public her experience or that of a person close to her.
- **Policy:** the user tweets information about a political news item, takes a political position or gives her opinion on an issue on the political agenda.
- **Racism:** the user reports a news item that refers to racist acts, takes a stand against racism or gives her opinion on a topic on the public agenda that has to do with racist acts.
- **Aesthetic canons:** the user tweets opinions or information about the discrimination suffered by women (or herself) due to the current aesthetic canons, or publishes an image in which her face or physique appears.
- **Others:** any other subject that has not been included in this classification.
- The **“Own initiative tweet”** category includes aggressions in which a user decides to attack or insult the aggressor without being a previous publication by the woman to which he/she is responding.

Once all the tweets of the period analysed had been collected and classified by theme, the sub-

theme category was summarized in one or two words. This qualitative distinction has not been relevant for the elaboration of the quantitative analysis -with the exception of the study of the sub-theme “8M” within the Feminism theme-, but it is expected to be highly relevant during the subsequent process of qualitative analysis.

In the classification of the tweets, the date of publication was collected and the total number of replies (replies to the initial tweet) and mentions (i.e. quotes: instead of directly replying to the initial tweet, the user makes a mention quoting the original tweet to give his opinion on it or make a comment) were counted.

Once these data were collected, the process of counting the aggressions began. In the first instance, those related to gender were considered; that is, all violence that is a consequence of the cisheteropatriarchal system originated by reason of the position, identity, or expression of gender and/or sexual orientation of the person assaulted (Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021).

Direct insults, threats, and other forms of indirect or less evident violence such as mansplaining or sealioning were taken into consideration. However, given that Twitter is a social network that eliminates most non-verbal communication, when comments or responses were of dubious interpretation, they were discarded in order to avoid false positives that could alter the sample and the results of the analysis. Thus, when there was no evident aggression, the interaction was not included, unless the user receiving it responded and evidenced that had felt offended.

Once the total number of replies and mentions were counted, as well as the number of aggressions for each tweet, nine parameters were calculated:

1. Percent of aggression in responses

2. Percentage of aggression in mentions
3. Total responses
4. Total mentions
5. Total interactions (responses + mentions)
6. Total responses with aggression
7. Total mentions with aggression
8. Total aggressions
9. Total percentage of aggressions

### 3. RESULTS

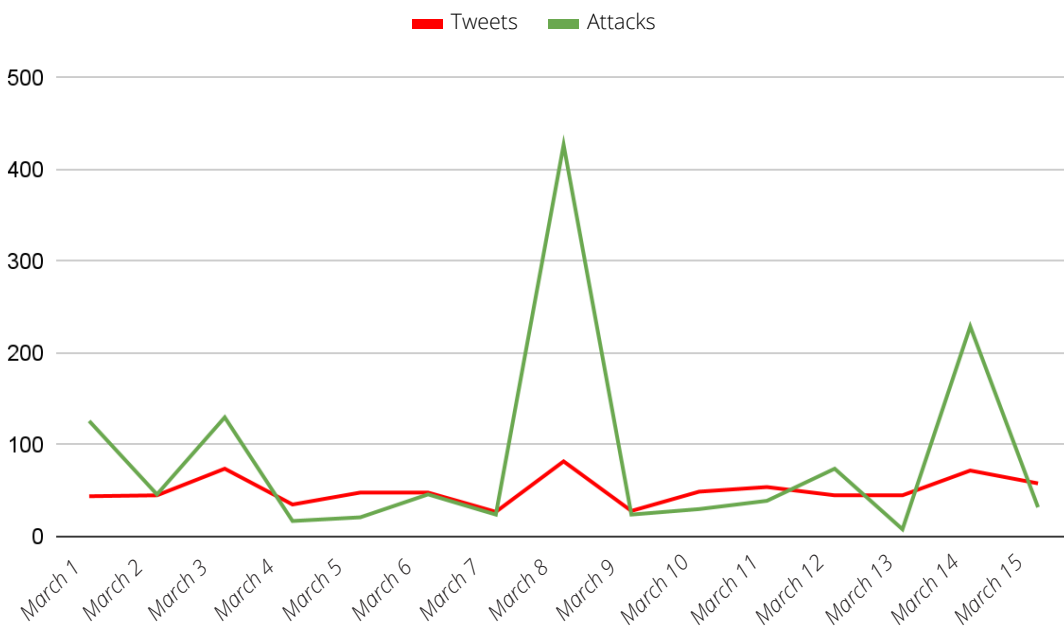
The study collected a total of 1,279 attacks on 20 women communicators in a period of 2

weeks. This represents an average of 85.3 attacks per day.

A significant increase in aggressions was found during the course of March 8 (see Figure 1). This was accompanied by an increase in the number of tweets issued by female users on that day (n=82) regarding the day before and the day after (March 7, n=27; March 9, n=28). In other words, women were more active than usual, but the aggressions they received multiplied up to 17 times more. On March 7 there were 24 aggressions, on March 8 there were 427 aggressions, and on March 9 there were, again, 24 aggressions. Therefore, March 8 is a date on which there is much more tension and violence than on the other days of the study. (Figure 1)

**Figure 1**

*Correlation between number of tweets and attacks between March 1 and March 15, 2022.*



Source: Own elaboration

Analysing in detail the topics that caused the most attacks that day (this is, March 8<sup>th</sup>)(Table 4), it can be seen that the topic that clearly stands out was Politics (n=349); this was followed in second place by Feminism (n=54) and, in third place, Others (n=3). There were also three attacks by Own initiative that did not respond to any previous tweet. (Table 4)

**Table 4**

*Aggressions on March 8, according to theme*

	Total
COVID	0
Feminism	54
Transfeminism	0
Sexual orientation	0
Policy	349
Racism	0
Aesthetic canons	0
Other	3
Own initiative	3

Source: Own elaboration

The research shows in Table 5 that, during the whole research, the topic that provoked most of the aggressions is Politics (n=761), which in turn was the topic most talked about by users (n=306). In second place was Feminism, with 362 aggressions among the 173 tweets on the subject. It is interesting to note that Feminism is the topic with the highest percentage of aggression; 21.91% of tweets regarding the total number of interactions, while Politics has 19.72% of tweets with aggressions. In this classification, in third place was the topic of Others (6.53%, n=63) followed by Transfeminism (5%, n=1). COVID, Sexual Orientation, Racism and Aesthetic Canons aroused 0% of aggressions. (Table 5)

The data obtained shows that 19.36% of the interactions were aggressions. This proves that

about 1 in 5 tweets generated some form of violence against women.

The Own initiative type of aggression stands out, which has been counted in 92 direct attacks on users without there being a response to a previous tweet. This figure is even higher than that reported by some topics -such as Others- which proves that this is a recurrent form of violence on the part of the aggressors.

On the other hand, the percentage of aggression in direct responses (18.58%) is slightly higher than in the case of mentions (16.90%).

The research confirms the trend noted in the previous research by Morena-Balaguer *et al.* (2021) where it was pointed out that the attacks mainly took the form of collective action. A total of 25 collective attacks on the sample users were collected, representing 1090 attacks and 76 individual attacks, with 189 attacks (Table 6).

The number of attacks received by the users was uneven, ranging from 0 to 380 insults or aggressions on the dates of the study (Table 7). Of all the women selected for the study, Marta Roqueta received the highest percentage of attacks, 52.53% in relation to the total number of interactions (Table 8). The fact that other women received a similar number of aggressions but have a lower percentage should be treated as proof that Twitter is also a space of support and sorority for some women (such as Ana Bernal, who received 107 unique aggressions but has 10.95% of aggressions in relation to interactions). This fact shows, therefore, that the study of communicational phenomena on Twitter must be approached from multiple and correlated methodologies, since statistics isolated from the context do not correctly represent the processes through which people who make up the sample go through. (Table 7)



**Table 5**

Sample research results following the data collection matrix and analysis parameters.

Topic	Number of tweets	Total responses	Total mentions	Total interactions	Responses with attacks	Mentions with attacks	Total aggressions	% Aggression in responses	% Aggression in mentions	% Aggression
COVID	4	6	2	8	0	0	0	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %
Feminism	173	1154	498	1652	276	86	362	23,92 %	17,27 %	21,91 %
Transfeminism	6	16	4	20	0	1	1	0,00 %	25,00 %	5,00 %
Sexual orientation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %
Policy	306	3177	683	3860	626	135	761	19,70 %	19,77 %	19,72 %
Racism	4	3	1	4	0	0	0	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %
Aesthetic canons	4	6	1	7	0	0	0	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %
Others	255	752	213	965	48	15	63	6,38 %	7,04 %	6,53 %
Subtotal		5114	1402							
Own initiative				92			92			
Total	752	6516		950		237		18,58 %		16,90 %
		6608			1279			19,36 %		

Source: Own elaboration

**Table 6**

Correlation between the number of women assaulted per day and the number of assaults they received

Month of march	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15	Total Aggressions
Total Women Collectively Assaulted	4	1	2	0	0	1	1	4	1	2	2	2	0	3	2	25
Total Collective Aggressions	119	25	135	0	0	33	5	416	12	26	19	70	0	212	18	1090
Total Women Attacked Individually	5	6	4	5	8	6	7	5	3	2	5	4	4	5	7	76
Total Individual Aggressions	7	21	5	17	21	13	19	15	12	4	10	4	8	17	16	189

Source: Own elaboration

Also noteworthy is the non-direct correlation between digital visibility and the number or percentage of aggressions (Table 9). The users who receive the most digital violence are not strictly those with the most followers. If we look at the percentage of aggressions in relation to the total number of interactions received, the user with the highest number has 14,078 followers, while the following have 60,840, 177,187 and 1,221,568, respectively. (Table 8)

There is no direct correlation between the number of tweets and the fact of receiving an aggression, but it is observed that the solution adopted by many of the users is not to tweet, or to do so less frequently, regardless of the women's digital visibility. Thus, virtual silence, which means a voluntary renunciation of the occupation of a basic space in our daily lives, tends to be a protective resource. For example, it is noted that 11 of the 20 women communicators who adopt a feminist activist role chose not to tweet about 8M during the course of the day as a way, potentially, of protection. This is, de facto, a form of silencing.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1. TWITTER: A SPACE FOR PACKS OF HOUNDS

The study has corroborated the hypothesis that presents Twitter as an intrinsically violent space for women communicators in Catalonia. Other studies have already concluded that women are insulted on Twitter because of their gender (Landsverk, 2016; Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021); hence, detecting that almost 1 out of every 5 tweets published by women communicators generates some form of violence means providing symbolic-practical weight to research on digital gender violence in this social network,

since it once again demonstrates that we are not facing a casual or sporadic phenomenon, but a systematic and serious one.

It is worth mentioning that although violence occurs on a recurrent basis, as only 5 of the 20 women in the sample did not receive any form of aggression, the high numbers respond to the viralization of tweets, which leads to collective aggressions. Most attacks (n=1,090) are part of collective aggressions, while individual aggressions (n=189) are a minority. This data confirms the theory already explained in Morena-Balaguer *et al.* (2021), which presents the idea that Twitter is a form of corrective and punitive violence against women.

In other words, the research proves that when a user observes that a tweet starts to go viral and becomes popular on the social network, he or she joins the exercise of violence more easily than when no one has yet attacked or insulted. Therefore, to the violence of an aggression itself we must add the complex hybridation of the collective attack, which as being amplified are more harmful to the victim.

### 4.2. MORE VIOLENCE DURING MARCH 8

The data from this research show that March 8 is a day when women receive more violence on Twitter than usual. Aggressions spike from 24 aggressions on the days directly before and after Women's Day to 427 aggressions on 8M. This leads us to consider that the analogical socio-cultural context significantly influences aggressions in the digital world.

The increase in aggressions is not strictly motivated by a greater activity of the users in the sample during 8M. It is true that the number of publications arose from 27 to 82, but the difference is exponentially greater when we look at the rate of aggressions, from 24 to 427.

**Table 7***Distribution of users according to the percentage of aggressions received (from highest to lowest)*

User Name	Percentage of aggressions in relation to interactions received	Number of interactions	Number of aggressions
Marta Roqueta	52,53 %	514	280
Laura Rosel	46,86 %	811	384
Empar Moliner	42,42 %	33	14
Julia Otero	20,28%	212	43
Agnès Marquès	16,13 %	62	10
Maruja Torres	14,13 %	2.343	331
Juliana Canet	11,11 %	18	2
Ana Bernal	10,95 %	977	107
Ana Polo	9,65 %	114	11
Natza Ferrer	8,56 %	631	54
Paula Carreras	8,13 %	123	10
Itziar Castro	7,39 %	203	15
Mònica Planas	7,41 %	27	2
Bel Olid	5,04 %	119	6
Montserrat Dameson	2,98 %	336	10
Miriam Hatibi	0 %	3	0
Llucia Ramis	0 %	20	0
Beatrice Duodu	0 %	0	0
Tania Adam	0 %	1	0
Cristina Puig	0 %	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>6548</b>	<b>1279</b>

*Source: Own elaboration*

**Table 8***Synthesis of demographic data and quantitative results*

	Age	Number of Followers (Digital Visibility) as of September 20, 2022	Total Tweets (Digital Participa- tion)	Number of aggressions	Percentage of aggression by interaction
<b>Marta Roqueta</b>	34	14.078	101	280	52,53 %
<b>Laura Rosel</b>	42	60.840	11	384	46,86 %
<b>Empar Moliner</b>	56	177.187	22	14	42 %
<b>Julia Otero</b>	63	1.221.568	3	43	20,28 %
<b>Agnes Marques</b>	43	46.242	16	10	16,13 %
<b>Maruja Torres</b>	79	234.441	246	331	14,13 %
<b>Juliana Canet</b>	23	52.496	8	2	11,11 %
<b>Ana Bernal</b>	42	89.227	42	107	10,95 %
<b>Ana Polo</b>	30*	38.367	9	11	9,65 %
<b>Natza Farré</b>	50	71.299	43	54	8,56 %
<b>Paula Carreras</b>	28*	4.977	16	10	8,13 %
<b>Itziar Castro</b>	45	57.632	110	15	7,39 %
<b>Mònica Planas</b>	47	65.280	23	2	7 %
<b>Bel Olid</b>	45	59.303	49	6	5,04 %
<b>Montserrat Dameson</b>	26*	13.901	37	10	2,98 %
<b>Míriam Hatibi</b>	29	33.812	3	0	0,00 %
<b>Llucia Ramis</b>	45	15.363	5	0	0,00 %
<b>Beatrice Duodu</b>	26	1.262	0	0	0,00 %
<b>Tania Adam</b>	43	3.219	2	0	0,00 %
<b>Cristina Puig</b>	50	23.336	8	0	0,00 %

*Note: Cases where age could not be fully verified are marked with an \*.  
Source: Own elaboration*

On the day of 8M, the topic that aroused more aggressions was politics, while the day before and the day after, the same topic generated only eight aggressions. This reinforces the idea that on 8M there is greater tension and tension against women than on other days on the calendar.

In second place, Feminism collected 54 aggressions during this day. This same topic provoked only one aggression on March 7, and 20 on March 9. The detected increase in violence, as well as the considerable distance of this topic regarding the following ones, which had only three attacks during the day, demonstrates that talking about gender equality, even during 8M, entails a greater possibility of receiving digital aggressions.

### 4.3. UNPREDICTABILITY OF ATTACKS

Unlike the previous study, the results show that users who tweet less are less likely to receive attacks, which entails the risk of women opting for self-silencing and renouncing their right to express themselves and to have a space in the networks. The five users who received zero attacks are, except for Julia Otero, the ones who tweeted the least (between zero and eight tweets in a 15-day period).

However, no significant correlation was found between the most active users and the number of aggressions they received. Marta Roqueta, the user who received the most aggressions, tweeted 72 times; Laura Rosel, in second place in number of aggressions, only tweeted 11 times. The user with the most tweets published, Maruja Torres (n=246), was in sixth place in terms of aggressions, behind women such as Julia Otero, who tweeted only four times.

Therefore, a greater number of tweets does not necessarily mean receiving more attacks,

since these follow the pattern described above: they happen suddenly and massively, when a user crosses a line that the aggressor group considers intolerable. This fact makes it difficult to foresee whether a tweet will generate or not massive aggression, which can increase the feeling of insecurity and fear.

Age does not seem to be a determining variable either. Regarding the ten top users, ordered by percentage of attacks according to interaction, the two who received the most aggressions, Marta Roqueta and Laura Rosel, belong to Generation Y or *Millennial*. The next three, Empar Moliner, Julia Otero and Agnes Marqués, are from Generation X; the sixth is Maruja Torres, from the *Baby Boom* Generation and the seventh is Juliana Canet, from Generation Z. Ana Bernal, Ana Polo and Natza Farré are, respectively, Generation X, *Millennial* and Generation X again.

Unlike the results obtained in past research, in the case of women communicators with public projection, it is not primarily their tweets that trigger aggression (i.e., insults do not tend to exist in the form of a response to what they have tweeted). These, often, are related to what is called a transfer of the crispness of the analogical context. In order to provide an example we will explain the case of Laura Rosel. On March 1st 2022, during the broadcast of the show *El matí de Catalunya Ràdio*, Rosel criticized in the statements that Borrell (a Catalan-spanish politician) had previously made about the war in Ukraine and about Puigdemont, former Catalan president. Because of this event that happened in analogue life, Laura Rosel observed an increase in the number of aggressions she received: March 1 (n=11), March 2 (n=0), March 3 (n=2).

#### 4.4. THE DANGER OF SILENCE

It is worth mentioning a significant change regarding to previous literature. The research consulted indicated that racialized female users received a greater number of aggressions (Amnesty International, 2018; Calala, 2020; Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021). In the present study, racialized women did not receive aggressions, but they were also the ones who tweeted the least and seemed to renounce their right to occupy the digital space.

This self-limitation happened even in the case of users who tweet considerably but avoid taking a public stance on controversial issues or those related to feminism or gender. For example, Bel Olid, a renowned feminist, tweeted on 51 occasions, but only 13 of them in relation to feminism or equality.

In this sense, it has been observed that 11 of the 20 users in the study either did not tweet about the 8M demonstration or avoided gender issues around that iconic date, even though they identify themselves as feminists and have used their platform on other occasions to denounce gender inequalities. This element is directly linked to the feeling of terror, already noted in other research (Morena-Balaguer *et al.*, 2021), that many women communicators experience when using digital platforms to speak out on certain issues. Therefore, although there is no direct correlation between the number of attacks and the number of tweets, the strategy of silence and self-censorship is the one most often chosen as a measure of protection against digital attacks. On the other hand, Marta Roqueta, the user who did not limit herself and who frequently wrote about gender issues, was the one who received the most attacks: 52.53% of all her interactions are an aggression.

Therefore, we can speak of a self-imposed limitation: expressing opinions on gender issues and amplifying these discourses in the digital framework translates into a greater likelihood of being attacked. For this reason, many users consciously or unconsciously prefer not to do so in order to ensure their safety and mental health. However, this is a direct attack on women's freedom of expression on social networks.

In short, this research shows that Twitter is a dangerous space for women, both for those who use the platforms to disseminate a feminist discourse and for those who only inhabit the network, especially during significant dates for the celebration of gender equality, such as 8M. Collective actions continue to be the most common forms of attack, which shows that digital violence responds to corrective motives and channelling misogynist rage, which are aspects that are difficult to vertebrate in analogue life. In the face of this violence, many women choose to limit their digital participation or silence themselves. This means that women communicators, those who precisely have the power to influence the public agenda and opinion, avoid doing so out of fear. This is a considerable obstacle to spreading the message of gender equality.

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# Dissecting fear, politicising rage. Spanish feminist documentaries against rape culture<sup>1</sup>

*Disecionar el miedo, politizar la rabia. Documentales feministas españoles contra la cultura de la violación*

# 2

ARTICLE



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### Abstract

This article addresses three Spanish feminist documentaries that, embedded in current social and political debates, deal with sexual violence against women: *Nagore* (Helena Taberna, 2010), *Tódalas mulleres que coñezo* (All the Women I Know, Xiana do Teixeiro, 2018) and

*La cosa vuestra* (It's Your Thing, María Cañas, 2018). The contribution analyses the formal strategies employed to deconstruct rape myths and their impact on the gendered regulation of public space. It also reflects how these films promote affective solidarity as a basis for collective feminist politics.

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## KEYWORDS

Feminism, documentary, Spanish cinema, rape culture, affective solidarity

## Resumen

Este artículo examina tres documentales feministas españoles que, insertos en actuales debates sociales y políticos, abordan la violencia sexual contra las mujeres: *Nagore* (Helena Taberna, 2010), *Tódalas mulleres que coñezo* (Xiana do Teixeiro, 2018) y *La cosa vuestra* (María Cañas, 2018). Se analizan las estrategias formales

empleadas para deconstruir los mitos que sustentan la cultura de la violación y su impacto en la articulación del espacio público en clave de género. Igualmente, se reflexiona sobre cómo estas obras promueven una solidaridad afectiva para articular una política feminista colectiva.

## PALABRAS CLAVE:

Feminismo, documental, cine español, cultura de la violación, solidaridad afectiva.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term rape culture has gained notable popularity in academia, activism and the media for growing feminist online content (Mendes, 2015; Keller *et al.*, 2016; Phillips, 2018) and specifically as a response to sexual violence against women, through transnational campaigns such as the SlutWalk movement (2011), the #MeToo (2017) or the viralization of the performance *A Rapist in Your Path* by *LasTesis* (2019).

In the recent debate on sexual violence in Spain, no case has been as relevant as that of *La Manada* (The Wolf Pack). The gang rape of an 18-year-old woman during the *San Fermín* festivities in 2016 shook Spanish society, received unprecedented international coverage and opened a broad legislative debate, also triggered by feminist mobilisations against its coverage and controversial judicial process. In the first sentence, handed down by the Court of Navarra on 26 April 2018, the defendants were convicted of sexual abuse, but not of rape, arguing that there was no physical violence or intimidation. On that day, rallies were held across

the country to show support for the victim. The banners and slogans - with their correlates on social media - challenged many of the rape myths, such as the questioning of the victim's testimony ("Sister, I believe you") or the scrutiny of female behaviour ("Alone, drunk, I want to go home!"). The existence of a feminist community was also emphasised ("This is our pack") and the judicial system was challenged ("It's not abuse, it's rape", "Patriarchal justice").

These demonstrations are evidence of the current momentum of feminism in Spain and its mobilizing capacity, mainly around abortion and violence (Campillo, 2019; Abrisketa and Abrisketa, 2020; Moreno and Camps, 2020; Gómez Nicolau *et al.*, 2021). The *La Manada* case also demonstrates how women-led movements have contributed to legally redefining rape (Freeman, 2013).

Although the first sentence was appealed and the Supreme Court ruled that the facts fell under sexual assault, in parallel to this appeal, most parties committed to a legislative change on the terms harassment, abuse and rape

(Abrisketa and Abrisketa, 2020). In September 2022, the Law on the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom, known as the “only yes is yes” law, was passed, based on consensus in accordance with the Istanbul Convention, ratified by Spain in 2014. Shortly after coming into force, this law has proved to be highly controversial, as sentences have been revised, in some cases benefiting convicted offenders, which has led to heated accusations about its possible inconsistencies or sexist interpretations by the judiciary. At the time of writing, the debate on its reform is still open. Despite legal advances and increased social sensitivity, it seems clear that the approach to sexual violence continues to generate controversy and is an issue on which parties shape their agendas. Moreover, there is no univocal position from the Spanish feminist movement either (Alabao, 2022).

In this context, and with the aim of inserting them into public debates, this article focuses on three Spanish feminist documentaries that examine rape culture: *Nagore* (Helena Taberna, 2010), *Tódalas mulleres que coñezo* – All the Women I know (Xiana do Teixeiro, 2018) and *La cosa vuestra* – It’s Your Thing (María Cañas, 2018). The aim is to analyse the formal strategies used by these documentaries to deconstruct rape myths and their consequent impact on the gendered regulation of public space. Attention will also be paid to the affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012) present in these works and which operates as a trigger for a feminist community.

## 1.1. RAPE CULTURE

The term rape culture was coined in the 1970s by feminists who politicized rape, identifying it as a tool of patriarchal power aimed at enforcing female subordination (Brownmiller, 1976; Herman, 1978). Herman (1978) analysed sexual violence as a male prerogative in a socio-cultural context in which aggressive male sexuality is considered a healthy, normal and desired trait; its counterpart being the objectification of women and the subjugation of their sexual agency. In line with these early conceptualizations, in their influential volume *Transforming a Rape Culture* (2005), Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth identify a wide range of behaviours - unwanted comments, touching or rape - as part of an ideological framework that “condones physical and emotional terrorism against women and presents it as the norm” (p. XI). Thus, it is worth noting that heteronormativity forms the basis underpinning rape culture, designating normative and idealised constructions of masculinity and femininity and differentiated spheres of action.

On the other hand, rape culture is perpetuated and reinforced by a series of myths that, while varying across societies and cultures, follow a pattern of exonerating the perpetrator, delegitimising and/or blaming the victim, and suggesting that only certain types of women are raped. The importance of rape myths, in the Barthesian sense, lies in their power and significance in shaping the understanding of sexual violence and the media, judicial and social responses to it (Schmidt, 2004). The naturalization of male

sexuality as insatiable and violent allows for the justification of aggressions, considering them excusable or inevitable in certain scenarios (Herman, 1978; Buchwald *et al.*, 2005; Mendes, 2015). In other cases, the perpetrator's conduct tends to be framed within the limits of exceptionality and monstrosity, turning him into an unintelligible subject (Barjola, 2018). On the other side of the coin, these myths encourage the responsibility to fall on the victims, fostering suspicions about their actions, appearance or sexual past and/or feeding the belief that they are the ones who seek or wish to be assaulted (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994; Schmidt, 2004; Mendes, 2015, Barjola, 2018). These *enticements* include behaviors that go beyond traditional chaste femininity - going out at night, drinking alcohol, wearing provocative clothing or flirting (Mendes, 2015) - and are read as transparent indications of sexual availability, whether or not explicit refusals or consents are involved.

The discursive framework that weaves rape culture reverts to the subjectivity of women, whether or not they have experienced sexual violence. In her analysis of discourses on sexual terror, Barjola (2018) highlights the disciplinary function of narratives that entail both "fear of physical punishment and self-control of risks, as well as mechanisms learned and internalized in women's everyday practices" (p. 138). Consequently, rape culture articulates a feminized cycle of fear, characterized by perceiving the street as a hostile space, fearing aggression, or glimpsing the consequences of such an act. It thus shapes public space by demarcating as potentially dangerous and conducive to sexual assault a series of places from which women, as always-already victim (Fanghanel, 2019),

must exclude themselves, guarding against the inevitable harm ascribed to them (Mendes, 2015; Barjola, 2018).

## **1.2. DOCUMENTARY COUNTER-REPRESENTATIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND FEMINIST AFFECTIVE POLITICS**

Media representations of rape have been the subject of extensive research and some of the work cited on rape culture has highlighted the role they play in naturalizing rape (Brownmiller, 1976, Herman, 1978; Barjola, 2018). As Kitzinger (2009) summarizes, the media is a key space for defining rape and shaping social perceptions about its constitutive parameters, perpetrators and victims. The author highlights its role in disseminating rape myths, as its coverage "can decontextualize abuse, encourage racism, promote stereotypes of women (as virgins or whores), blame victims and excuse assailants" (Kitzinger, 2009, p. 76).

Restricting ourselves to the cinematographic and audiovisual sphere, the representation of rape in television series has been examined in order to point out the reification of a heroic and guardian virility that simultaneously safeguards an untainted masculinity and contains feminist positions (Cuklanz, 2000); in films produced in a post-feminist framework, where individual responsibility is emphasized over collective activism (Projansky, 2001); or in auteur cinema, problematizing the ambiguous representations and readings of this violence in high cultural forms based on hermeneutic operations that appeal to a distanced intellectualism or that directly elide aggression (Russell, 2010).

