

Femitags for feminist connected crowds in Latin America and Spain

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, women are acting all over the world against gender violence and femicide. This new wave of feminist claims is characterized by the intensive use of social media to spread consciousness and amplify influence. For this research, we analyse three *femitags* (i.e., feminist hashtags) from Twitter that have been relevant in different crucial mobilizations in Argentina, Spain, and Mexico. These are three hashtags with different functions for activism that have shown special relevance due to their continuity or their intensity in the Spanish-speaking area between 2015 and 2020 (before the confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic). #NiUnaMenos (#NotASingleWomanLess) started in Argentina in 2015 and called to massive mobilizations on the streets. #Cuéntalo (#TellIt) was initiated in Spain in 2018 for sexual abuse disclosure. #NiUnaMas (#NotASingleWomanMore) trended in México around 2020 to denounce every new victim of rape or femicide. We analyse how those hashtags have spread in the Spanish-speaking region, what kind of social actors have been involved and what has been the role of opinion leaders. All data were collected with academic access to the Twitter API during December 2021. We have found that the most influential actors in the conversation are contingent and circumstantial, the leadership structure tends towards horizontality, and opinion leaders with large numbers of followers are only important in very specific moments. In all cases, *femitags* serve as a toolbox for action and build up an archive of grievances with a transnational dimension. Furthermore, all of them point out that structural violence against women leads to femicide.¹

1. Networks and connected crowds for contentious collective action

In the digital age the capacity to exert social influence has shifted from being in the hands of the mainstream media, where “opinion leaders” played a key role (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), to being distributed in a broad transnational scenario of social media users (Castells, 2012). Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2012) explored how networked publics from distributed conversations were able to oppose media elites and raise protests. There is no doubt that social change implies a process of psychological change in people’s understanding of themselves and others (Subasić et al., 2008, p. 330). As a new dimension of collective action, “connective action” occurs when personal action frames and “easily personalized ideas” are linked together through digital networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 37). In that sense, social media can facilitate collective action and social change in three ways (Grijdanus et al., 2020, p. 35): they allow people to express experiences and opinions, they allow online community members to get involved, and they

allow people to involve others outside their online community.

Since the Arab Spring, the Spanish *indignados* or Occupy Wall Street, scholars talk about “networked social movements” (Castells, 2012), “internet-mediated protests” (Chen and Liao, 2014), “networked protests” (Tufekci, 2017) or “connected crowds” (Toret, 2013; Rovira, 2017). In those mobilizations, leadership is likely to be informal, dispersed, and diffused rather than concentrated. This does not mean that protest participation is equally distributed online, but it is usually characterized by a power-law distribution (González-Bailón et al., 2013). Networked social movements are not leaderless but “leaderful” (Liang & Lee, 2021). Many individuals and groups can exert influence in a diffused way. Leaders don’t have a formal organizational role, and influence can be practiced by many people in specific locations and areas. Under the effects of social influence, networked collective action becomes more of a process of contagion than of incentive design (González-Bailón et al., 2013).

Activism on social media often begins with small, densely connected networks that expand and amplify. For example, the mobilizations for

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¹ *Femicidio* distinguishes any murder of women and girls (femicide), from hate crimes as the culmination of gender violence, and impunity (Lagarde, 2005).

racial justice in the United States generated what some authors call a “Black Twitter” (De Kosnik & Feldman, 2019; Florini, 2014) with its own production of “blacktags” (Sharma, 2013) (i.e., #BlackLivesMatter). Taking that baton, here we will analyse some relevant hashtags as *femitags* that trended mainly in the Spanish-speaking *Feminist Twitter* (Jackson, 2018, p. 49) during the period between 2015 and 2020, during what we call the wave of the feminist connected crowds.

Marcela Lagarde (2005) made the distinction that is now incorporated in the law in Mexico, Argentina, and Spain, between any murder of women and girls (femicide), from hate crimes as the culmination of gender violence and impunity (feminicides). In the same vein, we will not talk about *femtags* (as feminine hashtags) but *femitags* (feminist hashtags), which in many cases denounce femicide as the extreme form of violence against women.

We chose to analyse three *femitags* that were key in the extension of mobilizations against gendered violence between 2015 and 2021 in Argentina, Mexico, and Spain. Those three countries, taken together, constitute a case of interest because of their influence in the entire Latin American region, even if they only have in common the fact that between 2015 and 2020 there were major feminist mobilizations.

The question to pose is how social influence is led through specific hashtags, as part of the repertoire of “connective action” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) of the Spanish-speaking feminist crowds. Each of the three hashtags opens an online conversation and a “leaderful” scenario that becomes transnational, specifically in Latin America and Spain. Certainly, the viralisation of a post on Twitter with a hashtag does not necessarily translate to an ability to persuade, but attention is a precondition of influence (Liang & Lee, 2021, p. 8). We want to analyse the degree of concentration of leadership; that is, whether social influence in those online conversations becomes concentrated in the hands of a few or dispersed across many people.

The selected *femitags* are different in their specific functions: mobilization, storytelling, reporting cases of violence. They have been used for months. As the conversation grows, they include new members and new questions about local contexts. #NiUnaMenos began in Argentina to call for the 3 June 2015 protests, when 200,000 people filled the Plaza del Congreso after the murder of the young Chiara Páez. #Cuéntalo emerged in Spain in 2018 for breaking the silence about sexual violence after a court dismissed an accusation of rape. #NiUnaMas is a Mexican hashtag that had an intense use in 2020 indexing every new case of rape and femicide.

With an inductive methodology and a series of tools for the quantitative and qualitative analysis of social big data, we will proceed to the structural description of the conversation by means of Social Network Analysis techniques, and we will pay special attention to the tactical use of hashtags (Kadic, 2019), the type of actors that have participated in the conversations, the role played by opinion leaders and the different hashtags articulated in the debate. All of this will help us to understand how the current feminist crowds use hashtags as a toolbox for activism, erasing the sharp distinction between online and offline worlds, given that both spheres are heavily interdependent (Bonila & Rosa, 2015; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010).

