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## DOSSIER



### Voices from the Global South: the mediatization of feminisms in a podcast by Brazilian women around the world

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**Abstract:** The podcast *Femigrantes BR* is defined as “a space for conversation among feminist-immigrant women around the world”. The podcast had 21 episodes, gathering stories of Brazilian women who live and work in several countries. In the voices of the interviewees, life stories expand beyond the personal account and connect with firmly established structures such as racism and the unequal relations between the Global North and South. Taking that object and scenario, I investigate what has been the contribution of feminisms, as political discourse, to the “empowerment” of those migrant women and analyse how the media coverage of the feminist debate reflects on the way they act in the public life of the country in which they now live. In the effort to attend to these points, I engage in an immersion in digital media and, in dialogue with contributions from feminist media, technology, decolonial, postcolonial studies, I discuss how the feminist occupation of the internet can potentiate social transformations in unequal gender structures and contribute to challenge hierarchies between North and Global South.

**Keywords:** Femigrantes BR; feminist podcast; mediatisation; decolonial feminism; Global South.

### **Voices do Sul Global: a midiatização dos feminismos em um podcast de mulheres brasileiras pelo mundo**

**Resumo:** O podcast *Femigrantes BR* se define como “um espaço de conversa de mulheres feministas e imigrantes pelo mundo”. Em maio de 2022, o *Femigrantes BR* contava com 21 episódios, reunindo histórias de brasileiras que vivem e atuam em diversos países. Na voz das entrevistadas, histórias de vida expandem-se para além do relato pessoal, rico em si mesmo, para conectar-se com estruturas solidamente assentadas como as do racismo e das relações desiguais entre Norte e Sul Global. A partir do objeto e do cenário descritos, procuro investigar qual tem sido a contribuição dos feminismos, enquanto discurso político, para o “empoderamento” dessas mulheres migrantes e analisar como a midiatização do debate feminista reflete na forma como estas atuam na vida pública do país no qual passaram a viver. No esforço para atender a esses pontos, dedico-me a um trabalho imersivo nos meios digitais e, em diálogo com aportes dos estudos feministas da tecnologia, decoloniais, pós-coloniais e da comunicação midiática, intento pensar como ocupação feminista da internet pode potencializar transformações sociais nas estruturas desiguais de gênero e contribuir para desafiar as hierarquias entre Norte e Sul Global.

**Palavras-chave:** Femigrantes BR; podcast feminista; midiatização; feminismo decolonial; Sul Global.

### **Voces del Sur Global: la mediatización de los feminismos en un podcast de mujeres brasileñas por el mundo**

**Resumen:** El podcast *Femigrantes BR* se define como “un espacio de conversación de mujeres feministas e inmigrantes por el mundo”. En mayo de 2022, *Femigrantes BR* tuvo 21 episodios, que reunieron historias de mujeres brasileñas que viven y trabajan en varios países. En las voces de las entrevistadas, las historias de vida se expanden más allá del relato personal, rico en sí mismo, para conectarse con estructuras firmemente establecidas como las del racismo y de las relaciones desiguales entre el Norte y el Sur Global. A partir del objeto y el escenario descritos, busco investigar cuál ha sido la contribución de los feminismos, como discurso político, al empoderamiento de estas mujeres migrantes y analizar cómo la cobertura mediática del debate feminista se refleja en la forma de actuar en la vida pública del país en el que ahora viven. En el esfuerzo por atender estos puntos, me dedico a un trabajo de inmersión en los medios digitales y, en diálogo con aportes de los estudios feministas de la tecnología, decoloniales, poscoloniales y de la comunicación mediática, busco pensar cómo la ocupación feminista de la internet puede potenciar transformaciones sociales en las estructuras desiguales de género y contribuir a desafiar las jerarquías entre el Norte y el Sur Global.

**Palabras clave:** Femigrantes BR; podcast feminista; mediatización; feminismo decolonial; Sur Global.

## Voices from the Global South: the mediatization of feminisms in a podcast by Brazilian women around the world<sup>1</sup>

– Uhuu!!  
– Wow, we did it!!! We've won the technology challenge  
– [laughther]  
– Technology versus women  
– [more laughter]

(Lilian Moreira and Priscila Preta celebrating their success recording a remote interview for episode #3 of the Femigrantes Podcast BR)

“We've won the technology challenge”, celebrates the internationalist Lilian Moreira, after finishing another episode of the podcast *Femigrantes BR*. By antagonising “women” to “technology”, Moreira acknowledges the historical exclusion of women, especially black and racialized women, in terms of their access to technology.

Light-skinned Black, as she defines herself, the host of *Femigrantes* has been in Paris ever since she migrated to pursue her master's degree in Human Rights. The *Femigrantes* project began as a triple partnership between Lilian Moreira, Lidiane Vieira and Bouso Benussi Thioune, the former two Brazilian and the latter Italian of Senegalese ancestry. The three of them invested in the podcast format as a media capable of projecting feminist voices that reflect about borders, identity, gender and race.

In France, these three college graduates who went to graduate school in Paris found themselves in a position of racialized “Other”, therefore less “civilised”. They also found out that this feeling of inferiority, mixed with a certain amount of outrage, was not individual, but also experienced by other migrant women, especially those who carry in their skin the marks of a presumed non-European origin, as in the case of Bouso, the black Italian who shared with Lilian the *Fémigrantes FR* studio board. Being black shifts her location geographically and symbolically: 1. She cannot be European; 2. She is probably not educated.

In the first episode, in which the project is presented to the audience, of *Fé-*

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<sup>1</sup> This text derives from the Research project “*May Matriarchy begin*”, *the construction of on-line activism and off-line solidarities among Brazilian women living in Paris* (“*Que comece o Matriarcado*”, *a construção de ativismo on-line e solidariedades off-line entre brasileiras vivendo em Paris*), endowed with a National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) Productivity Scholarship, Level 2 (*Bolsa Produtividade Nível 2*), process 307378/2019-5.