If, broadly speaking, audiovisuals on rape outline a violent, victim-blaming and victimizing universe for women, it is crucial to pay attention to the counter-representations that destabilize these logics and build interpretative frameworks that have an impact on female empowerment (Barjola, 2018). In this respect, feminist documentaries stand as a privileged field of political intervention and study. If the documentary is a mode of representation that nourishes and mediates public debate and social life (Nichols, 2001), feminist practices, since their origins, have inserted denied subjectivities into the public sphere and have politicized issues such as women's work, reproductive health, or sexual violence (Lesage, 1990; Mayer, 2011). However, academic approaches to documentaries that deal with rape are scarce, with the work of Lesage (1978, 1990) standing out. This scholar identifies the features of dominant representations of rape "as the ultimate form of possession" (1978) and feminist filmic strategies that, on the contrary, avoid voyeurism, stigmatization and the incidence of trauma as the only possible expression of the violence suffered. In these films, women narrate their experiences, often ineffable, in their own terms, expressing denied emotions such as rage, resulting in the restoration of a damaged subjectivity and a critical analysis of the institutions that sustain violence (Lesage, 1978).

Lesage's emphasis on the affective processes involved in the pioneering documentaries on rape - the joint dissection of pain or indignation - allows us to engage with the notion of "affective solidarity", coined by Hemmings

(2012) to address how contemporary feminist non-fiction also explores possibilities of transformation from the collective. Hemmings theorizes affective solidarity as necessary for social change. In this sense, she suggests that, beyond empathy, affections such as anger, frustration or the desire for connection are what activate a collective politics based on "the desire for transformation out of the experience of discomfort" (Hemmings 2012, p. 158). Thus, the author speaks of an "affective dissonance" which she defines as a gap between women's negative experiences, the patriarchal order and the conditions of social transformation, so that it is this emotional click that activates an analytical process that gives meaning and body to feminism.

This perspective is highly relevant for approaching recent feminist artistic proposals -performance, photography, or illustration- which, in many cases, aim to denounce the structural or symbolic violence suffered by women (Gómez Nicolau *et al.*, 2021). Delimiting a context marked by the current and unprecedented visibility of feminism on a global scale and the consequent attacks wielded by a revitalized popular misogyny, Gómez Nicolau, Medina-Vicent and Gámez Fuentes (2021) examine and vindicate a series of practices that, on the one hand, respond to the pressing need to make female pain, rage and indignation intelligible; and, on the other, rearticulate these negative emotions - traditionally forbidden to subaltern subjects, as they argue on the basis of authors such as Butler and Ahmed - for political, artistic

and social purposes. In tune with this diagnosis, and by way of example, the aforementioned collective LasTesis positions rage as the driving force behind an artistic activism aimed at putting an end to the fear of sexual terror. In their words, “rage can be a virus [...]. The virus travels from where the wound was inflicted to the brain” (LasTesis, 2021, p. 11). In this regard, Martin and Shaw (2021) highlight the transformative role of emotions in the performance *Un violador en tu camino* (A Rapist on Your Way), indicating that “subjugation, pain, humiliation and resistance are embodied, with humiliation re-enacted momentarily, before bodies shift to positions of accusation and empowerment” (p. 7). From our point of view, the feminist documentaries that we will analyze below participate in these assumptions, constituting, from the audiovisual sphere, “expressions of rage and collective empowerment” (Gómez Nicolau *et al.*, 2021, p. 13).

## 2. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

Despite the development of documentaries with a gender perspective in Spain, non-fiction works focusing on sexual violence against women are scarce. With a few exceptions, these works have been produced in the last five years, evidencing the growing interest in the subject. It is worth highlighting the role of Netflix, a platform that, taking advantage of the popularity of

*true-crime*, has adapted this format to the national context, producing miniseries such as *El caso Alcàsser – The Alcàsser Murders* (Elías León Siminiani, 2019), centered on the rape, torture and assassination of three teenagers in a Valencian town in 1992, or *Nevenka* (Maribel Sánchez-Maroto, 2021), about the denunciation of sexual harassment of a politician and the subsequent stigmatization of the victim.

In contrast to these serialized documentary productions, our object of study are three independent documentaries made by feminist directors and whose purpose is to constitute critical tools on sexual violence. We analyze *Nagore* (Helena Taberna, 2010), which focuses on the murder of Nagore Laffage during the *San Fermín* festival in 2008; *Tódalas mulleres que coñezo* (Xiana do Teixeiro, 2018), a documentary that activates an intergenerational debate on the impact of sexual terror; and *La cosa vuestra* (María Cañas, 2018), a found footage piece about the *San Fermín* festival that analyzes the structuring of public space in terms of gender and includes the cases of *Nagore* and *La Manada*.

Based on the theoretical contributions outlined above, we examine the formal operations used to deconstruct rape culture, the myths and institutions that sustain it, as well as its impact on female subjectivity and the perception and articulation of public space. We apply textual analysis adapted to the principles of documentary film and the sub-genre of found footage, a term that refers to works created from pre-exis-

ting images that have not generally been filmed by the author of the piece (Weinrichter, 2009). In the first case, the priority is to consider the modes of representation of reality, its enunciative implications, the textual organization and the relationship with the subjects represented (Nichols, 2001); with regard to found footage, the priority is to observe the operations of re-signification of the archive through its juxtaposition with other visual or sound fragments. Following Lesage's (1990) conceptualization of the aesthetic and political strategies of feminist documentary, we will also discuss the audiovisual mechanisms aimed at representing and politicizing painful and adverse female experiences, which ultimately foster affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012).

### **3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. THE COLLECTIVIZATION OF PAIN: NAGORE (HELENA TABERNA, 2010)**

Directed by Helena Taberna, *Nagore* deals with the murder of nursing student Nagore Laffage during the *San Fermín* festivities in 2008, by Diego Yllanes, a resident doctor at the University Clinic of Pamplona, after she refused to have sexual relations with him. This participatory documentary brings together the testimony of the victim's family and friends, interviews with

lawyers and representatives of the institutions that acted as popular accusation, records of feminist meetings and archive material from the media and the trial. The film adopts a chronological structure, from the discovery of the body to the verdict, which is occasionally broken up by scenes in which the young woman is remembered.

According to Taberna, the film arose from the need to "offer an affective look at the mother and her pain" (Ana Palacios, 2021). Indeed, Asún Casasola emerges as the driving character of the story and, in doing so, she also sets the tone, with her affective inflections, for a personal and political transformation derived from the collectivization of pain. If the first scenes present a suffering and isolated mother - visiting the cemetery or at home - the narrative eludes her fixation as a subject anchored in mourning. Thus, numerous shots show her in transit - driving, walking or riding a bus to attend a demonstration - which visually reinforces this shift. The dynamism provided by a camera that follows the protagonist and the predilection for the subjective point of view also invite the audience to participate in this process of awareness-raising. If, as Smail (2010) points out, the presentation of pain in documentary has tended to deny the agency of the subjects who embody it and to encourage commiseration rather than solidarity, it can be affirmed that, on the contrary, *Nagore* starts from mourning and

injury to highlight its transformative potential in collective and feminist terms.

In fact, as several participants point out, this case marked a turning point in the social union and reaction to violence against women (Gabilondo, 2017). The documentary shows how Casasola, in her multiple facets, emerged as a unifying and energizing agent in various social circles: friends of her daughter, work colleagues and local feminist groups. Fundamentally for the purposes of this article, in these encounters - occasionally presented as casual conversations - aspects of rape culture are named at a time when the term was not a popular and/or popularized analytical tool. Thus, Nagore's friends reflect on their increased fear after the event, their previous perception of rape as something that only happened in big cities, and the change in their everyday behaviors, so that, as they express, the men were forced to accompany their female friends. Meanwhile, in scenes documenting meetings of a local feminist collective, they discuss legal shortcomings, the education of women in freedom, consent or the weight given to the victim's behavior during the trial. As an indignant Casasola asserts, "they even asked me if my daughter was flirty. They questioned why she went up to his house with him that night". These processes of collective analysis lead to a series of public demonstrations that make up the bulk of the final footage. Specifically, shots are inserted from the *Lunes Lilas* movement, which emerged shortly before Nagore's murder, and which organized monthly rallies to denounce violence against women. In one of these public protests, it is

emphatically stated that "this trial is gender violence from the moment Nagore and all women were denied the ability to say no".

Not least important, the documentary also activates affective solidarity between the subjects represented on screen through scenes in which the young woman is remembered in her personal dimension. In this way, and in contrast to the dominant narratives on sexual violence, the representation of Nagore as only a victim is counteracted. In other words, it problematizes her fixation as a sign of the potentially fatal consequences that befall women in certain contexts (festivities) and at certain times (early morning). To this end, the documentary compiles testimonies from friends and family members who evoke her jovial and affectionate character, her vitality and courage. Despite the melodramatic tone of these scenes, their inclusion responds to an ethical stance. According to Taberna, when filming began, the image of Nagore "is already bloodied and that is why the executioner wins, that is why one of the lines of the documentary is who Nagore was, what this girl was, what she could have been, her views on the world" (Ana Palacios, 2021). Indeed, accounts of sexual terror have been characterized by the indiscriminate dissemination of images of merely aggrieved bodies without paying attention to their possible impact on women, thus reinforcing female control, since "the existence of the tortured body, of the physical torture inflicted on it, launches a direct threat to other women" (Barjola, 2018, pp. 177- 179).

This does not prevent the documentary from offering raw details about the murder, inclu-



ding a judicial reconstruction of the events with the accused. The sequence is disturbing, but its presence in the footage is fundamental in showing a kind of “extreme truth” (Taberna in Ana Palacios, 2021). That is, it allows the audience to assess the perception of the aggressor before and during the trial, which, as the film suggests between the lines, crystallized into a positive image based on his social class and the religious values he espoused. In this respect, it should be remembered that Yllanes was convicted of manslaughter and not murder, ruling out premeditation, a variable - the defencelessness of the victim - which, nevertheless, seems to be refuted by the judicial visual evidence that the documentary gathers. In short, this counter-narrative on sexual terror is based on empathy in the face of pain and the narrativization of collective solidarity, without ignoring the figure of the perpetrator and the different and complex factors at play when it comes to minimizing his sexual crime.

### **3.2. THE POLITICAL DISSECTION OF FEAR: *TÓDALAS MULLERES QUE COÑEZO* (XIANA DO TEIXEIRO, 2018)**

*Tódalas mulleres que coñezo* by Xiana do Teixeiro aims, as its synopsis indicates, to construct a discourse on fear and violence that neither encourages fear nor is violent. Shot in sober black and white, it includes three encounters guided by the director and arranged in an abyss. In the first, a conversation between friends

in which the filmmaker participates as an equal partner, the experiences linked to the fear of sexual violence are dissected. The recording of this dialogue is the trigger for a subsequent discussion between an intergenerational feminist group. Finally, both stories are screened in a high school to promote a debate among the students. At the end of the session, several students approach the director to point out that some of the attendees have not been completely honest. With this coda, the film draws attention to the lack of awareness of the issue and points out “that there is still a long way to go in terms of exposure and debate around the problem of fear” (Pérez Pereiro, 2019, p. 212).

As can be inferred from the summary, this documentary is conceived as a tool for analyzing rape culture through collective dynamics that obey a conscious act of social cohesion in order to arrive at a political analysis of rape (Lesage, 1978). The film thus links up with the aesthetic and political strategies of the first feminist documentary that transferred the dynamics of consciousness-raising groups to the screen, conferring a political force to the conversation seen, in this context, as a tool of resistance and liberation (Lesage, 1990). Regarding these audiovisual strategies, do Teixeiro has pointed out that “dialogue is a powerful learning tool with which to question the audience, since once the film has shown the transversality of sexual violence, it generates a possibility to pick up the debate” (Dopico, 2018, n.p.).

If rape culture constructs the public space, as opposed to the domestic one, as the sphere

where women are potential victims, the film subverts this logic. It is in a square in Lugo where the friends, while drinking beer, talk about the moments in which, throughout their lives, they have suffered different types of macho harassment. In order to generate a climate of complicity and security during the recording, a minimum filming crew made up exclusively of women was used (Dopico, 2018). It should also be noted that the planning supports this sense of trust and respect. As Ledo (2020) remarks, the camera lingers on gesture and emotion, panning from speakers to listeners and then framing the whole group of friends. These movements contribute to the wrapping up of testimonies that, under another gaze, could be spectacularized, dismissed or ignored. Moreover, the shot - counter shot constructs relationships based on emotional interpellation, so that the narration of a violent experience is responded to visually with a gesture of indignation or empathy on the part of the interlocutors. This relational logic, which governs the film as a whole, emphasizes the existence of an affective dissonance that starts from a polyhedral analysis of fear and leads to a mutual recognition of patriarchal injustice. In other words, the documentary device employed by do Teixeira generates a space conducive to sharing adverse experiences that, from a group analysis, allow us to identify rage as a legitimate response and to delve deeper into the structural reasons for sexual violence.

Indeed, the first conversation eloquently exposes how media narratives about rape take effect. These women, born in the early 1980s, highlight the impact that the coverage of the Alcàsser crime, considered the epitome of trash TV in Spain, had on their lives. Based on

this case, the director points out the double dimension of sexual violence: "It is a reality and it is a story that circulates, because women are attacked, but many, many more, the majority, are not attacked, but we live with the tension that it could happen at any moment". A perception that the author exemplifies by recalling the confession of a friend who thought that "it was impossible to become an adult without being raped". In line with Barjola (2018), the documentary shows that rape culture is a discourse that is embodied and how its dissemination, with particular emphasis on liminal spaces, the brutal violence inflicted on bodies and the sobering discourse constructed on the basis of the teenager who stayed at home that night became the prolongation of a symbolic sanction aimed at all women.

As has been advanced, this first conversation is rich in nuances about perceptions of fear in the face of sexual violence and how responses to it are conditioned by a patriarchal system that manifests itself in the family, in close social circles or in legal institutions. In its continuous transition from the personal to the political, from the experiential to the analytical, several aspects of rape culture are brought to light by *Tódalas mulleres*. Firstly, the role of the family in inculcating gender roles that present male sexuality as uncontrollable or deviant, so that self-control falls to women. Secondly, the female friends relate how the perception of fear is strongly determined by the type of places they walk through, poorly lit or busy public spaces (a forest or a street) and the consequent lack of autonomy. Thirdly, they examine the paradoxes of a society that educates women in fear but minimizes these aggressions, thus underpinning a femininity associated with victimiza-

tion, overprotection and paranoia, without the existence of clear tools to confront violence. It is not in vain that the participants state that the burden of reporting - and in some cases events described as low intensity - also falls on the victim, so that the subsequent stigmatization becomes another mechanism of powerlessness in the face of rape culture.

On the other hand, the film's abyssal disposition encourages an intersectional reflection. In the second section, new perspectives are introduced based on the age and the family situation of the participants. Thus, it is eloquent to hear women affirming that sexual terror did not have so much weight in their youth, but that it is present now, pointing to the media as responsible - greater visibility or over-dimension - and pointing to its ultimate function as a key mechanism of female control. In another twist, several mothers express their concern for their children's education, so that they do not reproduce an aggressive masculinity. In short, through its reflexive and intergenerational approach, the film not only accurately and courageously dissects rape culture, but also imprints important historical nuances on its modulation. Thus, it is worth noting that this generation gap also illuminates, or so it can be inferred, some political, cultural and social changes that fostered the narratives of sexual terror, to counteract, ultimately, the advance of feminism during the 1990s (Barjola, 2018).

### 3.3. DISOBEDIENT RAGE: LA COSA VUESTRA (MARÍA CAÑAS, 2018)

If in *Tódalas mulleres* the affective dissonance is produced through the confrontation of testimonies, in *La cosa vuestra* (María Cañas, 2018) it is achieved through montage. In fact, Cañas is one of the main representatives in Spain of found footage and her practice is characterized by a carnivalesque humor when it comes to questioning media and nationalist discourses, a predilection for audiovisual detritus using the vast audiovisual heritage offered by the Internet and a growing feminist awareness (Fernández Labayen and Rodríguez Ortega, 2013; Oroz, 2013; Oroz, 2014; Álvarez, 2022). Produced within the framework of the *X Films* project of the Punto de Vista Festival, this documentary aims to show the most caricatured, atavistic, and cruel side of the *Sanfermines*. Although it does not focus exclusively on sexual violence, as the author has stated:

[*La cosa vuestra*] is an empowerment of the woman and the animal in the face of the carpetovetonic culture of murder and rape. In the face of violence, it is an ode to feminist self-defense and "*risastencia*", which is humor of all colors and flavours, the agitation of connected crowds, as strategies of insurgency (Cañas, 2018).

In her heterodox approach to *San Fermin* festival, Cañas exposes the tensions and con-

traditions of a festival in which the normal functioning of the city - a traditional city where ultra-orthodox Catholic groups carry great weight - is suspended, without this implying that everyone can enjoy the celebration with the same kind of behavior (Moreno and Camps, 2020). The film is structured through a series of oppositions between the sacred and the profane, the autochthonous and the tourist attraction, the rituals that imply a high degree of masculinity such as the *encierro* (running of the bulls), and the anti-bullfighting and anti-sexual violence demonstrations. Regarding this last point, it is important to point out that, in the context of this festival, the crowd is conducive to sexual violence. That is, women tend to be harassed in front of a public gaze that approves and ignores this violence -thus becoming a manifestation of expressive rather than instrumental male violence (Segato, 2016)- and those who attend the *Sanfermines* consider sexual harassment to be a plausible toll to enjoy leisure time (Moreno and Camps, 2020).

It is the last section of the documentary, about six minutes long, that focuses on sexual violence to examine gender performances in public space. If the bulk of the film had already made explicit how male bodies inhabit the festivity from a socially accepted excess, this segment begins with a succession of shots that show men totally unconcerned and lying hungover in parks, alleyways or on the bonnet of a car. This is followed by three sequences. The first reproduces WhatsApp messages from the group *La Manada* that the five rapists had with their colleagues, the second shows images of the trial of Diego Yllanes taken from the film *Nagore*, and

the last inserts feminist demonstrations against male violence.

This segment is shocking for its content and for its arrangement in a film which until then had shown the most grotesque side of the *Sanfermines*, using parodies of the comedian José Mota or images of a children's home in Uganda where the children play at the running of the bulls. The comedy and laughter that had marked the spectator's response, freezes at one point to give way to the astonishment of seeing on screen messages from *La Manada*, such as "These holidays are a trial by fire to be a wolf" or the description of the gang rape as "a whore of a trip". By highlighting these exchanges, Cañas emphasizes what Segato (2016, p. 18) calls "the male sexual mandate", which is not linked to sexual satisfaction, but to a precept among peers as proof of belonging to the group. For its part, the sequence that recovers Nagore's case focuses on the perpetrator, contrasting images of the trial in which, as the media highlighted, he was shown crying with others that show the excessive inquisitiveness and coldness of the murder, in line with the reading of Taberna's documentary already discussed.

From this contrast, *La cosa vuestra* proposes an emotional leap that goes from paralysis to indignation, to end in the social collectivization of rage through feminist practices. This last issue had already been announced with the previous insertion of images such as the poster "Fear is going to change sides" or the dedication "to all the witches you couldn't burn", illustrated with a sequence from *Las brujas de Zugarramurdi* (Alex de la Iglesia, 2013). It is worthwhile look at

the first slogan that alludes to the performative techniques of violence employed by activist groups in the Basque Country and Navarre (Medeak, 2015) whose aim is to appropriate the moments and spaces that rape culture prescribes as pernicious for women by presenting themselves as a threat to male sovereignty over them. To the rhythm of the assertive song *Se acabó* (It's over) by María Jiménez, the film contrasts images of the crowds celebrating the end of the festivity - the *Pobre de mí* - with those of feminist demonstrations of great performative force thanks to the use of black dresses, hoods and torches and slogans such as "Machete for the macho" or "The night and the parties belong to us". As is also the case in the performance of *LasTesis* (Martin and Shaw, 2021), these demonstrations are an act of disobedience, contravening expectations of women and their behavior in public spaces. In an epilogue, this challenge to the patriarchal symbolic order is emphasized by showing interventions on the famous Osborne bull: painted in the colors of the LGBTBIQ+ flag or, directly, castrated.

However, the filmmaker deliberately avoids a closed and, above all, victimizing discourse that implies a domestication of female sexuality. As an ironic counterpoint, *La cosa vuestra* includes fragments of humorous videos that reverse the roles of street harassment with the men being harassed - obviously, the response of the harassed is not fear, but surprise and jocularly - and introduces provocative testimonies that avoid drawing hasty conclusions about the objectification of women and their agency.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

From openly feminist positions, the documentaries discussed are conceived as tools for the analysis of rape culture, which record women's experiences, their media and judicial treatment and their impact on the perception of public space in terms of gender. These works stage subjectivities marked by adverse emotions - pain, fear and rage - constituting them as catalyst of a collective knowledge and response that goes through pedagogy, intervention in the public space and the questioning of the social and legal frameworks that shape rape culture. By adopting a dialectical logic based on the confrontation of disparate testimonies or images, these works also stand out for their attention to the ethical and political dimensions of the representation of sexual violence. Their positions are different - and in some cases they do not hesitate to include images that may be violent for the audience - but they coincide in contemplating the offense on female bodies as a trigger for a collective and political response.

It is in this sense that, following Barjola (2018), these documentaries have been considered as examples of counter-representations of sexual terror that link both with pioneering feminist documentary politics and strategies (Lesage, 1978 and 1990) and with current state art manifestations that activate feminist or feminist rage (Gómez Nicolau *et al*, 2021). Specifically, these films reflect on the media's treatment of rape, which is described as stereotypical or sized, and, in the face of this, they seek to avoid female victimization. Women are represented

as subjects of the discourse who, on the basis of their own experiences, also formulate desires for social change and personal freedom. However, far from simplifying the impact and logic of rape culture, this type of assertiveness contemplates fear and pain. As one of the participants in *Tódalas mulleres* relates, there remains a tension between politicized reason (female empowerment) - and the subsequent possibility of an emancipatory future (freedom of movement and action) - and the dictates of fear. As we have sought to point out, following Hemmings (2012), experiences of discomfort cannot be dissociated from collective analysis and doing.

No less importantly, these films subvert the prescription of public space as an unrestricted male domain. Thus, they include gestures of collective and symbolic appropriation of the street, be they collective gatherings that connect with consciousness-raising groups or collective strategies that are subversive and disobedient with respect to established narratives about women's presence in public space.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the historical value of these tapes. Taberna has valued the role

of *Nagore* as an archive of sexual violence in Spain, so that when the *La Manada* case occurred, the media and feminist groups, although in different terms, were able to refer to another case of sexual violence (Ana Palacios, 2021). This is not a trivial issue, as the media's tendency to analyze each rape as a single event depoliticizes sexual violence, separating it from its structural context (Barjola, 2018). Through oral or archival recounting, Cañas' and do Teixeira's documentaries recall brutal crimes and their effects on the public sphere, contributing to this historicization. In sum, like many contemporary feminist art practices, these documentaries also advocate (re)establishing links of women's struggles against sexual violence and outlining a necessary feminist history of sexual injury that is not paralyzing but mobilizing.

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# OBRA DIGITAL

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# Representations of violence against women in the series ARTE H24. 24 hours in the life of a woman

**Representaciones de la violencia contra las mujeres en la serie ARTE H24. 24 horas en la vida de una mujer**

# 3

ARTICLE



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## Abstract

This article explores the representation of forms of violence against women through the analysis of two episodes of the audiovisual series ARTE H24. *24 hours in the life of a woman* (2021). It offers a contextualization of European legislation and a review of concepts such as alternative cinema and feminist gaze. Through a series of indicators extracted from the most relevant publications, it provides insight into how this series offers innovative models of representation for forms of violence that are sometimes not perceived as such.

## KEYWORDS

Audiovisual, feminism, violence against women, female gaze.

## Resumen

Este artículo explora la representación de formas de violencia contra las mujeres a través del análisis de dos episodios de la serie audiovisual ARTE H24. *24 horas en la vida de una mujer* (2021). Ofrece una contextualización de la legislación europea y una revisión de conceptos tales como cinematografía alternativa y mirada feminista (*female gaze*). A través de una serie de indicadores extraídos de las publicaciones más relevantes, permite conocer la forma en que esta serie ofrece modelos innovadores de representación para formas de violencia que, en ocasiones, no se perciben como tales.

## PALABRAS CLAVE:

Audiovisual, feminismo, violencia contra las mujeres, mirada feminista.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article studies the representations of violence against women through the collective audiovisual production ARTE H24. *24 hours in the life of a woman* (<https://www.arte.tv/es/videos/RC-021432/h24/>). This series of 24 short films made from scripts written by 24 female writers and performed by 24 female actresses is a 2021 European production between ARTE and *Les Batelières Productions* based on real events that highlight violence against women in everyday life. The original idea was conceived by Nathalie Masduraud and Valérie Urrea and aims to denounce the various forms of sexual harassment, abuse and violence to which women are potentially exposed at any time. Beyond each particular case, this series shows as a whole a systemic problem that affects all European nations. This article seeks to answer this research question: What is the representation of violence against women in cases where it is exercised

through psychological or verbal harassment? To this end, it presents a brief note on European legislation on violence against women, selects and analyzes two episodes of the series and offers conclusions that include answers to the research question posed.

### 1.1. THE ARTE SERIES H24. 24 HOURS IN THE LIFE OF A WOMAN

This series has been chosen as one of the possible examples of collective productions by women that have come to light in recent years at the international level. From the American continent, to mention just one case, a variety of audiovisual productions have been produced collectively, often with a clear feminist intention (see, among others, Burgardt, Anderson, Pérez Escalá, Dagatti, Mercado, Bianco & Medley (2022); and Cervera, Kerfa and Ramírez-Soto (2022)). The choice of this audiovisual production is due to the intention of exploring a new

way of representing violence against women on the European continent. Violence against women, in its various manifestations, is a problem that, far from disappearing, remains irreducible and takes on new forms through cyber bullying. As explained in the following section, which focuses on legislation, regulations have not been sufficiently or uniformly developed to respond to this serious social scourge. On the other hand, this series represents an original formal model, with visual and discursive innovations, which deserves a detailed analysis. It is a contribution that advances the intervention of women in the European audiovisual field.

This series was conceived from the outset as a European project. ARTE (*Association Relative à la Télévision Européenne*), which was born in 1991 from a Franco-German alliance to promote European cultural production, has as its main objective “the transmission and broadcasting of television content related to European current affairs, the transmission of the values of the European Union and cultural exchange between the countries that make up the European Union” (ARTE, 2022). Justine Henochsberg and Julie Guesnon Amarante, from the production company *Les Batelières*, confirm that ARTE wanted to give this “more European and more ambitious” dimension to the H24 project (Faure, 2021), which involves women writers, actresses and directors from eleven countries: France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Spain, Greece, Italy, Poland, Finland, Norway and Greenland. In addition, the short films were shot in different languages and are available subtitled in French, German, English, Spanish, Polish and Italian. The creators state: “We discovered that the stories were similar and intertwined in France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Finland and Greenland. It was essential to integrate this circulation between European words and make these literary texts heard in the original language” (Baz’Art,

2021). Although there is no specific data on the dissemination of this series, ARTE’s audience has been growing steadily, with 18 million followers on its social networks (Franceinfo, 2021).

The following are brief notes on the presence of violence against women on the European continent and on legislation, in order to contextualize the subsequent analysis.

## **1.2 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT FROM THE LEGAL PERSPECTIVE**

Violence against women is an established fact in the European Union: one in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and more than half of women have suffered sexual harassment (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). Alongside this, there is a mistaken or distorted perception of the problem: 20% of men aged between 14 and 29 in Spain believe that this type of violence is an ideological invention, compared to 9.3% of women who believe this to be the case (Rodríguez San Julián *et al.*, 2021). A recent study confirms that young men and women aged 10-25 say they do not tolerate violence against women, but excuse and justify it on the basis of particular situational contexts (Edwards *et al.*, 2022).

It is clear that, despite regulatory advances to combat violence against women, its regulation is insufficient to provide an effective response to the problem. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN, 1979), which is the first international legal instrument on the subject, did not contain explicit references to violence against women. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against wo-

men and domestic violence, known as the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, 2011), is considered a milestone, being the first international-regional legal instrument to specifically address violence against women in all its manifestations (physical, sexual, psychological and economic). While all EU member states have signed the Istanbul Convention, its ratification<sup>1</sup> and the adaptation of domestic legislation to the obligations undertaken continues to be irregular, as evidenced by the reports of GREVIO, the body of independent experts in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Convention by the Parties.

