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REPORT

WHEN TALKING ABOUT EQUALITY, WHAT DO SOCIAL NETWORKS SHOW?

**18 MILLION TWEETS ANALYSED
ABOUT EQUALITY**

Madrid, March 10, 2020

ANALYSIS OF THE CONVERSATION IN SPANISH ABOUT EQUALITY AND FEMINISM

LLYC's commitment to a more equal and fairer society is to promote and support, through our communications and public affairs consultancy activities, a social transformation that isn't just talk, but bring about essential and fundamentally integrating change. So at LLYC we wanted to analyze the online conversation about equality, so that we can make better recommendations to those companies, organizations and institutions that want to be part of this movement and make their involvement count.

We focused on Twitter, still a major conversation starter on social and tradition media. A large part of classic media feeds off Twitter and this phenomenon is seen in politics as an opportunity to define issues, positions, and allies. Some of all this has seeped into the area of equality. Its emergence as a hot topic is due to highly varying factors, aside from the present political situation, but its main advocates are no doubt to be found in the emergence of new political parties and the rise of social media.

This study's conclusions are based on the analysis of almost 18 million tweets posted between January 1, 2019, and February 15, 2020, on equality and feminism issues in the Spanish language (at a later stage we hope to have a study of the conversation in Portuguese.)

The first phase of the analysis involved sorting the tweets by territory. The thematic classification used for the territories was inspired by demands over the 2019 8M manifesto. We used a Boolean search for significant key words and supervised machine learning techniques.

We then made a topological analysis of the network structures that make up Twitter profiles (as nodes) and their interactions (as edges, basically retweets.) We applied statistical network analysis techniques to profiles and interactions (analysis of degree and modularity being the most common), to identify communities, which were then taken to the presentation stage to be viewed in graphs.

Last of all, the third stage of the study made representative crossovers between the thematic territories and community networks to draw the most significant conclusions.



17.838.516 tweets sorted by territory



14 months of conversations analyzed



“2 in 5 tweets about equality come from Spain”

NOTABLE DIFFERENCES IN THE CONVERSATION IN SPAIN AND IN EACH LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY

There is no single conversation about gender equality. Each country in Latin America and Spain has notable differences of use, with different underlying contexts.

Basically, while in Spain the conversation about equality corresponds to women’s territory, this is not so usual in Latin America, where each country brings different issues and meanings, in some cases related to human rights and economic issues.

The #nomásabusos hashtag (“no more abuse”) is prominent in all the Latin American countries analyzed, especially in Chile, Mexico, Peru, Argentina, and Ecuador. However, it does not appear in Spain.