2. Hashtags for feminist connected crowds

Mobilizations in 2015 in Argentina set the beginning of a new global and networked feminist wave of protests (Chávez Rodríguez, 2017; Fuentes, 2019; Natalucci & Rey, 2018). In continuity with the Occupy Wall Street spirit, some relevant feminists called this global wave feminism of the 99% (Alcoff et al., 2017). Similarly, Nuria Varela (2020) speaks of the “feminist tsunami” as a transnational phenomenon.

We decided to talk about “feminist connected crowds” (Rovira Sancho, 2018); a diffuse, widespread, and networked political actor, which does not necessarily build unity. Connected crowds are characterized by bursting into digital networks and the streets in an imbricated and unforeseen way as performative constellations (Fuentes, 2019; Rovira,

2017), maintaining diversity and openness, as gatherings of the many without central command.

The collective action repertoire (Tilly, 1978) of these feminist multitudes has been very varied, with the emergence of modular, replicated, and remixed forms, and with the testing of global synchronicities and *onlife* action: simultaneously locally and on the internet. As Marisa Revilla Blanco (2019, p. 48) points out, “hashtags, slogans, organizational networks, international calls, performances, and videos are incorporated as novel tools into the repertoire of women’s movements in Latin America”.

In the continuum between networks and streets, several authors have already established a connection between the so-called fourth wave of feminism (Munro, 2013; Cochrane, 2014) and hashtag feminism (Peroni & Rodak, 2020). As Rosemary Clark (2016) points out, organizations no longer structure communication in the feminist movement. On the contrary, communication itself, from blogs to hashtags, has become organizational infrastructure: networks convene and are the convening. In the same vein, Hester Baer (2016: 19) notes that women’s online activism re-establishes the basis for collective feminist politics.

On the other hand, hashtag activism is often dismissed as “slacktivism” (Knibbs, 2013; Mulla, 2018); a term derived from combining the words “slacker” and “activism” to mean a “feel-good back-patting” through watching or “liking” response, which avoids taking any real action (Kadic, 2019, p. 7). There is no doubt that the costs of participation are not as relevant online, but copresence is no longer necessary to activate a protest (Earl & Kimport, 2011). We must add that in recent years, a backlash against feminist activists takes place on social media. Some scholars talk about a growing online antifeminist movement (Bonet-Martí, 2020; Ananías & Vergara, 2019; Ringrose, 2018).

Against the “fallacy of spatial dualism” (Lim, 2015, p. 118), in this research, we consider *femitags* as part of the repertoire of action of feminist crowds. We chose to drive our analysis on Twitter because it offers a privileged tool for social research (Van Dijk, 2016). We know we are missing many channels for diffusion, for instance, those opened by offline networks or exposure to mass media. It must be said, that in a context of structural inequality, it is noteworthy that marginalized voices are not equitably empowered by digital networks (Radke et al., 2016; Trott, 2020).

The current feminist mobilizations arise against a growing reality of violence and murder. In Spain, the rate of feminicides is 4.3 per million, one of the lowest in Europe. In contrast, Latin America is the second most lethal region for women in the world (the first being Africa), with a rate of 1.6 per 100,000 inhabitants. According to Alicia Barcena, of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), this is a systemic trend throughout the area: “It knows no borders, affects women and girls of all ages, and happens in all spaces” (La Vanguardia, 2020).

The statement “¡Ni una más!” (i.e., “Not a single woman more!”) was written for the first time in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, at the beginning of the century by the poet Susana Chávez, mother of a young victim of femicide. Chávez was murdered in 2011 while demanding justice for her daughter. It was after dozens of terrifying murders in Juárez that the crime of “femicide” was typified in Mexican law (González Rodríguez, 2002). With the same slogan, in 2007, ECLAC published the report “¡Ni una más! The right to live a life free of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean”.

2.1. Argentina in 2015 and the rise of the #NiUnaMenos mobilizations

As a variation of the poem of Susana Chávez, the phrase Ni Una Menos (Not A Single Woman Less), was used in March 2015 for a marathon reading and performance in Buenos Aires, Argentina, against the growing number of feminicides. In May, after the murder of 14-year-old Chiara Páez at the hands of her boyfriend, a group of journalists with high influence on social media decided to call for a street mobilization for June 3. To unify the mottos of the different calls, they publish

an updated list of the meeting points on #NiUnaMenos Twitter and Facebook accounts (Natalucci & Rey, 2018, p. 16). It was a success. About 300 thousand people marched across the country on June 3, 2015.

From then on, many women and feminist organizations joined #NiUnaMenos, and they started to assemble regularly to organize successive actions. As Garibotti and Hopp (2019, p. 186) point out, #NiUnaMenos opened a space for a wider feminist agenda, not only against femicide, but also for the legalization of abortion or denouncing unpaid reproductive labour, generating new campaigns, such as #AbortoLegal (#LegalAbortion) or women strikes. What started as a social media campaign quickly transformed into a fully-fledged social movement that adopted the name of the hashtag. #NiUnaMenos success and viralisation made it an identifier of the transnational wave of feminist protests that followed across the continent.

2.2. Spain and the ability to “tell it” #Cuéntalo

Certain events served as a spur to the emergence of a wave of feminist connected crowds in Spain. Among others, are the 2014 Freedom Train for abortion, the march on the first International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2015, the murder of Diana Quer in 2016, and the general strike for the 2018 International Women’s Day. As evidence of the growing Spanish feminist wave, we have the figures of the March 8th marches. In 2000, March 8 brought 1000 people into the streets of Madrid and, in 2019, 375,000 (Calderón, 2020).