At the EU level, the EU does not yet have any legally binding instruments that are specifically designed to protect women from violence. The fact that each member state has adopted different approaches to the problem (Shreeves & Prpic, 2019) has led to a disparity in legal definitions, criminal treatment and levels of victim protection (European Commission, 2021). This has made it difficult to establish common standards, as well as to develop a single, solid European doctrine on the issue (Freixes & Román, 2014). The European Parliament has called for the inclusion of violence against women as a Eurocrime (European Parliament, 2021) and regrets that this option has not been included (European Parliament, 2022) in the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against

women and domestic violence (European Commission, 2022). Nevertheless, the European Commission hopes, with this Proposal for a Directive, to close the regulatory gaps and the ineffectiveness of the existing measures for the prevention and protection of violence, as well as for access to justice for victims (European Commission, 2022b).

### 1.3 ALTERNATIVE FILMMAKING, FEMINIST GAZE AND INTERSECTIONALITY

The development of feminist film theory has been linked to the advance of feminist and film theories, as well as to the changes that have been taking place in the industry. The *H24* series is a clear example of alternative filmmaking; these audiovisual productions are made from an intersectional perspective that is in direct opposition to the so-called male gaze (Mulvey, 1989). Instead, it chooses a female gaze (French, 2021), to denounce the ubiquitous presence of gender-based violence in the lives of European women. Although the authors who have studied this concept use the translation "*mirada femenina*" for female gaze (see, for example, García (2007) and Tello (2016), this article prefers the term "*mirada feminista*" in the Spanish version, as it is more consistent, as it is more consistent with the message conveyed by the works analyzed.

Claire Johnston (1999) was one of the first authors to propose the idea of an alternative cinematography under the name of counter-cinema, as a way of questioning the dominant ideology that reproduces gender stereotypes and relegates women's desires to a second place. Although this article analyses a series and not a feature film as such, this notion can be extended, as the premises are the same in this type of audiovisual productions. Female images in commercial cinema, in most cases, do not re-

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<sup>1</sup>Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia have signed but not ratified the Istanbul Convention. Poland ratified it in 2015, but the Polish government announced in July 2020 its intention to leave it (European Commission, 2022a). On the other hand, the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention is at a critical point. Although EU ratification is seen as a political rather than a legal gesture, the European Parliament insists that it be done urgently, that its ratification be promoted by all member states and calls on the Council and the Commission "to ensure that the Convention is fully integrated into the legislative and policy framework of the Union" (European Parliament, 2019).

flect the reality of women at all, but are myths constructed by patriarchal ideology and manipulated for the satisfaction of male desires. To achieve this alternative cinematography, she adds:

Any revolutionary strategy must question the representation of reality; it is not enough to discuss the oppression of women within the text of the film; one must also interrogate the language of cinema/representation of reality, so as to affect a rupture between ideology and text. (Johnston, 1999, p. 37).

Laura Mulvey's (1989) contribution is similar to Johnston's when she points out that alternative cinema is a radical proposal "in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film" (p.15). She argues that in Hollywood cinema, the gaze is masculine and reveals the intimate connection between the male gaze, the patriarchal unconscious and the pleasure of the spectator. For Mulvey, the position of the spectator offered by cinema is masculine, with female characters as mere objects of male desire. From the perspective of the male characters with whom the viewer is encouraged to identify, the vision of the female body represents two things: to-be-looked-at-ness (the woman as a spectacle to be contemplated) and the horror of female phallic lack, which evokes the anxiety of castration. Feminist film theory has questioned and qualified these assertions, and while Mulvey (2001) has reviewed her own contributions, other authors have also advanced studies in this area (Kaplan, 1983; de Lauretis, 1984; Silverman, 1988; Dirse, 2013 and Deck, 2019, among others). Recently, Nora Wenderhold (2022) has reflected on this gaze in the series analysed here, in an unpublished text with a different objective and a different selection of episodes. Therefore, this article explores for the first time the episodes included here, with the intention of revealing

the representations of violence against women when there is no physical aggression as such. It serves the purpose of this article to point out that the two fundamental aspects for the articulation of an alternative feminist filmmaking are the female gaze and the intersectional perspective.

The way to question and reverse the dominant ideology and aesthetics is only possible through the articulation of the female gaze. This gaze in film is a broad concept that encompasses diverse perspectives linked to filmmaking, production, choice of subject, presentation and performance of the protagonist, audience and audience identification, among others. Megan Deck (2019) details some of its features: firstly, she states that when women create films about characters who are women, they tend to be represented more realistically and multidimensionally on screen than when they are written by men. It is therefore necessary to analyze the protagonist characters, their visual representation and the point of view from which they are presented; she concludes that the feminist gaze focuses on the protagonist's point of view and the transmission of her emotions. Lisa French (2021), points out that the fundamental purpose is to make women's subjectivities visible and also defends the projection of the emotional world as a characteristic of this perspective, since it gives visibility to women's subjectivity. These readings are close to the one proposed by the theoretical current of the affective turn, which highlights the cultural and socially constructed nature of affective experiences and, conversely, reveals the affective nature of social and political events and discourses (Ahmed, 2004).

Although we speak of the female gaze, we must insist on the idea that it does not exist as such, but that we always speak of a multiplicity of gazes, since, as French (2021) points out: "each

woman has her own unique gaze, which reveals how she is formed as a woman through historical, psychological and cultural experiences that modulate her life, body and thought in her aesthetic approach" (p. 56). This is why the feminist gaze in an alternative filmmaking has to be intersectional, as Christine Gledhill (1984) and numerous voices have warned (Young, 2006; Hooks, 2014; Collins, 2016, among others). It alludes to the need to project on film the ways in which categories such as gender, sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age and disability have been produced and perpetuated, both to denounce stereotypes and the maintenance of forms of representation that follow neo-colonialist parameters, and to propose alternative models.

In any case, it should be noted that Europe is the place where the series is set and this analysis focuses on the European discourse, when today, thanks to the dissemination through SVOD (Subscription Video on Demand) platforms, which provides access to very diverse international productions, the contribution in feminist terms of this series is just one more in the scenario of a polyphony and coalition at the international level.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The analysis sample focuses on two short films in which the protagonist is a young woman, sometimes an adolescent, and analyzes the accusation of violence against women in everyday life through an alternative cinematography with a feminist perspective. The chosen episodes show what could be called less serious episodes in the graduation of violence; that is to say, they refer to incidents that in many cases are common and do not seem to be serious in European societies. Fernández-Castrillo and Lara (2022), state that "symbolic violence", which res-

ponds to the two episodes studied here, is "an invisible violence exercised on bodies without the need for physical impositions"<sup>2</sup> (p. 4). By being shown alongside other episodes in which the violence is much more severe, more physical and dramatic, they remind the audience that violence against women exists in various forms and to varying degrees, but that it always affects the sufferer.

These episodes show diversity, but at the same time portray similarity through the psychological and physical damage experienced by the protagonists, regardless of their social status, age, race or level of education. This was one of the fundamental ideas in the conception of the series, as Valérie Urrea explains: "For me it was very important in this series to be able to show that very banal everyday things are also violence. That a small thought can ruin your life for days and days, it really hurts you"<sup>3</sup> (Devillers, 2021, n.p.). These short films support the message that the fight against gender-based violence is not a thing of the past; on the contrary, it is a pressing problem in European societies today. As Peltzer and Keppler (2015) point out, film and television audiovisual products are social phenomena that correspond, in many respects, to our everyday lives. Through their representations, they generate models of understanding that decisively change our culture and society. This is the selection of short films:

1.- *Concerto #4* (<https://www.arte.tv/es/videos/090629-004-A/h24-24-horas-en-la-vi-da-de-una-mujer/>).

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2 Es una violencia invisible ejercida sobre los cuerpos sin necesidad de aplicarles imposiciones físicas.

3 C'était vraiment important pour moi dans cette série, poursuit Valérie Urréa, de pouvoir montrer que des choses très banales du quotidien sont aussi des violences. Qu'une petite réflexion peut vous pourrir la vie pendant des jours et des jours, vous faire du mal, vraiment.



2.- *Le chignon* (<https://www.arte.tv/es/videos/090629-013-A/h24-24-horas-en-la-vida-de-una-mujer/>).

In order to analyze the representations of violence in these contexts, we start from the aforementioned theoretical contributions; in other words, the aim is to denounce the inequality and oppression suffered by women, but also to pay attention to the way in which visual aspects and representation, instead of reproducing stereotypes and inequalities at a formal level, articulate new ways of representation. As Fernández-Castrillo and Lara, (2022) point out, the symbolic violence of cinematic discourse is constructed through the elements of *mise-en-scène* and is therefore not only found in the plot. The methodology of analysis contemplates the indicators that configure the ideation, realization, production, distribution, staging and reception of the film from the perspective of the feminist gaze. These indicators respond in a broad way to the questions posed by feminist theory: what is being told, who is telling it and how and for what purpose is it being told (Fueyro and de Andrés, 2017). The indicators have been developed on the basis of the theoretical proposals around the female gaze detailed above (French, 2021; Deck, 2019 and Wenderhold, 2022), and will be reflected in the two analysis sheets in the corresponding episodes.

### 3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. CONCERTO #4

This episode translates into images the message already denounced by Liz Kelly and Jill Ra-

dford (1990) in “Nothing really happened: the invalidation of women’s experiences of sexual violence”. They argue that women are too often encouraged to minimize sexual violence and society tends to invalidate their experiences and emotions, so that it is the women themselves who end up claiming that “nothing really happened”:

When women say “nothing really happened” -a frequent remark that pre-

TABLE 1: CONCERTO #4	
1. Indicadors on authorship and production	
Script: Siri Hustvedt (USA/Norway) Director: Clémence Poésy (France) Production: Valérie Urrea and Nathalie Masduraud Running time: 4'15"	
2. Thematic indicators	
Theme: Harassment without physical violence, but with psychological impact Emotions: Shame, guilt, anger	
3. Indicators relating to the main character	
Sex: Woman. Actress: Céleste Brunnquell Age: Adolescent female Race: White Appearance: Absence of sexualisation Agent/Passive: Agent	
4. Indicators relating to perspective	
Voice: Main Character's monologue Point of view: Reality and projection of the protagonist's mental images.	
5. Indicators related to impact	
Final message and impact: Violence against women exists in many forms and has consequences also in cases where apparently “nothing has happened”.	

ppen when we are followed or chased down the street, when male partners insist on sex or inflict systematic emotional abuse. We do not feel safe; our trust is betrayed (Kelly & Radford, 1990, p. 42).

The episode narrates, through monologue, the emotions felt by a white teenage girl after her encounter with her cello teacher the day before. The consequences and the effect this encounter has had on the young girl are shown as soon as she wakes up. Her first thoughts are: "Stop shaking, how stupid", and she adds: "Nothing happened". From then on, the teacher's invitation to have a drink is narrated and, despite the fact that she did not want to go, she accepts out of politeness, because she is her father's age and he is also a teacher. From that moment on, the harassment takes the form of the man's insistence that she go home with him to listen to the music of a piece they are rehearsing, which the protagonist rejects and runs home.

This short film flatly rejects the interpretation that nothing happened. This manifests itself in several ways. Firstly, the monologue serves a dual function: on the one hand, it narrates the scene to the audience, who hear what happened through her words (for example, she knows that the teacher was trying to convince her to go home while looking at her chest). On the other hand, it articulates the thoughts and emotions of the teenager, who confesses to having felt shame and guilt, and who still feels an enormous discomfort that is manifested in the trembling she mentions upon waking up and in her serious, grief-stricken face. Visually, the harassment is shown in an innovative and

effective way, as the man's presence is physically manifested and we can see him sitting in the kitchen while she eats breakfast. The man's hand intervenes when she plays the cello, producing a discordant sound, or holds the toothbrush while she cleans her teeth. The presence of the man, in particular his hand, is an intrusion into the private space that conveys to the audience the mark that the harassment has left on the protagonist. She insists: "Nothing happened. That's what people say. He didn't do anything. Men are like that. They behave like that all the time. Nothing happens," mirroring the trend noted by Kelly and Radford.

The innocence of the teenage girl is underlined through a physical characterization that is radically removed from sexualization, with her face free of all traces of make-up and the light colors of her clothes and her surroundings.

The reference to her father's age to refer to the teacher brings the episode closer to pedophilia, as the protagonist could easily be a minor. However, this is not the fundamental message of the short film, but it aims to show such harassment with dire consequences even when no physical attack is consummated. This is forcefully stated, both narratively and visually in the final shots, in which the protagonist walks down the street and the musical instrument on her back is visually replaced by the man. This is a real physical burden from which she cannot free herself. Her thoughts, at the end, radically alter the expression that forces her to invalidate the experience of harassment: "Nothing

### Image 1

*Concerto #4*



happened. And I feel like crying? They say it's nothing to make me nothing. It's something. They're liars!"

Therefore, this episode challenges the widespread tendency to invalidate experiences of sexual harassment and violence and insists on showing their consequences.

### 3.2 EL MOÑO

This episode denounces harassment from an intersectional perspective, which takes into account the gender and race of the protagonist. Wenderhold studies this short film and quotes

Kimberle Crenshaw, who reminds us that a truly intersectional perspective cannot be limited to the mere insertion of a black protagonist in any given context, but must take into account the particular characteristics that affect the situation (Crenshaw, 1991). The protagonist in this episode is a black female university law student who, through her monologue, describes herself as someone who likes to think and who

was told as a child that she should be a lawyer. She enrolled in law, she says, to “have the right

**TABLE 2: EL MOÑO**

1. Indicators relating to authorship and production
Script: Agnès Desarthe (France) Directed by: Nathalie Masduraud and Valérie Urréa (France) Production: Nathalie Masduraud and Valérie Urréa Running time: 3'37".
2. Thematic indicators
Theme: Harassment through mention of physical appearance Emotions: Bewilderment and anger
3. Indicators relating to the main character
Sex: Female Age: Young university student Race: Black Appearance: Absence of sexualization Agent/Passive: Agent
4. Indicators relating to perspective
Voice: Main character's monologue Point of view: Recounting of the episode along with a sword fight.
5. Indicators of impact
Final message and impact: Sexism and racism can be transposed to a time to impede a young girl's academic progress through something as seemingly harmless as a compliment regarding hairstyle.

to have an opinion and to contradict”. The episode takes place in one of the classes in which the teacher, a white man, asks the protagonist to defend her point of view in a debate in which he holds the opposite view. As the young woman stands in front of the class, the shots show a group of students, men and women of different races, conveying a reality of the French nation in which racial diversity is a fact. The young woman is happy to be able to defend her ideas, as she has prepared her case well, and adds: “I have my arguments ready, sharp, ordered”.

From this moment on, in parallel to the debate, the images reproduce a fight with large swords between the young woman and the professor. At the moment when the professor hesitates

and the protagonist knows that she “has the upper hand”, the debate is interrupted with the phrase: “That bun looks good on you”, which, as Wenderhold (2022) rightly points out, introduces an element of objectification, in a leap from the intellectual plane to that of physical appearance. Faced with the young woman’s bewilderment and her attempt to return to the debate, the professor insists: “Your hair. It’s up. It suits you”. The protagonist admits that she had to smile out of politeness, because that is the usual response when a woman receives a compliment, but she regrets it: “I should have called him out”, but what happens is that this “submissive smile” makes the professor the winner of a “rigged debate”. From that moment on her voice dwindles, it is barely audible, and she ends the debate as best she can. In the present moment she reflects on what happened and questions her actions; she even claims that she should have slapped him. Her conclusion, however, reflects a situation that is unfair and difficult to resolve, as she is aware that if she externalizes her anger she also loses, so she can only hold her gaze before returning to her seat.

Again, this short film projects an everyday situation in many women’s lives that could equally well be summed up in the phrase “nothing really happened”, which invalidates experiences of harassment or, in this case, verbal violence. This tendency has been confirmed in a recent publication by Cullen-Rosenthal and Fileborn (2022), in which the results show that the majority of participants in a study on the harm of verbal harassment in the form of compliments are in most cases minimized. The beginning of this episode, however, gives a clear warning of how wrong this interpretation is, as the first words the young woman utters are the following: “Something is not right. There is something unacceptable”. The unacceptable unfolds in several

## Image 2

*Le chignon*



ways in this episode. Firstly, the compliment or praise focused on physical appearance, looks or hairstyle, is something that serves to construct hegemonic masculinities and femininities from a very early age, as Eliasson, Isaksson and Laflame (2007) have shown. The reference to up-do hair in this case as more attractive than loose hair, being a black woman, can be interpreted as a sign of approval of an appearance that avoids showing what is considered to be curly, unruly or different hair from that of white European women. Wenderhold (2022), states that Afro hair is still perceived as untamed or wild, so that the teacher's approval in a way flatters the submissiveness of the hair in a bun, which will lead to that "submissive" smile and the dejection of the young woman's intervention in terms of intellectual debate. Finally, her reflection on the harmfulness of showing her anger explicitly will only disadvantage her,

which also points to the perception of violence or irrelevance that both the teacher and the students may have and which affects a young black girl.

## 4. RESULTS

The results obtained confirm the characterization of the H24 series as an alternative cinematography with a feminist perspective, and the data obtained from the indicators of these two selected short films can be extrapolated to the rest of the episodes that make up the series. The 24 short films are based on scripts written by women and are also directed and produced by women. All the protagonists are women and they are the ones who express their thoughts, emotions and feelings through a monologue. Women's perspective is favored. The sexualization of the female body is avoided in all cases

and an intersectional perspective is promoted. The feminist viewpoint shown in this series aims to avoid stereotypes associated with violence against women and denounces the harassment that women suffer in everyday life. This is how Valérie Urrea, one of the creators, puts it: "Our series is a call to resistance, to be able to reflect, to respond, to testify, to speak (...) It is also a way of recovering our stories"<sup>4</sup> (Baýt-Darcourt, 2021, n.p.).

The two episodes analyzed choose situations from the everyday life of young women which, on many occasions, are not perceived as violent, as there is a tendency to invalidate this characterization. The protagonists manage to convey, through their words, gestures and emotions, the denunciation of verbal and psychological harassment as forms of violence. For all these reasons, this series has the potential to influence the audience and create gender awareness by conveying the idea that violence is very present in the daily lives of European women, regardless of their age, race, or cultural and economic level. The protagonists, far from showing submissive or complicit attitudes towards this structural violence, rebel and show attitudes of denunciation and rebellion, which translates visually into an innovative cinematography that opposes the dominance of the male gaze. As Fernández-Castrillo and Lara, (2022) point out, if cinema often has the capacity to provide a positive or justified image of the violence implied by male domination, "we must understand that it can perform the opposite operation: configure rhetorical strategies that highlight the unacceptability of this muffled and insensitive violence" (p. 5).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The answer to the research question concludes that the two episodes analyzed provide an innovative representation of episodes of violence against women in cases where there is no explicit physical violence. The analysis confirms that these short films are representative of an alternative cinematography with a female gaze, which is doubly shown both in their content and in their visual and narrative treatment.

The way in which this production has been described and characterized confirms this response:

Thus, the H24 series turns out to be a double manifesto: a feminist manifesto and an aesthetic manifesto. 24 women writers signed 24 stories of violence specifically against women. 24 actresses bring these voices to the screen in short films that follow each other relentlessly, hour by hour, following the 24 hours in the life of a woman<sup>5</sup> (Devillers, 2021, n.p.).

The only academic study that exists on this series concludes along the same lines. Wenderhold (2022) states that the directors apply a feminist approach to the issue of sexual harassment of women, deployed not only through the stories but also through the production process and the staging of each episode.

One of the limitations of this article is restricting the analysis to two episodes, since this selection has allowed a detailed analysis of the indicators, but it does not provide a study of the

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4 Notre série est un appel à la résistance, à pouvoir réfléchir, répondre, témoigner, prendre la parole (...) C'est aussi une façon de se réapproprier nos histoires.

5 La série H24 s'avère-t-elle un double manifeste : manifeste féministe et manifeste esthétique. 24 écrivaines ont signé 24 récits de violences spécifiquement faites aux femmes. 24 actrices portent ces voix à l'écran dans des courts métrages qui s'enchaînent sans répit, heure par heure, cloutant 24 heures de la vie d'une femme.

series as a whole, nor is it possible to detail issues related to the response of the audience. Nevertheless, some reflections can be provided on this topic.

It should be noted that not all experiences of violence against women are reflected, nor are all European - let alone international - realities represented. Despite the effort made to include an intersectional perspective, there is a greater number of texts and episodes from countries such as France as opposed to the absence of other European national realities. Despite all this, the series is an original and ambitious example, produced with a clearly feminist intention, and represents a remarkable effort in the advancement of women's rights and freedoms.

The creation of a series that reveals and denounces cases of violence against women can contribute in the future to the generation of a feminist identity at a European level that develops a critical spirit and resistance to harassment, discrimination and abuse. The creators affirm that the stories have generated debate since the first screenings reserved for the teams and their families, and this debate has spread to other areas. As a result, the creators say: "Our greatest gift: seeing the series become an object of awareness to accompany this liberation more broadly<sup>6</sup>". Future studies focused on the reception and the reactions of European audiences will contribute to answering this question.

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6 Notre plus beau cadeau: voir la série devenir un objet de sensibilisation pour accompagner plus largement cette libération.

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# OBRA DIGITAL

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# Representation of Arab Muslim women in the series *La víctima número 8* and *Skam España*<sup>1</sup>

**Representación de mujeres árabes musulmanas en las series *La víctima número 8* y *Skam España***

4

ARTICLE



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## Abstract

This article identifies and analyzes the image and stereotypes associated with Arab Muslim women in the discourse of fiction produced in Spain through the study of the series *Skam España* and *La víctima número 8*. Through a qualitative methodology based on the characterization model and the analysis of the stereotype

figure, it is concluded that both audiovisuals give relevance to these women, offer alternatives to the activities and spaces to which they are commonly circumscribed and enable them to confront and correct the stereotypes with which they are defined.



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## KEYWORDS

Spanish fiction series, Arab Muslim woman, representation, stereotypes, *Skam España*, *La víctima número 8*.

## Resumen

Este artículo identifica y analiza la imagen y estereotipos asociados a mujeres árabes musulmanas en el discurso de la ficción producida en España, a través del estudio de las series *Skam España* y *La víctima número 8*. Mediante una metodología cualitativa basada en el modelo

de caracterización de personajes y el análisis de la figura del estereotipo, se concluye que ambos audiovisuales otorgan relevancia a estas mujeres, ofrecen alternativas a las actividades y espacios a los que comúnmente se les circunscribe y posibilitan que ellas mismas enfrenten y corrijan los estereotipos con los que se les define.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

Series de ficción españolas, mujer árabe musulmana, representación, estereotipos, *Skam España*, *La víctima número 8*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The image of the world shown by fiction films and series puts into circulation and/or reinforces meanings and discourses that acquire symbolic value among the members of a community and influences how certain events, characters, spaces and other communities are perceived (Novoa-Jaso *et al.*, 2019). The power of audiovisual fiction to construct and sustain stereotypes and prejudices around notions linked to race, ethnicity and cultural identities different from those of its audience has been demonstrated (Mastro, 2009).

Minorities and ethnic groups are often portrayed in the media in a more negative way than members of the majority (Marcos-Ramos, 2014) which can lead to discriminatory attitudes towards those portrayed (Greenberg *et al.*, 2002 cited by Marcos-Ramos, 2014).

In Spain, studies on the media representation of foreign minorities mainly analyze the informative treatment of these groups; fewer studies examine the social discourse of entertainment on the subject (Eberl *et al.*, 2018). Nor are there many studies on the relations between the Spanish-Moroccan (and Spanish-Arabic) world

in television fiction products (Martínez-Sáez, 2021). Moreover, most studies offer a general overview and do not delve into the case of women (Marcos-Ramos *et al.*, 2020); and, if they do, they are studied as a whole and do not focus on each group. However, it has been identified that the space given to women in fiction varies considerably, depending on their place of origin (Zarco, 2018).

The consolidation of audiovisual fiction series as a successful product in the last decade places them in a privileged space to disseminate patterns and lines of interpretation of the world (Torres-Romay and Izquierdo-Castillo, 2022).

This article is part of a research project that seeks to diagnose the role of Spanish media in the reduction of inequalities and promoting gender equality. For this purpose, the cultural

discourses on Arab Muslim women<sup>1</sup>, disseminated through fiction audiovisuals produced in Spain in the second decade of the 21st century, are analyzed, as well as their influence on the construction of the collective imaginary.

This paper specifically describes the representation of Arab Muslim women and associated stereotypes in the fiction series *Skam España* (Movistar plus) and *La víctima número 8* (ETB2 and Telemadrid).

### **1.1. STEREOTYPE: A RECURRENT FIGURE IN AUDIOVISUAL FICTION**

Representation in serialized audiovisual fiction recurrently employs the figure of the stereotype. These cultural proposals provide a simplified mental image of some category of people, institutions, events, regardless of their truth or otherwise (Arranz Lozano, 2020). Because they offer characteristics that are easy to grasp and memorize, everything about the category in question is reduced to these traits, which are consolidated over time.

They are collective, impersonal, constructed, subjective and anonymous representations (Bernil Laguna, 2022) that not only describe how certain groups of people “should be” but also associate them to behaviors (Álvarez *et al.*, 2017 cited by Bernil Laguna, 2022).

The construction of stereotypes begins from the first years of life (Bernil Laguna, 2022). They

are transmitted through the family, education, oral tradition, culture and the media (Arranz Lozano, 2020). In fictional audiovisuals, viewers internalize stereotyped images during reception, transfer them to the plane of identification and can transform them into irrefutable truths.

Reliance on these mental images originates from the fact that they are shared by a large number of people within the group to which one belongs (Arranz Lozano, 2020). Cognitively they function through an intertextual network that fuses the characteristic and the representative, the distinct and the distinctive and offer commonplaces that repeat, transform and refer to each other within the discourse (Santos Unamuno, 2018).

Stereotypes, moreover, are evidence of power relations. According to Arranz Lozano (2020): “The triumphant stereotypes will be those that favor the stability and reproduction of the elite in power, [...] those imposed by the dominant group on the rest of the dominated groups” (p.45). They are not, therefore, the result of group spontaneity, but a control mechanism of the underlying power to categorize or name.

### **1.2. THE IMAGE OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN SPANISH AUDIOVISUAL FICTION PRODUCTIONS**

In the 1990s, Spain went from being a sending to a receiving nation of immigrants, and foreigners arriving in the country began to be represented in fiction series. Studies on the subject confirm their under-representation, both in characters and plots: 1.24 on a scale of 0-4 (Marcos-Ramos *et al.*, 2019; Marcos-Ramos *et al.*, 2020).

Authors agree that immigrant characters are generally not essential to the plot. Their psychology, emotions or conflicts are not explored

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<sup>2</sup> A female character belongs to this group not only if she was born in an Arab nation but also if she was born in a Western country into a family of immigrants of that ethnicity, and in both cases, she is Muslim. This distinction will be followed, because sometimes, the children of Arab immigrants born in the West are identified and self-identify according to the ethnicity of their parents (García *et al.*, 2011).

in depth; they are constructed through actions that characterize them and appear related to violence, low qualifications and irregular migration status (Marcos-Ramos *et al.*, 2019; Villamor and Romero, 2018).

Immigrant women appear almost 30% less than their male counterparts in Spanish television fiction, although the majority of the foreign population is female (Marcos-Ramos *et al.*, 2022). They are mainly associated with domestic work, caregiving, low-skilled jobs, prostitution, drugs and human trafficking. They do not study, nor do they have a stable profession; they are victims of violence; they seek marriages of convenience to regularize their migratory status or due to family cultural pressures; they belong to the lowest scale of marginality; they are more grateful characters and have better health habits than nationals and male immigrants (Fernández Soto, 2009; Marcos-Ramos *et al.*, 2022; Sánchez, 2021).

They are associated with the role of mother-wife, in which service, accompaniment and satisfying the needs of others predominate. In these characters, their immigrant status takes precedence over their gender, and it is more common for them to participate in conversations about racism or immigration than about machismo or empowerment (Marcos-Ramos *et al.*, 2022). Their verbal expression may also be limited due to their lack of fluency in Spanish (Sánchez, 2021).