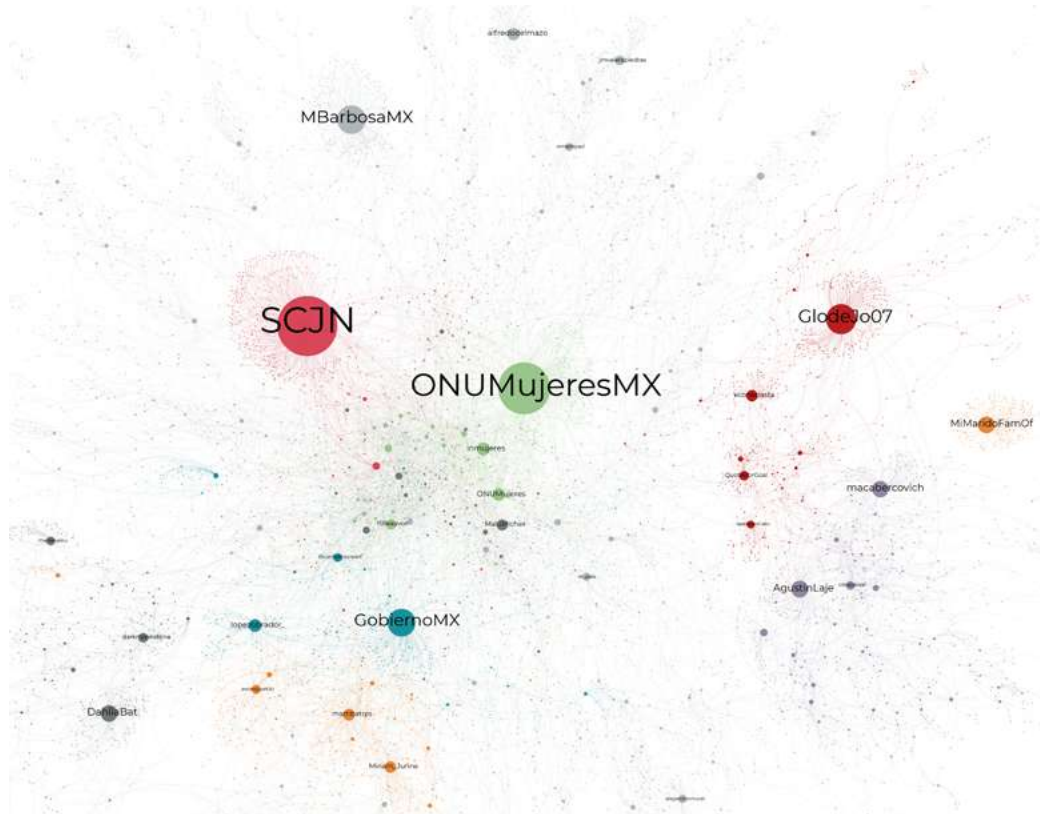
In contrast, the hashtag #feminismo appears with varying degrees of intensity both in Spain and in Mexico, Ecuador, and Peru.

Does gender equality therefore need a new term to spread out over Latin America, or will we see the #feminismo hashtag start to prevail as in Spain? From another point of view, is the Spanish conversation’s association with feminism on the right track or, as we shall see below, does it lead to politicization, preventing real dialogue?

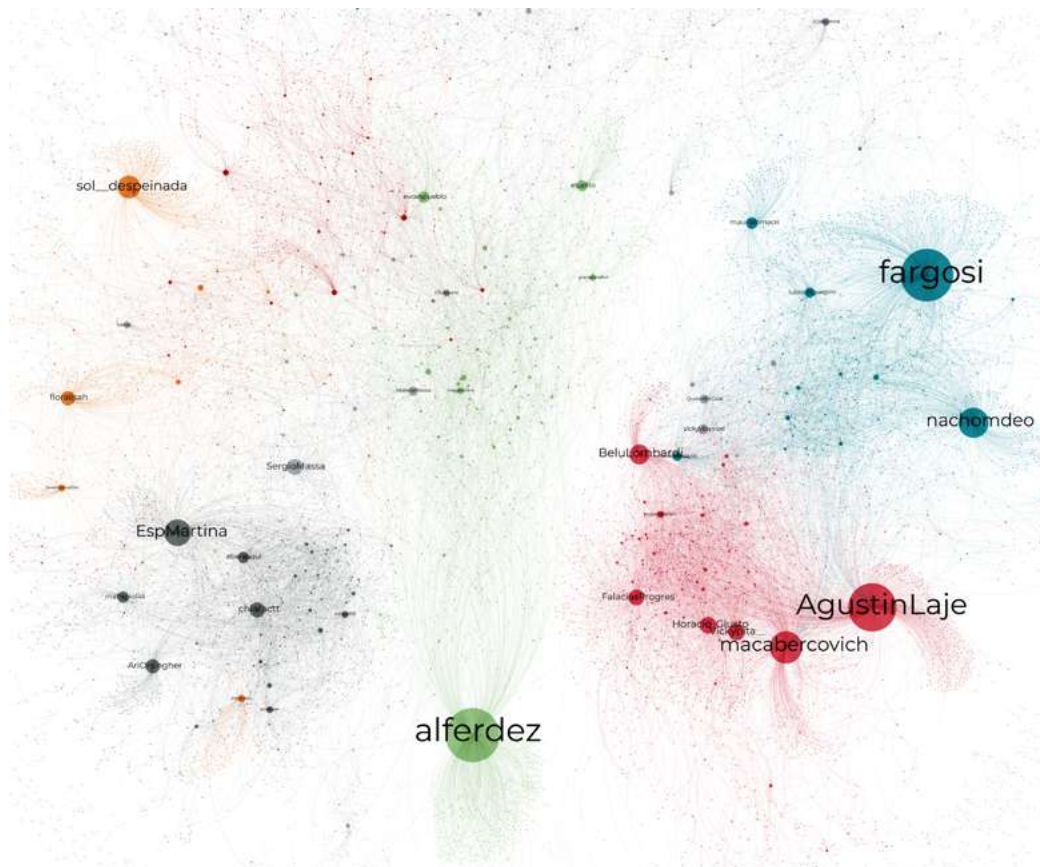
DIFFERENCES IN THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN SPAIN AND LATIN AMERICA



