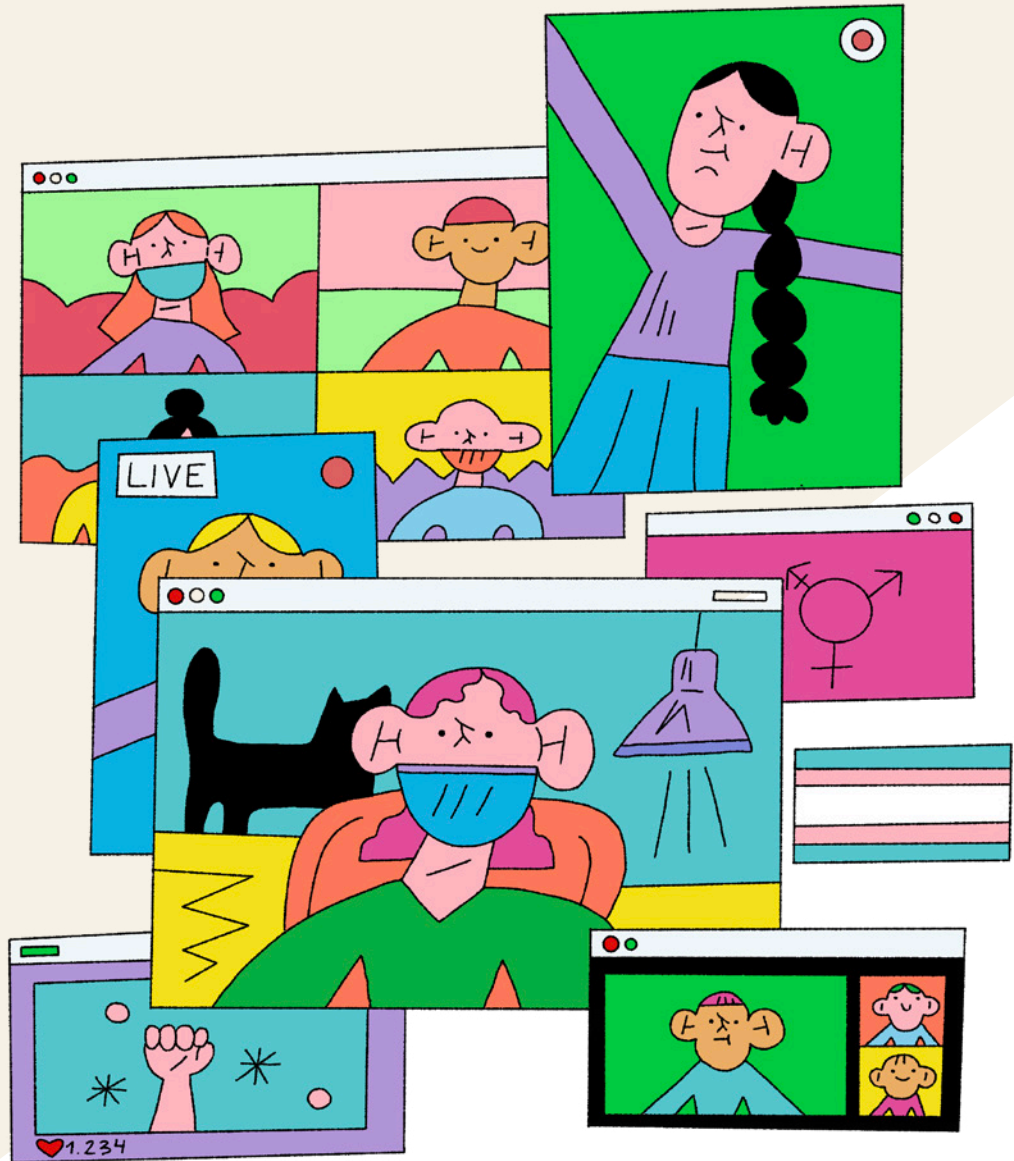


Miscellaneous



#(Trans)Feminist Movement #COVID-19. From Territorial to Virtual Dialogue in Cultural / Artistic Experiences in Argentina and Spain