*migrantes FR*, Bousso narrates<sup>2</sup> people's constant surprise, and even suspicion, regarding her nationality. In the assumption that she is an immigrant from outside the European Union there is an embedded idea that, under every black skin, there is a jungle (Bhabha, 1998, p. 39). That perception also comes across Lilian's everyday life. In Brazil, for a long time, she was perceived and perceived herself as “*morena*” (brown skinned). Lidiane too, with her Indigenous features, so many times erased by a longing for whiteness, which is not exactly hers, but of an entire region where eurocentrism has naturalised people's experience within a power standard by which race/skin/colour act as markers of the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000, p. 343).

The idea of systematising experiences of anonymous women migrants who have had a feminist reflection about the migrating process begins in French, as Lilian recalls:

We actually started the podcast in French, remember? I did it with my friend Bousso<sup>3</sup>, so we had the idea together. A product of discussions that we started during our master's, back in 2014, 2015, because we are two immigrants that do not speak French as our first language, and because of our conversations. So, I think it was an eagerness to share with other people our awareness of our condition as racialized and migrant women in France. The moment it hit us was in summer during a conversation about intense and profound things of life. Then, we started with the podcast in French and, after that, each one of us decided to launch our own in our mother tongues. (Lilian, in audio testimony to the researcher, 05/28/2022, via WhatsApp).

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding our use of the verb “to narrate”, Milena Britto discusses self-narrative as adopted in the literary style of contemporary Brazilian authors as a political strategy. In her analysis of the book *That Hair*, by Djaimilia Pereira, Brito claims that the voice in the first person that expands into a “narrating the self [...] involves the author's project of discovering oneself as part of a historical process and, at the same time, by recognizing herself as participant of a certain social group, questioning by writing as well as by its theme” (Britto, 2018, p. 103-104). Translator's note: all citations in this English version have been translated from the author's Portuguese version.

<sup>3</sup> Bousso is Italian and her parents are Senegalese. She has a Literature degree and, at the moment this paper was being written, she was making *Femigrantes* in Italian. *Femigrantes* in French has had 8 episodes. *Femigrantes BR* begins with the partnership of Lidiane Vieira, a sociologist from the state of Amapá, also doing her master's in Paris. Lidiane has been part of the project for 6 episodes and withdrew from it for personal reasons. Today, the team of *Femigrantes BR* consists of Gabriela de Carvalho; Luciana Gransotto; Mairê Carli; the visual identity is developed by Patrícia Kuniyasi (PKÁ) and Glauco Salmazio is responsible for editing, sound editing, and he is also creator of the podcast's sound identity.

In this text I focus on the Brazilian version of that project which, by means of a relatively cheap media production, seeks to combine the informality of orality with the spread of theoretical content.

The digital dissemination and sharing of content has allowed to “form feminist communities on digital media that elaborate forms of subjectivity” (Gonzaga, 2018, p. 114). In them, the privilege of personal narratives brings closer and sensitises a considerable number of young women to female issues relative to the experiences of cisgender and/or transgender women in a world pervaded by structures that perpetuate gender inequalities. That has also contributed to an somewhat problematic idea of “empowerment<sup>4</sup>”. Hamlin and Peters (2018, p.170) argue that the itinerary of “the concept of female empowerment goes from a clearly “collectivist” definition to an individualised version can be situated in that broader dynamic of late capitalism”, in which digital media and online social networks play a blatant political role. However, contestation takes place and those captures have been challenged on those same media.

Born during the Covid-19 pandemic, the *Femigrantes BR Podcast* sees itself as “a conversation space for feminist and migrant women around the world” (opening speech repeated on every episode). Gathering stories of Brazilian women who have voluntarily<sup>5</sup> migrated to countries such as Japan, France, Ireland, Italy, Canada, the United States, Senegal, England, Denmark, Norway, Germany, among others, the *Femigrantes BR Podcast* is based on narratives that intersect gender, nationality, sexuality and race. Biographies that update the slogan “personal is political”.

[I]ndividual and collective, psychic and social, personal and political, are interdependent terms that cannot be observed separately when dealing with social identities and their cultural representations. Among the several narratives present in media, which emerge to tell stories that go beyond the dominant discourse about a dichotomy between “internal” or “external” aspects, there are those that make use of radio (or sound) genres and formats, who can, therefore, give voice and ears to those agents. (Soares; Vicente, 2021, p.12).

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<sup>4</sup> We will postpone this discussion to the last section of this article.

<sup>5</sup> Most of the interviewees are women who have migrated to pursue their higher education (for full or partial completion) abroad. The fact that they recognize themselves as migrants and not in “scientific mobility” or “international scientists” is relevant for communication, as it grants their identities political value. As Thaís França (2016, p. 208) explains, “more and more immigration and immigrants refer to subjects stigmatised as dangerous, problematic, who cross borders without being protected by legal privileges and who are, therefore, unwanted. Scientific mobility, on the other hand, alludes to the geographical relocation of an intellectual and occupational elite who is, therefore, welcome”.

In the voice of the interviewees, the life stories expand beyond the personal account—itsself rich—to connect with macrosocial events such as economic crises, social transformations, public policy and the analytical reflection on how solidly established structures, such as racism and the unequal relations between the Global North and South, impact the interviewees' biographies. Thinking from the point of view of this duality does not mean sticking to binaries divided by hard lines, but a form of self-constitution from those in-between places and from border experiences that make other narratives possible. In words of Iquani e Resende,

o Global South can be conceptualised as inscribed within a 'narrative territoriality'. The goal is to understand media and global south issues as, in fact, constitutive and constituent of this territoriality (in it and from it), which means that media not is only inscribed in a territory (the global south) but also responsible for producing narratives about this (Iquani; Resende, 2020, apud Janotti Junior. 2021, p.25).

In the past three years (2019 to 2022), podcasts dedicated to feminist agendas have multiplied in a context of expansion and reconfiguration of radio and sound, in which debates about identity, equality and difference have become central. The Covid-19 pandemic has heightened intersectional debates and, at the same time, has contributed to the resurgence of conservative activisms, which have also shown their anti-feminism (Tabuchi; Rossi, 2021).

