

**THE DIGITAL FEMINIST
MAGAZINES,
A REFORMULATION OF
WOMEN'S PRESS FROM
SOUTH TO NORTH:
THE CASES *AZMINA*
AND *MADMOIZELLE***

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse how engaged media appropriate the format of so-called women's magazines to propose new models for feminist digital publications. I look at feminist media activism as a space made up of the interstice between other social worlds, such as journalism, digital activism and political activism. To understand the strategies for reformulating the magazine format from print to digital and from a perspective of reflection on gender issues, I compare, in a transnational approach, the digital magazines *AzMina* (from Brazil) and *Madmoizelle* (from France) using theories on gender studies and feminism as bibliographical support and the methodology of in-depth interviews with actresses and actors who participate to different degrees in the composition of the social world - content producers and support teams - to develop an analysis of the ways in which individuals are inserted into the context of these magazines. The results indicate that the interviewees rely on forms of writing and news gathering based on the reporting model both to write their content and to consume it. There is an inspiration in the pattern of so-called women's magazines for those who write the texts - and follow these writing patterns - and for those who read them - and create expectations of finding similarities with this writing pattern in the digital feminist media.

Keywords: women's press, feminist magazines, media activism

The role of the press in women's quest for more visibility and space in socio-political contexts is ambiguous. Media products have historically meant a form of liberation and resistance for women, based on the ability to read and the possibility of reflecting and developing critical thinking (Pinto, 2003). But these products are also manuals full of patriarchal rules on how a woman should act or behave (Pinto, 2003; Blandin, 2010). For centuries, the press has been a tool for liberating women from ties that prevent them from being on the same social, economic and cultural level as men (Duarte, 2017). However, it can also be an instrument for maintaining and reproducing current forms of domination.

Although the place assigned to both women and people in feminised positions in the world's socio-political conjuncture is constantly updated, it remains rooted in old family or political structures (Garcin-Marrou, 2019) and is reinforced by the dissemination of niche products for women, based essentially on economic purposes and stimulated by the advertising market (Pinto, 2003; Melo Cabral, 2008; Thérenty, 2010; Geers, 2016). The consolidation of women as readers rests on a strong economic character, as capitalism began to see them as potential consumers of literature, not just magazines and newspapers, but mainly products advertised in the press (Melo Cabral, 2008). Now, fashion manufacturers invest in these publications. Further to this, from the global South to the North, there have been historical efforts to control this consumption from forces and structures such as the church, state, family and school (Duarte, 2017).

In this article, in developing a multisite analysis of the transnational circulation of the phenomenon of digital feminist media activism, I turn to Brazil and France - as countries that are economically, politically and culturally representative, respectively, of the geopolitical scenarios of the global South and North - to try to understand feminist action aimed at producing magazine content. I mobilise the category of North-South (Santos, 1995; Meneses, 2008) of the world to bring

to the text the hierarchical nature of relations – marked by capitalist and imperialist logics – between these two parts of the globe.

Methodological paths

Based on the analysis of field experience and 63 in-depth interviews with actresses and actors who make up the feminist media activism space in Brazil and France, this proposal is based on ethnography as a methodology for understanding the construction of the social world of feminist media activism and its ways of functioning. Thirty interviews were conducted in France and 33 in Brazil, with different participants in the social world (reporters and editors, columnists, readers, accounting and fundraising teams, etc.), from October 2020 to November 2022. The relevance of the work is that it proposes to listen to in-depth accounts of the trajectories of the members of this space and to monitor, through field research, the group's forms of cooperation and negotiation to oppose anti-feminist agendas.

Understood as "constructions of reality, occasions in which the interviewee seeks to fabricate meanings to their experience in view of their interlocutor" (Pereira, 2008, p. 71), interviews were used as a way of grasping in detail the beliefs, attitudes, values, feelings, desires and motivations that trigger people's behaviors in specific social contexts (Gil, 1987; Bauer & Gaskell, 2002; Dantas & Lima, 2018). I seek to use the technique as a dialogue to highlight its exploratory nature and its potential for understanding and explaining social phenomena. I propose the deinstitutionalisation of the act of interviewing, conceived through the positions of interviewer-interviewee (Becker, 1993). During the interaction, there is a reordering of experiences while trying to create a coherent narrative.

To choose the media activists interviewed, I checked the "who we are" tab or equivalent on the websites of each selected

project for the *corpus*. When the names were not clearly listed on the websites, I turned to the publications' LinkedIn to locate the participants. Some names were also located via social media or on the projects' websites. With readers, I used the strategy of identifying profiles on social networks (Facebook and Instagram) that interact through comments with the publications studied. From there, I accessed each of these profiles, analysed the content published and liked posts that had some connection to feminist agendas (in text or images), to try to create links and affinities with the potential interviewees. This process can only be done on open profiles or those with some open content, so these were the ones I selected to contact.