On April 26, 2018, the sentence of “La Manada” (*The Herd*) was released exculpating of rape and only convicting for abuse 5 men who sexually assaulted a young woman in Pamplona in 2016 (Alonso, 2018). A wave of indignation arose with the hashtag #NoEsAbusoEsViolación (i.e., #ItsNotAbuseItsRape) and #JusticiaPatriarcal (i.e., #PatriarchalJustice), as the word of the victim was dismissed. Journalist Cristina Fallarás (2019) reflected on the fact that women are not believed. “That’s why we keep quiet. And if we keep silent, they deny the existence of our pain, of the violence they are inflicted, of the humiliations” (p. 40). She tweeted #Cuéntalo.² The next day the hashtag had jumped the Atlantic and was a global trending topic. In 15 days, the number of tweets and retweets exceeded 2 million.

In the #MeToo’s wake, #Cuéntalo breaks with the tendency to “preemptively dismiss” victims’ voices (Alcoff, 2018) and creates a listening community with other hashtags: #YoTeCreo (i.e., #IBelieveYou) and #NoEstasSola (i.e., #YouAreNotAlone). As Cristina Fallarás explains, “the data about male violence are not only partial and inaccurate... Without the accumulation of thousands of testimonies in a hashtag, only official reports and abstraction remain” (personal interview, Madrid, 15/10/2021).

#Cuéntalo has been documented by the Association of Archivists of Catalonia. Together with Cristina Fallarás and data journalist Karma Peiró they created the proyectocuentalo.org, where they analyse the content of the tweets. Among them, there are 5 thousand tweets about femicides, many of them giving voice to the dead: “I tell it because she can no longer tell it”.

2.3. Mexican fights against femicides and rape with #NiUnaMás

Since April 24, 2016, a new wave of increasingly large mobilizations against gendered-based violence grew throughout Mexico (Pfleger, 2021), in the face of alarming violence figures. In 2019, 2825 women were murdered in Mexico, 1006 of which were classed as femicide, according to the National Public Security System.

² After suffering digital violence, the initiator of the hashtag unsubscribed from Twitter in early 2021. Therefore, her participation does not appear in our dataset.

After three rapes by police officers in Mexico City in August 2019, a feminist fury using #NoMeCuidanMeViolan (i.e., #TheyDontTakeCareOfMeTheyRapeMe) took to the streets with pink flares and glitter, destroying a subway station and graffitiing monuments.

The hashtag #NiUnaMas accumulate tweets when the 7-year-old body of Fatima Aldrightt, appears in a plastic bag in February 2020. Shortly thereafter, photos of Ingrid Escamilla’s outraged body are leaked to the press (Signa Lab, 2019). On February 14, 2020, Valentine’s Day, protests across the country become more radical. The words of Yesenia Zamudio, mother of a femicide victim, went viral: “They killed my daughter. I have the right to burn and break”, with one million views in three days (Rodríguez, 2015, 2020). On March 8, 2020, the largest women’s mobilization in the history of Mexico took place. Mothers and relatives of victims led the way, shouting: “For our daughters, not one more (Ni una más), not one more, not one more murdered”. And on March 9, a women’s strike took place; “a day without women neither in the streets, nor at work, nor in the schools”.

3. Methodology

In this research, we have chosen to adopt an inductive rather than a hypothetico-deductive analysis strategy, and therefore, we have not started from a set of specific hypotheses but from a will of observation based on a series of initial questions or concerns linked to the articulated literature. The research questions have been the following and apply equally to the three *femitags*: What kind of social actors have been involved in the conversation; what linkages and synergies stand out between them; which is the role of opinion leaders, and what secondary hashtags and content stand out in those conversations.

Since our specific object of interest is *femitags* on Twitter, the data for this research have been obtained from the academic API of the platform itself, which allows the retroactive retrieval of large amounts of data. Data have been obtained regarding the feminist conversations held from 2015 to 2020 under the 3 hashtags, in different time slots we have deemed relevant, not pretending to be exhaustive:

- #NiUnaMenos: between June 1, 2015, and December 31, 2015.
- #Cuéntalo, #YoSíTeCreo and #NoEstásSola: between April 1, 2018, and September 30, 2018.
- #NiUnaMás: between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2020.

After retrieving the data, we synthesized a network from the retweets of the three conversations. Each node represents a user and each edge is a weighted relationship between two users that takes values according to the number of times a user has retweeted another user. The average degree and network density calculations have been applied with the Pajek software (1998), as well as the Multi-Level Louvain community detection algorithm (i.e., Resolution=1, Random Restarts=1, Maximum Iterations in each Restart=20, Maximum Levels in each Iteration=20, Max Repetitions in each Level=50). We have also used Pajek to calculate the weighted input and output degrees for each node. On the other hand, the visualization of the network was done with Gephi’s ForceAtlas2 algorithm (2014), which brings connected nodes closer together and moves them away from those with which links are weak or non-existent.

To analyse the contents of the network and its leadership, we have articulated a strategy of data blending that has allowed us to link the original table with the captured tweets and the table with the data associated with each author or node (i.e., Fig. 1). In this way, we have analysed the contents of each community from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, identifying for each of them 1) the most retweeted users, 2) the most retweeted content, 3) the most common locations of the users.

The analysis of the most retweeted content in each cluster has been carried out systematically. We have read, classified, and interpreted manually (i.e. without algorithms) the 15–20 most important tweets of

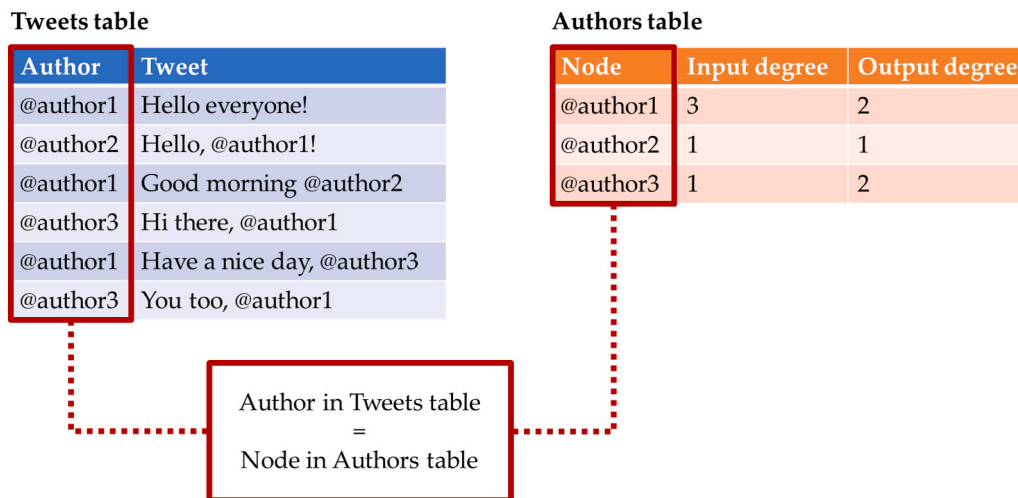


Fig. 1. Tabular data blending strategy
Source: Morales-i-Gras et al. (2021).