The content created for the episodes of the *Femigrantes BR Podcast*, up until May 2022, relied on the biographical dimension of narratives to promote empathetic listening. The programs, divided into two blocks, open with accounts that go back to the migrant trajectory of the interviewee, her family history, and other, more personal, topics. At a second moment, it explores a specific theme associated with academic research. It was not uncommon that research led to activism and reverberated in the history of employment of each of the women who took the podcast interviewee bench<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Topics discussed have so far included: intersectionality and immigrant health (#2); afro tourism (#03); media and migration (#04); motherhood and migration (#05); sexual abuse of children and adolescents (#06); decoloniality of migration (#07); hypersexualization of Brazilian women (#08); pandemic and immigration restrictions for students (#09); reverse migration (#10); migration and happiness indicators (#11); professional insertion as an immigrant (#13); striking stories narrated by interviewees (#14); Afro-Brazilian Bodies and Roots (#15); nutrition and coloniality (#16); binational love and global hierarchies (#12 and #17); March 8 special (#18); Female refugees from Ukraine (#19); imposter syndrome and female migrants (#20); music and the rediscovery of migrant identity (#21). In this paper we will not deal with the five specials called *Choquitos Culturais* (Cultural Little Shocks), frames released between episodes, nor with the discussions that take place in the group on Telegram, the *Femigrupo*.

A podcast is a communication ecosystem made up mainly of spoken words, with a schedule of common interest subjects, where time limitations and access concerns are minor. It is a medium that offers low investment efforts to attract substantial public attention. Although not all individuals know how to produce a podcast, or even how to find a targeted audience of listeners for the podcast created, the podcast ecosystem displays a diversity of perspectives, ranging from the format, duration and sound effects, all the way to the topics that appeal to large audiences. (Pelúcio; Luvizotto; Silva, 2022, p. 03).

Producing often amateur content and finding free ways to disseminate it through alternative media has been an appeal of feminist podcasts, which have become means of resistance in conservative-leaning political scenarios.

In this article, based on systematic listening of the 21 episodes of the *Femigrantes BR Podcast*, and on *WhatsApp*<sup>7</sup> interviews with its creators, in addition to participating as a guest in one of the programs, I: (1) investigate what has been the contribution of feminisms, as a political discourse, for the “empowerment” of those migrant women; (2) seek to understand how the mediatization of feminist agendas impact the international experience of interviewees; (3) analyse how the mediatization of the feminist debate reflects on the way in which migrant women act in the public life of the country to which they have resettled and/or how, from abroad, they exercise their feminism in relation to their original society.

This piece is organised in four parts. It begins with concerns raised by the list of objectives above, which introduce the intersection of gender, race and nationality based on the contributions of decolonial feminism and of postcolonial stud-

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<sup>7</sup> Lilian Moreira is one of the members of a group of Brazilian feminists, which I will call *Fridas e a Resistência* (Fridas and the Resistance), a fictional name. The collective was formed after the release of results from the first round of the 2018 presidential elections, with the aim of bringing together Brazilian residents in France to discuss ways to raise votes for Fernando Haddad, the Workers' Party (PT) candidate, opponent of the far-right candidate, Jair Bolsonaro. I was invited by Lilian to participate in the group's meetings, so our contact became closer. When the *Fémigrantes FR* project started, I showed my interest in it, which led to establishing an interlocution on WhatsApp and in meeting face-to-face whenever I was in Paris. It was in the same group that I met Lidiane Vieira, with whom I also started to talk by digital means and face-to-face, already signalling my research interest in relation to the production and content of podcasts. As for Bousso, I never got to know her, but she was aware of the development of my research and provided information through Lilian, always via WhatsApp. WhatsApp proved to be an efficient means for timely and more agile communications. The application enabled me to solve occasional doubts about the project, complement information about the interviewees, and it also proved to be a channel to solidify emotional ties. The exchange of digital messages, in addition to emojis, stickers and gifs (visual materials available in the application) fostered bonds of trust and friendship, initially based on a political partnership between the researcher and the producers of *Femigrantes BR*.

ies, in dialogue with contributions from feminist studies of technology and media communication. These approaches touch on the resources of orality and biographical narratives as communication strategies operated by the feminist podcasters to disseminate the content they produce at *Femigrantes BR*.

In short, this article is dedicated to thinking, from a specific product, what have been the contributions of feminisms to transform digital media into less feudalized spaces.

### Feminism turns the world upside down

“I’ve always been a feminist without knowing it.” This phrase echoes in several episodes of the *Femigrantes BR Podcast*. The statement suggests that feminist discussions, intensified over the past two decades, have been providing a fundamental political vocabulary for the interviewees to organise their past experiences in face of the decision to migrate. Reflections that reverberate in these women’s personal stances and political engagements.

As has happened with Lilian Moreira, today the voice of *Femigrantes BR*, many other women interviewed for the podcast reported that, even before migrating, when they were just little girls, at home they would hear and see strong, determined women who taught them that being a woman is not a mistake.

Mothers, aunts, grandmothers also appear as role models when the subject is skin colour and hair texture. This is recollected in many tales like the following, told in a broken voice:

“You must be very proud of being black, my daughter”. For me, this statement my mother made to me when I was six years old shaped my identity;

My parents always put a high value on our colour (...) my mother always valued our hair highly;

I came from a simple background, with little ambition, but my mother always said, “you need to continue your studies, you need to not depend on anyone else... on a husband or on anyone else to give you material support so that you can be a successful person in life’.

Listening closely to the statements of the black interviewees reveals that “success” is a social category of mobility that associates investing in studies with the confrontation against racism. Among the majority of the interviewees who identify as black, basic education was a motive to mobilise the family, who made sacrifices

to provide their offspring with what was seen as a quality education<sup>8</sup>. It is not uncommon that, among all the interviewees, regardless of colour or ethnicity, they are the first in their family to obtain academic degrees as high as they did.