Press and women

In France, the literacy of women was promoted by the state and increased considerably from the second half of the nineteenth century. However, even though women were becoming potential readers, encouraging contact with newspaper articles was often forbidden by husbands, who wanted their wives to be involved in domestic chores, and by religious institutions, who considered reading to be a moral deviation (Geers, 2016, p. 44). During the same period, women of the Brazilian bourgeoisie were not encouraged to read, as families and society at the time considered that information carried subversive risks and could encourage girls to communicate with boys. Subsequently, only young Brazilian women from the upper classes were allowed to receive elementary and religious education and notions of foreign languages alongside their embroidery and household chores (Cabral, 2008).

All over the world, by gaining access to literacy, women subsequently took ownership of reading and, therefore, writing - including critical writing. However, this process came up against a mentality of male superiority that still dominated the spaces of debate, so that there was an understanding based on common sense that the books and stories aimed

at women and read by them were not, in fact, literature, but rather a kind of subliterate that did not deserve to be taken seriously - similar to how women themselves were seen in society (Duarte, 2017).

Although the media was used as a tool for economic and political control - with publications that made an effort, against the backdrop of women's emancipation movements, to restore women's pride in being at home and reactivate familialist discourses (Blandin, 2010) - through contact with books and newspapers, groups of women with access to formal education became aware of their own subordinate conditions and the even worse conditions of illiterate women. "More than books, newspapers were the first and main vehicles of women's literate production, which from the outset were spaces for publicity, agglutination and resistance" (Duarte, 2017, p. 98).

From the beginning of the feminist movement, activists observed that the media played an important role in propagating gender stereotypes, which made them feel the need to create their own channels with alternative discourses to the hegemonic one. Women's ambiguous relationship with the press led to the emergence of two different new niches of journalism: the so-called women's press and the feminist press. The former was aimed at women to corroborate the standards that dictated their lives, imposing rules on their bodies and minds, while the feminist press emerged with the aim of promoting women's rights and showing them ways to free themselves from socially stipulated constraints (Buitoni, 1990).

These are categories that may eventually converge, but in general, the so-called women's press and the feminist press are distinct and even have opposite characteristics. The former is more conservative in nature and has historically been marked by the propagation of gender stereotypes and by corroborating discourses that emphasise the idea of women

as fragile figures assigned to the domestic sphere. Feminist journalism, on the other hand, denies the dissemination of labels and forms of writing linked to gender, proposing to construct narratives that encourage women and feminised people to deny structures of patriarchal domination and to occupy positions of power in society. In contemporary media culture, attempts to unite both perspectives are becoming increasingly frequent, transforming the content of the so-called women's press into channels open to the agendas of the feminist press.

The (so-called) women's press

For almost half a century, the press portrayed the world of women through fashion, literature, beauty and entertainment information, focusing its content on the importance of women's role as mothers and wives (Bronstein, 2008; Lajolo & Zilberman, 2019) and imposing the ideology of this role through social and cultural criteria (Buitoni, 1981). Many newspapers, created by priests, doctors and journalists, strove to convince women - especially those from the bourgeoisie - to become dedicated mothers, stimulated by concerns about infant mortality figures and a strategy to ensure population growth (Duarte, 2017). Publications focused on women are therefore tools for perpetuating power hierarchies.

These are contents that offer cooking and embroidery recipes, guidelines for mothers and fathers on raising children and instructions on maintaining domestic life, presenting themselves as indispensable for the functioning of the family routine (Blandin, 2012), as well as personality tests and events linked to the privacy of film and television stars (Bronstein, 2008). A female imaginary is constructed, centred on the idea of taking care of oneself (Flausino, 2003). In addition, changes were made to the way journalism was written, with an emphasis on proximity to the reader and to the publications, seeking to create intimacy with those who read them, creating a dialogue between informative journalism and the

elements of personalisation and seduction typical of advertising (Schmitz, 2010).

Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were no major changes in content or form in the press aimed at this audience. Women continued to be treated as sensitive and fragile (Bronstein, 2008). Over the decades, however, cities grew and changed, enabling new readerships to emerge. The mass culture that was growing at the time, coupled with the First World War and its aftermath, opened up space for the figure of women to move from the representation of puerile fragility to the strength of motherhood. The publishing industry of women's publications as a niche press was growing, since the hegemonic media produced content primarily with a male audience in mind. As a result, the figure of the woman seemed even more distant from the events of public life, moving instead towards the archetypes of magazines and private life (Bronstein, 2008). Over time, stimulated by economic factors, some media companies had pages aimed at the female audience in newspapers or publications made for men (Geers, 2016).