CONVERSATION IN MEXICO



CONVERSATION IN ARGENTINA



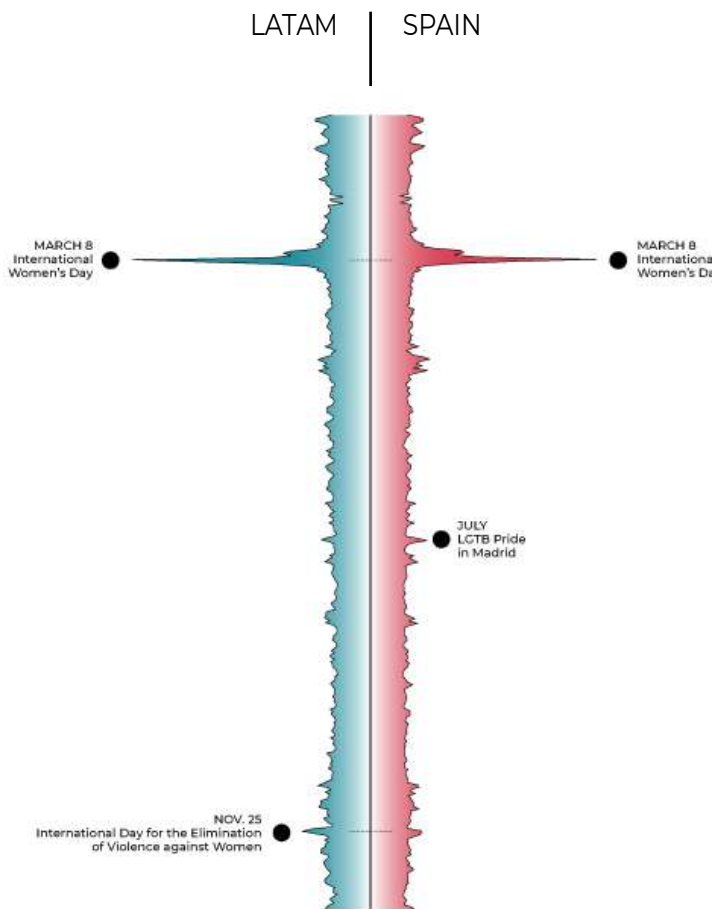
DIFFERENT INTENSITY AND SIMILAR RATES OF CONVERSATION

Of those tweets where the geographical origin could be inferred (almost half), Spain accounts for 43.4% of the total of the conversation about equality (23.2% of the total universe, if we include those tweets with no geographical reference.) This is followed by Argentina (17.3%, or 8.9% of the whole) and Mexico (9.1% and 4.7% respectively.)