Geographers have been dedicated to understanding the role of education and, beyond that, the importance of knowledge in the production of space (Geddie, 2015; King; Raghuram; Keynes, 2013; Waters, 2016). Likewise, feminist scholars have produced ideas that interrogate foundational spatial concepts in studies of the internationalisation of education (Doerr, 2014; Matus; Talburt, 2009; Sidhu; Dall'alba, 2012). The association of these perspectives has led to a critique of the celebration of the internationalisation of higher education and has allowed academics to acknowledge inequalities reproduced by disembodied practices, since mobility incites power changes in the body, as it produces new ways of living the spaces according to race, gender and sexuality (Hanson, 2010). (Martinez, 2019, p. 3)

Perhaps for this reason, studying abroad appears as a symbolic occupation of a prestigious political geography, as well as a territory that raises affections and affectations.

In the experiences of the interviewees who moved to countries in the Global North, being Brazilian is closely related to being seen as non-white<sup>9</sup>. For some of these women, this was one of the symbolic shifts that most mobilised them politically. The racialization of nationality acts as a trigger political issue, by borrowing terms for reflection and struggle in vocabularies from multiple strands of feminism.

Paradoxically, for black women, the racialization experienced abroad made them see and discuss Brazilian racism more than the one they were experiencing in their countries of destination. Abroad, many found black people in universities, in prestigious jobs and leisure spaces. That less segregated occupation of esteemed territories made them realise that in Brazil they were often the “unique black women” (*pretas únicas*) in private school, in the office or in the middle-class neighbourhood<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Not all attended private schools or had that access throughout basic education. But the parents' efforts to provide them with a “good education” is evident, which often placed them in hostile social environments, whether related to their being non-white women or because of their working-class background.

<sup>9</sup> Only two interviewees had experiences different from this, incidentally those who moved to countries outside the European Union (Senegal and Japan).

<sup>10</sup> “We're going to talk about how moving to another country made us embrace our Afro-Brazilian identity”, announces Moreira at the opening of episode 15, “Afro-Brazilian bodies and roots around the world”. This embrace is often called “encounter with Africa”, highlighted

It is revealing that the encounter with a world in which Black people occupy different places happened in European countries.

Half of my master's class was made up of black people;

I found the African brothers (...) reconstructing a black (*preta*) history;

When I arrived, I participated in a group called Panafricano, where I connected with several people from the diaspora, it was very important to me (...) this group holds many festivals that promote the culture of African countries”.

The above are testimonies taken from different narratives of women interviewed in the podcast.

Although this Black presence in European countries bears witness to the legacy of violent processes such as imperialism, what I called revealing above is related to the fact that this population of Black immigrants come from multiple experiences, not just those marked by racial exclusion and, more seriously, by a past associated with mercantile enslavement. These (re)unions resonate subjectively and, in many cases, politically, for the Brazilian women interviewed. That is when the narratives start to produce other meanings. They do not deal only with personal biographies, but with collective processes of transformation.

Crossing borders also always “relocates” and transforms subjectivities and worldviews (...) Our multiple “places” or subject positions change significantly for translation policies, according to our movements and passages through spatiotemporal “locations”. Our subjectivities are, at the same time, based on the place and dis-placed or mis-placed (Alvarez, 2009, p.744-745).

Not rarely, femigrants (I will also use this term to refer to podcast interviewees) felt “dis-placed” and “mis-placed”, as Sônia Alvarez argues in the excerpt above, writing about another context, but also looking at feminist and migrant women.

The feeling of being mis-placed appears in several tales with regard to two issues: the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge. The geopolitics of knowledge makes them feel mis-placed because these women who speak different

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more strongly in the cited episode, but present in the narratives of all Black interviewees.

languages and have masters' or PhD degrees are usually unable to establish themselves in the job market based on their professional qualifications. Either because they face bureaucratic mazes in order to validate their diplomas; or because their knowledge is not valued as “universal”, but is rather seen as “local” and, therefore, not applicable outside their countries of origin. The persistent disqualification of their expertise has often made them doubt their skills. The effects of the coloniality of power are insidious<sup>11</sup>. Even those who manage to critically read those hierarchical historical processes are caught in their wide webs, whose thread is thin enough to penetrate subjectivities, even those being made by resistance.

The sexualization of Brazilian nationality is another constant in interviewees' narratives. This was often the cultural aspect that made them look at gender, as much as at nationality, granted that the latter was, above all, race. In hasty but steady lines, this is the outline of the interviewees narratives when they revisit their feminist awakening.

In the narratives as embedded experience of human existence (Motta, 2013, p.17), feminism collaborates in the elaboration of meanings for those shifts. When talking about past experiences, terms such as “machismo”, “sexism” and “misogyny” provide support for reflections about the migration process, both with regard to the decision to leave Brazil and in relation to the arrival and adaptation to another country. The “decolonization” of thought appears as a daily exercise of looking at oneself in foreign environments, based on an intellectual repertoire that has been formed through different means: university studies, the access to feminist literature, and the growing discussions about race, gender and sexuality in digital media.

From the contact with feminist agendas on online social media to discussions in the academic sphere still as undergraduates and even as high school students, passing through a more systematic education in gender and feminist studies, the interviewees seem to have found a powerful semantic field in Black, decolonial and intersectional feminisms. The *general texture*<sup>12</sup> of their experiences as foreigners

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<sup>11</sup> Coloniality is the discursive and epistemological order that, according to Quijano (2000) on which Modernity finds support. This component was generated based on the European expansion into other regions of the planet and continues, in contemporary times, to guide the way places and people are hierarchized. Coloniality is born with colonialism, recognizes Quijano, but the latter, unlike the former, does not always imply racist power relations.