each community, or the 2–3 in the case of highly centralised clusters developed around very few very viral contents. However, in order to give greater importance to structural analysis than to content analysis in this research, we will not proceed to a detailed description of these contents and will not reproduce them integrally.

To analyse the role of opinion leaders in conversations, we have used two different metrics such as the weighted indegree (i.e., defined as the number of retweets received by each user in the conversation in a network of retweets) and the number of followers, and we have analysed the Correlation Coefficient between the two. The statistic developed by Karl Pearson yields figures close to ± 1 when there is a positive linear relationship between the two variables, and 0 when there is no relationship (Stanton, 2001). In the context of this study, a strong and positive correlation would suggest a high association between being an opinion leader on Twitter and having the ability to viralise messages in the conversation, since only those with many followers would manage to spread their messages efficiently. On the other hand, a correlation tending to zero would suggest that those who manage to make their messages viral are not necessarily opinion leaders, since they do not stand out in terms of the number of followers. Finally, a negative correlation could be read as bias against opinion leaders within the analysed conversation.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. #NiUnaMenos

We captured 1,005,337 tweets with the hashtag #niunamenos between June 1 and December 31, 2015. Of all the tweets captured, 614,278 (i.e., 61.10 %) occurred between June 2 and June 5. This makes evident the role of feminist hashtivism in the dissemination of the call for the June 3 protests. In the two days following the mobilization, the hashtag functioned as a virtual space to share the news raised by the march in the media and to celebrate the success of the mobilization.

The captured tweets include 609,753 retweets (i.e., 60.65 %), 338,457 original tweets (i.e., 33.67 %), 41,330 replies (i.e., 4.11 %) and 15,815 quotes (i.e., 1.57 %). The most important interaction in the conversation is the retweet. However, it is also worth mentioning a very high number of original tweets compared to the conversations that we will analyse later: many people wanted to leave in writing and in the first person their support for that first major campaign against feminicides. In total, 407,511 unique users participated in the conversation, which implies an average of 2.47 tweets per user (SD = 15.17, median = 1).

A network has been synthesized with the captured retweets. It

consists of 300,798 nodes linked by 519,620 weighted edges, whose maximum value is 177, this being the maximum number of times a user has retweeted another user in the conversation. Each node in the network is connected to an average of 3.45 other nodes, and there is a relational density of 0.000006. The above figure implies that only 0.0006 % of the possible relationships materialized in the conversation; this is a very low figure, but it will be the highest of those we will see here. These data should be interpreted to mean that we are dealing with a large and weakly connected community.

After applying the Louvain Multilevel algorithm with Pajek, no less than 11,136 distinct communities have been identified. This incredibly high number is indicative of how highly fragmented the conversation is. Although high fragmentation will be a phenomenon we will continue to observe in subsequent networks, it is worth mentioning that this is the most fragmented conversation of all. These data allow us to interpret that the hashtag was something like a foundational event that created a feminist performative constellation of many galaxies, calling on very diverse and not previously linked communities.

The Modularity statistic that goes with the community detection algorithm is 0.772, which suggests a very good quality of the community partitioning and reinforces the previous idea that the groups of nodes are very diverse and have tended to relate only with individuals belonging to their groups. For ease of reading and data analysis, we have kept only those communities that group more than 2 % of the nodes; these, on this occasion, manage to congregate only 50.51 % of the nodes in the network. This is a very low figure if we compare it with the other communities that we will analyse later and, once again, reinforces the idea already mentioned of high fragmentation and scarce intergroup contacts.

The network has been synthesized with the direct force algorithm ForceAtlas2 of Gephi, which brings the linked nodes closer together and distances them from those with no or weak links. A first element that stands out in the network (i.e., Fig. 2) is that there are two communities that are very distant from the rest and share very few links with them: these are the Spanish and Mexican communities which, because they are not Argentine, appear separated from the others. The mainly Argentinian communities, on the other hand, appear together in the network. This suggests two things: 1) the mobilizations that took place in Argentina also sparked a great deal of international activity on Twitter, and 2) despite the above, we also observe a marked tendency towards national homophily or in-group preference, with most users tending to relate only to those from their own country, thus forming communities with users from each country.

In the non-Argentinian communities, we find, first, signs of support

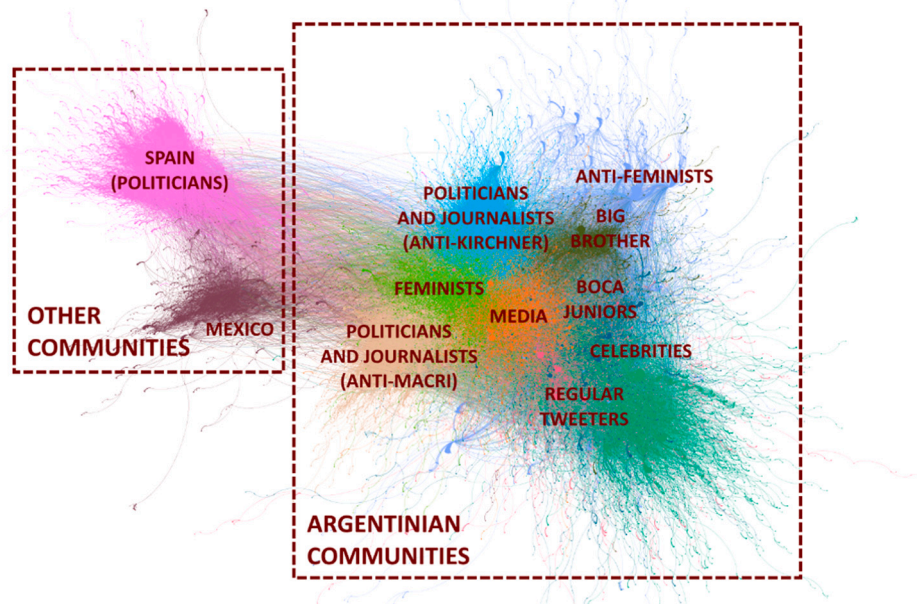


Fig. 2. #NiUnaMenos retweets network.