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the narratives, practices and strategies articulated in (trans) Feminist artistic/cultural experiences in Argentina and Spain seen in the context of COVID-19 from three dimensions: Ethical, Aesthetic, Political. It is framed within a socio-anthropological research study that was carried out between June 2020 and June 2022. The study charted the tensions and agreements between (trans) Feminist social movements and the daily practices of various artists and people holding management positions in the cultural field in Argentina and in Spain. The findings cover: (1) the ethical implications of resisting, challenging and negotiating expected socio-cultural practice; (2) a community's ways of being and doing; (3) resignification of the senses of the cultural and the generic as spaces of the everyday and of political experimentation (re)producing different ways of tackling and shaping the world; (4) grasping the intersections between The State and citizens' rights in specific communities; (5) new ways of doing Social Research in the cultural field.

Keywords: Cultural/artistic experiences; Feminist movement; LGBTQI+; COVID19; Argentina/Spain

SUMMARY

- Introduction
- Theoretical Framework
- Methodological Framework
- Results
 - The Sensitivity of Culture and Gender Issues
 - Politics in and from the (Trans)Feminist Movement
- Conclusions
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- Legislation consulted
- Short Biography

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st Century, legal efforts to grant and reflect the politics of sexuality (Rubin, 1989) have been strongly influenced by the social and political demands of Feminist and LGBTIQ+¹ movements in various countries worldwide. In this regard, examining the legislation enacted from the year 2000 to the present day in Argentina and Spain lets us grasp these processes in relation to cultural transformations in both countries. In earlier research (anonymised, 2019, and anonymised, 2021), we examined some of these laws in connection with specific cultural activities highlighting the

legislation, giving rise to broad debate. We were driven to account for the potential of various artistic/cultural experiences that demand the inclusion of women, and of both Feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements in local cultures. More than ever, this situation made the cultural sector in each country engage in discussions about how to ensure access, fair hiring practices, and equality. They also re-evaluated the designs, implementations, and management of cultural policies aimed at translating and ensuring the legal regulations for expanding citizens' rights within the cultural field (anonymised, 2022a).

Yet indicators and reports from government organisations (such as SINCA, 2020; UNESCO, 2021a and b) and civil society groups (CCEBA and FLACSO

1 The abbreviation LGBTIQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, and others.

Argentina, 2021) show that the COVID-19 crisis challenges many Feminist practices and strategies (many of which are grounded in these laws). On the one hand, the socio-cultural context of many activist Feminist cultural practices and strategies has been changed by the new legal framework. On the other hand, the contingencies arising from these practices and strategies reveal tensions in certain agreements reached within Feminist and LGBTIQ+ groups. To understand this process, our paper analyses everyday life in today's cultural/artistic field from a multi-local, multi-situated socio-anthropological perspective (Marcus, 2001; Shore, 2010).

Within this broader research framework, we shall now set out two key choices the author made between June 2020 and June 2022.

The first choice was to delve into the aforementioned legislation. This, one should recall, arose from a specific socio-historical context — one in which we show the analytical and political relevance of the continuities/ruptures within Feminism and LGBTIQ+ identities. In this context, we examine how the interactions and disagreements between Feminism and LGBTIQ+ identities are not hindrances to understanding the political aspects of these groups. Instead, they represent complex relationships that let us identify and grasp the sociocultural possibilities and limitations of various groups in specific contexts. This involves questions such as: 'Who are they?; What are their demands?; What alliances are formed and with whom?; What issues are raised; With which social actors are they debated?; In what legal contexts do they advocate for their rights? What laws support them? We therefore reconfigure these trajectories under the heading of the category of the (trans) Feminist movement to empower these processes. The use of the term '(trans)Feminist' in this paper refers to the whole identity and political framework, shedding light on the differences/agreements found within Feminist movements and within LGBTIQ+ movements. On the other hand, it also refers to the rapport/divergences found between Feminist

movements and LGBTIQ+ movements in their external dialogues with the social and political sphere (new legislation, regulations, and citizen rights). Furthermore, by putting (trans) in brackets, we highlight the proximity/distance between the various groups making up both movements. The similarities and differences in the demands made by these groups also shed light on the disputes over who is the "political subject" of Feminism in the context of the "Fourth Wave" flooding the artistic/cultural field during the pandemic. Thus, we re-appropriate the trans-Feminist approach proposed by Sayak Valencia, who sees it as an "epistemological tool that is not confined to incorporating transgender discourse into Feminism, nor is it meant to replace Feminisms." Instead, it is "a network that considers gender transit states, migration, hybridism, vulnerability, race, and class, to articulate them as heirs of historic social uprisings" (2018: 31).