<sup>12</sup> Luiz Gonzaga Motta (2013, p.17-18), based on Roger Silverstone, defines the general texture of experience as the “active attitude of human beings to pursue goals, shape their lives and the lives of others, to reflect and create in a constant interaction”. This is constituted “intersubjectively, in a shared way, through continuous interaction and communication with others”. For Motta, this texture is of a narrative nature, more than conceptual, that is, more spontaneous. However, I argue that the conceptual has been shown to be fundamental in reframing experiences and structuring new narratives, disputing meanings with already established others and

involves “questioning the colonial consequences that continue to interfere in the lives of various subjects, especially of Black women” (Brito, 2018, p. 102)<sup>13</sup>.

By discursively weaving their biographies, terms such as “epistemicide”, “coloniality”, and “global South”, punctuate and organise narratives that dialogue with relatively recent intellectual productions, by which the interviewees claim ownership to a decolonial grammar in their critical reflection upon their experiences as women, Brazilians, feminists and migrants. Echoing Françoise Vergès (2020), I propose that these *Femigrant* voices that reverberate through transnational media and speak with and to a plural audience take part in the emancipation struggles of Global South women. And they do so not as some kind of new feminist wave, or only as representatives of a new generation, but as heirs of stories that are being retold.

The persistent colonial residues that merge in the concept of coloniality of power have been systematically challenged based on the contribution of authors such as Aníbal Quijano, Maria Lugones, Walter Dignolo, Ochy Curiel. But the ones most frequently mentioned by Brazilian interviewees at *Femigrantes BR podcast* are the American authors of Black feminism, and a few Brazilian writers such as Lelia Gonzalez and Carla Akotirene. The South-South dialogue seems still fragile. Nevertheless, the *Femigrantes BR Podcast* intends to provide narratives by anonymous women who, from the North, can bring a “new perspective of analysis for a more complete understanding of the relationships derived from ‘race’, sex, sexuality, class and geopolitics, intertwined” (Curiel, 2019, p. 32). Moreira’s inspirations, as well as those of the interviewees, are marked by what Ochy Curiel (op. cit.) has called critical feminisms. Those that “turned feminist theories and practices upside down”, proposing other epistemologies, which imply other perspectives and positionalities.

Such twists show quite graphically in the current logo of *Femigrantes BR*, where the world map is represented “upside down”, i.e, its representation is inverted in relation to the conventional way we are used to seeing it. That way, regions such as Latin America, Africa and much of Asia are in the North. Its contours design a female profile that suggests the figure of a racialized woman (see Figure 1). This inversion translates the critical path and most of the territorial and symbolic dislocations through which the interviewees have gone.

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even leading to subjective reconfigurations of the one who narrates herself.

<sup>13</sup> Writes Milena Brito, referring to *That Hair*, a book by Dajaimilia Pereira de Almeida, an Angolan author living in Lisbon. I considered this proposition appropriate for the discussion I develop in this section.

It is from that position (upside down) that I move on to the discussion about the mediatization of feminist agendas and the ways in which these women occupy the internet.



Figure 1: Femigrantes Podcast logo (Art by Patrícia Kuniyasi – PKá)

### The podcast is political

“Let’s create a hashtag and shake this up (laughter)”, suggests one of *Femigrantes* interviewees. Although the proposal was made as a provocative joke, it only makes sense because, in recent decades, hashtags have been important digital tools in feminist struggles, especially the younger and the ones with greater access to online social networks. The hashtags *#meuprimeiroassedio* (*#myfirstharassment*); *#meuamigosecreto* (*#mysecretfriend*), an online viral wave of testimonies of past stories of sexual abuse of female teens and children by closely related male adults; *#eunãomereçoserestuprada* (*#Idontdeservetoberaped*), *#foracunha* (*#get-outcunha*), *#elenão* (*#nothim*)<sup>14</sup> tell a recent path in the history of Brazilian feminism, in which the historical women’s movement meets digital media<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> TN: The hashtag “*#foracunha* (*#cunhagetout*)” refers to the then President of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha. The hashtag “*#elenão* (*#nothim*)” was directed at Jair Bolsonaro, then presidential candidate.

<sup>15</sup> For an in-depth discussion of feminist hashtags, see Josemira Reis and Graciela Natahsohn, 2017.

*Femigrants* grew up, for the most part, in a connected world<sup>16</sup>. Even those who came from homes with a significantly limited budget, or from rural areas, have teenage and youth experiences associated with online social media and had access to websites and blogs on the internet. It was at internet cafés, school computers or even at home that they learned how to travel in a blurry and plural territory where they came across sexual and gender diversity, discussions about race and the body. Some of them, as we will see later, also became content creators, motivated by this arsenal of ideas. When they left the country, the discussions gathered over years of roaming online spaces travelled with them, as their personal baggage.

The internet, with its current architecture, has provided more accessible ways to disseminate and consume content (which does not mean becoming more transparent and less corporate). Technological devices, such as smartphones connected to the network, and countless apps, have simplified the production of audiovisual and verbo-visual materials as never seen before in the recent history of media. Thus, collective subjects who have been historically made invisible or deprived of the power to make claims begin to occupy communicative spaces established as an connective media ecosystem—a system that feeds and, in turn, is fed by social and cultural norms that simultaneously expand in our everyday world (Van Dijck, 2016, p. 53).

The appropriation of the social Web, of its different platforms and languages by feminist activism has enabled greater participation and visibility in public discourse, by counting on the precise toolsets to launch and disseminate its demands, as well as to obtain support in a global context. Although the digital medium is established as one additional sphere of society in which the inequalities and violence of the offline world are present, they can also energise actions, given the real and mythical power of technology and its worldwide projection. (Piñero-Otero, 2021, p. 233).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Of the 18 interviewees, nine were born in the 1990s; seven in the 80s; only one in the 60s and another in the 1940s. Two came from rural contexts; three came from the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro and one from Petrópolis in the State of Rio de Janeiro. Nine lived most of their lives in capital cities: São Paulo (02), Campo Grande (02), Florianópolis (01), Porto Alegre (01), Belo Horizonte, (01) Salvador (02). Two came from inland cities: Ribeirão Preto (SP) and Joinville (SC).