The literature concludes that, although the social discourse has attempted to deconstruct certain preconceived ideas about immigrant women, Spanish audiovisual fiction maintains models of representation tied to stereotypes, prototypical roles, and do not show all the existing diversity, nor do they include characters of foreign origin with a notable presence in Spanish society (Marcos-Ramos *et al.*, 2022; Sánchez 2021).

### **1.3. ORIENTALISM AND NEO-ORIENTALISM IN THE WESTERN MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE ARAB MUSLIM WOMAN**

In the Western world, Arab Muslim women not only suffer from the domination of the patriarchal structure, they are also victims of Orientalist marginalization that places the West as the heir of modernity and defines the East<sup>3</sup>, by opposition, as underdeveloped, irrational, mysterious, threatening, barbaric and reluctant to any integration (Gezgin *et al.*, 2021).

Edward Said proposed the term orientalism to account for this worldview (Said, 2003). Dag Tuastad (2003) updated the concept to neo-orientalism after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and the transformations they introduced in the relationship between the West and the Arab Muslim world.

This model of thought is transferred to the discourse and traverses the way in which these spaces and characters are constructed and shown on screen (Akmeşe, 2021; Berciano Garrido, 2021; Gezgin *et al.*, 2021; Güven, 2021). Violence is shown as an intrinsic feature of Muslims and Arabs, and political movements in this region are associated with the potential Islamic-terrorist threat, homogenizing the collective and equating it with radicals and terrorists (Telseren, 2021). Fear of Islam is central to the discourse and is represented as a monolithic and violent entity (Güven, 2021).

With globalization and migratory processes, the images of Arab Muslim men and women no

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<sup>3</sup> The term Orient, when it is not specified as referring to the entire Asian continent or denoting the distant and exotic, actually implies the Arab Muslim world (Said, 2003).



longer portray a distant other, but rather people who live both outside and inside Western nations (Telseren, 2021) and are a constituent element of their societies.

Women function as one of the most recurring differentiating elements by which the Muslim Arab world is observed and evaluated. Their behavior and clothing are represented on screen as measures of modernity or barbarism, embodying the conflict between modern Western values and traditional Eastern ones (Akmeşe, 2021; García, A. *et al.*, 2011; İmik Tanyıldızı and Yolcu, 2021; Telseren, 2021).

From the West, Islam has been blamed for the situation of Arab Muslim women as a religion that is intrinsically unfair to them and for allowing the consolidation of cruel and oppressive societies (Martín Muñoz, 2012). This ignores the patriarchal sociocultural heritage that, through religion, sacralizes and perpetuates structures and laws that benefit male political, social and economic dominance (Martín Muñoz, 2012; Telseren, 2021).

The rejection of what is Muslim is conveyed through women, considered as victims, subjected on screen to the archetype of the exotic, oppressed, socially devalued woman, deprived of any form of freedom and under the yoke of male domination (García *et al.*, 2011; İmik Tanyıldızı and Yolcu, 2021; Telseren 2021). The hijab has become a sign of that oppression, minimizing the variety of connotations it entails (García *et al.*, 2011).

Research has identified other on-screen models: the economically independent Arab Muslim woman, westernized in her appearance, but inserted in societies that allow her only partial emancipation, and the veiled and traditional mother figure, who perpetuates the patriarchal system and safeguards its continuity among young women (İmik Tanyıldızı and Yolcu, 2021;

Telseren, 2021). There are also characters who live or were born in Western countries and have as a trait a political awareness that makes them react to the West with suspicion, hatred or admiration (Akmeşe, 2021).

## **2. SKAM AND LA VÍCTIMA NÚMERO 8 SERIES**

The two series analyzed in this study were released in 2018. *Skam España* is an adaptation of the successful Norwegian youth audiovisual counterpart (Onieva, 2018). In 39 chapters it tells the stories of five girls attending high school in Madrid: Eva, Cris, Nora, Viri and Amira.

The Spanish version maintained the original storyline with minimal changes in plots and characters, although it included specific elements adapted to the local audience. All four seasons employ the narrative resource of changing the perspective of the story, thus contributing to polyphony, expanding the range of identifications and representations, and offering greater depth to the contexts and conflicts of each protagonist (Mateos-Pérez, 2021).

After a discreet premiere in the first season, the second season of this series turned out to be a success in terms of viewership both on and off the Movistar platform. The fandom factor spread and, in the following seasons, the audiovisual became a phenomenon, managing to create conversation from its followers each and every day of broadcast. It was not only trending in social networks in Spain, but also in Argentina, Brazil, Italy and Mexico (Diéguez, 2019).

*La víctima número 8* is an eight-part thriller that begins with a jihadist terrorist attack in Bilbao. The story focuses on the consequences of the attack for both the families of the victims and the family of the main suspect. It had very different reception rates in Madrid and the Basque Country, going almost unnoticed with a 3.8%

audience share in the capital, while in Euskadi it was the audiovisual with the second highest number of viewers on its premiere day (verTele!, 2018).

However, the impact of these fictions in terms of audience is not the criteria followed for the selection of the sample in this work.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the image and stereotypes associated with Muslim Arab women in these series is based on the contributions on the construction of characters that have been proposed from the audiovisual narrative. The phenomenological approach is adopted, which considers the character as a simulation of a real person, with an intellectual, emotional, and attitudinal profile, and understands it as a perfect simulation of what we encounter in life (Casetti and Di Chio, 2007).

The methodological proposal is based on the characterization model developed by Elena Galán (2006), which comprises three fundamental axes on which a character is designed: physical, psychological and sociological description. An analysis sheet was prepared that includes three to five indicators in each of the dimensions mentioned above (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

#### *Characteristics of the characters*

Series title:

Year of release:

Season number and episodes:

Character name:

Nationality:

Physical Dimension:

- Age.
- Physical traits/ Appearance
- Transformation

Psychological dimension:

- Behavior
- Objectives/Goals
- Evolution

Social Dimension:

- Social status/economic level:
- Professional/occupational environment
- Educational level
- Family environment:
  - Marital status
  - No. of children
- Spatial framework

A second methodological direction focuses on the figure of the stereotype in its relationship with the characters. For the construction of the instrument of analysis, contributions from cultural and postcolonial studies, the concept of orientalism and neo-orientalism were used as a starting point. Likewise, previous research on stereotyping in audiovisual fiction series (Galán, 2006) and the representation of Arabs and/or Muslims (Akmeşe, 2021; Berciano Garrido, 2021; Güven, 2021; İmik Tanyıldızı and Yolcu, 2021; Telseren, 2021) were reviewed.

In addition, a first visualization of the series was carried out, which allowed us to identify scenes in which dialogues or behaviors motivated by a preconceived idea towards Arab Muslim women or their community appear. The numerical superiority and the possibility of analyzing

explicit phrases in which stereotypes were evidenced led to the selection for this study of the moments in which the characters externalize their ideas through verbal expression and discarded the moments in which they are expressed exclusively through gestures or attitudes.

The analysis sheet has two sections: the first is focused on identifying who are the characters who verbally express these stereotypes and in what context, and the second allows us to analyze the use of stereotypes associated with five categories or themes (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Analysis of stereotypes and stereotype-generating themes.*

Series title:

Year of release:

Chapter title:

Season number and episodes:

Scene Context:

a) Analysis of verbally expressed stereotypes:

- Who speaks
- Socioeconomic status of the speaker
- Who is it being talked about
- Who is the recipient
- Socioeconomic status of the listener
- What they say and when they say it
- With what attitude
- Why they say it
- Where it is said

b) Treatment of the following topics:

- Lifestyle

- Religion
- Clothing
- Violence
- Integration

The two case studies were selected based on the series produced in Spain that included at least one Muslim Arab female character in a leading or secondary role, discarding those productions in which they appeared as background characters. The second decade of the 21st century was chosen as the time frame, in which a series of relevant political events occurred in the Arab Islamic world (such as the Arab Spring, the Syrian War and the emergence of the Islamic State), which have influenced how the Western media have represented communities and nations of that region (Corral *et al.*, 2021).

With these criteria, a search was carried out in the catalog of the Spanish Film Library. From the universe of series identified, it was decided to study the cases of *Skam España* and *La víctima número 8*.

*Skam España* features a Muslim teenager of Moroccan descent who assumes the leading role in the fourth season, which is unusual in Spanish audiovisual fiction. *La víctima número 8* includes a middle-aged Moroccan immigrant woman as one of the most relevant secondary characters for the plot.

The audience rating was not the main element in favor of these two specific cases. Within the audiovisual universe, proposals such as *Élite* had a much greater impact in terms of reception. However, *Skam España* has the peculiarity of being the only series in which an Arab Muslim woman takes the leading role in a season (Nadia in *Élite* is one of the main characters in a choral proposal).

Since one of the cases of analysis was a youth series, it was decided to choose another audiovisual that did not share this genre: *La víctima número 8*. In addition, the characters under study do not belong to the same age group nor do they live in the same area of the country, thus diversifying the units of analysis and, consequently, the results obtained.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS

Both Amira Naybet's character in *Skam España* and Adila Jamal's character in *La víctima número 8* constitute fundamental elements in the development of the plots of their respective audio-visuals. The first is a teenager and the other is a middle-aged woman. They have physical features usually associated with Arabs and their descendants, brown or dark skin, eyebrows and hair equally dark. Neither undergoes significant changes in appearance throughout the series. Amira wears western clothes, while Adila opts for djellabas, long dresses and baggy pants. However, both follow the Islamic code of modesty in their dress; they do not show shoulders or cleavage (Table 1).

Both cover their hair. The former appears in all the scenes of the series with hijab, she does not show her hair even in the private space of her home. As will be seen, this garment not only constitutes her distinctive element, but will also be a source of conflict with her environment and with herself. Adila, on the other hand, wears her head uncovered both at home and at her workplace. Outside these spaces, she wears a hijab or turban (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Physical dimension of the characters Amira Naybet and Adila Jamal*

	<b>Amira Naybet</b>	<b>Adila Jamal</b>
Title of the series	Skam España	La víctima número 8
Year of the series	2018-2020	2018
Number of seasons and episodes	Seasons 1, 2, 3, 4 39 episodes	Season 1 (only one) 8 episodes
Nationality	Spanish (Moroccan descent)	Moroccan
Age	16-18 years old	44 years old
Physical traits/appearance	Medium height, slim, dark skin. She wears a hijab in all her scenes, she doesn't show her hair even in her home. She opts for western clothes, but she always has her legs, shoulders and cleavage covered.	Medium height, slim, dark skin, wears her hair covered with a scarf, turban or hijab. She only shows it at certain times at home and where she works. Dresses in djellaba, long dresses, baggy pants and upper garments that cover her shoulders and cleavage.
Transformation	Maintains her physical characteristics and appearance throughout the audiovisual.	There are no relevant changes in her appearance or physical characteristics.

In the psychological dimension both characters are shown as strong and frontal. Adila and Amira make decisions and act to achieve their goals. The former is motivated by her condition as a mother and the latter by her desire to live her faith as a Muslim without being subjected to discriminatory remarks and behavior by others (Table 2).

Both stand firm in their objectives and goals. Adila seeks to prove her son Omar's innocence. Amira tries to combine the lifestyle of a teenager from Madrid with the practice of Islam.

Both defend their deepest convictions: to look after the welfare of her children, in the case of Adila, and to be faithful to the precepts of Islam despite the pressures of society, in the case of Amira (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Psychological dimension of the characters Amira Naybet and Adila Jamal*

	Amira Naybet	Adila Jamal
Behavior	Responsible, focused on her studies, loyal to her friends. Confronts discriminatory or stereotypical attitudes. Although she sometimes doubts about her identity, she manages to overcome it with maturity, reaffirming her beliefs and personality.	Fighter, courageous, strong and frontal. She is not passive, she takes the initiative in actions to achieve her goals. Mother capable of fighting tooth and nail for her children.
Objectives/ Goals	Not to be singled out or judged for her customs or religion. She tries to lead a life like the rest of the teenage girls, but without renouncing the precepts of her faith. She dreams of studying engineering.	To prove that her son Omar, accused of being the perpetrator of the attack in Bilbao, is innocent. In the midst of the situation resulting from the terrorist attack, she is looking after the needs of her other two children.
Evolution	Various conflicts make her doubt about how she wants to live her faith in Allah within a Western society. However, despite external pressures, she discovers her own path within Islam.	She maintains firm confidence in Omar's innocence. Even when she decides to turn him over to the authorities, she is motivated by her intention to save him. She acts according to what she thinks is best for her children.

Both characters belong to the middle class. Their main contrasts lie in their occupations, educational level and the spatial framework where they mainly carry out their actions. While Adila is dedicated to domestic work and caregiving, Amira is in high school and aspires to study engineering at the university. Precise information about the former's educational level is not given, although it is shown in scenes that she knows how to read and write. The protagonist of *Skam España* is one of the most outstanding students in her class, and she is even proposed to give the graduation speech (Table 3).

Adila is the head of her family, has three children and is married to Ibrahim. He provides the economic support, but she is the one who makes the decisions regarding children and family. Amira lives with her parents and is single (Table 3).

The character in *La víctima número 8* occupies mainly the domestic and private sphere. Her main scenes take place in her home and in María's home, where she works. It is in these spaces where she makes decisions (Table 3).

Amira's main field of action is the public space. Her scenes take place mainly in high school, the Las Labass association, bars and leisure spaces she frequents with her friends. One of her conflicts lies in the search for belonging to this public space in which she is singled out for her condition as a woman of immigrant descent and as a Muslim (Table 3).

**Table 3**

*The social dimension of the characters Amira Naybet and Adila Jamal*

	<i>Amira Naybet</i>	<i>Adila Jamal</i>
Social status/ Economic level	Middle class	Lower middle class
Professional/ occupational environment	High school student	Housework and caregiver
Educational level	She is one of the most outstanding students in her high school class, with very good grades. The teachers ask her to give the graduation speech.	No information is provided on their level of education, but it is inferred that she has basic education and can read and write.
Family environment Marital status: No. of children:	Single from season 1 to 3. She starts a relationship with Dani, Cristina's brother in season 4. She lives with her father and mother.  She has no children.	Married to Ibrahim Jamal, her marriage has been broken for years, but she does not separate or divorce for economic and cultural reasons. However, the relationship between the two is not bad.  She is the mother of 3 children: Omar, Zakir and Aissa.
Spatial frame	She interacts and faces her conflicts in the public space. Most of her scenes are in high school. She feels excluded from the public space because of her status as a woman of Moroccan immigrant descent and a Muslim.	She mainly occupies the domestic, private space. Her main scenes take place at home and in the house of Mrs. Maria, whom she takes care of.

## 4.2. ANALYSIS OF STEREOTYPES AND STEREOTYPE-GENERATING THEMES

Between both audiovisuals, a total of 24 scenes were detected where stereotypes associated with Arab Muslim women or their community are verbally expressed. These ideas are expressed both by characters outside this group and by Muslim Arabs. In 23 scenes, the middle class speaks; only one upper class character, in *La víctima número 8* expresses a stereotyped idea.

The phrases uttered by the Spanish characters in both series contain the following ideas: the rejection of the "Moorish"; Muslim Arabs as potential terrorists; religion is the guideline for all aspects of their lives; discomfort when wearing the veil or displaying customs (especially with religious connotations) in Spanish public spaces; a community that does not interact with Spaniards or adopt customs from the host country; they do not belong to Spain, even though they were born here.

Questions about these women are limited to the fact that they do not know and cannot live their sexuality freely and remain subject to the will of the family. In addition, misconceptions about the use and meaning of the hijab were expressed.

Arab Muslim characters speak from anger and surprise, having to endure the reproduction of these preconceived ideas and being mostly defined and judged by them. When they allude to stereotypes about themselves, they mention: the blaming of the whole community for terrorism; the rejection of the Arab and/or Islamic; the need to keep their customs in a private space in order not to disturb; the understanding of the Arab Muslim world as a homogeneous unit; their descendants are not considered

Spaniards; and the criticism that women receive about their decisions and behaviors from members of their community as well as from outside it.

The Spanish characters reproduce these stereotypes convinced of the veracity of the idea they replicate. They also do so with surprise, discomfort, curiosity or mockery. Only Maria, Adila's employer in *La víctima número 8*, expresses embarrassment at having thought of her as a "damned Moorish woman". When the conversations occur between Spaniards, they avoid being overheard by the Arab Muslim character, also on screen, evidencing an acknowledgment that what is said may be inappropriate and even offensive.

There is a predominance of phrases alluding to Arab Muslim women, their community and the behavior of the rest of the Spanish society towards them.

The scenes that include stereotypes mostly appear to be questioned or rejected by Adila, Amira and other characters of the Arab Muslim community. Only in three moments of *Skam España* are they reproduced or strengthened without questioning. In these scenes the conversations occur between Spanish characters and Amira is not present.

#### **4.2.1. LIFESTYLE**

Several scenes in *Skam España* allude to stereotypes about the lifestyle of Arab Muslim women or of this community in general. In *La víctima número 8* this topic is not mentioned.

*Skam España* addresses the way in which Arab Muslim women live their sexuality. Viri directly assumes that Amira will not go to the beach because it is a space where the body is shown and on two occasions she expresses her discomfort to talk about sexual issues in front of the girl,

"because Muslim women do not talk about that". Esther's character (friend of Amira's boyfriend at the time) says: "Moorish women can't do it until marriage. It's general culture".

The idea of considering all Arab Muslim countries as an entity lacking in particularities, hot and desert-like, is recurrent. This is what Viri says, while Kasim (brother of one of the girls of the Las Labass Association) complains that he is continually asked about the situation of other Arab nations as if he had to know about it.

A tendency to associate Arabs and Muslims with problematic and very traditional people was identified. In the specific case of women, it is believed that their destiny will inevitably be to marry an Arab Muslim boy, thus precluding any other life project:

Cris' mother: As smart as Amira is, I don't think they will let her do engineering.

Cris: Who won't let her?

Cris' mother: Her parents, if they have forced her to wear a scarf and everything.

Cris: Mom, they have NOT forced her.

Cris' mother: That's what she says, but you know how those people are.

Cris: No, what are they like?

Cris' mother: Well, in the end Amira will end up getting married to a Moorish boy, as soon as she finishes high school.

Cris: Her parents are not like that.

Cris' mother: They didn't seem to be like that, and you see, with a scarf and everything.

### 4.2.2. RELIGION

Both audiovisuals deal with stereotypes related to Islam. It is shown that Muslims are very religious, they follow the precepts of their faith to the extreme, without exceptions, and religion controls absolutely all aspects of their lives. On repeated occasions, Amira's friends give their opinions or speculate on how Amira will behave, always subordinating her behavior to her religion.

In the two series, Spanish characters, but also Muslim Arabs, establish a parallel between Islam and jihadist movement, manifesting the stereotype of perceiving the Arab Muslim community involved in a kind of religious crusade. However, both Amira and Adila correct this idea at different times:

Concha (mother of one of the victims of the terrorist attack blamed on Omar):  
...I guess I'm looking for answers.

Adila: Answers to what questions?

Concha: To why my son is dead.

Adila: There are questions that have no answers. Just as there is goodness without reason, I think the same thing happens with evil.

Concha: But the murder of my son, the murder of all those people does have a reason: your religion, your Holy War or whatever you call it?

Adila: It is my religion, but not my war. Killing in the name of Allah makes as little sense to me as it does to you.

### 4.2.3. CLOTHING

Several scenes in *Skam España* deal with the way Arab Muslim women dress. The hijab acquires prominence as a differentiating element

that causes amazement or curiosity. In *La víctima número 8*, the subject is not mentioned.

Amira's decision to wear it surprises a high school girl who associates the cause with the celebration of Ramadan or with her having dirty hair. Viri curiously asks if she is not hot wearing it and her boyfriend Dani's friends are convinced of what they know about the veil:

Esther: I love your style. Like that, with the scarf. And have you always worn it?

Amira: For a while now.

Esther: Of course, because you wear it with your first period.

Amira: No, you wear it whenever you want. I put it on when I was 16.

Patri: And what about the color of the scarf, is it because of your mood?

Amira: No, it's like any other garment. I don't wear the same one to school or to go out.

Likewise, Amira and her friends from the Las Labass Association discuss the belief that the hijab is a symbol of oppression and that wearing it or taking it off brings criticism from both non-Muslims and Muslims.

### 4.2.4. VIOLENCE

Characters in both series discuss the link established from the stereotype between violence and the Arab Muslim community. Specifically, terrorist violence motivated by religious conceptions is addressed. In the case of *La víctima número 8*, the beginning of the plot with an alleged jihadist attack makes it possible for the entire Arab Muslim community of Bilbao to be blamed for what happened:



Adila: Are you sure they are not going to suspend the ceremony because of last night?

Ibrahim: I spoke to Habib and he said no.

Adila: It's horrible... Poor people.

Ibrahim: Poor us. The same thing again... To apologize for something, we haven't done...

Adila: Better to apologize than to bury a son, Ibrahim...

Ibrahim Jamal repeatedly asks his wife to leave the city because he is convinced that the stigma of terrorist violence will haunt them, even if Omar's innocence is proven. With a similar thought, Amira in *Skam España* explains that Muslims are associated with potential terrorists, so the image of a person with a veil and a backpack immediately refers to the possibility of an attack.

#### **4.2.5. INTEGRATION**

There are scenes about integration in both *La víctima número 8* and *Skam España*. Certain characters in both series question the capacity of the Arab Muslim immigrant community and that of their children born in Spain to integrate. This idea provoked in the past for Maria not to want a "damned Moorish woman" to take care of her. This is what she confesses to Adila with shame years later. In *Skam España* it is Cris who recommends to the girls of the Las Labass Association to allow non-Arab Muslims to collaborate in the projects so that they are not accused of not integrating:

Dounia: This is a space where I can be with girls who share the same problems than me. It is not an NGO.

Cris: But what Amira says makes sense. If you only hang out with each other, in the end you won't fix anything, right? Because people will keep saying that you don't integrate.

Dounia: What exactly do we have to integrate into? Come on, I was born here, at Jiménez Díaz.

This response leads to a reflection on how society perceives the children of Arab and Muslim immigrants who were born in Spain. In another scene, Noor (one of the girls in the association) complains that people in the street mostly assume that she is a foreigner, before considering the possibility that she is Spanish.

Amira expresses that as a "Moor" she is expected to sacrifice her customs so that the rest of the Spaniards do not feel upset. The girl expresses this idea after the school management, in response to the protest of some parents, decided to remove the Ramadan Mubarak poster. The placement of this poster also provoked the reaction of some students who, as their words show, confuse religion with nationality:

Boy 1: What's that, man?

Boy 2: I don't know, they want to be cool now.

Boy 1: But what's that doing there, man? They just need to put up a little couscous stand.

Boy 2: No way! They should put banners in their own fucking country!

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis it is evident that the importance of Amira in *Skam España* and Adila in *La víctima número 8* does not depend exclusively on the relevance of a male character. The former assumes the leading role from the fourth season of her series. Adila, although she begins in *La víctima número 8* as “the mother of” (in this case the protagonist), is the head of the Jamal family and makes decisions that influence the course of the story.

The stereotypes that appear in the series agree with those pointed out in studies on the subject, previously referenced in this article (Berciano Garrido, 2021; İmik Tanyıldızı and Yolcu, 2021; Telseren 2021). The ideas address the way in which these women live their sexuality and their destiny of becoming wives and mothers. The hijab is situated throughout the dialogues as a differentiating element, a symbol of oppression and a catalyst for criticism. They are labeled as extremely religious women and an intrinsic relationship between Muslims, violence and terrorism is perceived. The ability and willingness of this community to be part of Spanish society is questioned and their descendants born in the country are not identified as Spaniards.

Adila and Amira are depicted with features regularly associated with people belonging to the Arab Muslim community. They dress according to the Islamic code of modesty; however, Adila opts for clothes usually associated with the

traditional image of these women and Amira wears western garments. This difference seems to be driven by the age of each character and the fact that Amira was born in Madrid. Both cover their hair: Adila in public spaces and Amira permanently.

What is innovative in the treatment of stereotypes is that both series show a strong, frontal, active Muslim Arab female character, breaking with the tendency to represent these women marked by submission and passivity. Amira’s role allows us to delve into her conflicts, motivations and aspirations, while little is known about Adila beyond her role as mother, wife and the main person in charge of her family.

Adila follows the trend of showing immigrant women associated with housework or caregiving, with a low or medium level of education, and whose sphere of action is the home environment. However, Amira possesses characteristics that are not normally associated with these women: she is a good student who aspires to study engineering and actively participates in the public sphere.

The latter is the one that is farthest from the characteristics with which Arab Muslim women are represented in the audiovisual; however, it is in *Skam España* where there are more scenes in which stereotypes are introduced. Nevertheless, on most occasions, these preconceived ideas are immediately questioned or rejected by the characters addressed.

An advance in the relevance given to both characters is evidenced. Alternatives are offered

in terms of the activity they perform and the spheres in which these women are commonly placed. When they are faced with stereotyped phrases about them and their community, both Amira and Adila react by correcting and expressing their discomfort with the preconceived images they are associated with. However, their status as Arab and Muslim is the constant that defines them within Spanish society.

It can be concluded that, although they reiterate formulas of representation identified in previous research on the image of immigrant women and Muslim Arabs, the series addressed in this article incorporate elements that deviate from the trend.

The analysis of two specific cases does not allow extrapolating the results to a model of representation of Muslim Arab female characters in all Spanish products. However, the case study contributes to expanding theories, understanding the interaction between the parts of a system and its characteristics (Gordillo and Liberia, 2016). Moreover, the analysis carried out in this article exposes original results in the treatment of this group in recent audiovisual productions.

This study allows the development of future research to explore the representation of Arab Muslim women in Spanish film production and to establish comparisons with respect to serialized audiovisuals. Likewise, it is relevant to analyze the logics followed by scriptwriters, directors, message senders, when constructing the characters belonging to this community, as well as to examine the collective imaginary of the Spanish public about these women and their correspondence with what is shown on the screen.

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# Feminist political practices and Information and Communication Technologies. The case of the 35th Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Transvestites, Intersex, Bisexual and Non-Binary in Argentina

***Las prácticas políticas feministas y las Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación. El caso del 35° Encuentro Plurinacional de Mujeres, Lesbianas, Trans, Travestis, Intersexuales, Bisexuales y No Binaries en Argentina***

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ARTICLE



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## Abstract

This article proposes to analyze the relationship between social movements and feminist political action with the new information and communication technologies (ICT), reviewing the current theories on cyberactivism and, in particular, cyberfeminism, in order to anchor and understand the phenomenon in a specific case: the 35th Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Transvestites, Intersexuals, Bisexuals and Non-Binaries in the province of San Luis (Argentina) in the year 2022. Using qualitative methodology, I describe and analyze, with the parameters relieved by theoreticians, my entry into the field as an observer participa-

ting in the organizing committee of this event, in which various positions and interactions are put into play, both face-to-face and virtual. In this way, this case serves to shed light on the phenomenon of the influence and interrelation of social movements, specifically feminisms, with ICT.

**Keywords:** Social movements, feminism, ICT.

## Resumen

El presente artículo propone analizar la relación entre los movimientos sociales, la acción política feminista y las nuevas tecnologías de información y comunicación (TIC). Para ello, pasa revista a las actuales teorías sobre cibe-

ractivismo y, en particular, el ciberfeminismo, con la finalidad de anclar y comprender el fenómeno en un caso concreto: el 35° Encuentro Plurinacional de Mujeres, Lesbianas, Trans, Travestis, Intersexuales, Bisexuales y No Binaries en la provincia de San Luis (Argentina) en el año 2022. Mediante una metodología cualitativa, se describe y analiza, con los parámetros teóricos relevados, el ingreso de la investigadora al campo como observadora participante en la Comisión Organizadora de este evento en

el que se ponen en juego diversos posicionamientos e interacciones tanto en el ámbito cara a cara como virtual. De esta manera, este caso sirve para echar luz sobre el fenómeno de la influencia e interrelación de los movimientos sociales, específicamente los feminismos, con las TIC.

**Palabras claves:** Movimientos sociales, feminismo, TIC.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we propose to analyze feminist political practices and their relationship with new communication and information technologies (ICTs), in the framework of a political event of feminist activists that has been held annually in Argentina (each time in a different province), from 1986 to the present day. In 2022, it was organized in the province of San Luis (Argentina) in person; previously, in 2020, its organization was interrupted by the Covid 19 pandemic for three years (2020, 2021 and 2022).