As the market for so-called women's magazines grew and catered for consumers with money, publishers developed the popular novel press, relying on class stereotypes to offer poor women, who were considered to have little knowledge of political and literary issues, immediate pleasure from reading (Geers, 2016, p. 50). These publications were known as the "press of the heart" and contained little advertising and images, since advertisers believed that this was an audience without sufficient financial resources to devote to consumption.

The 1960s, however, represented a turning point in this situation and reinforced the emancipatory nature of specialised journalism for women. Inspired by the May 1968 movement in France, an international political scenario emerged that encouraged questioning and rebellion and mirrored the strength of a young and progressive culture. Media publications that

failed to grasp these changes saw part of their young, active readership, with a high cultural and intellectual level, migrating to more informative magazines (Charon, 2008).

But more than outlets for content concerned with gender equality and sexual freedom, the magazines were instruments for attracting more readers and, through advertising, increasing profits. The press' encouragement of women's autonomy allowed them to choose the direction of their own lives and, in particular, which products would be part of this (Buitoni, 1981). The empowerment fostered in previous decades entered the 1990s as a factor that consolidated the figure of the multitasking woman (Bronstein, 2008). The media corroborates the idea that women are capable of taking the lead in different areas of life¹, conquering space in the job market, in universities, while at the same time looking after the home, maintaining a marital relationship and raising children.

Specialised journalism for women in recent years has kept pace with the capitalist order and has increased advertising in the media as women have risen in the workplace (Maia, 2013). The dichotomy in the women's press between the propagation of reactionary values and ideals of gender equality still persists. The massification of information technologies means that new channels for disseminating content can be created and ways of doing journalism that are different from the hegemonic one can be proposed. But digital environments still echo misogynistic and sexist discourses.

In short, unlike the daily media, the so-called women's press is not concerned with reporting *hard news*, but instead focuses on interviews, expert opinions, analysis of current affairs and, at the same time, is closer to entertainment and service (Buitoni, 1981). Although it does eventually make room for

feminist content, in general, this layer of journalism perpetuates gender stereotypes, helping to keep women out of the public debate and ensuring the existence of a consumer audience capable of maintaining the profitability of publications and the industry around them.

Feminist press

The press plays an important role in disseminating feminist ideas around the world, helping to strengthen the movement politically. In journalism, discourses related to gender equality can appear in three ways: in publications that are resistant to dealing with feminist issues; in those that present a discourse that is sensitive to feminist agendas, but without directly claiming to be aligned with them; and, finally, there are explicitly feminist media, which assume themselves as such and echo the actions of the feminist movement of their time (Olivesi, 2017, p. 178). The last two are discussed below.

Ever since it was established, the press became the tool that people with new ideas sought to express themselves, even if this was limited to the educated urban middle and upper classes (Pinto, 2003). At first, newspapers and printed publications were the only way to massively disseminate information, as there was no radio or television. Since its emergence in the mid-nineteenth century, the feminist press has promoted actions to occupy public space through media tools, using these tools to denounce oppression and as a way of challenging androcentric narratives (Santos, 2019).

Feminist activists embarked on careers as journalists in the traditional press and often observed that the strategy of creating alternative media could be more effective in spreading their ideas (Lévêque, 2009; Boussahba-Bravard & Pasteur, 2014; Woitowicz, 2014). These activists created small newspapers,

¹ It is essential to note that the number of demands placed on women is a mechanism for maintaining patriarchal domination, since women are overloaded with activities that consume their time and consume them on a psychological level, making it difficult for them to find the space and energy to participate in public debate.

often handmade, to publish articles and opinions on the status of women. These publications were often produced by just one or two people, who put a lot of effort into keeping them in circulation (Pinto, 2003). This content was usually produced and consumed by women from the upper classes, linked to the agendas of the suffragette movement (Formaglio, 2017), and the projects were short-lived, especially due to their counter-hegemonic nature and the lack of advertising (Poupeau, 2018) that could support their financial survival.

Over time, other socio-technical elements contributed to the spread of feminist thinking. Television becomes more popular and the feminist agendas that manage to enter women's programs mean that, along with the traditional information on cooking, fashion and raising children, previously unthinkable topics such as female orgasm, contraception and domestic violence also appear (Costa, 2005, p. 15). In the current context, especially with the spread of digital tools and the growth of social media with the capacity to horizontalise discourses, the feminist press has been expanding and captivating a wider audience. The emergence of *online* magazines of a notably feminist nature, which have appeared in the last decade, are presented as "an uprising in favor of greater representation of other women and even in favor of other ways of being a woman" (Bittelbrun, 2019, p. 2087).