<sup>17</sup> Spanish original: La apropiación de la Web social, de sus diferentes plataformas y lenguajes, por el activismo feminista ha posibilitado su mayor participación y visibilidad en el discurso público, al contar con las herramientas precisas para el lanzamiento y difusión de sus demandas, así como para la consecución de apoyos en un contexto global. Aunque el medio digital constituye una esfera más de la sociedad, en la que están presentes las desigualdades y violencias del mundo offline, también puede energizar las acciones desarrolladas, dada la potencia real y mítica de la tecnología, y su proyección mundial.

Podcasts are part of this arsenal of new forms of communicative action. They are new because they can be accessed on demand, in addition to the technological possibility of spreading beyond the borders that limit broadcasting to specific physical territories. In addition, they are low-cost productions, since free applications for cell phones can be used to record voices and insert sound effects by means of the tools they provide. You can also upload the material for free to platforms that play podcasts and make use of accounts created on online social networks to disseminate them. Podcasts, like radio shows, can be listened to while we carry out other day-to-day tasks. That convenience meets contemporary demands of a highly productivist society, in which the drive to be multifunctional (rather than simply functional) and endure in training and productive activities are elements that help understand the boom of podcasts (Soares; Vicente, 2021).

Apart from these characteristics, and because of them, podcasts are a possible space for voices historically excluded from mainstream media. This is how *Femigrantes BR* identifies. As Lilian Moreira repeats in every episode, echoing the voices of the volunteer team that is now part of the project, it is a “space for feminist and migrant women around the world”. Admittedly decolonial, *Femigrantes* maintains itself without funding, other than modest crowdfunding among listeners. Following the episodes of the *Femigrantes BR Podcast* also means getting to know the role of Brazilian women born in the 1980s and 1990s (only two of them were women over 50 years old), who seek, from abroad, to develop projects aimed at Brazilian women, children, students of all sexual identities, immigrants of different nationalities and migrant status. They often use the digital communication ecosystem to make projects viable, to promote them and to enable interaction with the targeted audience.

I enthusiastically believe, like Jeder Silveira Janotti Junior,

the way in which the technological environment of digital culture has intertwined the ways of producing, circulating and consuming cultural products points to the emergence of new agencies between culture, technology and social relations (...). In this context, it seems interesting to think, along with José Van Dijck (2013), of a communicational environment that translates into the terms of an ecology.

The ideas of communicational environment, ambience and ecosystem define network connections that presuppose mediations and transmissibility between technical artefacts (objects) and humans, establishing associations that gather, separate and configure ways of inhabiting worlds in contemporary culture. (Janotti Junior, 2021, p. 25)

Inhabiting worlds or The World as a migrant Latin woman is a plural experience, evident in the sample considered here. Even if they are educated, (mostly) young and Brazilian women, the intersectionality between class, region, skin tones and sexuality diversifies their experiences. They are markers that weave textures that constitute specific networks of local integration and transnational action. Mediations and transitabilities are sewn together in delicate stitches that integrate platforms combined in an ecosystem that Van Dijck called “connectivity media”: “A system that feeds and, in turn, is fed by social and cultural norms that expand simultaneously in our everyday world” (Van Dijck apud Janotti Junior, 2021, p.25).

The social transformations Brazil has gone through in the last two decades of this millennium have thrown us from progressive political cycles—a moment which most of the interviewees experienced, as teenagers or young adults—to another conservative inflection cycle. Orchestrated by the State, an anti-feminist wave emerged in Brazil, openly violent and racist, averse to the egalitarian policies we had come to know<sup>18</sup>. The reverberations and reactions to these scenarios enabled, motivated and provoked interventions by the Brazilian women considered here, turning them into media content creators, and not only consumers.

I list some of these productions below: 1. the Instagram account @brasileirasdomundo, with more than 46,000 followers (as of June 2022), an initiative to empower Brazilian migrant women and to deconstruct gender and nationality stereotypes; 2. the electronic magazine *Viajadamente*, focused on the mental health of those who migrate and on employment in the receiving country; 3. also on Instagram, the account @pretanaitalia (with more than 17,000 followers as of June 2022), to provide tips on living in Italy from the point of view of a Black Latino woman; 4. the blog *Papacapim*<sup>19</sup>, where Sandra Guimarães, a *femigrant* of rural origin, linked to the Landless Workers Movement (*Movimento dos Sem Terra*),

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<sup>18</sup> Between 2002 and 2015, the State intensified policies to promote gender and race equality, such as the implementation of the policy of racial quotas, in 2002, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and Bahia State University. The following year, the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women – SPM was created. Also in 2003, the Secretariat of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPP/PR) and in 2015 be incorporated as part Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights, combining the Secretariat of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality, the Secretariat of Human Rights, and the Secretariat of Policies for Women. In 2004, the Program Brazil Without Homophobia was created. In eight years, while President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was President, 74 State-promoted conferences dealt with 40 different themes: Children and Adolescents, Women, the Environment, Race, Health, Education, People with Disabilities, just to list a few. In 2008, the first National Conference on LGBT Rights took place (AGUIÃO, 2017, s/p).

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.papacapim.org/>

discusses food and coloniality, capitalism, speciesism and agribusiness; 5. the “No one messes with me” (“*Ninguém Mexe Comigo*”) campaign, created by Paola Bellucci, to educate, prevent and protect children from sexual abuse. Launched in 2020, the campaign’s music videoclip was released by the channel *TV Cultura* and, in May 2021, the song already had versions in 10 different languages besides Portuguese<sup>20</sup>; and 6. the initiative of Vera Jus, co-coordinator of the *Coletivo Encrespa Geral Londres* (@encrespageraloficial, account with 1,174 thousand followers in June 2022 e 20,700 on Facebook).

Apart from the aforementioned individual initiatives, the *Femigrantes BR Podcast* has also featured institutional interviews. Interviewees part of the *Support Network for Brazilian Women Victims of Domestic Violence – REVIBRA*<sup>21</sup> discussed: binational relationships and the myth of the foreign prince charming; racialization in immigration; the decolonization of migratory projects; maternity and migration, in conversations in which the personal experience of the interviewees enlivens Donna Haraway’s proposition (1995) about situated knowledge.