Source: Own elaboration with Pajek, Gephi and Paint.net.

for the Argentinean mobilizations. Secondly, and even more importantly, we observe how different agents in these countries (i.e., regular tweeters in the Mexican case, leftist, and progressive politicians in the Spanish case) appropriate the hashtag and use it to denounce femicides in their countries and thus add strength to a campaign that was global from the very beginning.

There are different types of communities in the Argentinean conversation. The largest, and the one with the most diffuse leadership, is the one we have called “regular tweeters”, which is mainly focused on reporting the demonstrations that took place on June 3 or showing support for the campaign. There are also communities with different types of celebrities (i.e., artists, instagramers, and content creators, basically), media and official accounts, and Boca Juniors fans showing their support for the campaign. There are some communities that are more focused on the political articulation of the campaign: two communities formed by politicians and journalists of opposite signs that accuse each other of hypocrisy for their positioning regarding the campaign, and a feminist activist community that tries to establish a discourse that goes beyond the June 3 call.

Two more Argentinean communities are also very interesting because they are quite different from the others. The first is a clearly anti-feminist community that criticizes the campaign (i.e., arguing that it is a fad and that there is a kind of witch hunt against those who do not support it) and makes jokes and memes with the hashtag, trivializing and decontextualizing it. The second is a community centered on the show *Big Brother*, with users celebrating the reality show’s adherence to the campaign and users criticizing the hypocrisy of the show, which allegedly locked a victim of gender-based violence in a room with her aggressor a few months earlier.

The Correlation Coefficient between the number of followers and the input degree (i.e., the number of retweets each user has received in the network) is rather low, of 0.21. If we look at the numbers of the statistic in each community, we see that the correlation is especially strong for communities of regular tweeters (i.e., $r = 0.72$) or for communities revolving around *Big Brother* (i.e., $r = 0.67$) or anti-feminist discourse (i.e., $r = 0.57$). In contrast, we found the lowest correlation in the feminist cluster (i.e., 0.10). These data suggest a high dependence on media leaders and important figures on Twitter in the general dissemination of messages, while they point to a different, more autonomous, and a

horizontal tendency for users more aligned with feminist activism. Without a doubt, the most interesting thing in reading these figures will be to see how the trend will be the exact opposite in the other two conversations.

In terms of hashtags, in addition to #NiUnaMenos, other hashtags that refer to mobilizations in these two countries stand out in the Spanish and Mexican communities, such as #YoVoy7N (i.e., #IDon’tGo7N) in the case of Spain or #JusticiaParaLxs5 (i.e., #JusticeForThe5) in the case of Mexico. As we have already mentioned, these communities do not work with a classic, unidirectional logic of solidarity in which there is a sender and a receiver of such solidarity, but rather it is about joining forces for a common cause by making visible the links that exist between feminists from different countries.

On the other hand, the Argentinean communities are fully engaged with the hashtag #niunamenos. 70.86 % of the hashtags that have been used in this conversation are #niunamenos, in contrast to 43.67 % of the non-Argentinean communities. The other hashtags that are important references to the problem of femicides from another perspective, such as #MachismoMata (i.e., #MachismoKills) or #BastaDeFemicidios (i.e., #StopFemicides), or to more partial aspects of the conversation, as is the case of the controversy around the support of the reality show #GH2015 (i.e., #BigBrother2015).

4.2. #Cuéntalo

For the hashtags #Cuéntalo (i.e., #TellIt), #YoSíTeCreo (i.e., #IBelieveYou) and #NoEstásSola (i.e., #YouAreNotAlone) we captured a total of 2,117,032 tweets between 1 April 2018 and 30 September 2018. A total of 90.74 % of the tweets, which amounted to 1,921,088, occurred between 26 April and 5 May. The tweets captured include 1,908,102 retweets (i.e., 90.13 %), 164,743 original tweets (i.e., 7.78 %), 29,082 replies (i.e., 1.37 %) and 15,105 quotes (i.e., 0.71 %). Even stronger than the previous network, this is a retweet-oriented network. In total, 628,776 unique users participated in the conversation captured, which implies an average of 3.37 tweets per user ($SD = 9.01$, median = 1). This average is higher than the previous case.

The retweets of the conversation have been used to synthesize a network consisting of 604,023 nodes linked by 1,828,910 weighted edges. The maximum weight of an edge in the network is 144, which is

the maximum number of times a user has retweeted another user in the conversation. Each node in the network is connected to an average of 6.06 nodes and the density of the network is 0.000005 points. This means that only 0.0005 % of the possible relationships take place in the network: a very low figure, although slightly higher than for the previous network.

With the Louvain Multilevel algorithm for community detection, implemented with the same conditions as for the previous network, up to 5052 different communities have been detected. This figure is significantly lower than the previous one, suggesting that the conversation is less fragmented, and the participants are better connected to each other, from a comparative perspective. The value of the Modularity statistic is 0.565. Although this is a high and mathematically relevant value—any value equal to or greater than 0.3 (Newman, 2006) is—the fact that it is a lower figure than the previous network also reinforces the idea that this second conversation is denser and more tightly knit than the first. On this occasion, the number of communities that bring together more than 2 % of the nodes in the network is 9, and, altogether, they account for 88.07 % of the nodes in the network. All these data suggest that, compared to #NiUnaMenos, #Cuéntalo opened a new narrative constellation around sexual violence, but connected with a more established, consolidated, and active feminist movement on social media.