These projects set out to cover topics related to black feminism, the LGBTI+ cause and the routines of poor and socially marginalised women, in a fight against racist, classist and heteronormative journalistic approaches, in which institutionalised heterosexuality is mandatory within a context of cultural hegemony (McCarl Nielsen *et al.*, 2009). They are not restricted to white, bourgeois and highly educated women, taking a progressive stance compared to the traditional so-called women's media by dedicating themselves to women's rights, while the so-called women's press focuses on "duties" (Bandeira, 2015).

They tend to appropriate the journalistic style of the so-called women's press, adopting a lighter tone of writing than *mainstream* newspapers, but also proposing to deal with political and economic issues. They use journalistic writing and editing techniques and conventions - such as the use of the inverted pyramid format in texts and news value standards² - and content construction strategies similar to the so-called women's press - such as the use of the first and second person singular or the second person plural in texts, the use of lists and tutorials and articles whose purpose is to suggest services. It is a hybrid journalism that absorbs the characteristics of new media (Santos & Miguel, 2019, p. 7) and media activism to produce and broadcast free content that is avowedly independent of commercial and advertising ties.

Based on the work of Bandeira (2015), Bittelbrun (2019), Blandin (2012), Buitoni (1981), Olivesi (2017), Pinto (2003) and Santos & Miguel (2019) on the history of the press aimed at and made by women, it was possible to outline the similarities and differences between the two media niches, as shown in tables 1 and 2 below. It is worth emphasising, however, that these are generalisations of historically constructed scenarios, and that the so-called feminine media may have characteristics that are more in line with feminism and the breaking down of gender, race, class and sexual orientation stereotypes, as has happened in recent years in Brazil and France.

Even in the hegemonic media, gendered discourses are changing. Not only publications in the so-called women's press, but even non-niche periodicals that focus on factual and current affairs coverage are beginning to debate issues related to gender equality and are proposing reports that give visibility to the alarming numbers of violence against women and gender inequalities in the job market. Although there are commercial interests in this change, it also allows

2 Criteria for selecting and presenting events used by journalists in defining what information will or will not be published.

Table 1 General similarities between the so-called women's press and the feminist press

| |
|---|
| Similarities between the so-called women's press and the feminist press |
| A lighter, more personal tone compared to mainstream newspapers |
| They use journalistic techniques and conventions for writing and editing content (e.g. news values and the inverted pyramid technique). |
| The aim is to create a close relationship with readers by using the first person singular or plural in the texts |
| Use of lists and tutorials and articles whose purpose is to suggest matters of public interest |

Table 2 General differences between the so-called women's press and the feminist press

| THE (SO-CALLED) WOMEN'S PRESS | FEMINIST PRESS |
|--|--|
| Creating content focused on women as potential consumers | Creating content to stimulate women's critical thinking as active members of the political and social debate |
| Information related to the private sphere of life (cooking, fashion, and household chores) | Information related to the public sphere of life (politics, economics, the environment) |
| It focuses on addressing the social attitudes linked to duties or what is expected of women in society | It focuses on addressing women's demands and rights to reclaim new social roles for them |
| They often reproduce normative socio-cultural standards related to body, race, sexual orientation, and class | They seek to break with normative standards related to body, race, sexual orientation, and class |

for the expansion of socio-political debates on women's rights and feminised people. It should therefore be recognised that, despite historical challenges, contemporary media are investing in more actions aimed at giving women visibility and a voice.

In this article, we start from the understanding that the organisation of a media structure is formed based on a system of relationships that different actors contribute to constituting, in unequal ways. The operating rules of a newsroom - both implicit and explicit - serve to support the construction of positions and strategies in the constitution of the complex dynamics of the social world (Damian-Gaillard *et al.*, 2010). There are structures of horizontal segregation between men and women reflected in the distribution of journalistic

specialties within newsrooms based on the existence of sectors, departments, media sections and skills linked to gender, as is the case in the magazine press, which has historically been the main professional medium for women journalists (Damian-Gaillard *et al.*, 2010).

By observing journalistic activity as a practice linked to limitations and a complex network of interdependencies that permeate relations with sources, the structuring of the journalistic field, and its relations with the economic field (Neveu, 2019), I try to understand the ways in which individuals, while suffering social constraints, manage to implement innovations and inventiveness within the profession in order to find spaces for expression, autonomy and fulfilment in the professional world (Lemieux, 2010). Looking at mutations in the

context of the media helps to analyse specialised subfields of journalism that have emerged in recent years, such as digital feminist magazines.