This time, the meeting was called the 35th Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Transvestites, Intersex, Bisexual, Bisexual and Non-Binary.

Therefore, this paper aims to describe and analyze the activities and social practices of feminist activists, both in the realm of face-to-face and virtual interaction. To this end, an ethnographic study was carried out through the methodology of participant observation in the Organising Committee of the meeting, throughout the year 2022. The researcher's entry into the field is then analyzed. It also describes some of the mechanics of interaction in these spaces: face-to-face, through ICTs and the relationship between the two.

Currently, there are discussions about the modalities, possibilities and characteristics of political action within the framework of new technologies. In this context, one of the main topics of fourth wave feminism (Varela, 2019; Fernandez Romero and Sanchez Duarte, 2019; Figueroa, 2018) is cyberfeminism, which analyzes the relationship between ICTs and this political, social and cultural movement. *El Encuentro* is, then, a social and cultural political event that brings together women and feminist dissidents annually in Argentina and becomes a case of relevance for the study of political practices and their relationship with technologies that impact on the concrete strategies carried out in the networks and that, in addition, function as spaces for diverse interactions. This will be seen in the development of the paper.

It is proposed, then, to explore the characteristics of feminist political activity in the face-to-face sphere and in social networks, in this case study. The aim is to investigate how differences and positions are configured in the field of organization, how ICTs intervene in these configurations, what are the dynamics of the relationship between virtual and face-to-face spaces, and what political strategies are deployed in each space?



This work begins with a brief survey of studies on change in political practices; change that is brought about by new technologies. Reference is made to cyberactivism and cyberfeminism. Next, methodological guidelines are proposed that introduce the analysis of the case in which the positions and strategies of the participants and the relationship of ICTs with the feminist political practices of this organization are explored. It concludes with reflections that emerge from the research.

## 2. FEMINISMS AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

This section briefly reviews the theoretical discussions and conceptual frameworks in reference to political action in general and feminist political action in relation to ICTs. It ends with a proposal for a micro-social exploration of ICTs in the context of feminist political practices.

On the one hand, within a broad social critique of ICTs, authors such as Han (2014) and Bauman and Leoncini (2019) investigate the problems that arise in relation to effective political action through the use of new technologies, in a society that they imagine to be increasingly marked by individualism. Thus, they expose the difficulties of lasting collective action in these media. On the other hand, there are theories on cyberactivism that study social movements in the context of networks<sup>1</sup>

that analyze the possibilities of political action through ICTs. This is done in reference to the funding benefits that ICTs provide, as well as the facilitation and independence from state institutions and structures that they offer for the realization of political practices. Furthermore, they warn about the potential cyber-attacks that can occur (Sanpedro Blanco and Resina de la Fuente, 2004; Sorell, 2015; Pickerill, 2004; Earl, 2012, as cited in Accossatto and Sendra, 2018).

Social movements are intimately intertwined with current technological phenomena. This relationship has been studied by recent research, such as Varela (2019), Fernandez Romero and Sanchez Duarte (2019), Figueroa (2018), and Accossatto and Sendra (2018). The possibilities offered by ICTs for disseminating information, for generating and creating virtual infrastructures and for building networks are highlighted.

ICTs bring about change in collective action: they enable organization, mobilization and, through the effect of the viralization of information produced by social networks, they can also break the silence to which groups and fractions that do not have a social hierarchy are subjected (Ortiz Galindo, 2016; Ramírez, 2022). It is also possible to study cyberactivism on the network and through the network, whether it involves direct actions in virtuality, the formation of alternative online communities, or the use of ICTs to achieve interconnected networks, more dynamic and effective flows of capital and information than those that would be achieved through traditional means (Ortiz Galindo, 2016). ICTs influence numerous aspects of collective actions and social movements, as, through their use, changes are brought about with reference to: "(1) hierarchical structure; (2) communicative autonomy; (3) reticular organization; (4) transnationality; (5) timelessness;

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<sup>1</sup> A social cyber movement can be conceptualized as: "a collective actor, structured in the form of a distributed network, which intentionally and with a certain continuity, uses the communicative opportunities of the Internet era and the social Web to affect social change, through the promotion of its collective actions, which can take place inside and/or outside cyberspace, with the aim of raising public awareness about a social conflict and public objectives that are claimed from an established collective identity" (Ortiz Galindo, 2016, p. 172).

(6) mobilization; (7) action repertoires; and (8) the creation of collective identities and political opportunities” (Ortiz Galindo, 2016, p.176).

Concomitant with studies on cyberactivism, feminist authors are emerging who address the influence of virtuality on this specific social movement. This was born as a response to the orthodoxy of socialist feminism that made “ominous predictions” about the social consequences of new technologies (Wajcman, 2006, p.126), Donna Haraway wrote the Manifesto for Cyborgs in 1983, which initiated a current that later became known as cyberfeminism. This perspective posits the possibilities of emancipation, empowerment and dissolution of gender barriers that ICTs provided (Plant, 1997; Wilding F., 2004; Wajcman, 2006). Cyberfeminism is not only an academic movement, but also a political, artistic<sup>2</sup> and cultural one (Varela, 2019; De Miguel and Boix, 2002). As a variant of it, social cyberfeminism advocates the transformation of the world through ICTs and aims to incorporate the history and practical experience of feminist struggles into possible political actions, in the context of new technologies (Varela, 2019; De Miguel and Boix, 2002; Ramirez, 2022). For Wilding (2004), it is necessary to “seek coalitions and alliances with diverse groups of women involved in the integrated circuit of global technologies” ( p. 141).

Because of the great diversity of positions within the feminist movement, it is often referred to in the plural: feminisms. Feminisms have been understood as “a historical - and contemporary - transnational movement for women’s justice and freedom, which depends on women’s activist participation in linked groups:

local, national and international” (Wilding, 2004, p. 146). Feminisms today are characterized by their massiveness, they produce a political activity that is deployed in new technologies and use social networks as their own sphere<sup>3</sup>. This relationship has given rise to slogans, proposals, movements and political activities that are spreading globally, such as *Ni una menos* (Argentina) or *Me too* (United States). Likewise, the 8M call in Madrid (Spain) can also be mentioned (Varela, 2019; Accossatto and Sendra 2018; Ramírez, 2022; Castaño, 2015, Figueroa 2018 Fernández Romero and Sánchez Duarte, 2019).

The relationship between feminist activism and new technologies can acquire various nuances, according to different criteria (Accossatto and Sendra, 2018). On the one hand, they can be differentiated according to the medium in which they are deployed, whether it is a political activity that is mainly circumscribed to the network or movements and collective actions that are born outside the networks, but are facilitated by ICTs. On the other hand, there are the criteria related to the facilities it provides for linking, information or communication, such as reaching a larger audience at a lower cost. This produces a multiplier effect called “viralization” (Earl, 2012; as cited in Accossatto and Sendra, 2018). Also, one can observe the criterion of the influence of ICTs on internal organization, by promoting communication and coordination, or by facilitating the creation of innovative forms of power structures and decision-making. This “makes it possible to establish more fluid and short-term links based on looser and

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2 In the early 1990s the term “cyberfeminism” was used by several artists in reference to works of experimentation between the female subject, art and virtuality (De Miguel and Boix, 2002).

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3 Sadie Plant defines cyberfeminism as: an absolutely posthuman insurrection; the revolt of an emerging system that includes women and computers, against the worldview and material reality of a patriarchy that still seeks to subjugate them. It is an alliance of commodities against their masters, an alliance of women and machines (Bassnett, 1997: 46-49 quoted by Wilding F., 2004 p. 141).

unstructured organizational relationships” (Accossatto and Sendra, 2018, p. 129). Likewise, one of the main advantages of using ICTs is that they “strengthen network cohesion and swarming, based on the ability to connect with other activist groups, aid mobilisations and the generation of collective campaigns” (Pickerill, 2004, cited in Accossatto and Sendra, 2018, p. 130). This happens both locally and globally.

Currently, research is being produced on political actions that take place within the framework of social networks, whether for their call for face-to-face activities, marches or political actions, both nationally and internationally. Fernández Romero and Sánchez Duarte (2019) analyze the call for a strike on 8 March 2018 in Spain, through a quantitative study on the main frames of reference (frames) used in Facebook messages; their contribution to knowledge about the call for a strike was studied. Within the analysis of ICTs and political movements, the analysis of the political use of hashtags is a recurring theme. Castaño (2015) uses it to investigate the potential and usefulness of social media as “commercial platforms and technologies of subjectivity for the contemporary feminist movement” (p. 126).

At the Argentinean level, there are precedents on claims or movements that involve ICTs, such as the case of the Argentinean claim called *Ni una menos* (Not one less), analyzed by Accossatto and Sendra (2018). In this case, they study communicational strategies in the organization of collective action, and focus their attention on the implication of ICTs in the generation of public opinion that is built “from the bottom up”. This gives rise to numerous voices expressing themselves in the new technologies and the way in which they accelerate social processes through the extent and immediacy of their reach. It also studies the involvement of ICTs in the study of actions that promote

the visualization of abuses in a patriarchal context, such as “Mira cómo nos ponemos” (“Look how we put ourselves”). In studying this case, Ramírez (2022) reflects on the role of digital media in relation to social mobilisations and, in particular, the use of hashtags on Twitter about the demonstrations of support for the actress Thelma Fardín. She denounced actor Juan Darthés for sexual abuse and the feminist community supported her through the use of the slogan #*MiráCómoNosPonemos*. In addition, the slogan #*SeráLey*, which is representative of the campaign for safe, legal and free abortion, was placed in the public conversation.

Up to this point, there has been an outstanding background on the relationship between the study of political activity, especially feminist activity, and ICTs. Moving out of this field and towards the subject of this paper, research has been produced at the national level on the Encuentro de Mujeres from a historical and social point of view (Alma and Lorenzo, 2009). More specifically, to analyze the issues related to the present work, Mason (2007) stands out, which seeks to understand and describe feminist political practices in their specificity, through an ethnography of spaces and narratives in the framework of the Encuentro de Mujeres, in which a similar objective and methodology to that used in this work is proposed. The two articles differ in that, in the first paper, the author does not carry out an analysis of ICTs in the context of the struggle.

This work seeks to investigate and explore the relationship between ICTs and everyday political activity through the methodology of participant observation within the Organising Committee of the 35th Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Transvestites, Intersex, Bisexual and Non-Binary People in the province of San Luis, in the year 2022. Based on the background information gathered, there is

a research gap regarding the new implications of the use of ICTs in this specific political activity. The solution to this gap is explored in this paper, since it is considered (as will be seen in the next section) that ICTs influence the positions and classifications of activists, the spheres and specificities of interaction in each network, the dynamics between the different political strategies that are deployed both through ICTs and face-to-face. A micro-social study is proposed in which the functioning of new technologies is explored through a qualitative methodology, describing the researcher's entry into the field of a feminist event. This was done with the intention of constructing new classifications and categories of analysis for the study of the topic of feminist political action and new technologies.

### 3. ENTERING THE FIELD

In order to study feminist interactions and practices in the context of the 35th Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Transvestites, Intersex, Bisexual and Non-Binary in the province of San Luis in the year 2022, a qualitative methodology has been applied, which "refers in its broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data: people's own spoken or written words and observable behavior" (Tylor and Bogan, 1987, p.19-20). In this case, this will be done through participant observation<sup>4</sup> that is triangulated, internally, with the search and collection of documents and audio-visual material.

Initially, the aim was to study the different positions in the field of organization, strategies and practices, as well as the meanings that the participants of the organization had about

them. The research design was flexible; this refers to the possibility of relatively mutating the topic, questions, purposes and methodology, according to the nuances that the research acquires in its development (Mendizábal, 2006).

The research approach is framed as an ethnography. This term can be defined as:

The description of what people do from the perspective of the people themselves. This means that an ethnographic study is interested in both the practices (what people do) and the meanings that these practices acquire for those who perform them (people's perspective on these practices). (Restrepo, 2018, p.25).

Thus, this paper seeks to understand, enter into and collect data on feminist political practices through a case study, which investigates how practices are configured in the face-to-face and ICT sphere in a given context. The main unit of analysis is activists.

Through this methodology, we study the practices, spaces, events and narratives of women and dissidents who identify as feminists in the organization of an annual political, social and cultural event. The proper names used in this work are fictitious, with the ethical intention of protecting the identities of the participants.

The present analysis is based on the researcher's participation, through participant observation, in a national gathering of all types of feminisms. In 2020, this meeting was scheduled in the province of San Luis. Participant observation means: "research that involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the latter's *milieu*<sup>5</sup> and during which

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4 Based on notes found in a field diary that was kept for this purpose.

5 The definition incorporates this French term meaning environment, ambience.

data are collected in a systematic and non-intrusive way" (Tylor and Bogan, 1987, p.31).

Two significant events marked this event: on the one hand, the Covid 19 pandemic postponed the meeting, so its organization was interrupted for three years (2020, 2021 and 2022); and, on the other hand, the event changed its name to Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Transvestites, Intersex, Bisexual and Non-Binary. Its slogan was: What is not named, becomes invisible. The change of name generated a fragmentation of a minority group of the Encuentro, which continued to opt for a previous name.

In the analysis of entry into the field, one of the elements to consider is accessibility to the field, which is given by the keys, which is the name given to the people who act as intermediaries and introduce the researcher to the field of study (Tylor and Bogan, 1987). In this case, access was facilitated by two main factors: first, the researcher was part of feminist activist groups in the city of Villa Mercedes since the beginning of the pandemic; and second, the organization of public access assemblies for women and dissidents helped to incorporate them into the field. Concomitantly, the relevance and place of the various social networks and ICTs in terms of contexts of differentiated interaction, with specific purposes and strategies, will be detailed, as well as the relationship of these with the facilities and obstacles that were experienced in the first moments of participant observation. The first classifications and differentiations between activists that emerged at the beginning of the research will also be mentioned.

In the early 2020s, the researcher attended some meetings of a feminist group in the city. These took place during the summer and were held in a square; in addition, there

was a WhatsApp group in which the participants took part. This virtual group was an important source of contact between the activists in the group, as they asked for help, passed information, organized activities and planned meetings. A few months later, the Covid 19 pandemic began and activities were curtailed. In 2020, feminists in San Luis had to organize the Women's meeting. It should be remembered that the change of name meant a break in the organization, which also meant not having the economic funds left over from the previous meeting, which were used to finance the next one. This resulted in the organization splitting into two factions.

Virtual activities and assemblies were held during 2020 and 2021, and an assembly and a meeting of the culture committee were held. Both were held virtually via the meet platform. Discussions were slow; for example, during the first half of the initial meeting, the date of the next meeting was discussed for two hours. This can lead to boredom in some cases.

In April 2022, it was announced via the WhatsApp group, to which the researcher still belonged although without active participation, that the first assembly was being held for the meeting, which that year would be held in person. The assemblies were held on a weekend day in a city in the province; the first one took place in San Luis, the capital. The group of activists announced that there would be free buses<sup>6</sup> to take people to the capital. The bus would leave at noon and return at night on a Saturday. In the organization of transport, there were strong disputes between the different groups of activists. A first differentiation was observed between the different ideologies that

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<sup>6</sup> In Argentina, buses are called *colectivos*, and on this occasion, the activists arranged the transfer with the Secretary of Women's Affairs of the municipality.

were more akin to the regional government or to a national movement. The researcher sat at the back of a bus during the journey to the capital. There, she met people from the municipality, the provincial government, the workers' unions, etc. Testimonies are collected about what it is like to be a feminist in a macho environment.

A first category that begins to emerge immediately, and which has already been mentioned above, has to do with political affiliation and/or affiliation to different types of groups to which activists belong. For example, one group is the government in its different spheres (provincial or municipal), *las socorristas* (an organization dedicated to accompanying abortions), the *autoconvocados* (self-convoked), those from the different groups or currents of justicialism, those from trade union organizations, student organizations, etc. In fact, when they took note of who attended the assembly, they asked about their political background.

The assembly was held in the center of the city of San Luis, in the university canteen of the UNSL<sup>7</sup>. A main table was set up at the head of the circle to serve as moderators. At this point, they began to talk about how each person should elect a sub-commission. All the members were part of the Organising Commission and, at the same time, there were sub-commissions dedicated to specific topics such as press, finances, logistics, culture, contents, self-care, children and adolescents, the plurinational commission, etc.

In these spaces, feminist merchandising is sold (which are a constant feature of the assemblies): scarves, wristbands, books, accessories for the cannabis smoker. These sa-

les take place while the rest of the participants arrive.

The day's activities are divided into three parts: the general assembly begins; then everyone chooses a sub-commission to belong to and these sub-commissions meet separately in the hall; finally, it's back to the general assembly. At the beginning, the main topic is the differentiation of the two existing meetings. The researcher asks for the floor and proposes communication strategies for the networks with the greatest impact. The issue of differentiating the role between activist and researcher was a constant problem throughout the research. An attempt was made to have an attitude of continuous reflexivity about the position and views of the researcher.

Perhaps contrary to what Tylor and Bogan (1987) suggest, the researcher was too visible in the first Assembly, through the intervention noted in the previous paragraph. One can see here the different tensions between the components of the research such as that between distance and proximity, the need for non-intervention and the need for *rapport*<sup>8</sup> (Tylor and Bogan, 1987).

After the opening protocol, participants were invited to join the different sub-commissions: press, finance, contents, logistics, children and adolescents, plurinational commission, self-care, etc. It was proposed as a rule that each person would be part of up to two sub-commissions; in any case, you had to decide to go to at least one commission. Before the Assembly dispersed for the sub-commissions to meet, it was noted that as soon as the sub-commissions were formed, new par-

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7 Universidad Nacional de San Luis. San Luis National University

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8 Rapport is a word of French origin (rapporteur), meaning "to bring back" or "to create a relationship", definition taken from <https://www.rdstation.com/blog/es/rapport/>.

ticipants should be added to the WhatsApp groups of each sub-commission<sup>9</sup>.

Fourteen women and dissidents participate in the press sub-commission; many of them work in radio or in government. Within this group, there are women who work in radio, trans girls who talk about social media, and even a girl who asks that each member of the commission introduce herself with the pronouns with which she identifies.

The scope of the sub-commission is discussed and it is analyzed whether content can be created or only what the sub-commission dedicated to that specificity decides should be disseminated. There was also talk about the issue of the networks; the younger ones focused on Twitter and proposed trying to be a *trending topic*<sup>10</sup> with the theme of the date of the meeting. There was even talk of manipulating the algorithms. Later, they talk about networks that have more impact, such as Instagram and Facebook. At this point, young people decreased their participation. It seems that Twitter, at the organizational level, was a network more promoted by young people and the other networks had more attention from middle-aged people. The day of the weekly subcommittee meeting was also decided. In the sub commission's WhatsApp group, the link is posted so that participants can join the meeting, which is held via the Google Meet platform.

In the first virtual meeting of the sub-commission, leadership is evident within the group. It is a leadership in charge of directing, instructing on the forms and attitudes expected. There is talk about the commitment

that people must have with the movement and the hours of work that will be needed to move the *Encuentro* forward.

This highlights yet another aspect of the marked differentiation between feminists. It also serves as a mechanism of exclusion and segregation within the sub-commissions. The feminist movement is differentiated into active feminists, who are the most committed, who not only go to the assemblies, but also participate in the sub-commissions even if it is a holiday and carry out the necessary activities of the sub-commission; and inactive feminists, who are the people who go to some assembly or participate marginally in some activity. In accordance with this classification, two WhatsApp groups are usually set up: the general group and the active group. The second group has a select number of members.

During the time that the researcher participated in the active WhatsApp group, there was a discussion about the pronouns to use in a communiqué: there was a debate about whether to use only *"todes"*, *"todas y todes"* or *"todas, todes y todos"* (the latter explicitly includes trans men who participate in the organization). In this discussion, it is pointed out that, in the postgraduate career, *"todxs"* is used, which is inclusive of all gender categories. At this point, a government press officer comments: "I understand. But the academy cannot come and impose on a person how they have to name themselves, whether their self-perception is masculine or feminine, from the binary or outside the system".

In this way, another differentiation and categorisation in the movement becomes evident: there are the academic women (to which the researcher belongs because of her work), and the non-academic women. At the start of the subcommittee meeting, the main topic of

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9 In the previous two years, numerous activities and virtual assemblies had taken place and sub-commissions had been formed, but all virtually because of the pandemic.

10 A very popular topic on Twitter.

discussion was the existence of two meetings, the possible unification of dates and the need to clearly communicate the differences between one meeting and the other. It is said that it is not clear to the activists who will come from all over Argentina why there are two meetings on two dates.

It was decided to write a song as part of the sub committee's activities. This song will be worked on remotely, using ICTs. Thus, through WhatsApp, an exchange of ideas takes place; in addition, in a video call on the same application, the couplet is finished, details are polished and the content of the couplet is edited. On the day the couplet is presented, the researcher cannot be present at the meeting.

In that second virtual meeting, a change in the days on which the meetings will be held is established. In addition, all those who took part in that meeting leave the WhatsApp group of activists; this strategy is used to immediately re-establish a new group of activists, from which those who did not participate in the last meeting are excluded. In this way, a clearly marked strategy of differentiation and exclusion is evident. Over the course of the months, belonging to these differentiated groups became very important as a strategy within the organization. The participants gave multiple explanations for the existence of two groups: "so that the active group would be a more operational group", "so that information would not leak out" (especially in view of the danger of possible "spies" from the other meeting who could be infiltrated).

However, beyond these reasons, the existence of two groups served to exclude those who, for whatever reason, were undesirable to those in control of the movement and who

were very committed and active. Thus, power over the commissions was monopolized; as the months went by, these exclusion techniques grew, leading to numerous conflicts.

This section has outlined the researcher's entry into the field, as well as the categories, hierarchies and internal differentiations that were encountered along the way. The role of new technologies and networks in this specific field has also been highlighted. One can see the constant interaction between face-to-face and virtual activities; the preference for certain platforms, according to personal characteristics such as age group, or for different contexts of interaction, such as meetings or more specific collaborative activities among activists. The networks served as an information mechanism through which news of upcoming events is made available. It also serves to establish frameworks for discussion on gender issues and is a way to reduce travel costs.

ICTs allow for multiple virtual meetings and activities. This is important for movements such as the feminist movement, as activities can be held with participants anywhere in the province. It is also a mechanism for assembling factions and subgroups, which serves as a mechanism for exclusion and a strategy for concentrating power. As detailed, it is not a split world, where activism is primarily carried out on the networks, but rather a reality that moves in these two instances (virtual and face-to-face), in a complementary way and with categories that are constructed in the interaction in both spheres.

## 4. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The paper outlined a number of theoretical and conceptual frameworks based on



current discussions around political actions, social movements and new technologies. Special emphasis is placed on the analysis of a specific political and cultural social movement within the framework of feminisms.

In the case of this *Encuentro*, the relationship of feminist political activity with ICTs is highlighted in many ways. ICTs lower costs, provide facilities for the dissemination of information and communication. Moreover, these technologies are used to consolidate different strategies and mechanisms of feminist political practice.

The researcher's account, in an exemplary manner, aims to analyze the current reality of social movements and, in particular, feminist movements. These movements are marked by constant interactions in different contexts, both face-to-face and virtual: face-to-face assemblies, virtual meetings through different platforms and networks such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Google Meet, Facebook and Instagram. These interactions produce a complex whole to

be analyzed in a non-divided and non-fragmented way in future research.

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# Collective work of art and digital ethnography: Identity and Perception on Instagram. *Me, Myself & I* project

***Obra artística colectiva y etnografía digital: Identidad y Percepción en Instagram. Proyecto Me, Myself & I***

# 6

ARTICLE



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### Abstract

*Me, Myself & I* is a collective art project about Instagram. It was made between December 2020 and March 2021. The methodology was an open call, where each user of the platform sent the most representative post of themselves explaining in a text why they selected it over the rest. The 126 participations show the potential of the immaterial codes of social media when discerning other identities or self-exhibiting ourselves. By analyzing the personal image, we also worked on understanding the perception of a virtual community. The research was supported by the II ESTIBA Grants.

### KEYWORDS

Digital Art, Instagram, Digital Identity, Social Media, Digital Community

### Resumen

*Me, Myself & I* es un proyecto artístico colaborativo en torno a Instagram. Se realizó entre diciembre de 2020 y marzo de 2021. La metodología empleada fue una convocatoria abierta en la que cada usuario/a mandó libremente una captura de pantalla de su *post* más representativo junto con un texto explicativo del motivo de selección. Las 126 participaciones muestran

la potencia de los códigos inmateriales de las redes sociales a la hora de auto-exhibirnos. Al analizar la imagen personal se trabajó la percepción comunitaria virtual con cada vez más difusas fronteras entre lo digital y lo terrenal. La

investigación contó con el apoyo de las II Becas ESTIBA.

## **PALABRAS CLAVE**

Arte Digital, Instagram, Identidad Digital, Redes Sociales, Comunidad Digital

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## **1. INTRODUCTION AND STATE OF THE ART**

*Me, Myself & I* seeks to understand the rituals of image projection and the formulas of perception under which content is poured on the Instagram social network. This is a virtual environment where individual realities occupy every screen, where one's own creativity can find new forms of expression or be completely annulled amidst the rest of the identities that are exalted there.

To navigate all this social fluctuation, the most used boat is leisure. We speak of leisure understood as learning that responds to the new form of socio-individual development, based on subjectivities and experimentation. This kind of leisure occurs partly on digital platforms and partly also in terrestrial events. There is therefore a complementary duplicity between the identities that separate and bring together the physical person and his or her virtual avatar. This study is based on the observation that everyone who has a profile on any network (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook...) is a slave to its maintenance and it also becomes an important task in their daily life. This aspect encourages the creative spirit whereby each user shows what he/she wants to show.

In turn, and as a consequence, individual creation is increasingly leaning towards a media-creating community to achieve something superior; the anonymous and collective work of art (Brea, 2003). This strategy also benefits the area of influence of audiovisual works, due to the sum of the radius of action of each person within a virtual community. Another factor that affects the gestation of this kind of community is the creation of content that manages to bring them together due to the acceleration of image productions on the Internet. Regarding this phenomenon, Jiménez-Donaire (2021) speaks of a digital swarm of people connected to each other and says that "this virtual swarm consists of individuals connected to each other, but paradoxically isolated" (2021, p.72), thus clearly stating the duality between the need to live in common and the need to build a solid ego, a strong and coherent identity that can be maintained over time through the production of this kind of transmedia content.

Continuing with the participant observation, it can be seen that this utopia of the media community is truncated by the intervention of large corporations, interfering in a tool that could be independent and generate valuable leisure in itself, such as the Internet. Capitalism acts as an amplifier through *mass-media* by promul-

gating simultaneously vast quantities of information for the same incident. This way, the system avoids applying censorship that could go against these dynamics by generating information cacophony that annuls itself daily.

When reference is made to Benjamin, the great author who mentioned the work of art during the period of its technical reproducibility in 1936, we must remember that the technical work (any reproduction taken from a device) is not an imitation, but leads to its updating, to its wear and tear or to the transformation of the relationship of the public with art by extracting something from its context to resignify it at the present time (Benjamin, 1936). This loss of spatial-temporal location generates a mutation supported by the new modes of reception that as a consequence change the language, thus requiring new policies for the use and democratization of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in teaching, promoted by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). These measures may well prevent future online threats due to the lack of knowledge of the internal dynamics hidden behind the screens, especially at an early age.

Culture and leisure stand as franchises that link the existence of more free time with that of a greater cultural offer. The privatization of cultural consumption is increasingly taking place through canned goods. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a tendency towards the construction of plural identities that add layers of meaning according to the contexts that concern each individual.

Increasing emphasis is placed on the exercise of participation, which invites people to experience the productive process. Society assimilates its participation in the development of activities as a more relevant aspect than the final result of these activities. Culture seems to go beyond being an end in itself, and sometimes becomes the servant of other kinds of ends, such as the economic benefit of corporate brands or country brands (territorial branding). There are new forms of concentration in the face of trending topic events that focus attention on simultaneous public opinion.

New forms of consumption are convulsively exposing us to the bait of experiential products that promote a powerful perception of the self in terms of the feeling of freedom for decision-making. It is a present where personal choices are a symbol of the control of subjectivity.