The undeniable power of all of these initiatives does not erase the fact that their environment of repercussion is that of digital culture. Graciela Natansohn’s critical lenses (2018, s/p) considers that an “epistemic matrix, daughter of hegemonic globalisation and of transnational capitalism”. However, inspired by Helena Suárez Val, I propose we can make subversive uses of those tools and spaces. Suárez Val calls these forms of feminist activism “disobedient”, as they transform technologies designed in the global North, (mainly) by men, into tools to report gender violence.

digital and non-digital media, disobediently appropriated by feminist activists, acquire a self-propelling vitality, “*continually doing things*” (Bennet, 2009, p.112; emphasis in the original) as they move through human and computer networks and formats, being re-used, re-signified and re-shared. (Suárez Val, 2018, p. 118, English original).

Can “disobey to decolonize” be a strategy to make the Internet more feminist? I do not offer an answer to this uncomfortable question, as I believe, similar to

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<sup>20</sup> Access to the campaign videoclip, recorded during the Covid-19 pandemic, with volunteers in their homes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1RHieEwRNE>. On Instagram, the account is @ninguem.mexe.comigo

<sup>21</sup> The Network operates in different countries for the legal protection and psychological assistance of fellow countrywomen, but also of other nationalities, who are in a situation of vulnerability based on gender and nationality.

Graciela Natansohn (op. cit.) and Evgeny Morozov (2018), that we cannot be naive when we travel through highly guarded, controlled and commodified territories. Still, I insist on the question so that it remains uncomfortable to us.

### Mediatization and feminisms: concerns instead of conclusions

We have witnessed, in the past decade of this millennium, an inflection in feminist agendas in the national scene<sup>22</sup>, closely related to the consolidation of the Brazilian democratic project, the maturation of identity-driven social movements, such as those that struggle for sexual, racial and gender rights, and to governments more fond of demands of historically subordinated segments. Add to this scenario the intensification of the use and access to digital media<sup>23</sup> such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, whereby users become content creators and replicators of varied discourses. Among those, the ones associated with feminist agendas, such as equal social rights, equal wages, reproductive rights, decriminalization of abortion, complaints against domestic violence and, more recently, the struggle against sexual harassment. The agendas associated with the body as a political territory have shaped dialogues with the agendas of trans movements, as well as with Black movements.

All of these recent changes and alliances are closely related to the mediatization of activism (Aquino, Bittencourt, 2013) and this, to the flagrant expansion of the political vocabulary by which culturally naturalised or silenced behaviours are questioned and reported. Terms such as “misogyny”, “harassment”, “female empowerment”, “structural racism”, have been added to the political lexicon that mobilises words such as homophobia, lesbophobia, transphobia, transfeminism,

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<sup>22</sup> A survey carried out by the DataFolha Institute in 2019 reveals that women with college education tend to identify more with feminism (44%) than those who only attended high school (33%). The same survey points out that “among Black women, 47% are feminists, a rate that stands at 37% among brown women, and 36% among whites” (DATAFOLHA, 2019, s/p). These results are embodied in the biographies of the Brazilian women who have been at *Feministas BR*.

<sup>23</sup> According to the IBGE Continuous PNAD TIC 2017 (National Household Sample Survey), on access to the Internet and television, in addition to owning a cell phone for personal use, the Internet currently reaches three out of four households in the country. However, 97% of the people heard access the World Wide Web by cell phone, which is mainly used for sending or receiving text, voice or image messages through applications other than e-mail (<https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-sala-de-imprensa/2013-agencia-de-noticias/releases/23445-pnad-continua-tic-2017-internet-chega-a-tres-em-cada-quatro-domicilios-do-pais>). Last accessed on 06/10/2022. Research carried out by IBOPE in 2019 showed that women form the majority of internet users (53%).

cisheteronomativity, among others that have become hashtags and network debate topics. That way, this specialised vocabulary has been increasingly appropriated by different agents, as Garcia reminds below.

According to Fausto Neto (2008), the progress of mediatization causes transformations of speech regimes, within reformulations of practices, of contracts, devices, operations, and of the issue of how meaning is produced. In these processes, new configurations of social and individual life, of dynamics and logic are created, in which there are new formats of symbolic exchanges and old customs. (Garcia, 2011, p. 216).

The concept of mediatization may offer theoretical elements to think about those practices and their association with activisms. More precisely, with activisms articulated by feminist women, a field whose engagement is penetrated by media logics. Number of views, likes, comments, among other ways of leaving digital traces, form a metric that quantifies activisms and individualises them, demanding accurate negotiation strategies between those who produce content and the algorithmic invisibility that organises internet platforms.

Feminism and communication technologies cultivate a historical flirting that reached its turning point in the 1990s, when the term *cyberfeminism* was coined by Sadie Plant, director of the Centre for Research into Cybernetic Culture, of the University of Warwick, to describe the convergence between women and technology. A relationship that Plant described as intimate and subversive (Ureta, 2005, p. 383). The motto “the personal is political” already brought this insinuated relationship at the end of the 1960s. With the mediatization of feminisms and of the politics of gender and sexuality, the slogan coined by Carol Hanisch<sup>24</sup> over 50 years ago also got inverted: the political becomes highly personal.