Feminist activism in the digital media

For more than a decade, we have seen a variety of feminist initiatives emerge on the internet from different currents, but which have in common the use of digital tools to disseminate content (Jouët, 2022). This activist and combative feminism has erupted in different parts of the world, combining digital tools with traditional social movement strategies such as strikes and street demonstrations.

The transnational current spread to several countries, with slogans with global repercussions circulating in the form of hashtags: #NosotrasParamos, #WeStrike, #VivasNosQueremos, #NiUnaMenos, #TimesUp, #Feminism4th99 (Arruzza et al., 2019). The movement, however, is gaining momentum, especially in the global South (Pinheiro-Machado, 2019). It has developed in such a way as to increasingly reinvent local meanings of the international #MeToo movement.

It is a phenomenon that has been taking shape since the 2010s and is still in the making, being a model of militancy in the midst of construction (Castro & Abramovay, 2019; Paveau, 2020; Perez & Ricoldi, 2019; Pinheiro-Machado, 2019; Oliveira, 2019). It is characterised by the strong presence of its members in the digital media, by organisation in the form of collectives and by considering, more than before, the various social cleavages that permeate gender, configuring an intersectional feminism (Perez & Ricoldi, 2019). This is a form of activism that intersects class, gender, and race in an organic way, considering different systems of oppression (Castro & Abramovay, 2019, p. 24) in its action strategies.

During this reconfiguration of feminist activism, digital feminist media activism has emerged, a concept that goes beyond

the simple fusion of the notions of media and activism and expresses itself not only through words and techniques, but above all through people. It is a proposal that oscillates between approximation and, at the same time, the rejection of journalistic conventions, aiming to "break with (and establish resistance to) consolidated structures of vertical and unilateral dissemination of information" (Dias & Borelli, 2018, p. 841). It results in content characterised by aspects of collaboration, defending one or more social causes and trying to involve the public in debates (Santos & Miguel, 2019), applying digital activism strategies to produce plural content (Bentes, 2015).

Feminist media activism is guided by the pedagogical concern of providing a kind of political education on gender for readers (Silva, 2017). The producers of this content challenge pre-established conventions and reformulate journalistic production practices, seeking to position women as agents of their own lives, in order to detach them from the prejudices and stereotypes that want to condition the female gender to be supporting players in socio-political debates that impact the totality of their existence. Faced with socio-technical devices, activists appropriate the informational potential of the media and the format of magazines while also resorting to the technological environment to achieve their demands and setting out to master techniques for creating buzz and making noise on the internet (Jouët, 2018), exploiting the viral potential of social media.

In short, feminist media activism consists of processes in which feminist activists use socio-technical devices to build new forms of creation and writing on the web using digital technology, the use of online platforms and social media and the appropriation of journalistic techniques. This is a new digital practice in which feminist collectives, NGOs and publications share information on the internet that covers the gender debate and the rights of women and feminised groups. Although they are projects with different statuses (non-governmental organisations, collectives, women's magazines,

feminist magazines, websites), they share the central aim of producing quality feminist information based on journalistic research and investigation and precepts of form and writing derived from standard reporting, as well as offering opinion pieces.

AzMina: a magazine for women from A to Z

AzMina magazine is part of the AzMina Institute, which tries to use information, technology and education to combat gender violence. The institute is a non-profit organisation whose aim is to broaden the gender debate and empower women. The wave of protests #NãoMereçoSerEstuprada³, or, in free translation, "I don't deserve to be raped", created by Nana Queiroz, the project's founder (Santos, 2019), propelled the organisation's launch. The magazine is a journalistic production that appeared in 2015 and is located on a web portal (www.azmina.com.br) and on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Santos & Miguel, 2019). The publication calls itself independent and feminist, claiming not to align itself with political movements and parties (Duarte *et al.*, 2017).

The team responsible for the project has created and feeds a digital magazine, runs campaigns, talks, events and consultancies, and develops other tools aimed at combating machismo in Brazilian society, - such as the PenhaS app, aimed at tackling domestic violence. The magazine's core audience is women aged between 18 and 35 - but there is also a proportion of women aged between 35 and 50 - and around 15% of readers are men (Duarte *et al.*, 2017). The project has been gaining recognition in its field. In 2017, the magazine won the Women's Press Trophy in Brazil, in the "Best Journalistic Project" category (Schander & Bertasso, 2019).

The magazine has no fixed editorial staff and brings together professionals from different locations (Buitoni & Lopes,

2018). Contributors often have to combine this work with other jobs to support themselves (Duarte *et al.*, 2017). The project is made up of a diverse group of women, including journalists, publicists, psychologists, lawyers, and other professionals - always women - and its focus is investigative journalism. *AzMina* mixes journalistic work with activist action (Machado *et al.*, 2019), based on a reconstitution of conventional journalistic practice.