Following the same steps as for the previous analysis, we have coloured the network according to the community detected for each node (i.e., Fig. 3), and we have proceeded to analyse each community separately. As in the previous case, we notice that many participants in the conversation are grouped in clusters whose main characteristic is that they are not Spanish: 5 of the 9 largest communities in the network are full of Argentinian, Puerto Rican, Colombian, Mexican, Chilean, Panamanian and Venezuelan users, among other Latin American countries. It is interesting to note that these communities are always made up of users from different countries, thus showing a pattern of Latin American supranational connectivity. All these communities appear concentrated in the graph, because of Gephi's ForceAtlas2 algorithm, which places the interconnected nodes close to each other.

The Spanish communities are 4 of the 9 that remain above the threshold of 2 % of nodes. In them, we can clearly distinguish four distinct patterns of leadership. In the community that we have called

“regular tweeters” we find a phenomenon that we had already seen in the previous network, which is the diffuse leadership of a series of users, mostly young women, who do not have large numbers of followers or are not public figures, but who have managed to make some content go viral due to their originality, quality, or opportunity. This type of user is also predominant in Latin American communities.

The rest of the Spanish communities reflect other types of leadership more linked to the media and political sphere. On this occasion, among the most retweeted users, several television presenters and politicians from left-wing parties stand out. The Spanish community that we have called “extreme and alt-right” is more varied in its leadership, including regular tweeters, media, and political associations. What they have in common, in this case, is their criticism of the feminist movement and, simultaneously, the publication and popularisation of messages that establish an association between gender-based violence and immigration.

The Correlation Coefficient between the number of followers of the users and their input degree in the network is 0.06. This is a very low figure and, if we compare it with the 0.21 of the previous conversation, it shows the increasingly characteristic horizontality of *femitags*. Here, the norm is already the non-correlation between the volume of followers and retweets received, and the communities in which this trend is least observed are those of journalists and politicians (i.e., $r=0.31$) and media and celebrities (i.e., $r=0.25$). All this suggests a clear pattern of diffuse and contingent leadership, increasingly distant from the model of interpersonal influence based on opinion leaders.

In Latin American communities, the presence of the hashtag #Cuéntalo (i.e., #TellIt) is much higher than the rest of the hashtags: 88.54 % of the times a user wrote a hashtag in these communities, the hashtag was #Cuéntalo. This shows there were lots of testimonials coming from Latin American countries. Although hashtags such as #YoSíTeCreo (i.e., #IBelieveYou), #LaManada (i.e., #TheHerd), or #NoEsNo (i.e., #NoMeansNo) also appear, which clearly refer to the Spanish mobilizations, most participants come to the conversation to show their support to the victims of the different cases of violence against women that appeared in the hashtag #Cuéntalo, in clear consonance with the English-speaking hashtag #MeToo.

In the Spanish communities, on the other hand, the presence of the hashtags #Cuéntalo (i.e., #TellIt) and #YoSíTeCreo (i.e., #IBelieveYou) is

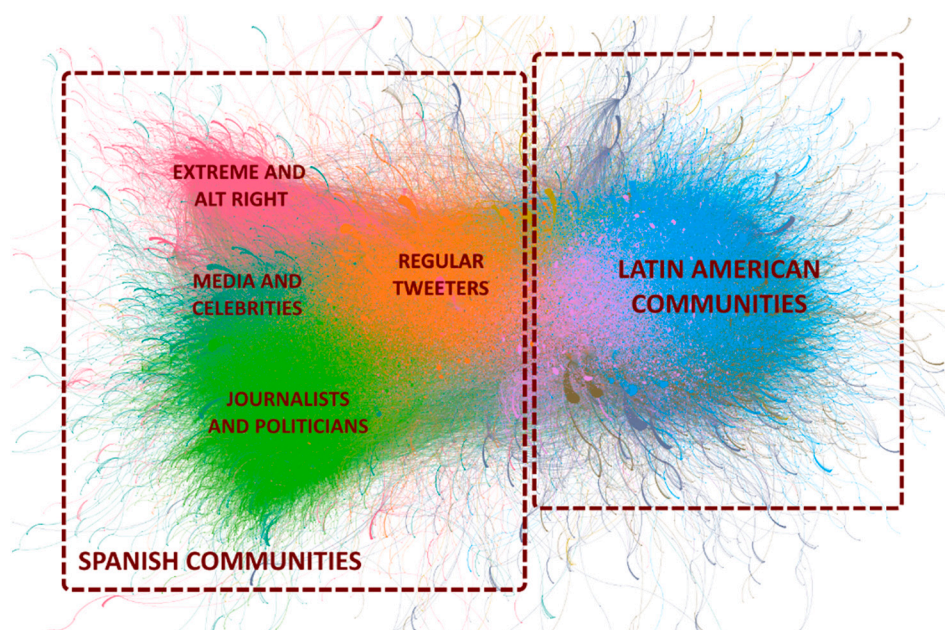


Fig. 3. #Cuéntalo, #yosítecreo and #noestásola retweets network. Source: Own elaboration with Pajek, Gephi and Paint.net.

much more balanced, with a representation of 26.41 % and 23.35 %, respectively. The rest of the relevant hashtags in the Spanish clusters refer to the sentence in the “La Manada” case and the different mobilizations that took place as a reaction of the feminist movement. It is worth noting, in this sense, that the hashtag participated by the extreme and alt-right did not use a different repertoire of hashtags to the rest of the conversation; instead of trying to generate their own hashtags, they tried to spread their messages in the channels that were already open.