When there is order in consciousness, we can focus on the consolidation of a novel, increasingly complete and formed version of ourselves. Moreover, all this is exacerbated by the ability to edit oneself / the self/ what the Internet offers, as suggested by García Castañeda (2019) in his text on the aesthetics of the hyper mediated subject, where he stresses that: "the final moment in the process of aestheticizing the self in the network, refers to the self-curation of the person's self-virtual image itself" (p.19). In this way, it can be seen how the way of showing ourselves inevitably conditions the creation of self-awareness in the contemporary era and specifically in its virtual dimension.

In addition: "Leisure is one of the areas where the most experiences are lived in which the limit between the global and the local is

blurred" (Cuenca, 2014, p.26). This aspect has been expanding thanks to the material loss of territory and, in turn, of terrestrial boundaries, which are increasingly absent in the virtual environment. This is due to citizens' knowledge of and access to hardware and software; however, this could change with new regulatory measures linked to economic status.

The social network Instagram was created in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and its name combines "the concepts of «*snapshot*» and «*telegram*», words that reminded the creators of their childhood with Polaroid photographs" (Gil, 2022, p.1). In this way, a public exhibition portal appears that, in its origins, had a square image format, in homage to Kodak Instamatic and Polaroid (Gil, 2022).

Instagram has been part of the Facebook franchise since 2012 (BBC, 2018) and this has caused what were once personal and family photo albums to expand to the whole world, diluting the boundary between public and private. Being fully visual from its conception, it is not surprising that the platform only includes the written word as a caption or linked message. It did not take long for video to be incorporated as a necessary structural modification for this social network to reach its transmedia puberty.

However, by recently introducing the mechanism of the interview as a binary response (yes or no), Instagram has opened a new field that, although it makes it possible to carry out research through the medium, it also reinforces the value of opinion and populism within a network where it was believed, until now, that the image had power over words. Thus, this tool seems to be used in a more abrupt way: "(...) All imitative arts carry two messages: a

denoted message, which is the analogon itself, and a connoted message, which is, in a certain manner, the way in which society offers the reader its opinion about it" (Barthes, 2002, p.13-14).

Focusing now on the analysis of the codes that are applied to the images, we are aware that these images are not reality, at least not beyond the dematerialization of physical reality through the crystallization of specific moments, but rather, in the words of García and Pereiro (2019): "the Image-Code is the substance of New Media and a valuable tool for preservation" (p.111). This preservation finds in memory a way to maintain contemporary visual codes edited with a lesser or greater degree of detail and veracity. Nowadays, filters have modified the essence of the messages to the point of becoming mere geolocation tags of personalities built by an accumulation of data that is disseminated individually. It is an ode to the ego within an *infocinated* society which, paradoxically, is at the same time incapable of assimilating such a quantity of information, detaching itself from the self and understanding it from the commonplace.

This quasi-hyperactive impulse of constant activity to demonstrate that we live and that we enjoy ourselves, is translated into an Anglo-Saxon concept to define users: *adprosumer* (Arroyo, 2011). According to this author the term is made up of three syllables: AD (advertisement) because the customer is satisfied with the product or service and shares it with the network of potential customers within their reach; PRO (producer) which refers to the new generation of customers who provide information, and SUMER (consumer) since in addition to producing information, also consumes it. However, this theory is mutating more than a decade later

due to the problems that arise in interpersonal relationships that are present in the use policies that the creative community must accept on the Internet.

This selection of backgrounds has been the main motivation hidden under the epidermis of the *Me, Myself & I* project. The proposal began to take shape in 2017 and emerged with force between 2020 and 2021. We found 126 life stories that narrate ways of feeling, ways of belonging and ways of enunciating what concerns us the most and, at the same time, what is difficult for us to communicate: who we are and what we have come to do.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

It is known beforehand that the visions that reach us are constructs. Nevertheless, we are human beings and as such we like stories (to tell and to be told). For this reason, between 2020 and 2021, and with the support of the Haceria Arteak-ZAWP Association and the Ministry of Culture of Spain, a space for collective reflection was born, which can be a tool to explore other paths of self-criticism built in common on social networks: the online archive: <https://memyselfandi-sm.blogspot.com/>.

The sampling strategy specially designed for *Me, Myself & I* to study the messy identities of Instagram and humanize the desire that leads us to self-exhibit followed the data provided by the agencies Hootsuite and We, are social in the year the project was carried out, which was in 2021. Salgado (2021) points out that social network users are on the rise in Spain, with eight million new users in 2021. This report reflects that the behavior of Internet users was setting post-pandemic adaptation trends at that time.

This factor is an important conditioning factor when analyzing the results obtained, as they are personal perceptions captured during difficult circumstances. The results are socio-individual portraits of a time in which both social networks and new technologies managed to establish themselves both rapidly and unexpectedly (and sometimes difficult to manage). This has generated intimate and very powerful intangible communities among strangers (as a future line of thought, it is questionable whether these communities are stable and sustainable in the long term).

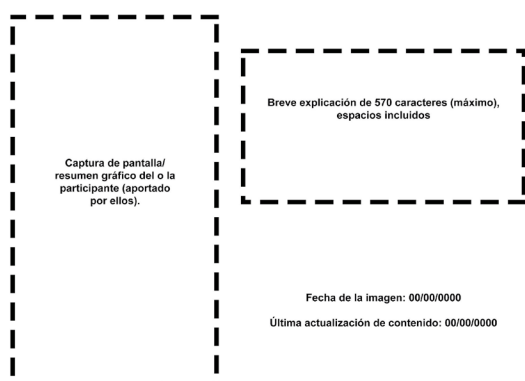
The work of agencies that research into the behavior of people on the Internet using ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) shows that the use of Instagram is in third position, with 69% of potential users. Moreover, the age range that appears most often on Instagram is between the ages selected for the *Me, Myself & I* project: between 18 and 34 years old. These ages have the highest percentages in the graph, with 14.5% of women and 15.3% of men aged 18-24, and 16.1% of women and 16.9% of men aged 25-34 (We are social and Hootsuite, 2021, p.130). This refutes the reason why, when activating the sample, Instagram users within these age ranges were contacted, limiting a broader spectrum that would be unmanageable for a single author.

The *Me, Myself & I* digital ethnography exercise was the result of an open call that was communicated through different online channels so that people between the ages of 18 and 34 could take advantage of this opportunity to freely delve into the self-knowledge of their profiles and the functioning of the platform as a community.

It is difficult to reduce all the complexity behind an Instagram profile to the confines of a pre-fixed template devised specifically for the project (e.g. Figure 1), and to confine thoughts and feelings to a screenshot and 570 characters including spaces. However, sometimes it is only by experimenting in this way that soliloquies become one or the other.

**Figure 1**

*Me, Myself & I template. Own source.*



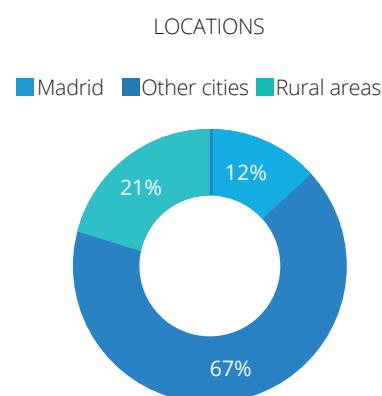
**Note:** The image represents the base template that was used to lay out all the content that entered the email configured for *Me, Myself & I*. On the left was the screenshot image (with or without the username visible as agreed). On the right the descriptive text, and below the date of publication of the post on Instagram and the date of reception in the project.

On the other hand, and in addition to receiving 126 stories of a very diverse nature (reflexive, creative, doubtful...), each participant had to fill out an informed consent that would allow their testimony to appear publicly on the project's blog, research Instagram profile, exhibitions and/or possible publications, having received and filed 111 (e.g. Figure 2).

Another variable that was measured in parallel was the place from which the content was broadcast. Most were urban participations with 21% of the total came from Madrid. This data reflects the clear demographic imbalance in Spain, although it is somewhat anecdotal in this study and is visible on the scale of a sample as small as the one at hand (e.g. Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Results Me, My self & I. Own source*



126 participants  
 111 informed consents (figure made upon this data)  
 Data extracted to be employed in my thesis *The impact of cultural participation in the neo rural ecosystem: digitization as a new meeting space for the community (the public)*



**Note:** The image shows the geographical distribution of the participations and the number of informed consents received in order to be published in the project's communication exercises.

### **3. RESULTS. BEYOND SELFIES: FROM EGO TO ECO**

When the project began in December 2020, it was soon verified that the authorship of the work would never be our own. Its execution escaped any type of control that might apply to it. At no point were entries censored or selected, which left the project free to become what the co-authors of the work wanted to make of it.

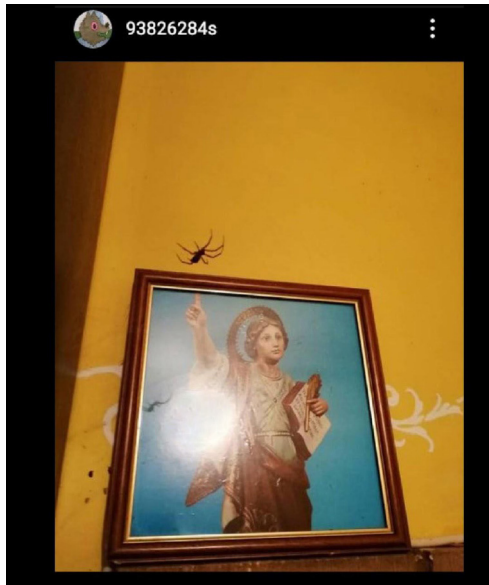
The mechanization of authorship meant that the recipient of the content became an automaton who did little more than open an email, download the material received into a folder and go to the editing program to assemble the final image, sending it back to the sender, together with an informed consent form where the participants filled in and signed where they wanted to appear in the work; not even that decision rested with the project manager. This depersonalization of the self, dissolved into a communal entity gave full creative freedom.

This effort highlighted that a sense of community can be generated by agreeing to be part of a work of these dimensions. The sharing of a project prompted those who wanted to play the game to review their own publications, under the premise of choosing a single image that described them above the rest. They then had to send a screenshot of their choice to the author, also providing information on issues such as whether their phone was set to night mode or not, whether it had a black background (e.g. Figure 3), or a white background (e.g. Figure 4). This also provided information, in the background, on blue light hypersensitivity, aesthetic preference, or even the daily screen time of each participant. Such a screenshot had to be accompanied by a short descriptive text of no more than 570 characters (spaces included), resulting in a conjunction of all of these in the official project template, explained in Figure 1 in the methodology section.

Each result offered light and shadow not only from the device itself, but above all from the person who was using it to show insecurity, creativity, nostalgia, or joy (among many other emotions typical of the fickleness of our current society).

**Figure 3**

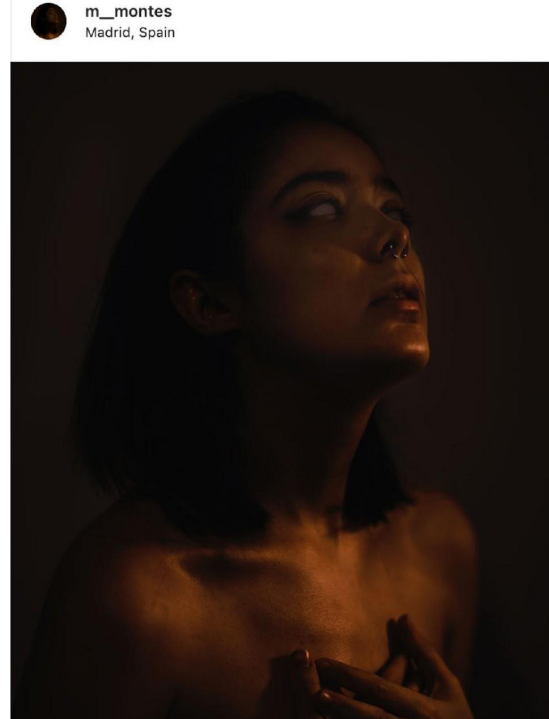
*Example participation: Me, Myself & I  
black background. Source: @93826284s*



**Note:** Example of participation in the collective work *Me, Myself & I* with a testimonial received on 01/25/2021 from user @93826284s with the phone set to dark mode.

**Figure 4**

*Example participation: Me, Myself & I white  
background. Source: @m\_montes.*



*In one go  
Like my writing: in hot  
With the tare just made,  
with the latent pain.  
No cure,  
but you are vulnerable.  
Think in your decisions  
in your self-respect  
Stop and think:  
what your wound is  
what your pleasure,  
and what you have to do.*

*Date of publication of image: 01/20/2021  
Date received for MM&I: 01/25/2021*

**Note:** Example of participation in the collective work *Me, Myself & I* with a testimonial received on 01/20/2021 from the user @m\_montes with the phone set to a white background.

Although the results were also exhibited in the form of a photographic installation in an old boiler factory, the way it was produced meant that the blog and the project's Instagram profile (*@pfifacetas\_identidad*) were more natural spaces to broadcast the 111 consented participations of Instagram users who were involved in this development and wanted to be a visible part of the collective work.

After the installation of the Internet as a means for international communication, the identities of users have been mutating until they have become roles or avatars, often represented as selfies. As the referent of post-photography Joan Fontcuberta (2016) mentions: "we don't so much want to show the world as to indicate our being in the world" (p.87). In this way, these new self-portraits are a way of showing how we belong to territories.

These kinds of images are becoming visually more succulent, but also freer of earthly conditions. The physical environment has different standards than the digital environment. This was another of the reasons why *Me, Myself & I* sought, at all times, to show the more forgotten physical B-side of digital showcases: that which is not seen because it is process-based and unpublished, but that lays the foundations for later broadcasting the contents. Here it is expressed with the descriptive text that accompanies the chosen image.

In the same way, interpersonal relationships are distorted in the virtual space because the number of followers or friends visible to other users turns out to be more important than the real bond that one has with each person, who is a numerical tag within the online tracking system. Obsession with the quantitative leaves behind a trail of subjectivities that overflow and are often not attended to as they deserve.

The use of photography has been installed in society as a very quick way of recounting memorable events or life changes of any relevance on the Internet. This whole dialectic can be manipulated to achieve a variety of uses, and is essential to the capitalist system. According to Berger (2001): "Through photographs the world is transformed into a series of unconnected and independent particles; and history, past and present, into a collection of anecdotes and fait divers. The camera atomizes, controls and obscures reality" (p.55). In this way, moments are frozen in memory. The whole tangle of moments that are captured with a device that, like a car, can learn how to use it. This, it twins the machine with the human being. This hybridization is much feared because it jeopardizes the degree of humanization of creative processes.

When we carry out a detailed autopsy of *Me, Myself & I*, we see that the construction of how things are perceived is very powerful. Many of the images refer to the Western imaginary in cinematographic postures of the bodies, in taking landscape views like postcards, or in making productions based on what other creators broadcast daily by using their own digital showcases.

From the 19th century onwards, the well-known secularization of religion took place due to the embrace of capitalism: another kind of worship that demanded a social reform to stay. The 20th century erected an opportunism that turned everything into a spectacle: nature, history, other people, etc. It is an ever-present, eternal spectacle of immediate expectation. It is an ever-present, eternal spectacle of immediate expectation; there is a direct relationship between spectator and audiovisual product. Within this new climax, we must remember that the camera, moreover, frees from the yoke of memory, further mechanizing the qualitative result of this new civilization.

Thanks to *Me, Myself & I*, we can see that a new way of telling reality through transmedia has emerged in a multitude of aspects that increasingly materialize the concept of the cyborg as a representative figure of the masses due to this hybrid between the body and its creation in pixels.

Nowadays, society lives in a moment in which: “photography is more alive than ever, just not under the same circumstances” (Toro-Peralta and Grisales-Vargas, 2021, p.5). This means that this accumulation of images forms part of a socio-political imaginary that aspires to achieve a different memory that will change the concept of anthropocentrism for that of the Anthropocene (new geological stratum resulting from the remainders of human activity). This new maelstrom reaches its peak with the new dynamics of concentration of public opinion on social networks such as Twitter, a platform where each user can share their view, now also with a greater number of characters.

If we pay attention to the policies of Facebook (a company that also owns Instagram, the social network on which *Me, Myself & I* is based) we can observe a manifesto claiming to make the world “a more open and connected place” (Facebook, 2022). In its cover letter, Facebook explains the type of information it collects, such as the user activity and the data it provides (data that also includes the geolocation of the place where the photographs were taken, the date, duration and frequency of activities shared), data about the user provided by other users, the groups to which the user is connected, billing, shipping and payment information. Furthermore, as if that were not enough, the franchise can also access the information accumulated in the devices where its application is

installed, or that are simply access ports to it (mobiles, tablets, computers...).

All this tangle of captured (but unearned) information is used to develop and provide better services, and to offer shortcuts and suggestions (cookies: external advertising). In other words, a whole business with the benefit of interconnectivity between users as an advantage.

The people responsible for the social platform state that:

“When we have information about the location, we use it to tailor our services to your needs and the needs of others; for example, we help you record visits and find events or offers in your area, or tell your friends that you are near them” (Facebook, 2022).

However, do we really want such an exhaustive control of our lives and our personal connections? Is the right to social disconnection, to absence, ever taken care of?

“The reason that the spectacle is nowhere to be found at home is that the spectacle is everywhere” (Debord, 1999, p.49). This faithfully summarizes the sheltering of one’s own gestures and those of others under the sphere of artificiality that constantly interchanges the concept of reality with that of representation. Contemporary society lacks justifications and that is why the material bases of almost any event are in a very precarious equilibrium within a time frozen by flash halos.

The existence of oral and written languages allows one of the communicating parties to feel confirmed by the other visual party in an exercise of feedback. Thanks to this, the human being can count on others as on him/herself. Within this statement it is very common for the

deepest fears and ignorance to be confirmed. This type of impulse reveals that it is something innate to seek to live in community (Berger, 2001), because as Kropotkin would say, mutual help has proven to be essential for the perpetuation of the species and in this case, also of art.

Contemporary public photography tends to offer information to the environment outside the experience, just as if a stranger were shouting to attract everyone's attention. It does not contain meaning in itself because it functions "by attribution" (Berger, 2001). The alternative use of photography today constructs a context for each snapshot in a unilinear way, not radially as it happens with the mnemonic function. This scheme that seeks to branch out more and more is what *Me, Myself & I* has worked as the central axis.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Human beings have a tendency to accumulate data or objects only in the hope that they will be able to use them in the future. We live in a society of rapid and massive consumption, a worthy heir to the collections of the past that erected ideals of prestige, conquest or hobby, and which have been forming the largest three-dimensional encyclopedias that we have outside the network: museums and archives of historical memory that are also turning towards new forms of exhibiting their contents in the virtual world.

This relationship with technology needs some sphere to ensure it, and that sphere is art. According to Benjamin: "Among the social functions of art, the most important is that of establishing a balance between man

and the system of apparatus" (1936, p.84). This balance is more than surpassed today, with the mechanization of manual processes such as drawing or animation through graphic tablets, computers and editing programs. This brotherhood refers to two sides of a whole that is very visible in the results of *Me, Myself & I*: the human being as creator and the created as a tool for transmission.

Never in the succession of the different centuries has there been so much awareness of the right to privacy. In spite of this, the policies of use of the different platforms often seem to deny it at the root in order to obtain data that feeds large companies. The preservation of historical memory is also being left aside, possibly because living in an infocated society, the average citizen has forgotten the value of connection beyond the use of Wi-Fi. However, with the arrival of digital natives into adulthood, we can see a concern regarding the profiling of identity, interrelationships and knowledge about the visual medium on the web. With the maturity of the users there are also mixed feelings such as shame, violence, sexual, political, polemic issues... and all this without leaving aside the question of who I am and what I have come to do in this life (the eternal existentialist dilemma poured into contemporary media).

After the anthropocentrism-consented establishment of the self in psychology, the individual in society, the self in philosophy and the artist in art, the commitment to specify a concept for normality supported by institutions such

as mental hospitals in the twentieth century is falling flat in contemporaneity. The value of the bizarre can no longer be used to define and contrast one person with another, for both are as strange and disturbing as any other. When defining the strange or the weird, one turns to Fisher, who creates a bias between two concepts: the strange and the creepy, defining the former as “a particular type of disturbance (...) something that should not exist here” (Fisher, 2018, p.19). Presence has found in the ways of appearing in a photograph, of self-portraying or of making ourselves present in spaces beyond our absolute control, a multitude of ways that shoot in as many directions as axioms this plot can come to weave. Here it is worth noting that there are so many stories broadcast on the Internet and their possible ways of bringing them together that *Me, Myself & I* is presented as a pilot project that calls for opening up other explorations within social networks in this regard.

Perhaps it is precisely this lack of control that is given to us by accepting the policies of use of these online platforms, that *Me, Myself & I* directly addresses us in familiar forms. This collective work undertakes the problem of the drift of the personal narrative by forcing us to choose an image, the most identifying image of the person who is brush, paintbrush, canvas and support, essential raw material in this artistic display.

Another important point to highlight is the large amount of content that is poured into a channel where the exchange of data is very extensive. This exchange is such that the web is always active and in constant oscillation. Internet Live Stats, which counts each and every one of the movements that take place on the Internet every day, counts that in sixty seconds 3.6 million Google searches are generated, 150 million e-mails are sent, 140,000 video calls are made, 45,000 photographs are uploaded to Instagram, and 8.1 million videos are viewed

on YouTube (Internet Live Stats, 2022). This maxi-consumption of online content represents a change in the communication dynamics of companies, institutions and the public, who are committed to transparency where little or nothing can be hidden in a hyper-connected network.

Internet society has become a sea of compulsive sharers, with 81% of Spanish users accessing the web daily to review and share content (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2021). Social networks are the main hub for sharing with others immediately, without going back over our own digital footprint. This abandonment of content that has already had its moment of glory means that we are unconcerned with perpetuity, as we have already accounted for that which most deserves to be remembered and exhibited; so why even consider it as digital heritage in the future? Memory is fading, but memories are also increasingly lazy and tend to seek the immortality of any kind of record in order to leave a physical, material or virtual record of what builds us, individually and socially.

Regarding statistical data provided, and adding a more subjective and humanistic aspect, Rendueles (2013) talks to us about sociophobia. He considers that we live and coexist in a state of permanent panic due to anthropological density, and therefore defines sociophobia as a universal bias spread across the entire surface of the globe. This apparently negative aspect is a bid to raise awareness of the digital utopia of cyber-fetishism in a technological determinism constrained by ICTs and far removed from Marxist ideals. Sociophobia is established as the central ideal of liberal currents, with Bentham's panopticon as the model. This panopticon is based on a circular construction with individual cells around the entire circumference of the building, with the guards in a central

watchtower, open to all angles of vision. This idea captures the key that technology needs: an omnipresence, a permanent visibility that never lets us see when it is exercising its power. Because of these characteristics, and others that are less essential, it remains the model for contemporary international relations (Rendueles, 2013).

According to C. Gattegno, quoted by Dondis (1976): "Sight, though we all use it so naturally, has not yet produced its own civilization [...] it enables our minds to receive and retain an infinite number of units of information in a fraction of a second" (p.14). *Me, Myself & I* leads us to suggest that the civilization that will foster visuality will be cemented by the support of preference-linked knowledge. Arguably, it is being arrived at right now. Contemporaneity will hardly be able to see at the time the imprint it will leave on the future, but it is aware of the changes it needs to resolve in the exercise of its routine, within its breeding ground.

Moreover, sight has found in photography (or in post-photography) an important ally, as we have already seen, since: "Thanks to the realism of photography, it is more difficult to disassociate ourselves from real experience, and therefore to escape from autobiography" (Jiménez Revuelta, 2021, p.84). With these words, the author places us in a panorama where autobiography, understood as a look at the personal past, becomes part of the collective memory, through faithful or distorted memories. All of this is linked to new communication strategies.

The future civilization needs to face all socio-individual dilemmas by communicating among peers. We need to express ourselves, to feel listened to and to gain security by laying the foundations of what makes us part of a society,

of a community. The civilization that is to come needs to manage the gift of sight and master it in order to be able to say without words that which may not be able to find any other means of communication. The civilization to come is already scratching the surface and is asking for changes in the different ways we have of living, coexisting and sharing.

In this way, and following the idea of Domínguez (2020) that: "we must speak about observation beyond its contemplative dimension: understanding it as an act of a new game of inquiring and questioning" (Domínguez, 2020, p.100), we would need to properly instruct ourselves in this language to be able to translate it, interpret it, communicate with it and, above all, not lose the ability to enjoy it.

Perhaps what today began as a collective work of art on digital ethnography with *Me, Myself & I* will take on different meaning later on. We may reach a time when social networks become much more plural and personalized encyclopedias of life, full of different points of view and with a multitude of access ports, just as is the case today with Wikipedia. We are leaving reflections for future generations as long as the managers of cultural heritage (or rather: of the new digital heritage) allow it.

The new community ecosystem built on the basis of likes and visits to other people's social profiles finds a new dimension. The loss of hermeneutics in the diaspora of this type of proposals generates a desire for visual literacy, which is necessary to discern the hidden messages and the deferred knowledge available behind each creation. The famous adprosumer to which we are already accustomed leads to an expansion

of the author-audience under algorithms and commercial strategies with the ultimate goal of capitalizing.

After having achieved a certain secularization of religion, this sudden cult of a technological doctrine stands out. Technology has become, as an all-powerful entity, a meter of cities and social structures in the world (or rather of its reflection in the virtual network). This spectacularization of power, as previously defined by Debord (1999), is demonstrated by the study of the impacts of *Me, Myself & I* on Instagram, which highlight an intended omnipresence on the part of the users connected to it, both at the level of sender and at the level of receiver.

Within this speculative tangle, the boundaries of the real are becoming increasingly blurred. The division between the physical person and the virtual person adds to this confusion and

the way they fit together is often not as simple as it might seem at first sight. However, the importance of preserving digital heritage as a child of its time must be emphasized.

Just as after the boom of architecture, sacrilegious sculpture, or painting in previous stages it was assimilated that maintaining and caring for the most outstanding results of these disciplines was to preserve the history of humanity itself, it should also be understood that digital works and online contents are powerful. Their power is still pubescent before the boundaries of our history, but it can find, in artistic recreations that bring us closer to digital ethnographies and collective works, a whole ocean of motivations that move us towards other realities and circumstances but above all, towards other ways of making community.



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# Social networks in the activation of collective identity: the case of the Official Cristero National Guard Facebook

***Las redes sociales en la activación de la identidad colectiva: el caso del Facebook de la Guardia Nacional Cristera Oficial***

7

ARTICLE



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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates the characteristics of the memory activation through the analysis of the social network of the *Guardia Nacional Cristera*. It highlights the role played by this Facebook platform in the reinterpretation and updating of the links of the Cristero community. It delves, in fact, into the characteristics of the publications, following the methodology proposed by Robert Kozinets (2015) in *Netnography. Redefined*, which allows for a punctual review of

the content of the publications, and therefore interprets the results in the light of theories of memory, post-memory and forgetting.

## **KEYWORDS**

social network, memory, activation

## **Resumen**

El trabajo indaga en las características que reviste la activación de la memoria a través del análisis de la red social de la Guardia Nacional

Cristera. Se destaca el papel que desempeña esta plataforma de Facebook en la reinterpretación y actualización de los vínculos de la comunidad cristera. Profundiza, en efecto, en las características de las publicaciones, siguiendo la acertada metodología propuesta por Robert Kozinets (2015) en *Netnography. Redefined*, que

permite realizar una revisión puntual del contenido de las publicaciones, y por lo tanto, interpreta los resultados a la luz de las teorías de la memoria, la posmemoria y el olvido.

## **PALABRAS CLAVE**

redes sociales, memoria, activación

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Facebook platform was created in 2004 and emerged as a university social network.<sup>1</sup> A few years later, it would experience a significant diffusion that turned it into a “generalist social network” (Caldevilla, 2010, p. 60). Specialists attribute the growth of this type of virtual networks to the ludic and plastic possibilities that the platform offers; for example, the ample opportunity for interaction, the potential for personalization, the use of multimedia content and the richness derived from editing, as well as the direct feeding of its participants (Caldevilla, 2010).