In all the countries the mentions are concentrated in a flood of tweets on March 8, International Women’s Day. The next conversation peak in Spain is concentrated around the festivities for LGTBI Pride in Madrid in July, while in Latin America there is more activity around November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

As this study analyzes a high number of references, these volume peaks entail a risk of misinterpreting the relevance of the conversation at other times of the year. Although this is not as concentrated, it is sufficiently numerous throughout the period. This is clearly an issue of constant interest, not just associated with specific moments.

2019 CONVERSATION



“The fight against gender violence is gaining in the Latin American conversation”

“Polarized opinions, radicalized positions, superficial talk and the “bubble filter” define the conversation”

PREACHING TO THE CHOIR?

Many psychological and communications theories claim that social media limits itself to reinforcing preconceived opinions, but does little to create a socializing effect. LLYC’s study found precisely that the different communities formed around gender equality are endogamous and do not dialogue with each other.

There is much polarization over the main strands of opinion, with highly radicalized positions. What activist Eli Pariser calls a “bubble filter” is very apt when it comes to equality. The conversation feeds back among people who think the same, reinforcing prejudices. Debate is avoided and conversations maintain a noticeably superficial tone.

CORRELATION OF THE COMMUNITIES VS. SCATTERED CONVERSATION

In Spain there are five large conversation communities, though these only account for half the dialogue. These correspond in general to the parliamentary political spectrum, hence the community favorable toward feminism is divided into four, while detractors grow (the number has passed 20%) and are concentrated into a single community, with far fewer nuances.

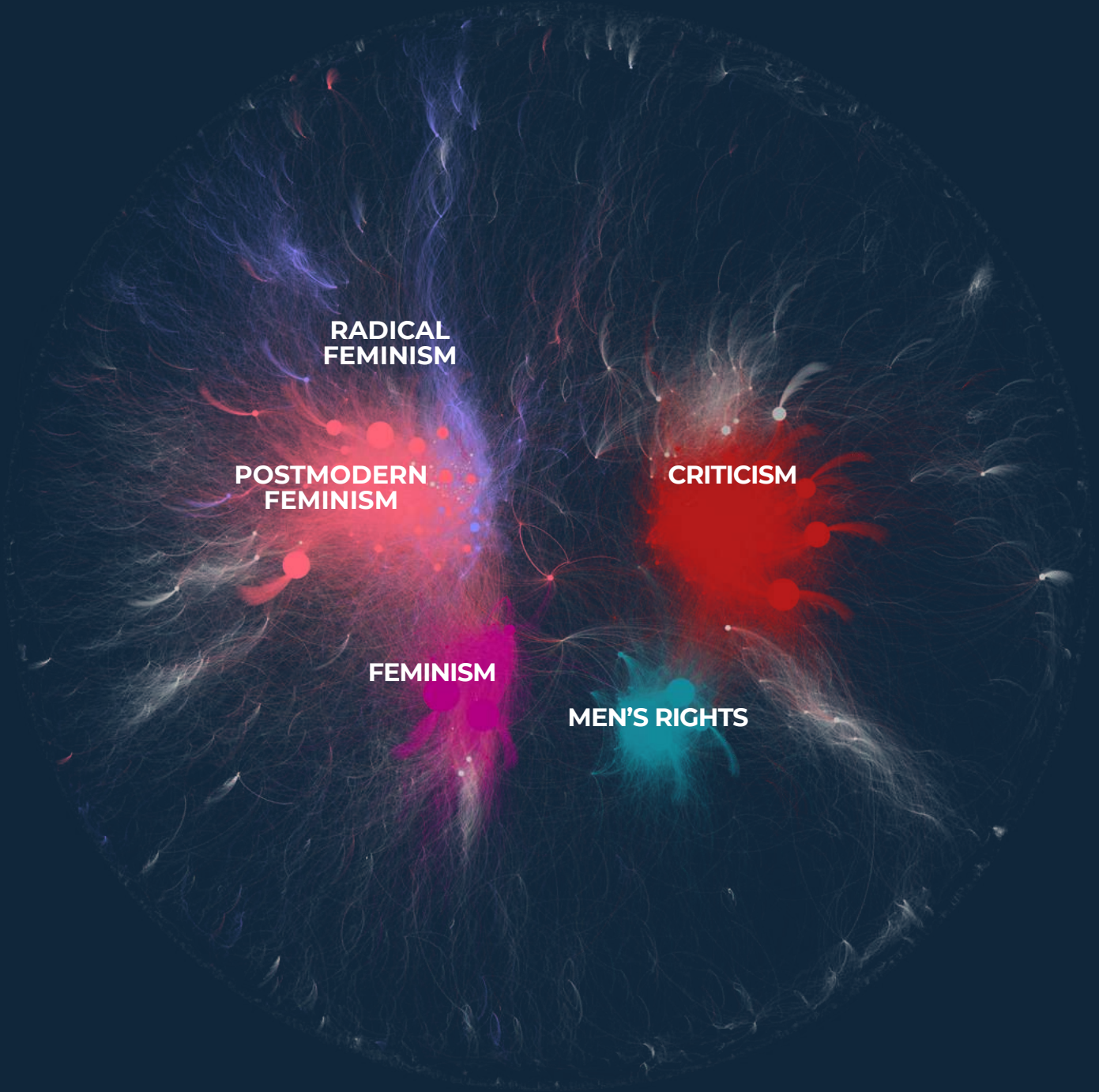
In Spain five equality communities account for half the dialogue:

- **Critical communication.** A growing community reacting against feminism, especially the developing postmodern feminist community. Mostly captured by the Vox sphere.
- **Postmodern feminist community.** Associated with fourth-wave feminism, which started in the 2010s and is closely connected to major demonstrations and, in the conversation in Spain, concentrated to a great extent in the sphere of Unidos Podemos.
- **Feminist community.** Related to third-wave feminism, the feminism that started in the early 1970s and which on Twitter accounts for much of the Socialist Party sphere.
- **Radical feminist community.** A feminism that defines itself as radical and puts the patriarchy at the centre of the debate as responsible for gender inequalities.
- **Masculinist community.** A community that does not see “feminism” in the development of the fourth wave, but rather “hembrismo” or a need for women’s supremacy over men.

In Latin America the conversation is generally more diffuse, and only generates trends in dialogue about feminism and government actions. In Mexico there is a debate on the Supreme Court and the UN’s position on women, while in Argentina opinion leaders tend to be lawyers and journalists. In the other countries, as the volume of conversation is much lower but equally scattered, any classification is less representative.

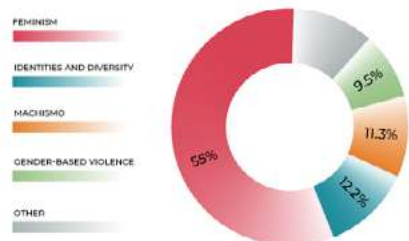
(1) Eli Pariser, *El filtro burbuja: cómo la red decide lo que leemos y lo que pensamos*. Traducción de Mercedes Vaquero. Barcelona, Taurus, 2017.