4.3. #NiUnaMás

We have captured a total of 696,291 tweets around the hashtag #NiUnaMás (i.e., #notasinglegwomanmoore), published between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020. The highest rates of activity for this hashtag correspond to 13 February 2020 and 8 and 9 March 2020, coinciding with the most critical mobilizations in the streets: the call for protests for the feminicide of Ingrid Escamilla on February 14, the march for International Women’s Day on March 8, and the women’s strike on March 9, 2020. A total of 40.25 % of the tweets are concentrated during the months of February and March 2020. These include 578,552 retweets (i.e., 83.09 %), 76,627 original tweets (i.e., 11.01 %), 22,620 quotes (i.e., 3.25 %) and 18,492 replies (i.e., 2.66 %). As in the previous cases, the network is clearly a network of retweets. In total, 346,107 unique authors have participated, with an average of 2.01 tweets per author (SD = 8.03, median = 1).

The network synthesized from retweets has brought together 315,821 authors connected by 496,394 links representing retweet relationships. The maximum weight of links in this network is 235, which is the maximum number of times a user has retweeted another user in the network. In this network, each node is connected to an average of 3.14 other nodes; this is the lowest figure in this study. The relational density of the network is 0.000005, which means that, as for the second conversation, only 0.0005 % of the possible relationships between users have materialized in the third conversation. As in the two previous cases, the data suggest that these are very massive conversations in which their users tend to establish relationships with very small portions of users. Affinity groups and small affective communities (Rovira Sancho, 2021) appear online.

After applying the Louvain Multilevel community detection algorithm with the same parameters as in the two previous cases, a total of 6222 communities have been identified. These figures, considering also the rather small size of this network in comparison with the previous ones, place us before a scenario like that of the first network,

characterized by very high fragmentation. The value of the Modularity statistic accompanies this interpretation, at 0.769 points, almost as high as that of the first network. Furthermore, the number of communities that congregate more than 2 % of the nodes is 16, as in the first network, and all of them together manage to congregate 69.71 % of the nodes in the network. These data suggest greater diversity and less intergroup linkage in the Mexican and Argentinian conversations compared to the #Cuéntalo hashtag, initiated in Spain.

After a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the network (i.e., Fig. 4) we realize that, once again, the conversation has involved users from other countries appearing in some clusters. On this occasion, we find four non-Mexican communities in the network, quite isolated and separated from the central set of clusters. These are the Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, Colombian, and Spanish clusters. These clusters use the hashtag #niunamás to denounce and disseminate specific cases of disappearances or deaths of women perpetrated by men in their respective countries.

Among the Mexican, we observe two types of communities. On the one hand, there are communities grouped around leaderships related to artists and intellectuals, international institutions such as the United Nations, different groups from the Mexican feminist movement, journalists, and Instagramers. In all these communities we find different users who accumulate relatively high numbers of retweets. On the other hand, we also find communities that are generated by a single tweet—usually a tweet that tells a story of violence in the first person or denounces the disappearance of a loved one—which is retweeted by the rest of the users in the community. In these communities, we find a single user who accumulates retweets from others. In any case, the content that spreads and goes viral in these clusters always has to do with specific cases that are reported on Twitter and to which the community reacts. This can be interpreted as the use of this hashtag to raise awareness of cases of disappearance, rape, or murder of girls and women by those close to or familiar with the specific cases.

The Correlation Coefficient between followers and input degree in this network is the lowest in the study, only 0.02. Thus, the tendency towards the horizontal, diffuse, and contingent leaderships identified in the second network is confirmed and even more pronounced in the third network. The only notable exception is the Spanish community, which involves several personalities including the country’s President and several government accounts, in which the correlation between followers and retweets is headed up to medium figures (i.e., $r = 0.27$). The second most powerful correlation is found in the cluster of journalists, and this is already a rather low figure (i.e., $r = 0.13$).

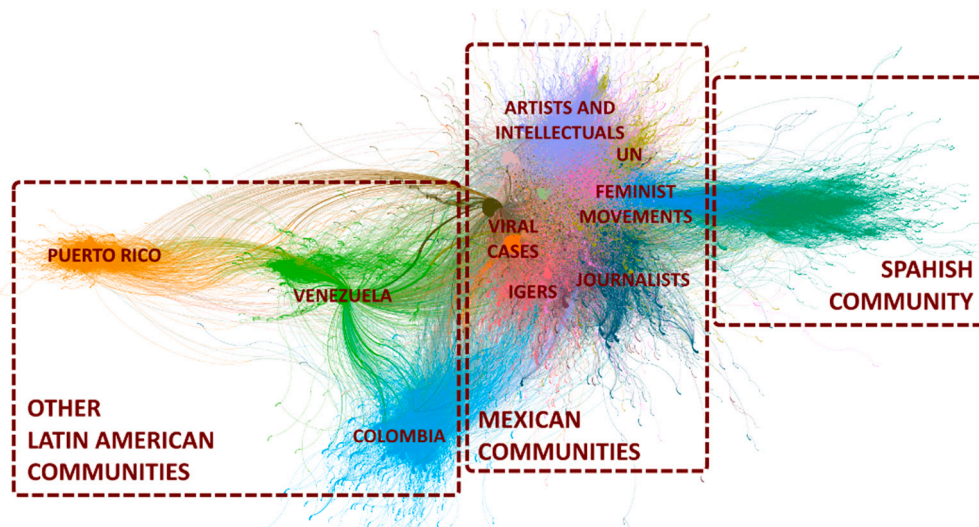


Fig. 4. #Niunamás retweets network.

Source: Own elaboration with Pajek, Gephi, and Paint.net.

Leaving aside the Spanish case and focusing on the Mexican case, the hashtag #NiUnaMás is highly counter-institutionalised, in the sense that it serves as an umbrella to denounce violences that the state institutions do not attend. The impunity of the aggressors is denounced and an archive of cases of violence and disappearances in Mexico is being built. The hashtag also articulates many other campaigns, linking the feminist networked movement with the familiars that seek justice for their relatives. This happens in several countries, but the data also show that the case of Mexico is special, since a large part of the users who use this hashtag are Mexican. Among the specific campaigns that are articulated around #NiUnaMás are #JusticiaParaLaBeba (i.e., #JusticeForBeba) in the Venezuelan community, #ElCasoNiñaEmbera (i.e., #TheCaseOfTheEmberaGirl) in Colombia or #JusticiaParaFatima (i.e., #JusticeForFatima), #LaVozDeAbril (i.e., #TheVoiceOfAbril), #IngridEscamilla or #JusticiaParaIngrid (i.e., #JusticeForIngrid) in Mexico.