The same author states that social networks are born as “a gathering of people, known or unknown, who interact with each other, redefining the group and feeding it back” (Caldevilla, 2010, p. 47). Although the administrator is primarily responsible for publishing and curating content, the community is the one that issues opinions and shares publications in a process that favors the growth and flow of multidirectional communication (p. 47).

Social networks, in fact, can be equated in structure to discourses and traditions, since they

have a starting narrative, a trajectory and an end that includes biases, silences, forgetfulness and suppressions (Hall, 2005). It is a statement<sup>2</sup> that changes in the face of the “burden imposed by the enunciator”, which requires considering the succession of hands that carry it, as well as the modifications they undergo (Latour, 1998, p. 112). If we follow this approach, it becomes essential to identify how individuals and groups construct their memories through the narration of some specific moments that are chosen throughout their evolution (Hall, 2005).

This paper aims to identify the role of networks in the processes of activating community memories<sup>3</sup>. To this end, it analyzes the publications on the Facebook page of the Catholic group called *La Guardia Nacional Cristera Oficial*<sup>4</sup> (The Official Cristero National Guard). It should be remembered that this group has its ideological roots in the Cristero War, which the Mexican state fought against Catholic groups in the central region of the country at the end of the 1920s. It should be noted that the Cristeros, in the conflict, used not only weapons,

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1 The term “social network” is used to designate networks that seek to continue a relationship, usually “offline,” while “social networking” contemplates social networks that are conducive to the initiation of relationships. In this framework, Facebook is considered a “social network” site (Sinn, 2014, p. 97).

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2 Latour points out that by statement: “we understand anything that is launched, sent or delegated by an enunciator [...] that refers to a word, a phrase, an object or an apparatus and sometimes to an institution” (1998, p. 112).

3 The concept of community used is the one elaborated by Benedict Anderson and defined as imagined because its members will not get to know most of their peers: “although in the mind of each one lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1993, p. 23).

4 See <https://www.facebook.com/Guardia-Nacional-Cristera-Oficial-951497078224610>

but also other means of propaganda to spread their ideas in newspapers and photographs, which have recently been activated through their social network.

It should be noted that the group called Guardia Nacional Cristera opened its Facebook page on May 4, 2015, intending to serve as an “official organ of information and linking of the Cristeros”, as happened with the David magazine, in its second period (1952 and 1968). It should be remembered that this Cristero organ began its publication in 1936, and managed to print 59 issues. It intended to strengthen the ranks of the Ejército Popular Libertador and maintain the Cristero spirit (Flores, 2015).

To delve deeper into the characteristics of the interactions that take place on this social network, a netnography and content analysis of the publications over the course of a year was chosen. This required delving into the events that led to the formation of the group, with the intention of properly situating the community's references. The review focused on the content of the posts, the characteristics of the images and the community's response, to clarify the elements that the community has selected as its own and, thus, to identify the relevance of the social network in the integration of a geographically dispersed community.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The Cristero conflict in Mexico arose from the publication of the Calles Law on 31 July 1926, which was called the Penal Code of the Federal District and Territories on crimes of the common law and crimes against the federation in matters of religious worship and external discipline. This law sought to limit ecclesiastical power with measures affecting the Church's internal life, which was to provoke the outbreak of the first rebellion. In effect, it prohibited the wearing of religious clothing in public places, the participation of foreign priests in worship, and decreed secular education. It also imposed restrictions on freedom of association and the religious press; above all, it denied the Church's legal personality (Avitia, 2006).

The Mexican Episcopate, faced with the anti-clerical measures of the government, responded with the publication of a Pastoral Letter that decreed the suspension of public worship as of July 31, 1926. The State's frontal attack on the Church would provoke, in August and September 1926, the first Cristero uprisings in the states of Zacatecas, Jalisco, Michoacán and Durango (Avitia, 2006). The Cristero struggle, at the beginning, would be characterized by the execution of dispersed actions that would reach greater strength with the arrival of General Enrique Gorostieta as sole chief of the Cristero Liberation Army, on October 28, 1928 (Avitia, 2006).

The struggle between the Cristero and federal forces, in fact, maintained a certain warlike intensity until the death of General Gorostieta, on June 2, 1929. His death marked the decline of the armed struggle, which helped the Church and the State to reach a political agreement that led to the signing of an armistice that put an end to the conflict. However, after the arrangements, the State once again violated the relationship with the Church by adopting measures aimed at limiting ecclesiastical power in public life, which would provoke a second rebellion from 1934 to 1936.

It should be noted that, forty years after the end of the Rebellion, and being at the limit of the period to carry out the transmission of the memory -as pointed out by specialists- (Assman, 2011 ), the old Cristeros took action, with the purpose of “vindicating the truth of the movement and the memory of the fallen.”<sup>5</sup> The effort of the Cristero community to transmit their memories to future generations can be traced through the recording and gathering of information, to the recent application of the memories by the current community.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Now, before entering into the study of the activation of memory on the Facebook page of the Cristero National Guard, it is necessary to point out that this work supports its analysis on the proposal made by Tzvetan Todorov (2003) in his work *Hope and Memory*. This is an obligatory reference for the examination of this topic. Indeed, the author identifies three stages in the process of memory configuration, which are the establishment of facts, the construction of meaning and the application or activation. The first

includes the selection of the traces of the past that one seeks to preserve and that will play a decisive role in the construction of memory, in the understanding that it is a conscious and voluntary process of choosing the traces that are considered worthy of perpetuating .

The construction of meaning, on the other hand, is based on the establishment of facts to understand the past and the present, to discern their causes and effects (Todorov, 2003 ). Finally, the phase of activation or application is characterized by the use of the past to serve the objectives of the present (Todorov, 2003 ). This is a three-phase practice that usually coexists and may begin with an idea of application of knowledge and experience that precedes the search for and collection of facts. Todorov stated that one usually looks to the past to legitimize an action in the present, since “memory is selective by nature and there must be a criterion for selecting what is preserved from a mass of information received and this conscious and unconscious criterion is a guide to the uses we make of the past” (Author’s translation. Todorov, 2003, p. 128).

It should be noted that the Facebook page of the Cristero National Guard, which emerged as a result of the National Assembly held on April 11, 2015, uses on its cover a photograph of the Southern Division, which was in charge of Jesús Degollado Guízar, who was responsible for the discharge of the Cristero troops on June 21, 1929 (Peña, 2019). Degollado would call his followers in a Manifesto not to give up the struggle and to remain united with the motto “God, Homeland and Liberty”. This act took place two weeks before the agreements signed by the prelates of the Church with President Emilio Portes Gil, in 1929 (Puente, 2002 ).

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<sup>5</sup> See *David's* second period, in particular, number 20.

**Figure 1**

Cover image, Facebook Of  
ficial Cristero National Guard.<sup>6</sup>



The cover image is closely related to the page profile, as it uses the shield of the Cristero National Guard<sup>7</sup> to represent the group. The symbol of the cross formed with a feather and a rifle incorporates the motto “Dios, Patria y Libertad” (God, Homeland and Liberty). The dates of the first rebellion “1926-1929” are included, alluding to the reinterpretation of the struggle and, of course, the Cristero symbols (see fig. 2).

**Figure 2.**

Profile image. Official Cristero National Guard Facebook.



An initial review of the social network makes it possible to identify a community with an interest in Cristian practices and beliefs, as the group participates in the construction and strengthening of links between local communities and in the creation of ties with members who cannot participate directly and express their support virtually<sup>8</sup> (Peña, 2019 ; Kozinets, 2015 ).

The community actively participates and interacts through publications that incorporate topics that can be considered significant and even controversial. For example, in the first category, it is possible to identify the dissemination of the liturgical calendar such as Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week or Christmas. In a second order, there are publications that delve into polemic topics such as those related to the current pontificate.

However, in order to delve deeper into the characteristics of the Facebook profile posts of this group and to understand the expressions of this social network, it was decided to carry out a year-long quantitative and qualitative analysis focused on identifying the most frequent themes, as well as the most salient features. The exercise used as a reference the method proposed by Robert Kozinets (2015) in his text *Netnography: Redefined*. The aim was to carry out research that combined archival work and online communication. Similarly, a technique developed in the field of health sciences was used; this technique was published by Henrik Eriksson, Mats Christiansen, Jessica Holmgren, Annica Engström and Martin Salzmänn-Erik-

6 [https://www.facebook.com/Guardia-Nacional-Cristera-Oficial-951497078224610/photos/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/Guardia-Nacional-Cristera-Oficial-951497078224610/photos/?ref=page_internal)

7 The slogan was used by the National Catholic Party from its foundation in 1911 until its disappearance in 1914.

8 Rheingold defines it as a “social aggregation that emerges from the network thanks to the participation of enough people who play an active role in discussions for a more or less prolonged time and with involved feelings, in order to form networks of personal relationships in cyberspace” (Rheingold 1993, p. 5 cited by Kozinets, 2015, p.8).

son, who applied it in a case study on images of nurses' tattoos (Peña, 2019).

Regarding Kozinets' method, it should be noted that it employs seven steps of analytical interpretation, which he defines as intellectual implements or techniques of qualitative network analysis. These implements, from the researcher's position, seek to transform the data into forms of representation given the possibility of imagining and constructing initial reflective ideas. The method then establishes the stage of recalling the data and carefully recording those that are remembered to initiate abduction, to relate and contextualize the ideas in different ways and from various points of view. Once the cultural patterns that permeate the objects of analysis have been understood, he points out that it is possible to continue with the visual abstraction of the individual and particular elements that are incorporated. One can even resort to artifying, which is the search for images or phrases that summarize the interpretation of the data obtained. Finally, the author recommends the cultural decoding or assembly of the information, and its revision through its exposure to different theories (Kozinets, 2015).

For the case study of the Facebook page of the Cristero National Guard, and with the methodological basis described above, the analysis focused on 381 publications disseminated on the page from January to December 2017. These were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, to differentiate the characteristics of the post, the elements of the image and text, and the response of the followers (Peña, 2019, p.

233; Kozinets, 2015, p. 67).<sup>9</sup> The immersion and compilation process was carried out from the researcher's personal profile, where the particular interest in the page of the Cristero National Guard was made clear.

In fact, the group was informed of the purpose and focus of the research, indicating to the administrator the interest in delving deeper into the nature of the publications that the group disseminated. However, no response was ever received. However, beyond the public nature of the information, followers are not always willing to consent to the use of data and images, as they may be interrogated and forced to confess. This may bring relevant ethical implications (Kozinets, 2015). Therefore, an intermediate level of blocking was used, which is presented as translucent to the context and social network in which the interaction takes place, although the identity of the participants is protected.

## 4. RESULTS

The content of the data obtained made it possible to investigate the processes of memory activation. They are contrasted with those historical records that were generated during the armed rebellion. The work deepened, in fact, in the analysis of the Facebook publications of the Cristero National Guard, following the premise that the concepts and articulations of memory are undergoing important modifications.

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<sup>9</sup> The registry included three sections: the text, the image and the community's response. Regarding the image, we identified whether it was a celebration or whether it was a portrait of a martyr or an image of Christ the King. In addition, the text was noted and the reason for the publication was identified, for example, if the interest is focused on calling or informing about a parade, ceremony, anniversary or a propagandistic action in favor of the Cristero National Guard and Catholic beliefs. The number of "likes," "I am amused," and the number of times it was shared, as well as the number of comments, were also recorded.



However, the results showed that most publications were oriented towards the dissemination of Cristero practices and Catholic beliefs.<sup>10</sup> Although, at a second level, those that disseminate the Cristero rides and ceremonies organized by the local chiefs<sup>11</sup> in the municipalities that participated in the rebellion stand out. Finally, and with a smaller number of publications, there are those aimed at disseminating the principles of the Cristeros<sup>12</sup>, as well as the anniversary of the martyrdom of some of their most illustrious participants.<sup>13</sup>

With regard to the specific handling of text and images in each publication, it should be noted that most<sup>14</sup> of the publications incorporate text<sup>15</sup> and images of a generic nature that were taken by members of the community, in order to record and share with the page's followers their participation in the celebrations.<sup>16</sup> A smaller number of publications, but with a better response, are those made by the page administrator. These publications include the dissemination of the liturgy and Catholic principles, as shown in Figure 3.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 3**

*Publication with best response. December 22, 2017.  
Facebook Official Cristeral National Guard.*



10 Thirty percent of the publications are oriented towards strengthening the traditional nuclear family or are against abortion.

11 22% of the publications advertise the rides and report on them through images.

12 19% of the publications disseminate the image and slogan of the Cristero National Guard.

13 11% of the publications are oriented to the diffusion of the actions of the martyrs, on the occasion of the anniversary of their martyrdom or beatification.

14 In 2017, 1224 images were disclosed, of which 661(69%) were published by the community.

15 Of the year's 381 publications, 211 include a text and 45 refer to a ride.

16 Rides account for 60% of the images in the publications.

17 They include 7% of images dedicated to allusions to the Cristeros, 4% of images of a historical nature and 3.6% of portraits of martyrs, among others.

When reviewing the social network and, therefore, the publications generated by the community, it is possible to notice the notorious reappropriation of the Cristero rituals that arose during the armed struggle, which forced the realization of horseback rides and religious ceremonies in the open air. The publications give an account of this type of activities. In this framework, it is possible to identify the interest of the Cristero groups in reinterpreting the traces of the past and participating in the process of memory translation, through the incorporation of new elements that are inserted into the pre-existing structure (Peña, 2019). To this end, one of the most effective tools has been

the use of contemporary communication strategies that have favored a considerable growth in the Cristero National Guard group, as from 5400 followers in 2016, it has reached a figure that exceeds 24,000.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

When speaking of the scope of action of memory, it should be noted that it extends along two main axes; the first plays a leading role, thanks to articulating the sense of belonging. The second propitiates an interest in preserving something that one has and may disappear over time, which generates a sense of permanence (Muriel, 2013). If we follow this order, the first is clearly identified in the evolution of the Cristero community and its interest in preserving and activating the memory of the events. The second, on the other hand, identifies social networks as a tool for recording, preserving and disseminating memory.

Now, the interest in prolonging the sense of belonging and permanence coincides perfectly with the definition of Connerton (1989) in his work *How Societies Remember*, where he refers to memory as a process of "sedimentation" that is fixed through social practices (p.72). The first of these practices, known as incorporation, is determined by the messages that are transmitted through one's own body and are preserved through the ceremonies that continue to be practiced. The second feature that he points out in the sedimentation of memory is inscription, which he locates precisely in the registration in publications and, of course, in the incorporation into social networks.

It should be specified that this process of memory transmission is located between memory and post-memory, as well as between memory and oblivion. It should be recalled that the term postmemory, introduced by Marianne Hirsch (2012) in *Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Postmemory*, states that the concept of memory is the gap that separates the generations that experienced the events and their descendants based on the connection to the past. Indeed, the author argues that postmemory groups: "the experience of those who grew up dominated by the narratives that preceded their birth, whose stories were replaced by the stories of the previous generation and shaped by traumatic events that neither generation can understand" (Author's translation, p. 22).

However, the linking effect produced through the network's publications facilitates the construction of partial bridges between memory and post-memory, as well as -although in a different way- between memory and oblivion (Hirsch, 2012). In the case of Cristero, it is the exercise of post-memory that favored the selection and preservation of facts that strengthen the cohesion of the group. However, it also functions as an instrument of cohesion of the members of the community. It is clear that the community omits the use of references that account for the dimension of the struggle and the imperative of breaking the commandments of the Catholic Church, since it omits the remembrance of the violent episodes of the struggle.

From the establishment of the facts and the construction of meaning to activation, selective measures were carried out for their trans-

mission to future generations or for forgetting. According to Yerushalmi (1989), a community forgets when the generation that was in power of the traces of the past decides not to transmit them and/or the generation that receives them in inheritance decides to reject them. He argues that memory retains as a priority the history that can be integrated into the system of values that are judged exemplary for a people<sup>18</sup>.

process closely linked to the social network and the contents it incorporates and disseminates. It is, therefore, a platform, or rather a collection, based on a collective construction that actively participates in the identification and cohesion of the community through the selection, activation and fixation of symbols, concepts and experiences that are incorporated and sedimented within the group.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to highlight the role of social networks in the identification and transmission of community memory. In this spirit, it placed its object of study in the Facebook group of the Official Cristero National Guard. Its purpose was to establish the characteristics of the discourse that this community constructs in the social network.

The analysis identified the main forms of participation of the members, as well as the importance of the transmission and reinterpretation of the community's memory. In addition, it was highlighted that it is a selective act that concerns the post-memory sphere, which is determined by the integration of the elements that respond to its value system. Likewise, the selection makes it clear that the discursive construction is determined by the intention of the bearers to transmit certain features of the events, translating only the characteristics of the discourse they receive and what they are interested in disseminating.

The process undoubtedly made it possible to underline the updating of memory in a dynamic

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<sup>18</sup> Yosef Yerushalmi refers specifically to the *halakhah* value system although he states that "every people has its *halakhah* [...] the path along which it marches" (9).

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# OBRA DIGITAL

Universitat de Vic - Universitat Central de Catalunya  
Universidad del Azuay

## MISCELLANEOUS SECTION

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# The contribution of trade fairs to city branding: comparative study of the cities Barcelona and Milan<sup>1</sup>

*La contribución de las ferias comerciales a la marca ciudad: estudio comparativo entre Barcelona y Milán*



ARTICLE



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<sup>1</sup> This research is part of the doctoral thesis entitled “The contribution of trade fairs to the city brand: The case of Fira Barcelona”, which is linked to the UVic-UCC with a collaboration agreement with Fira de Barcelona in the framework of the Industrial Doctorates program of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

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## Abstract:

Trade fairs can help cities to differentiate themselves because they offer important possibilities regarding the relationship, promotion and brand positioning of the territory (de San Eugenio Vela & Jiménez Morales, 2009). However, the current literature provides few articles on the influence of these events on *city branding* (Kowalik, 2012).

The general objective of this publication is to analyze the coordination between municipal decision-makers and trade fair organizers in the *city branding* strategy, comparing the cities of Barcelona and Milan. The specific objectives are: a) to know the *city branding* strategy of both cities; b) to confirm whether the organizers are aware of it, as well as their objectives; c) to identify whether there is collaboration between them to achieve these objectives and, finally, d) to share recommendations thanks to the analysis of the management model of each city.

The methodology used, from a qualitative approach, has been firstly in-depth interviews with the city council and the most relevant actors in these cities. Secondly, online surveys were carried out to find out the opinion of the trade fair organizers who perform their activity in these cities.

**Keywords:** Trade show, place branding, city branding, Barcelona, Milan.

## Resumen:

Las ferias comerciales pueden ayudar a las ciudades a diferenciarse porque ofrecen importantes posibilidades respecto a la relación, la promoción y el posicionamiento de la marca del territorio (de San Eugenio Vela & Jiménez Morales, 2009). No obstante, la bibliografía actual aporta escasos artículos sobre la influencia de estos eventos en la marca de la ciudad (Kowalik, 2012).

El objetivo general de esta publicación es analizar la coordinación entre los responsables municipales y los organizadores de ferias en la estrategia de *city branding*; al comparar las ciudades de Barcelona y Milán. Los objetivos específicos son: a) conocer la estrategia de *city branding* de ambas ciudades; b) confirmar si los organizadores la conocen, así como sus objetivos; c) identificar si existe colaboración entre ellos para alcanzarlos y, finalmente, d) compartir recomendaciones gracias al análisis del modelo de gestión de cada ciudad.

La metodología empleada parte desde un enfoque cualitativo y ha consistido, en primer lugar, en entrevistas en profundidad con el ayun-



tamiento y los actores más relevantes de estas ciudades. En segundo término, se han articulado encuestas online para conocer la opinión de los organizadores feriales que desarrollan su actividad en estas urbes.

**Palabras clave:** Ferias comerciales, place branding, city branding, Barcelona, Milán.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research aims to relate the organization of trade fairs to city branding (Kavaratzis, 2004), given that cities have a greater interest in positioning themselves to attract investors, talent and tourists (de San Eugenio *et al.*, 2019). In other words, the aim is to understand whether trade fair activity influences city branding (Kowalik, 2012). Likewise, the comparative study between Barcelona and Milan is based on the hypothesis that their trade fair events have an impact on the configuration of the brand of these cities. It also intends to suggest recommendations in the management model to achieve this. If we consider the surface area of its three trade fair venues, Barcelona is among the three cities in the world with the largest exhibition space, and Milan ranks sixth in the same ranking (UFI, 2022).

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS OF CITY BRANDING

The great cities of the world have a distinctive label of their own. Their image and identity project them as a destination that provides opportunities to create affinity and exchange knowledge (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2021). However,

many cities design brands, logos and messages to identify and differentiate them from others. Nevertheless, limiting this strategy only to the design of promotional material can generate problems, as it partially applies to the branding process (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2009).

Place branding relates target groups, such as consumers or users, to the territory (Braun *et al.*, 2010; Zenker, 2011). Some authors even distinguish three main segments: visitors, residents and workers, and businesses and industry (Kotler *et al.*, 1993). The strategic reflection to address a process of conceptualizing the branding of the territory must consider the different groups; it identifies the starting point and projects its future scenario (de San Eugenio *et al.*, 2019). City branding is a strategic tool for destinations to captivate investment and attract talent (Romero-Lengua *et al.*, 2019).

For Kavaratzis (2004), city branding is:

The means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investment and tourism, and also for achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest. (p. 70)

### 2.2 TRADE FAIRS, CITY AND STAKEHOLDERS

Since 1980, event tourism has become an important and globally competitive economic phe-

nomenon (Getz, 1997). This sector generates higher quality tourism and not only from an economic perspective (Rogers, 2013). The organization and sponsorship of events give recognition to the territory and establish links between the event brands and the city (Hall, 1989). The organizer and public decision-makers must develop strategic planning that coordinates the activity of both (Ashworth, 2009a). Ritchie and Hudson (2009) argue that close collaboration between public administrations and business associations is necessary to get the most out of the event. Citizen participation also generates added value, demonstrating residents' complicity with the event (Dolles & Söderman, 2010). Likewise, the attitude adopted by citizens can determine the visitor's appreciation of the experience of attending the trade fair (Oppermann & Chon, 1997).

The strategic value of events is appreciated by policy makers. They are aware that these events help to generate a favorable brand image of the city (de San Eugenio *et al.*, 2009).

Trade fairs facilitate the advancement of economic activity, which brings innovation to the industry and facilitates dialogue between professionals (Hattendorf, 2020). They are also an important source of business tourism that can impact on mainstream tourism, as professionals discover the city (Köker & Maden, 2013). The 2019 report by UFI - The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI, Oxford Economics, 2020), which predates Covid19, indicates that 353 million visitors, from 180 countries, visited 4.8 million exhibitors at trade fairs held worldwide. This generated 3.4 million jobs.

The pandemic caused by Covid19 has dramatically affected tourism worldwide and the recovery of trade fairs is key to its reactivation (UPF Barcelona School of Management, 2020). Recently, major hotel chains have assured that

holding large trade fairs in Spain will allow them to exceed, in 2023, the turnover they obtained in 2019 (Molina, 2022).

## **2.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADE FAIR EVENTS IN BARCELONA AND MILAN**

Barcelona and Milan are two European cities with a high tourist attraction and intense trade fair and convention activity; they have become world benchmarks (Hall, 1989). Both cities manage modern, first-class trade fair centers, with a large exhibition area to host large global fairs. These major investments were made through public-private partnerships (Ashworth, 2009a). Milan has three venues with 345,000 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space. Barcelona has 321,000 m<sup>2</sup> in two exhibition venues (UFI, 2022) and 100,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the Barcelona International Convention Centre (hereafter CCIB).

### **2.3.1 BARCELONA**

For 20 years, Barcelona has been among the five cities in the world with the most MICE events (EFE Barcelona, 2018). In 2019, it was the world's leading city in terms of the number of attendees at these events, with 157,000 delegates (ICCA, 2019). The economic impact that this sector generated in 2019 in Barcelona was €1.900.000.000.000; 20% of total tourism. The average expenditure of a professional visitor in the city is €115 per day (excluding accommodation); 52% more than the daily expenditure of a holiday tourist (Cugat, 2021).

Fira Barcelona, founded in 1932, is a consortium formed by Barcelona City Council, the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce. It manages three exhibition centers: Montjuïc, Gran Via and CCIB. Fira 2000, S.A. is the owner of the Montjuïc and Gran Via exhibition centers, while the CCIB is owned by

**Table 1***Evolution of MWC Barcelona results, 2015/2019.*

Data	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total area sqm % international	100.000 92% (92.000)	110.000 -	110.000 81% (89.000)	110.000 85% (93.500)	110.000 81% (89.000)
Total exhibitors % international	2.000 92% (1.833)	2.200 80% (1.760)	2.200 80% (1.760)	2.200 85% (1.870)	2.200 80% (1.760)
Total visitors % international	94.000 80% (75.200)	101.000 80% (80.800)	108.000 80% (86.400)	107.000 81% (87.000)	109.000 80% (87.200)

*Source: Association of Spanish Trade Fairs (AFE)***Table 2***Evolution of Milano Design Week,, 2015/2019*

Data	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total area sqm	200.000	207.000	205.000	205.000	205.000
Total exhibitors % international	2.000 30% (600)	2.310 30% (693)	2.300 34% (782)	2.491 30% (747)	2.418 34% (822)
Total visitors % international	310.840 69% (214.480)	372.151 67% (249.341)	343.602 67% (230.213)	434.509 70% (304.156)	386.236 65% (251.053)

*Source: Barozzi, 2023 (consultant and collaborator Faculty ITA/ICE).*

the city council. Fira 2000, S.A., created in 1993, was founded by the Generalitat de Catalunya, Barcelona City Council, Barcelona Provincial Council, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, L'Hospitalet City Council and the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce. Its current projects are the extension of the Gran Via site (Orihuel & Zanón, 2022) and the remodeling of the Montjuïc Exhibition Center (Barcelona City Council, 2022). In 2019, prior to Covid19, Fira Barcelona had a turnover of €215,000,000 and organized more than 150 events. The Mobile World Congress, hereafter MWC (see Table 1), was the largest event held that year (Fira Barcelona, 2019).

### 2.3.2 MILAN

Milan leads trade fair activity in Italy and is one of the most important cities in the sector at

European level. It organizes important international trade fairs attended by world-class professionals (Milano & Partners, 2022). The Milano Design Week (see table 2), stands out as the largest design event in the world, which brings together the Salone del Mobile and the Fuorisalone. The latter has activities in the city (Dezzen, 2022).

Fiera Milano has been organizing trade fairs and events since 1920. It has been listed on the Italian stock exchange since 2002 and had a turnover of €280,000,000 in 2019. It holds 80 trade fairs in Italy, 30 trade fairs abroad and 160 congresses (Fiera Milano SPA, 2022). It manages three fairgrounds, owned by Fondazione Fiera Milano (Fondazione Fiera Milano, 2022).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

For this study, six in-depth interviews were carried out to decision-makers in the cities of Barcelona and Milan (one interview per city council), with the owners of trade fair venues (one interview per city) and with the main organizers of trade fairs (one interview per city). In addition, 46 online surveys were sent to the other trade fair organizers holding their events in both cities.

#### 3.1 INTERVIEW WITH THE CITY COUNCIL, OWNER OF THE FAIR GROUNDS AND MAIN ORGANIZER OF TRADE FAIRS IN THE CITY

The in-depth interview was based on personalized questions depending on the profile of the interviewee. The persons that were selected are related to the city council, the owner of the fair grounds or the main organizer of trade fairs in the city. Six interviews were conducted, three in Milan and three in Barcelona, with professionals with extensive and recognized experience in the subject of this research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). One of these interviews was a double interview, as one of the interviewees acts both as a venue owner and as a main trade fair organizer. This typological sample of interviewees was as follows: (Table 3)

**Table 3**

*Typological sample of interviewees*

Name and surname	Position in the organization	Date of interview
Sr. Lorenzo Di Pietro	Executive Director of Entrepreneurship, Enterprise and Innovation of Barcelona Activa (city of Barcelona).	17/02/2022
Sr. Salvador Tasqué	Member of the Management Committee of Fira Barcelona (venue owner).	08/06/2021
Sr. Salvador Tasqué	Director of Own Business of Fira Barcelona (main trade fair organizer).	08/06/2021
Sr. Luca Martinazzoli	Managing Director of Milano Partners (city of Milan).	25/11/2021
Sra. Enrica Bacchini	Research and Development Director of Fondazione Fiera Milano (venue owner).	25/10/2021
Sr. Nicola Orsi	Director of Public Affairs and Corporate Communications, Fiera di Milano (main trade fair organizer).	26/11/2021

*Source: own elaboration*

The interview questions were open-ended and related to the city branding objectives of each municipality. To corroborate whether venue owners and organizers of major fairs were aware of them and participated in achieving the objectives.