The publication does not use any advertising funds and depends on collective financing, donations from legal entities, workshops, events and lectures, and the support of public notices to promote journalistic and cultural projects. It also carries out activities other than journalism, such as advising companies (Duarte *et al.*, 2017). The initiative is part of the new media perspective and is linked to the changes that the magazine genre has been undergoing (Duarte *et al.*, 2017). The content proposed by the publication seeks to deconstruct stereotypes about the feminist movement, including those that come from within the movement itself, such as the issue of abortion, which usually appears linked to death, silence and pain: the magazine proposes reinterpreting this from the perspective of freedom, choice and tranquillity (Schander & Bertasso, 2019), in a movement to re-signify meanings.

Madmoizelle: society is spelled feminine

Madmoizelle is an openly feminist French digital magazine that began production in 2005. It presents itself as a committed, inclusive, and daring publication that informs readers about society, culture and people. In 2020, it was integrated into the Humanoid group, a French media company that acts as an *online* press publisher. This, in turn, is linked to EBRA, the French regional daily press group owned by the Crédit Mutuel Alliance Fédérale bank. Humanoid, however, like

3 The movement began after a 2014 survey by Brazil's Institute for Economic and Applied Research (Ipea) found that 65% of respondents believed that women deserve to be attacked when they wear clothes that show their bodies.

Madmoizelle, claims to be an independent project and interviewees for this research who work for the publication claim that the magazine's sponsors are selected according to criteria of alignment with the feminist agenda and the principles defended by the magazine.

The media outlet calls itself a women's magazine, with a lighter tone to its writing, although it also deals with socio-political issues. In addition to employing humorous strategies and tools such as memes and *gifs* to reach its audience through the website and social media, the project tries to move away from the reproduction of stereotypes around women's bodies, reflecting on whiteness, heterosexuality, thinness and the validity of restrictive norms and offering feminist and inclusive action tools to the public.

The stripped-down tone, inspired by social media interaction formats, makes the media address political and social issues with a focus on a young audience, even though it purports to be a publication that reflects all generations of women. The site inspires teenagers and young people by tackling various topics without taboo, such as the menstrual cup, homosexuality, threesomes, and free love (Lamy, 2019). It also appropriates icons from pop culture and internet culture to reach its audience.

Analyzing digital feminist magazines

Digital feminist magazines directly work in dialogue with conventions from the world of traditional journalism, with which they intersect and dialogue directly, to establish themselves as a practice for producing information that is recognised as serious and reliable. By using resources and themes from the so-called women's press, the projects analysed offer texts in the form of entertainment tips (ranging from advice on love relationships, motherhood, work to suggestions for films and series) - a recurring content presentation strategy in magazines conventionally aimed

at women (Bittelbrun, 2019) - while still producing in-depth investigative reports based on the methods of informative journalism. They also use methods that emphasise feelings and sensations and apply techniques that deviate from part of journalistic conventions, such as first-person texts, keeping similarity in form to the tradition of so-called women's magazines. At the same time, they use technological tools to disseminate their content.

In the interviews with contributors to the publications studied, the concern with the use of journalistic techniques of verification and checking in the production of content stands out. The audiences also emphasise the use of investigative journalism resources in the format of the texts and reports in the magazines, listing the statistical and data base of the feminist media as the most relevant characteristic when asked about the differences between these and the hegemonic newspapers. This factor is directly pointed out in the responses of almost two thirds (18 people) of the readers of feminist publications when asked what interests them in the magazines. The story of Bruna, a literature columnist and journalist for *AzMina*, exemplifies this logic:

AzMina is a foot in the door of journalism, it's a lot of journalistic purism. "Let's check the information", "Let's do a good report, well done, with data". There's always this look: "Check it out properly", "Talk to more people", "See if it's really true", "Work on this data better", "Put it in accessible language", "Explain it better because it's not clear". (interview, August 2, 2021)

The reporters' work is monitored closely and regularly by the editors, which includes periodic meetings to discuss the progress of research and writing, a long investment of time - since production can take months, as the journalists interviewed reported - and revisions that involve more significant changes to the texts compared to columns and opinion pieces. In other words, as in hegemonic journalism, the work

dynamics and interactions of the editing and proofreading teams change depending on the format of the texts.

More than features reappropriated from journalism in general, these publications employ content construction strategies similar to the pattern inspired by so-called women's magazines - with techniques for humanising content, use of the first and second person singular or the second person plural in texts, debates around fashion and aesthetics-related topics, writing lists and tutorials, and writing articles for service purposes.