SPAIN AND ITS 5 EQUALITY COMMUNITIES

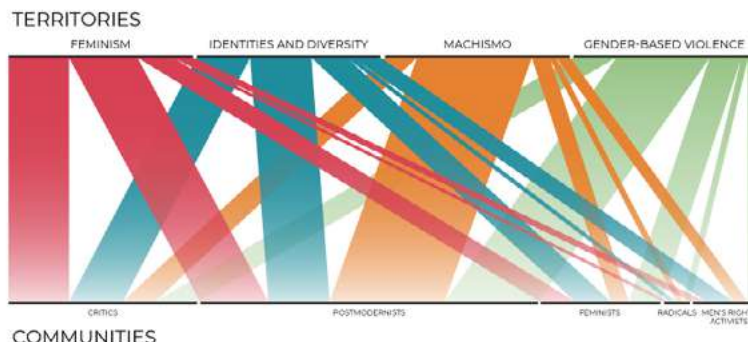


TERRITORIES

CONVERSATION



COMMUNITIES PROTAGONISM IN THE TERRITORIES



POLITICAL OVERLAPPING, A SPANISH PHENOMENON

As the conclusion above suggests, communities in Spain do not line up or develop around gender equality, but are previously constituted and conditioned around political ideology. Vox on one side and Unidos Podemos and the PSOE on the other polarize the conversation. Of the Ciudadanos node, which was very active until mid-2019, only a few leaders remain. The Partido Popular has generally kept out of the conversation and barely generated opinions.

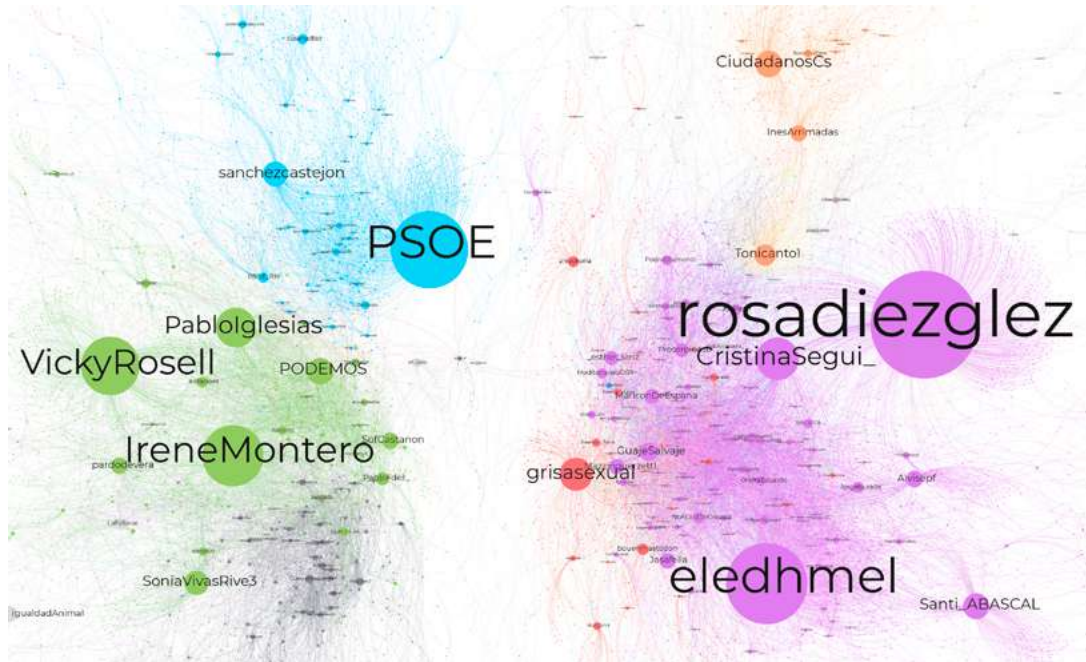
Since the two-party model in Spain has been replaced with a politics of blocs, it seems clear that this polarization has overlapped with a large part of the dialogue on gender equality. A conservative bloc has formed, with some apparent uniformity among critics and

masculinists and with a relevant presence of bots. Then there is an antagonist progressive bloc, more heterogeneous and divided, with an occasional presence of bots and a certain tendency to internal disputes and splits.

The political tint is a wholly Spanish quirk. It is particularly interesting to compare it with what is happening in Latin America, where the conversation on gender equality develops far more spontaneously, with opinion influencers much more connected to civil society than to political parties, although in any case the general tone continues to be one of clichés, preconceived ideas, and commonplaces.