Linked to the above, the data suggest that there is no specific event that triggers the conversation in this case as was the case with the two previous conversations. This does not imply that there are not abundant references to mobilizations that have taken place in Mexico, as represented by the hashtags #8m2020, #UnDiaSinNosotras (i.e., #ADayWithoutUs), #NoMeCuidanMeViolan (i.e., #TheyDontTakeCareOfMeTheyRapeMe) or #Brillanteada (i.e., #Glittering). However, both for the variety of cases it covers and for its temporal stability, we find in the case of #NiUnaMás a good example of the counter-institutionalisation of *femitags*.

5. Conclusions

In this research, we have analysed the Twitter conversation of three *femitags* that have accompanied feminist connected crowds in Argentina, Spain, and Mexico. However, the first thing that stands out in these online conversations is that calling them “Argentine”, “Spanish” and “Mexican” is, to say the least, inaccurate. After analysing them, we can see that the staging of feminist activism is transnational, without prejudice to the fact that each hashtag appears linked to local reality and conversations tend to national homophily.

Feminist hashtivists have a shared agenda expressed in *femitags*, even if they don't built an organized social movement, they oppose media elites and raise protests from distributed networks of social influence. This means that, when knowledge of the language allows it, synergies are established between heterogenous actors from different countries, and hashtags that have been successful in other contexts are appropriated. It is not simply a matter of solidarity, but rather of a certain transposition of exogenous dynamics in more local contexts, adapting them and giving rise to variations with a great capacity for viralisation through networked publics. In this sense, hashtags help to organize and facilitate the diffusion of online discussions. *Femitags* make it possible to share a kind of toolbox for the Do It Yourself of new feminist protests, where online and offline action are interdependent.

In terms of social influence, instead of *leaderlessness*, we found informal and diffused leadership, as Liang and Lee (2021) assessed. The data analysed suggest a very pronounced tendency towards multiple, contingent, and arguably weak leaderships. Thus, feminisms reject hyperleaderships and seek the distribution of voices to assemble common frameworks of meaning, spread protest and denounce grievances. Among the evidence supporting this interpretation, the practically null correlation between the number of followers on Twitter and the volume of retweets received stands out, especially in the Spanish and Mexican conversations, which occurred after Argentina in 2015, which has a certain halo of a foundational event, and which involved many sensitivities and social actors beyond feminism. Social influence is led through *femitags*, as a process of contagion (González-Bailón et al., 2013) based on “connective action” (Bennet & Segerberg) giving birth to connected crowds that move from the net to the streets and vice versa, as performative constellations.

One could say that our argument has a certain circular nature to it

since the polycentrism that characterizes networked social movements already anticipates this kind of outcome. This may be true to some extent, but, as we see it, the results would probably have been different if we were to analyse other transformative social movements that are shaking up the 21st century and that do have visible and recognizable faces that resemble the strong leaderships of other times (e.g., the Youth for Climate movement and the figure of Greta Thunberg). Moreover, as we have seen, this does not mean that feminist connected crowds cannot take advantage of the popularity of key people at specific moments (e.g., journalists, celebrities, or politicians). Feminism also benefits from creating synergies between them and most users.

From a historical perspective, it can be observed that the three conversations are highly dependent on contingent events. In the case of #NiUnaMenos, its strength starts in the multitudinous call in the streets on June 3, 2015. The case of #Cuéntalo, together with #YoSíTeCreo and #NoEstásSola, cannot be understood without the media and network commotion caused by a court ruling that dismissed the word of a rape victim. It also cannot be explained without the global success of the #MeToo campaign for sexual abuse disclosure, which started a few months earlier. The last hashtag, #NiUnaMas, more routine and long-lasting, with less intergroup linkage, denounces state inefficiency to protect women.

We have been able to verify that the three *femitags* correspond to a shared symbolic repertoire spread throughout the Spanish-speaking area. As already told, both #NiUnaMas and #NiUnaMenos are appropriations and at the same time quotations of the poem of Susana Chávez, the mother who was murdered while demanding justice for the femicide of her daughter in Juárez. “Ni Una Menos” is not just a hashtag or a Facebook page or an organized collective, but a call for assemblies and mobilizations. Ni Una Más is not only a call for mobilization every time a woman is killed, but an archive that documents and denounces the extension of feminicides by naming them one by one. #Cuéntalo responds to what is distinctive to networked forms of “personalized politics” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Observing the three *femitags* it becomes evident that the feminist connected crowds, at least the Spanish-speaking ones, arise or end with the denunciation of femicides. #NiUnaMenos and #NiUnaMas are clearly the fruit of this. But also #Cuéntalo weaves a broad framework of continuity between sexual harassment and murder.

As we said, social change implies a process of psychological change in people's understanding of themselves and others. There is no doubt that “people are more likely to take action to support a cause when they experience an action-relevant emotion and/or believe that taking action can make a difference” (Thomas et al., 2012, p. 116). Nevertheless, in this research we cannot draw conclusions on the structural configuration that the Encapsulated Model of Social Identity in Collective Action (EMISCA) can explain. Other studies should analyse the process through which women engage in collective/connective actions where emotion of moral outrage leads to social identification.

In line with previous studies on hashtag feminism, we found that anti-feminist communities use *femitags* to insult and make jokes with a great amount of misogynistic content. We identified a Spanish “extreme and alt-right” community with regular tweeters, media, and political associations. In that sense, Twitter is becoming a place where anti-feminist movements grow. It is no coincidence that Cristina Fallarás, the journalist that initiated #Cuéntalo, and was interviewed for this research, decided to close her Twitter account in 2021.

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