In addition, the bonds and ties created between team members develop from the socialisation processes that take place during the joint production of content. Interactions take place in the daily lives of media activists through cooperation and negotiations between writing and editing professionals, leaders and support teams. From a Beckerian perspective, there are two movements in the recruitment and formation of teams within feminist magazines. The first consists of the efforts of veterans, especially those from the world of journalism, to incorporate into the medium groups of individuals not yet trained in hegemonic journalistic practices or not aligned with them, so that these actors are more malleable and adapt more easily to remodelling or creating new forms of negotiation. The second movement involves insiders, especially in leadership positions, trying to maintain links with more experienced journalism professionals who can lend credibility to the group's work and validate its output. The publications then try to distance themselves to some extent from the world of journalism, but only selectively; they continue to follow some of the rules, change some practices and accept others (Becker, 1982).

Moreover, besides the conventional structures of journalism, feminist magazines are also structured around the conventions of political activism. This means that the production routines of the teams are based on constant dialogue with concepts and reflections from gender studies and feminisms.

The publications bear the foundations of militantism in their ways of conducting and maintaining the projects, from financial capture mechanisms to the very involvement of the collaborators in spaces of activism, a relationship that crosses the professional and personal lives of the group members.

Actresses and actors from the social world create actions with traces of performances (Hollanda & Costa, 2019), starting with the launch of *hashtags*, *online* petitions, and social mobilisation campaigns via the internet, trying to draw attention to the feminist cause. Through these tactics, the publications address debates on gender inequalities and try to give their content an aspect of insubordination - with characters who break the mould, such as black, fat, trans and indigenous women, among others, as can be seen on the websites of the digital magazines *Madmoizelle* and *AzMina*.

Therefore, the circulation of conventions and the ways in which conventional models reach this social world are associated with the collaborators' relationships with the journalistic production environment, with the practices of using socio-technical devices and with immersion in feminist collectives and militant movements and/or with the engagement of individuals in activist actions. The ways of working in these environments are absorbed and reproduced or adapted with a focus on producing feminist information.

However, engaging in the production of feminist magazines or the consumption of these products is not merely a professional choice or a career-related area of activity. The practice is enshrined in the routine of these people as a model of life, in which working time merges with the time of other activities linked to living and the interactions of the group's participants form a vital space of community activity (Malini & Antoun, 2013). Intersecting journalism and feminism, this engaged practice appropriates the characteristics and action strategies of social movements, building an inventive and performative news production environment.

The digital feminist press from south to north

Socio-historical research themes, such as economic development, industrial policy, racial and ethnic relations, national identities, the emergence of democratic and authoritarian governments, and gender and women's rights, have gained prominence (Rueschemeyer & Mahoney, 2003). So, drawing a parallel between the Brazil-France cases, as representative of the global South and North, seems to contribute to the analysis of a transnational perspective of the world of feminist media activism, permeated by the context of engagement based on the use of socio-technical devices.

Elements of national identity and habits of using technology or even militant and activist tools make the observation of these two cases more dynamic as the field unfolds and analysis begins to emerge. Factors such as digital immersion, for example, make Brazilian militant movements stand out in activism on the networks, launching new techniques of militancy and engaged action *online*, as happened with feminist media activism initiatives in Brazil from 2015, long before *MeToo* and its developments in France.

The social world of contemporary feminist media activism has a transnational character and, despite the socio-political, historical and economic differences between the global South and North, these projects are based on common traits in terms of the ways in which media are created and maintained, with occasional differences related to raising funds and co-opting new members. The analysis of the interviews showed how the negotiation of identities and practices works within the Brazilian and French publications.

Tasks are divided according to the skills and experience of the collaborators and the needs of the team. There are regular agenda meetings and the media activists help each other to produce content, choose agendas, deal with tight *deadlines* and operate in situations where there are

difficulties in contacting sources or gathering data. There are also exchanges that allow people who are not journalists to enter the social world, or even for the public to regularly write and publish their own stories on the websites and social media pages of feminist magazines. In other words, the forms of collaboration are sustained by solidarity between the groups.

The players in the social world, especially the content producers and the publications' support staff (centred on administrative and accounting positions) are constantly exchanging among the group and building a network of solidarity that triggers a feeling of belonging. Meetings and moments of relaxation are offered to share stories about routines and daily life beyond work so that the collaborators can rest and relax together. The closeness of the group's practices to activism inspires in its members a sense of shared identity and of fighting for the same cause that unites them (Andrade, 2020).

The conventions are organised around the notion of activism that goes beyond the digital, permeating the physical experiences of the collaborators. They often don't know each other personally. People from different regions and cities make up the groups (both in Brazil and France), although the teams tend to be concentrated in large urban centres (São Paulo and Paris). Geographical distances don't seem to affect the cohesion of the group, since even the actresses who are in different cities or who don't even know each other face to face feel involved in the social world and consider that they belong to the group.