“The conversation in Latin America is spontaneous and comes from civil society, while in Spain it is fundamentally political ”

**POLITICIANS' ROLE AS ACTIVISTS BETWEEN
JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2019**



CORPORATE SILENCE

Companies in all the areas analyzed remain conspicuously absent from the conversation about equality. When analyzing over 17 million tweets there is a deafening silence, or rather, a barely perceptible whisper. There are not even conversations about female leadership development programs, about shared responsibility, conciliation, flexible working hours, or support for entrepreneurship, all measures that are so important in achieving equal gender opportunities and are the focus of the business narrative.

All signs suggest that emotions have replaced reason in the imaginary of social media users and it seems companies have preferred to stay out of the debate, which is often conditioned or taken over by the various political stripes. Of course, on the contrary, the current noise and fury could represent an opportunity for those companies that decide to take the leap and attempt to redirect the dialogue in terms of efficiency, consensus, and inclusion.

“Corporate participation in the conversation is imperceptible”

Although it may be understandable that, given all the political noise on Twitter, companies think twice before using this channel to communicate about their equality strategy, the neutrality of the territories most related to the measures to be taken by companies can encourage businesses to join in the conversation from a positive angle. Instead of focusing efforts on more general concepts, companies need only work out how to find a specific niche for themselves.

There is also a notable absence of the associative corporate fabric, although business associations have timidly started to sign agreements that set or recommended goals for their associated companies, focusing on getting more women into leadership positions and onto boards of directors.

A NECESSARY METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

Because of the need to set a semantic limit, the definition of the territories and the analysis of the study are based on the demands surveyed in the Spanish 2019 8M Manifesto. Of all the territories that were defined in this manifesto, only some of them are visible in the conversation of the communities analyzed.

As mentioned above, a very significant percentage of tweets are related to the International Women's Day strike on March 8, which shows, among other causes, that the mobilization aims to take advantage of a significant date to address two antagonistic realities and generate political leadership in this respect.

All this contributes to an emotional, visceral language, which raises something anecdotal to something symptomatic for the sake of more retweets, and shies away from debating ideas, minimizing or discouraging moderate positions.

SO, DO WE TALK ABOUT EQUALITY?

The LLYC study found that we talk a lot to those who think the same as us, but we dialogue little, which no doubt instead of facilitating real progress towards a shared goal generates greater social polarization.

The opportunity lies, however, in taking advantage of the volume being loud and constant to seek out those spaces where, although there are connections with the general issue, there is still a "blue ocean" of conversation and leadership with fewer political connotations.

While in other spaces we recommend not considering a single territory, because the issue is saturated or scattered, but rather the intersection of at least two, to facilitate relevance and generate enough focus, in terms of equality this exercise of defining a narrative strategy is essential.

Additionally, companies and people who want to highlight their commitment to equality will be more successful if they stay away from consolidated dates and, instead of trying to stand out in March, identify other times in the year when they can roll out their messages and ideally generate engagement with key audiences.

Last of all, those who want to truly dialogue with various audiences and gain legitimacy in such an important issue cannot settle for doing so over few media channels, even if these do have a widespread reach. They must have a broader range, to include those most consolidated as sources for each group and reinforce them with leaders with heterogeneous opinions. Otherwise they run the risk of involuntarily positioning themselves with only one of the communities and, unfortunately, this could bring rejection from others.

Technology allows us to analyze a complex context with far greater detail, and although at first this focus shows up more risks than opportunities, the reality is that the main danger lies, precisely, in feeling our way blindly in a terrain of growing importance to everyone.

When talking about equality,
what do social networks show?

18.000.000 interactions analysed on **Twitter**

16 countries • **19** territories • **5** macro communities

We analyzed 14 months of conversation in Spanish about equality and feminism

METHODOLOGICAL STUDY

1

TERRITORIES

*Define thematic territories, inspired by the 8M Manifesto
Classify them based on KWS and supervised machine learning*

2

COMMUNITIES

*Analyze engagement network topologies
Track community identity, based on modularity*

3

NARRATIVES

*Pinpoint intersections between territories and communities
Identify the most representative narratives*

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