The virtual realm of the Internet places unknown expressive potential within the reach of the feminist movement. Among other aspects, collective communication acquires a new significance that converts women into authors, transmitters and recipients of information (...) For all of these reasons, it seems reasonable to state that the female collective finds in the new

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<sup>24</sup> Carol Hanisch coined the slogan “the personal is political” in 1969. She was considered radical by some critics. A journalist engaged in the fight for the civil rights of blacks and other political minorities, she was at the forefront of protests such as those for the end of Miss pageants. She engaged in different struggles, such as the one for the end of Apartheid in South Africa. Today still with us, Hanisch defends face-to-face activism, even though she acknowledges the mobilising effects of digital social media. For an interview with Hanisch, see: <https://medium.com/@feminismoclasse/entrevista-com-carol-hanisch-b9016b1d5375> (last accessed on 06/16/2022).

digital platform an unrivalled scenario for its claims, one in which one can access content consistent with their interests and information needs. (Ureta, 2005, p, 381).<sup>25</sup>

However, as acknowledged by Lilian Moreira (via WhatsApp, on 06/04/22), conservative groups seem to occupy digital territories more efficiently. Particularly because scandals, sensationalist take on news and conspiracy theories are the favourite boosted content boosted by platforms such as Facebook, and even by private conversation networks, such as WhatsApp, harder to monitor (Morozov, 2018). Companies are interested in the extraction of our data, more than in the dissemination of genuine and true content.

However,

These alternative channels have allowed women to place their perspectives and topics of interest on the public agenda through mass self-mediation processes in the digital environment. Indeed, self-mediation constitutes one of the main actions of international feminist activism. The compilation of missing news in the media, the change of focus in its treatment, the introduction of new voices or historical revisionism (known as herstory) not only offer a feminist reading of different realities with a gender perspective, but also present an important labour of visibility and dissemination. Broadcast lists, blogs, social networks or podcasts are built on manifestations of this work of feminist self-mediation. Collectives and individuals have explored the creation of different types of content, ranging from themes closer to feminist theory and praxis, to the presentation of more diverse and dissident voices and perspectives. (Piñeiro-Otero, 2021, p, 234)<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Original in Spanish: “El espacio virtual de Internet pone al alcance del movimiento feminista potencias expresivas desconocidas, entre otras, una nueva significación de comunicación colectiva que convierte a las mujeres en autoras, transmisoras y destinatarias de información (...) Por todo ello, parece razonable afirmar que el colectivo femenino encuentra en la nueva plataforma digital un escenario reivindicativo sin igual, en el que poder acceder a contenidos coherentes con sus intereses y necesidades informativas.”

<sup>26</sup> Original in Spanish: “Estos canales alternativos han permitido a las mujeres situar sus perspectivas y temáticas de interés en la agenda pública, a través de procesos de automediación de masas en el medio digital. De hecho, la automediación constituye una de las principales acciones del activismo feminista internacional. La recopilación de noticias ausentes en los medios de comunicación, el cambio de foco en su tratamiento, la introducción de nuevas voces o el revisionismo histórico (la llamada herstory) no sólo ofrecen una lectura feminista de las diferentes realidades con perspectiva de género, también presentan una importante labor de visibilización y divulgación. Listas de difusión, blogs, redes sociales o podcast suponen manifestaciones de esta labor de automediación feminista. Colectividades y personas individuales se han lanzado a la creación de diferentes tipos de contenidos, que van desde temáticas más próximas a la teoría y praxis feministas, a la presentación de voces y perspectivas más diversas y disidentes”.

The purpose of media production analysed in this article was to promote listening to anonymous border voices<sup>27</sup>, with heavy accents and regionalisms, which find narrative elements in the political vocabulary of feminisms that help them reread their stories, while telling them to an audience as imagined as uncertain. Occupying gender, race, class, nationality, religion, age, etc. digital gaps and seeking strategies to overcome them is one of the 16 topics that “claim the end of market hegemony and the free circulation of ideas on the web”, taken from the *II International Cyberfeminist Meeting* held in Salvador during the World Social Forum/WSF.

Without illusions of a cyber-utopia, I think it is fundamental for us to keep asking ourselves “as feminists, what kind of internet do we want, and what do we need in order to achieve it?” (Nathansohn, 2018, n/p). “For that, it will be necessary to break off the intellectual and discursive monopoly that technology companies maintain over our political imagination”, writes Evgeny Morozov (2018, s/p), referring to anti-neoliberal fights. I borrow that strategy, as I only see the decolonial feminism of the *Femigrantes Br* as a production critical of neoliberalism. As such, it questions the individualising meanings of “empowerment”.

I recognize, like Cecília Sardenbeg (2009), that despite the radical origins of the concept of “empowerment”, the term has gone through processes of academic theorization and domestication by the State, which plunged it into a politically slippery polysemy. This critique is not about wanting to fix it as a concept, but facing its different uses, situating their meanings and tensions in the field where it is deployed, and understanding the meanings that emerge in the narratives of the women at the studio bench of *Femigrantes BR*.

Within the discursive field of action of feminisms, the Brazilian interviewees have found theoretical and conceptual resources that fostered and expanded their reflections on their projects and migration experience. By naming experiences of subalternization, recognizing them as products of unequal relations that hierarchize bodies and countries, they began to produce resistance. Perhaps this is what *femigrants* call “empowerment”.

Part of this strengthening, which leads them to question asymmetrical relations of power, involves the mediatization of feminisms, a phenomenon that is not easily separated from the platforming of feminist agendas by the Internet. However, as Josemira Reis and Graciela Natansohn argue, achieving the internet we want requires us to dive into a guerrilla war in an attempt to crack the andro-

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<sup>27</sup> The *Femigrantes Br Podcast* team intends to extend this listening to people who have migrated in less favourable and even precarious conditions.

centric foundations at the genesis of the internet, with its militaristic cradle and its commercial corollary, the “venture capital companies, scholars and hackers, all social segments controlled mainly by white men and English speakers” (Reis; Natansohn, 2017, p.117).

Racialized women, speaking in Brazilian Portuguese, have shown that feminisms have offered an efficient combat language, not only transforming their private lives, but also equipping them to act on several political, decolonial and anti-patriarchal fronts. As activist volunteers, associated with international organisations or acting as academic researchers, *femigrantes* have, however modestly, challenged the privilege of the male “voice” in the podosphere. Their voices speak of experiences of being expatriate women, intertwine with macro-social structures, and connect to past struggles, revisited from a different feminist perspective, the one that has turned the world upside down.

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