In addition, the link with ancestry runs through the discourses of the interviewees, whether they are content producers, support staff for the publications, or readers (although this appears in different ways in each country). In Brazil, interviewees mention their inspirations and links with African ancestors who were enslaved or with women who belonged to native peoples. Meanwhile, in France, the narratives (mainly

from readers) show identification with witches and women who were persecuted by the Inquisition, as an effort to reclaim voices that have been historically silenced.

In terms of bonds, there was a constant desire to change social structures in the interviewees' accounts. Through activism, they seek to transform the other social worlds through which they move. Feminist media activism also emerges as an opportunity to drive transitions in their careers and personal lives. What was surprising, however, were the narratives in which the changes begin not in the outside world, but with individuals on a personal level.

Regarding the differences between Brazil and France, there are two points that attract the most attention. The first is that, among the Brazilian feminist media studied, there are no men on the teams and the debate on this issue is not consensual. There are media activists who believe that the spaces should essentially be for women and others who defend the importance of having male figures in these groups. According to interviewees, the discussion tends to intensify as team members have children, especially if the children are boys, which gives media activists a new perspective to reframe the ways of conducting feminist activism. In France, *Madmoizelle* magazine has men on its staff. The leaders and regular members of the publication say (in interviews with the author) that they find the presence of men in feminist content production projects valid as a way of reaffirming the importance of a broad, joint struggle for gender equality.

Another important difference between the dynamics of how publications operate in each country is fundraising. In France, non-voluntary engaged media seek sponsorship and form partnerships with brands to maintain the group financially. In Brazil, there still seems to be greater resistance from the worlds of journalism and political activism to accepting the existence of links between feminist information production projects and private companies.

The very understanding and consensus on the status of publications that intend to monetise themselves becomes a challenge for the teams, who have to assume that they occupy a place at the intersection between activism and professionalisation. Feminist publications, therefore, rely on the strategy of maintaining themselves through money from donors as a form of mobilising communication, with a focus on raising public awareness and encouraging others to collaborate in order to make the production of content viable. This also presents itself as a way of trying to circumvent the limitations caused by advertisers (Peruzzo, 2013). However, in the case of feminist engaged media in both Brazil and France, this doesn't necessarily seem to be a viable or sufficient path, which leads media activists to look for other ways to enable the continuity of the social world.

The financial costs of engagement are often a factor that limits the capacity for action of the contributors to the publications analysed, especially for volunteers who would like to devote more time to media activism but have to keep day jobs. In publications that are closer to the world of activism, there is the reproduction of unpaid engagement logics with a high demand for participation and dedication to activities that are fundamentally linked to commitment to the cause, with no tangible financial or material rewards in the short term, which makes it difficult for collaborators to remain in these spaces. However, it can be seen that the interviewees who have stable jobs alongside their media activism manage to combine volunteering and other professional activities more easily.

Only a third of the media activists interviewed said they didn't need to juggle other jobs alongside their work at feminist publications, and that they were part of the teams as full-time members. However, these employment relationships are often loose as media outlets generally hire these professionals as *freelancers* without a formal contract or with fixed-term contracts, thus reproducing business logics of precarious wages and working conditions for professionals. At the same

time, the social world is also appropriating ways of working associated with innovations made possible by technology and which facilitate the routines of actresses and actors, such as the implementation of teleworking and/or hybrid working arrangements - which expands the territorial reach of the teams and promotes a diversity of professional profiles within them.

Brief conclusions

Through activism, the actresses and actors try to transform the other social worlds which they circulate. This desire for change is a factor that connects the group, sensitising media activists and audiences to invest in engaged actions. Although they know that the impact of the productions they produce or consume and disseminate is limited, the interviewees find the incentive to continue their involvement with feminist agendas through the experience of immersion in a collective mobilization; once they have experienced the power of being, organising and living in a community, they cannot and do not want to leave these spaces (Pinheiro-Machado, 2019) to which they feel they belong.

The groups seek to act on different fronts, from capturing and reproducing readers' testimonies as a strategy to give voices to previously silenced women, to investing in institutional actions and campaigns that have repercussions in the state sphere, enabling the creation of public policies to combat sexism.

The functioning and participation processes of the individuals in this practice are based on forms of cooperation whose permanence is linked to emotional expressions of euphoria, pleasure, solidarity and hope that are socialised among the group and which sustain the maintenance of the space. Interactions between the group enable the formation of support networks in personal and emotional terms for the

contributors and reader, while networks of contacts between professionals from different fields, political activists and digital activists are also built. For these people, the social world becomes a collective network with transformative potential and, above all, tangible hope.

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