### **3.2 ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE REST OF THE TRADE FAIR ORGANIZERS IN THE CITY**

The questionnaire, entitled The Influence of trade fairs on the city brand, was addressed to the other trade fair organizers in both cities. The questionnaire was customized per city, and had questions with a closed Likert-type scale (1-5) for the answers. These are the links to the online surveys: trade fair organizers in Barcelona (14 companies) <https://forms.gle/41q6KZ3ZNLjYzSAJ9>; trade fair organizers in Milan (32 companies) <https://forms.gle/WjbfAyEZf51r9nM96>. Out of a total of 46 companies, twelve responses were obtained (nine from Barcelona and three from Milan); 26% of the total (64,28% in Barcelona and 9.3% in Milan).

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1. THE OBJECTIVES OF CITY BRANDING**

#### **4.1.1 BARCELONA**

##### ***Barcelona Activa***

Barcelona Activa is the city's department for economic promotion and development. For the person in charge, the objectives of city branding are heterogeneous because they represent different ecosystems in Barcelona. However, its main objective is: "To promote the economic competitiveness of the city and its strategy is based on connecting the various local ecosystems with other global ones to achieve this goal". Therefore, all international events held in Barcelona are essential connectors be-

tween both ecosystems (L. Di Pietro, personal communication, 17 February 2022). This requires a strategic plan to coordinate management between the various stakeholder groups (Ashworth, 2009b).

Trade fairs have a special mention, as they amplify the message that the city wants to give internationally (Kavaratzis, 2004), with the aim of creating a hub of entrepreneurship in the city; for example, this occurs in technology sectors (L. Di Pietro, personal communication, 17 February 2022). In this regard, it is worth noting that the MWC led to the creation of the Mobile World Capital Foundation in 2012. This foundation is currently a partner of the 22@NetworkBCN association, which promotes the 22@ district of Barcelona. The aim is to consolidate it as an innovation hub for the technological and creative sectors (Associació 22@NetWorkBCN, 2022).

Barcelona Activa has a close relationship with Fira Barcelona: "We articulate a program to promote trade fairs that are considered key to promoting strategic sectors for the city". This initiative, which has more than 10 years of experience, allocates specific resources annually to promote these types of fairs (L. Di Pietro, personal communication, 17 February 2022).

When asked about the facilitators that make collaboration possible, the person in charge of Barcelona Activa stated: "For decades, Barcelona has consolidated the culture of public and private collaboration to tackle strategic projects in the city" (L. Di Pietro, personal communication, 17 February 2022). This collaboration is the main facilitator for the consolidation of the projects that are promoted by the city (Ritchie

& Hudson, 2006). On the other hand, when talking about the difficulties, he points out: “The main obstacle is not having a focus and wanting to cover everything. Not having a clear objective” (L. Di Pietro, personal communication, 17 February 2022).

### **Fira Barcelona**

*Fira Barcelona* acts as the owner of the venue, attracting external organizers. At the same time, it acts as an organizer with its own portfolio of fairs. The head of Fira Barcelona said: “When we deal with external organizers, coordination with the public administrations is led by Fira Barcelona. It is we who accompany them in the relationship with state institutions” (S. Tasqué, personal communication, 8 June 2021). This is especially true for international fairs that have a significant economic impact on the city, such as the MWC (Nadeu, 2022).

According to this manager, the relationship and coordination between Fira Barcelona and the City Council has always been smooth (S. Tasqué, personal communication, 8 June 2021). This is partly explained by the fact that the presidency of the General Council of Fira Barcelona is held by the Mayor of Barcelona (Fira Barcelona, 2022). As argued above, the representative of the trade fair institution states: “Between Fira Barcelona and the City Council there is a development program for those fairs that are considered strategic for the city” (S. Tasqué, personal communication, 8 June 2021).

When asked about the facilitators for this coordination, he said that it is necessary to “collaborate to join forces and achieve the objectives, such as promoting fairs or events that are important to create a hub of innovative industries that help internationalize local companies” (S. Tasqué, personal communication, 8 June 2021). The definition of local development policies takes form in ideas that bring capital and

knowledge to the territory in order to boost the brand identity of the city and its local policy (Kavaratzis, 2004).

The attraction of business tourism is another contribution made by Fira Barcelona, which brings millions of national and international professionals who visit it every year (Getz, 1997). “Fira Barcelona is one of the key actors that the city has to consolidate the international projection of the Barcelona brand given the attendance of foreign visitors” (S. Tasqué, personal communication, 8 June 2021).

## **4.1.2 MILAN**

### **Milano & Partners**

Milano & Partners is a public and private agency that aims to make the city of Milan the best and most attractive destination in the world. In the interview with its head, he confirms that all city branding objectives are desirable. However, the main mission of Milano & Partners is to attract new visitors, talent and investors to the city. To this end, the brand Yes, Milano! has been created. During the interview, the manager confirms: “More importance is given to attracting business tourism” (M. Martinazoli, personal communication, 25 November 2021). This is why they recognize the relevance of trade fairs for this purpose (Köker & Maden, 2013). Milano & Partners works in coordination with its sponsors and partners, some of which are multinationals. The head of Milano & Partners states: “The main facilitator is our leadership, which ensures the smooth functioning of the working committees with the stakeholders. This makes it possible to defend the heterogeneous interests of the different groups involved. He also points out that “not leading these projects, in order to preserve their objective and look after the interests of the public, is the main limitation on these committees” (M.

Martinazzoli, personal communication, 25 November 2021). He also indicates that delegating tasks according to competences is part of their strategy: 'For example, if the city sets itself the goal of attracting talent, attracting international students, universities and business schools are involved to ensure the success of this project, as they are the experts and specialists' (M. Martinazzoli, personal communication, 25 November 2021).

### **Fondazione Fiera Milano**

Fondazione Fiera Milano, founded in 1922, was one of the pioneering institutions in fostering the economic development of Milan. This foundation is the owner of the three Milan fairgrounds: Fiera Milano (Rho), Fiera Milano City and Mi-Co Milano Congressi. In addition, Fondazione Fiera Milano is the majority shareholder of the city's main trade fair organizer, Fiera Milano Spa, which manages a portfolio of its own and external products in the MICE sector (trade fairs, congresses and events). Some of these events are of international importance (Fondazione Fiera Milano, 2022).

The head of this institution states that the celebration of the Universal Exhibition in Milan in 2015 led to the interest to continue to work as a team for the international promotion of the city: "Thanks to the success of the Milan Expo, the agency Milano & Partners was founded. In this way, stakeholders could continue to work together; this time to achieve the objectives of promoting the Milan brand through Yes Milano!" (E. Baccini, personal communication, 25 October 2021). In fact, the former CEO of Expo Milano, Giuseppe Sala, is now the current mayor of the city (Comune di Milano, 2022).

The head of Fondazione Fiera Milano confirms that the agency's main objective is to attract business tourism. A facilitator of the management is to work in a collaborative way: "Each stake-

holder has the opportunity to act in its own field. Thus, in the case of the Fondazione Fiera Milano and Fiera Milano, we strive to attract international conferences and trade fairs to the city. Likewise, the industrial associations in attracting new companies and creating a hub, for example a technology hub" (E. Baccini, personal communication, 25 October 2021). As for the limitations, she explains: "The experience of the 1990s is a clear example that consensus was not reached due to the conflict of interests and the heterogeneous profile of the stakeholders" (E. Baccini, personal communication, 25 October 2021). Fiera Milano and Fondazione Fiera Milano also represent all trade fair organizers in front of the institutions. The Italian government is sometimes involved, as it depends on the international importance and impact of the trade fair in question (E. Baccini, personal communication, 25 October 2021).

### **Fiera Milano**

Like *Fira Barcelona*, Fiera Milano acts as a venue owner when it has to attract trade fairs and congresses to be held at its fairgrounds. At the same time, it acts as a trade fair organizer, having its own portfolio of trade fairs. For the head of this company, the leadership of Milano & Partners is a facilitator for the achievement of the promotion objectives. In the particular case of Fourisalone, he affirms: "Thanks to the institutional leadership, the stakeholders have consolidated the "marriage" between the Salone del Mobile and the city through the Fuorisalone; creating the Milano Design Week. This global event attracts hundreds of thousands of design professionals from all over the world. For more than 30 years, this initiative has also turned the city itself into another exhibition space" (N. Orsi, personal communication, 26 November 2021). For this manager, "the main obstacle is a partisan and biased vision of stakeholders, which prevents us from betting on strategic projects

such as Milan Design Week” (N. Orsi, personal communication, 26 November 2021). As a summary of the most relevant responses from all these interviews, the following contributions can be highlighted (see table 4 and 5):

**Table 4**

*Main objectives of city branding of both cities.*

Main objectives	Relationship with trade fairs
Connecting local ecosystems with global ecosystems.	The fairs are facilitators of relationship and connection between both ecosystems.
Internationalize local companies and attract new ones to establish themselves in the city.	International fairs help develop the local ecosystem, which becomes attractive to investors and companies.
Attract new international events to invite business tourism	Trade fairs are a great source of business tourism.

*Source: Own elaboration.*

**Table 5**

*Facilitators to achieve city branding objectives between city council, fairground owners, main fair organizer, and other stakeholders.*

Facilitator	Justification
Public-private partnerships.	To bring resources, visions and initiatives beyond the focus and scope of public administration.
Involve other stakeholders.	To share concerns, identify needs and expectations, join efforts and reach a consensus that allows supporting projects that are considered strategic for the promotion of the city brand.
Creation of competency-based working groups.	In this sense, involve, to a greater extent, those stakeholders who have experience in the field of the objective to be achieved. For example, universities and business schools, to attract foreign talent and students.
Leadership.	The main facilitator for well-functioning working committees between the city and the different stakeholders is leadership (de San Eugenio et al., 2019).

*Source: Own elaboration.*

## 4.2 FAIR ORGANIZERS

### 4.2.1 BARCELONA

In the online surveys carried out with trade fair organizers in Barcelona (table 6), are the most important city branding objectives for the city's decision-makers:

**Table 6**

*Trade fair organizers in Barcelona.*

What do you think are the most important city branding objectives for those responsible for the Barcelona brand?	Assessment (out of 5 points, with 1 being “not important at all” and 5 being “very important”)
To increase the positioning of the Barcelona brand.	5
Resident satisfaction.	5
Creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.	4,8
Encourage the creation of a hub of innovative industries.	4,6
Internationalization of local companies.	4,6
Attracting investors.	4,4
Attracting talent.	4,4
Attracting business tourism.	4,2

*Source: Own elaboration (online surveys).*

However, when asked how satisfied they think the City Council is with the achievement of these objectives, the highest score was for the objective of attracting business tourism, which scored 4.4 out of 5. Likewise, they also consider that notable progress has been made in the creation of a hub for innovative industries (4 out of 5 points) and in increasing the positioning of the Barcelona brand (4.2 out of 5).

When asked whether they consider that trade fairs can contribute to the achievement of Barcelona's objectives (table 7), the organizers replied:



**Table 7***Trade fair organizers in Barcelona.*

Which of these goals do you think trade fairs can contribute to achieving?	Assessment (out of 5 points, with 1 being "hardly at all" and 5 being "very much".)
Attracting business tourism.	5
Internationalization of local businesses.	5
Increase the positioning of the Barcelona brand.	4,8
Creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.	4,6
Encourage the creation of a hub of innovative industries.	4,6
Attract investors.	4,6

*Source: Online surveys*

As can be seen, the three objectives in which the fair organizers believe that they can contribute to their achievement with the fair activity are attracting business tourism, internationalization of local companies, and increasing the positioning of the Barcelona brand (mentioned by 80% of those surveyed).

#### **4.2.2 MILAN**

In the surveys carried out with the organizers of the city of Milan, the answers on what they believe are the most important city branding objectives for the city's decision-makers (table 8) were:

**Table 8***Trade fair organizers in Milán.*

Which do you think are the most important city branding objectives for those responsible of Milan brand?	Assessment (out of 5 points, with 1 being "hardly at all" and 5 being "very much".)
Attracting business tourism.	5
Internationalization of local businesses.	5
Increase the positioning of the Milan brand.	5
Creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.	4,3
Attracting investors.	4,3
Attracting leisure tourism.	4,3

*Source: Own elaboration (online surveys).*

Regarding the satisfaction that, according to the organizers, the City of Milan has with regard to the achievement of these promotional objectives, the highest score is shared by two of them: attracting business tourism and attracting investors, since those surveyed value their achievement at 4.3 points out of 5. They are followed by increasing the international positioning of the city and the satisfaction of residents (4 out of 5).

When asked about the contribution that fairs could make to achieving these city branding objectives (table 9), their answers have been:

**Table 9***Trade fair organizers in Milan*

Which of these goals do you think trade fairs can contribute to achieving?	Assessment (out of 5 points, with 1 being "hardly at all" and 5 being "very much".)
Attracting business tourism.	5
Increase the positioning of the Milan brand.	5
Internationalization of local businesses.	4,7
Creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.	4,3

*Source: Online surveys*

Like the Barcelona organizers, their response has been clear. With their activity, they believe that they can contribute to attracting business tourism, increasing the positioning of the Milan brand (these two objectives with a score of 5 out of 5) and internationalization of local companies.

### 4.2.3 TRADE FAIR ORGANIZERS IN BARCELONA AND MILAN

Grouping the responses obtained in both cities (table 10), it can be seen that the trade fair organizers of Barcelona and Milan coincide in stating that the most important city branding objectives for their city councils are:

**Table 10***Trade fair organizers in Barcelona and Milan.*

What do you think are the most important city branding objectives for the brand managers of your city? (consolidation of answers from Barcelona and Milan)	Assessment (out of 5 points, with 1 being "hardly at all" and 5 being "very much".)
Increase the positioning of the city brand.	5
Internationalization of local businesses.	4,8
Creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.	4,6
Attracting business tourism	4,6

*Source: Online surveys*

Regarding the satisfaction that both cities have with the results obtained, the organizers have responded that their city councils have achieved results in attracting business tourism, since they value this achievement at 4.37 points out of 5; and the international positioning of the city brand, which has 4.10 points.

Regarding the contribution that trade fair organizers can make to achieving city branding objectives (table 11), the same responses were mostly mentioned in the two cities:

**Table 11***Trade fair organizers in Barcelona and Milan.*

Which of these goals do you think trade fairs can contribute to achieving? (consolidation of responses from Barcelona and Milan)	Assessment (out of 5 points)
Attract business tourism.	5
Increase the positioning of the city brand.	4,9
Internationalization of local businesses.	4,8
Creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.	4,4

*Source: Online surveys*

From the point of view of the trade fair organizers of both cities, they believe that their trade fair activities contribute to attracting business tourism and to the international positioning of the city brand. These two objectives appear in 90% of their answers.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Both Barcelona and Milan are recognized as cities with solvency and the capacity to host large events. This fact links them, globally, with the industries that these events represent (Cuadrado-Roura & Rubalcaba-Bermejo, 1996). Therefore, they are considered as “a node in a global mosaic and annual timetable.” (Weller, 2008, p. 13). It is evident that the synergy that can be generated by associating the name of the city with the trade fair implies a possible image transfer between both brands; in these

specific cases, Milan is linked to the Milano Design Week and Barcelona, with the MWC (Hall, 1989). In addition, the business and associative representation that gathers at these fairs undoubtedly contributes to creating a positive image among potential investors. Likewise, the participation of public administrations is key to demonstrating the vision of the future that both cities project; which gives prestige to both the image and the brand of the city (Kowalik, 2012). Equally, among the main actors of both cities there is a support program for those fairs that are considered strategic for the economic development of the city (Hall, 1989).

Both city councils work together with the trade fair organizers, and the rest of the stakeholders, to define strategies and promote projects with the aim of taking advantage of the positive impact that the holding of these international events generates in the city (Hankinson, 2009). In addition, promotion managers in Barcelona and Milan proactively publicize and communicate these global events and there is a specific working group that aims to promote trade fairs that help the city's economic development (Ashworth, 2009b).

Trade fairs are key players in developing an industrial ecosystem in their area of influence, as they facilitate investment, generate employment and add value to the territory. Undoubtedly, all of this has a direct impact on the city's brand (Rubalcaba-Bermejo & Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). In this sense, international trade fairs are unique and unquestionable events that

help to consolidate the reputation of the city's brand. Therefore, international trade fairs in both cities help the brand positioning and reputation of both Barcelona and Milan. This association is sustainable over time because it links the city to the event; most importantly, it is linked to a particular sector or industry (Köker & Maden, 2013).

As previously argued, four most relevant facilitators have been identified for good coordination between city actors, which allows the achievement of promotion objectives:

The first is public-private collaboration, to provide resources and initiatives beyond the scope of public administration.

The second is to create working groups between those responsible for the city brand and the stakeholders, to share concerns, identify needs and expectations, join efforts and seek consensus to support projects that are considered strategic for the promotion of the city brand.

The third facilitator is to involve the stakeholders in the deployment of the plan and, specifically, in the achievement of the city's promotional objectives. In this sense, it seeks to involve, to a greater extent, those who have experience in the field of the objective to be achieved.

The fourth, and last facilitator, is the leadership of municipal officials. This is the key to addressing strategic projects in the city, as they focus and avoid dispersion. At the same time, they involve various actors to ensure the interests of the stakeholders. The main facilitator for the proper functioning of the work committees between the city and the different stakeholders is leadership (de San Eugenio *et al.*, 2019).

In the case of Barcelona, the GSMA, organizer of the MWC, highlights the tireless work carried out jointly with local, regional and state institutions to promote and make the 2021 edition a reality, in the midst of the Covid19 pandemic. John Hoffman, the CEO of the GSMA, admits: "Barcelona is our home" (Molina, 2020). In this sense, the head of the GSMA has personal interviews with the Mayor of Barcelona that allow him to share relevant aspects of the relationship between Barcelona and the trade fair (Colau, 2023). The GSMA has recently decided to designate Barcelona as the permanent venue for the MWC. In the opinion of Pau Relat, president of Fira Barcelona: "This is news of an extraordinary dimension, not because of the renovation in itself, but because of what the gentlemen of Mobile are telling us: we want to link our future with yours" (Martín, 2022).

The trade fair organizers in Barcelona and Milan believe that they contribute to achieving the objectives of city branding in these cities. In this sense, the ones that stand out are: attracting business tourism, internationalizing local companies and the entrepreneurial ecosystem. However, special mention should be made of the objective that has inspired this research work: the trade fair organizers of both cities claim that, through their work, they contribute to consolidating the international positioning of the city's brand (Köker & Maden, 2013).

Trade fairs are key to improving the city's image. If they are also international events, they generate a strong complementarity and synergy between their brand and the city. For this reason, global trade fairs should be part of the city's long-term development strategy (Ashworth, 2009a).

In the case of Milan, Milano & Partners' commitment to Milano Design Week is based on the fact that the Salone del Mobile and Fuorisalone are consolidated as the perfect marriage between the fair and the city. It thus becomes the world's capital of creativity and design. Precisely, the leadership of Milano & Partners consists of joining forces and leading this type of projects, as they benefit the city and the stakeholders (Aitken & Campelo, 2011). However, for other authors, the Salone del Mobile is entirely geared towards promoting the export of Italian companies and other foreign exhibitors (Jansson & Power, 2008). After two years, in 2022 Milano Design Week returned to its usual format, where it achieved very positive results: 2,175 exhibitors, 27% foreign, and 262,608 visitors from 173 countries. This edition showed the city of Milan's enthusiasm and will to offer this global experience as the world's design capital is still intact (Il Bagno News, 2022).

The Barcelona MICE Destination Support Program (Cugat, 2021) demonstrates Barcelona's strategic commitment to consolidating its policy of economic promotion and branding of the city through events. This initiative also recognizes the influence of trade fairs in achieving this. Barcelona is hosting two new trade fairs: Global Sea Food, the largest seafood event, and Integrated System Europe (ISE), the world's leading trade fair for audiovisuals (Martin, 2022). ISE 2023 recently closed its doors, breaking attendance records with more than 58,000 visitors (Europa Press, 2023). The coincidence of the MWC and ISE in Barcelona gives the city a good opportunity to position itself as one of the world's technology capitals (Bracero, 2023).

Structured interviews and online surveys were crucial in order to get the opinion of experts; both fair organizers and institutional deci-

sion-makers. In this sense, their participation was necessary in order to have a sufficient representative sample of their opinions. Lack of time, busy schedules and other professional factors were obstacles that have prevented us from expanding the typological sample of interviewees and respondents for this research. In this sense, this activity has had to be constantly rescheduled, given the low response rate of the participants. Despite these drawbacks, a sufficiently representative sample has finally been achieved to carry out these interviews and surveys, which, it is believed, justify the research value of this communication.

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**REVIEW**

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# How to get to the second: interviews with contemporary Spanish filmmakers

***Cómo llegar a la segunda: entrevistas con creadoras del cine español contemporáneo***

9

REVIEW



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### DATOS DEL LIBRO RESEÑADO:

Scholz, A., Álvarez, M., Binimelis Adell, M., Oroz, E. (Eds.) (2021). *Entrevistas con creadoras del cine español contemporáneo. Millones de cosas por hacer*. Peter Lang.

The 2022 survey of Sight & Sound magazine of more than 1600 filmmakers and critics generated as much buzz and controversy as the World Cup in Qatar, which was being played on the same dates the survey results were published. For the first time, and surprisingly for the film world, a film directed by a woman, Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles, appeared at the top of the list. In 1975, with a

tiny, mostly female crew, Chantal Akerman sought to portray the repetitive and monotonous experience of the life of a housewife who worked as a prostitute to support her teenage son. Films by filmmakers such as Claire Denis, Agnès Varda, or the more recent work of directors such as Céline Sciamma also made it to the top of the Sight & Sound list. The analyses of the results, refuted, supported and amplified in the social networks, made evident a decentring of the canon and the regret that central figures of this canon such as Howard Hawks or Ernst Lubitsch had been left by the wayside. Some critics and filmmakers, in chat rooms and podcasts,

boasted of not having seen Jeanne Dielman or even of being unaware of the film's existence until the publication of a ranking that they considered to be ominous and detrimental to cinema.

The ignorance, feigned or not, of Akerman's work evidenced, in any case, a situation that is confirmed by the data on the production and reception of films made by women, who are an overwhelming minority in directing. According to the European Audiovisual Observatory, in its report *Female professionals in European film production* (2022), women only occupy a quarter of the directing positions in European films, it is a profession in which very marked gender roles persist. Thus, women continue to occupy production tasks or are interpreters, while their presence in more technologically mediated profiles such as photography or sound is scarce.

In addition to the low number of women in directorial positions, a number that has been growing in recent decades, spurred on by affirmative action policies, their works remain invisible. These are generally low-budget and are made in so-called minor genres; these films end up being seen in alternative circuits and sometimes become cult works. Some of the consequences of the lack of visibility of films made by women are the absence of references and the lack of generational transmission, which makes it difficult to create a tradition. Thus, it is not possible to produce what Ruby Rich (1978) called an instant canon of feminist film theory, in the manner of the outbursts of manifestations of subalternity studied by Gramsci (1999). Film production by women is therefore, in conventional historiography, a collection of atomized films that seem to emerge out of nowhere at specific moments and that do not show continuity between projects. Feminist research has, therefore, the obligation to map and connect

the dots between experiences so that an effective transmission can take place for women directors to come. Thus, in the compilation of experiences *Women of vision: histories in feminist film and video* (2001), Alexandra Juhasz collected the voices of different generations of video artists in order to avoid the disappearance of their works and to create bridges between the different artists.

The transmission and creation of references for future filmmakers are part of the main ideas of *Entrevistas con creadoras del cine español contemporáneo. Millones de cosas por hacer* (Interviews with female creators of contemporary Spanish cinema. Millions of things to do), the volume of interviews edited by the researchers Annette Scholz, Marta Álvarez, Mar Binimelis Adell and Elena Oroz. The publication is one of the results of the funded research projects "Articulaciones del género en el documental español contemporáneo: Una perspectiva interseccional" (Gender Articulations in Contemporary Spanish Documentary Film: An Intersectional Perspective) and "Cartografías del cine de movilidad en el Hispánico Atlántico" (Cartographies of mobility cinema in the Hispanic Atlantic). These are part of the initiatives within the academy to analyze the work of women in film, from historical or contemporary perspectives. This volume, edited with the meticulous photographs of Óscar Fernández Orengo, presents, from its very title, an approach to contemporary cinema made by women in Spain from a perspective that questions the idea inherited from the politics of authorship, in which authorship falls almost exclusively to the directors. In this sense, the volume presents the experience of mostly women directors, but also of producers, such as Belí Martínez or María Zamora, directors of photography, represented by Neus Ollé, editors such as Ana Pfaff, or sound designers such as Alejandra Molina. This compilation

of voices from different fields, some of them profoundly masculinized, seeks, as the editors state in the introduction, to take a “polyhedral and decentered look” (2022, p. 16) at the profession. The choice of voices also questions the politics of authorship, inherited from the European avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s, by claiming that creativity is not exclusive to the directorial role, but that film, as a collective work, presents this authorship in many other phases and activities of film projects. This loss of the centrality of the eminently male director-author figure goes hand in hand with the network of essential support within and outside the team. From the conversations, a map of relationships between the filmmakers can be traced, insofar as many of the interviews are in dialogue with each other through common projects. Thus, in this sense, a central point can be marked on the map that functions as a network in Barcelona, where relations are articulated through the training centres, particularly the ESCAC, the Master’s in Creative Documentary at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and the Master’s in Theory and Practice at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. In addition, there are several nodes in Madrid, Galicia and the Basque Country, where other informal networks are developed. In this sense, certain imbalances persist between center and periphery, which affects the creation of these links and generates, together with work on the periphery of industry, a double exclusion that is not explicitly addressed in the volume.

The conversations, intelligently guided by researchers, not only address the existence of these networks and their circuits, but also revolve around issues such as affirmative action policies, ascriptions to explicitly feminist positions or the difficulties not only of making a project, but also of reaching the next ones. Although the policies are generally celebrated,

not all the authors are forceful when it comes to invoking feminism as a driving force or working methodology. In this sense, the words of Agnès Varda resonate when, interviewed in the 1980s by fellow filmmaker Margarita Ledo, she maintained that she did not want to be “a feminist woman who makes films only about women” (Martínez, 2022). The female creators in conversation in the book express their legitimate desire to be able to make any form of film, any genre, under the same conditions as their professional peers. It is precisely at this point where they all point out the main imbalance: there is an increasing number of films made by women, but this is a low-budget, often experimental cinema, which struggles on the margins to perpetuate itself. The second film is thus invoked in a large number of interviews as a symbol of continuity, beyond the flash of a first work, made, in most cases, with precariousness and extraordinary effort. This effort is especially emphasised in those women who try to survive in the profession by being mothers, another of the issues that appears in many of the dialogues.

The interviewees also talk about film, in the abstract, as the panelists who reject the irruption of the material in their evaluations, not only through their own work, but also through their references. The creative processes are explored in depth, in such a way that the book can become a good manual that functions as a complement to the viewing of their film works. Precisely, the invisibility of women’s work in film is another important issue when looking for references for the classroom, as many of the creators interviewed are also teachers. The editors of the volume mention, in fact, the idea of a triangle between film, research and teaching, which is constituted as the confluence where support networks are woven and transmission takes place. This book, as the result of several

solid investigations, can therefore be used for teaching, in classrooms where the future voices of cinema will be able to listen to those of their predecessors, who found it more difficult to find role models in the spaces of formal education, governed by that canon, which is faltering, and which we mentioned at the beginning of this review. In this sense, works such as the one presented here can contribute to the creation of a genealogy between the works of the pioneers, who are undergoing a process of necessary recovery, and the contemporary ones, who are aware of the importance of their example for those who follow them. Following this chain of transmission of knowledge, we hope that, like the happy promise of the second film, this book may give way to others in which more and

more voices of women creators are progressively collected.

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