The second research choice was to focus on the diverse, unconventional ways in which (trans)feminist demands inspire powerful daily practices and strategies within artistic and cultural experiences.² These practices highlight methods of social transformation. Here, we redefine the category of (trans)feminist artistic and cultural experiences

2 The cultural/artistic experiences discussed in this paper encompassed a variety of virtual and in-person productions (workshops, theatrical performances, panel discussions, musical shows, among others) run between 2020 and 2022 by: 2 researchers and educators in cultural management and gender (1 from Argentina and 1 from Spain); 2 Spanish female rappers; 1 co-ordinator of an LGBTIQ+ Cultural Centre in Argentina and 2 co-ordinators of a bookstore specialised in women and LGBTIQ+ topics in Spain; 2 visual artists (1 from Argentina and 1 from Spain); 1 feminist activist with indigenous heritage and another of Afro-descendant descent (1 from Spain and 1 from Argentina); 2 non-binary poets (1 from Argentina and 1 from Spain); 1 activist lesbian poet; 1 transgender youth activist in Argentina; 3 dancers and singers (1 from Argentina and 2 from Spain); 2 female circus performers from Argentina; 4 musicians (2 from Argentina and 2 from Spain); 2 Feminist writers (1 from Argentina and 1 from Spain); 2 transgender poets, queer individuals, and members of a music collective; 1 screenwriter, director, and actress from Argentina; and 1 actress and puppeteer from Argentina, currently residing in Spain.

as tools for reshaping cultural policies. These tools involve detachment from and alternatives to the typical cultural practices on both a local and global scale. This occurs through a fluid dialogue with various unconventional perspectives that propose 'different' ways of being and existing in the world (anonimised, 2022b).

To delve deeper, we needed to sharpen our focus on the values of those taking part in this study. This would help identify the everyday practices and strategies of those carrying out (trans)Feminist artistic/cultural experiences in Argentina and Spain during the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, we reframe the three key questions guiding our methodological tool: (1) How did they align their legitimising artistic/cultural practices with socio-gender rights and the principles underpinning pandemic lockdowns?; (2) How did they redefine the meanings and sensitivities of the cultural and gendered within the pandemic framework?; (3) How did they materialise the intersections between The State and citizen rights acquired in a locked-down cultural sector?

To structure our narrative, we shall first share the theoretical and methodological approach we took. We make an artificial distinction between theoretical and methodological elements for analytical purposes. We then split this task into two sections – the theoretical and the methodological framework – given that doing places the divers (trans) Feminisms in dialogue. We shall describe them separately but reflect on how they were mutually enriched with questions, discussions, and concepts based on reconfiguring the socio-anthropological data of situated experiences in both countries. Second, we focus on developing some results stemming from the two main research choices set out above. They form the core of the paper and meet our research goal. Here, we shall recover the narratives, practices, and strategies of the individuals whom we interviewed, and that revealed common responses to the situations in the two countries. In the concluding remarks, we reconstruct three dimensions (Ethical, Aesthetic, and

Political) to shed methodological and theoretical lights on the intertwined practices and strategies. The split between theory and practice is an artificial one but is useful for analytical purposes. The setup of these analysis axes lets us ask new questions, which hone our enquiry. It also shows us the value of looking at real people in the midst of complex social changes rather than just focusing on outcomes. These changes are embedded in cultural and artistic processes and in the context of political movements that discuss many cultural spheres. These different worlds make us reconsider how we can make our journeys a bit more liveable.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout the course of the research, we engaged in a dialogue between four approaches. These were:

- (1) Political Anthropology (Shore and Wright, 1997; Ábeles, 1997; Shore, 2010), which helped us grasp the situated power relations that are reconfigured in public policies and the actors involved in them. In our study, we delved into the dialogue between legislation on gender issues and the cultural field with the actors at play.
- (2) Sociology of Culture (Bourdieu, 1990; Rubinich, 1992, Rodríguez, 2014), facilitating concrete discussions of the cultural field in relation to other social dimensions, letting us delve into the transformations that are (re)produced there. Specifically, studies addressing alternative, participatory femininities in punk sub-cultures and their implications for politics, cultural trends, social movements, and civil rights influenced by DIY culture have been particularly valuable (Atkinson, 2006; Hubbell, 2011; Lukens, 2013; Rodríguez, 2014).
- (3) Cultural Studies (Grossberg, 2010, Hall, 1992), Decolonial Studies (Quijano, 2007; Lugones, 2008; Mignolo, 2010), Intersectional Studies (Crenshaw, 1989; Vivero Vigoya, 2016); gender/

(trans)Feminism studies (Serano, 2009; Solá and Urko, 2013; Valencia, 2018; Platero, 2020; Preciado, 2020), which offered contributions to denaturalise the relationships between culture, gender, ethnicity/race, sexuality, health, and power in a specific historical context and in two geopolitically different countries.

- (4) Intervention/action methodologies (Achilli, 2005; Vich, 2014; anonymised, 2022), which invited us to reconstruct creative forms of participation and study in specific contexts.

These intersections let us see the situations that tend to recur in real people's issues and social actors with specific times and spaces. We configured these skills as practices of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1995). In this conversation, we observed the need to account for how the various forms of the politicisation of culture (Wright, 1998) continue to reproduce the political (whether explicitly or not) and reshape historical, social, localised, and humanised knowledge; that is, a theory of social existence in itself (Quijano, 2007). This framework led us to Cultural Studies, given its ability to "produce the best possible knowledge using the most sophisticated tools to address specific questions about the organisation of power in social life" (Grossberg, 2010: 56). As a result of these debates, we questioned the notion of cultural diversity/social inequality (Reygadas, 2007; Fraser, 2006) from the perspective of gender(s) and its entanglement with public policies, adding various Feminist and race-related works (Crenshaw, 1989; Hall, 1992) that support redistribution and social justice (Fraser, 2009). At this point, we revisited the relationship between The State and civil society (Foucault, 1978; Bourdieu, 1993; Abéles, 1997; Lorey, 2016); the deepening of processes of inequality and the precariousness of life (Reygadas, 2007; Butler, 2009); the issue of identities/subjectivities/sexuality/body (Haraway, 1995; Bennett, 2010; Butler, 2010, 2014, and 2017); and, specifically in the cultural field, we observed the reconfigurations of identities and politics of sex/gender collectives demanding rights bearing on gender and sexuality

(Barrancos, 2014; Fraser, 2009). In this context, we saw that women used DIY culture to redefine their identity, be creative and liberate themselves from the influence of male dominance. For instance, this empowerment inspired them to form bands, improve their skills, and grow in producing their own unique style. Through this, they forged strong links with other women. Today, DIY culture can be seen as an early sign of women adopting a specific Feminism that altered their thinking. They started taking charge in social, cultural, and aesthetic aspects to create their own identity, moving away from traditional gender expectations. This allowed them to form equal connections in their environments and take control of their lives.

To sum up, working within this framework, we focused on reclaiming the voices that intersect in diverse (trans)Feminist artistic/cultural experiences against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic in both Argentina and Spain. We argue that the experience can be seen as the result of a complex web of social representations circulating in society and culture, that is, experience as a historical, social, and cultural product (Scott, 1996; Trebisacce, 2016). The subjectivities of those involved are reshaped in this process. Therefore, the research journey made us realise the need to identify the individual/group daily practices and strategies spawned by these experiences. We focus on the complexity of their relationships with the organisation of culture and power (which necessarily involves cultural policies and Art's place in society, covering: subsidies, scholarships, mediations, management, etc.) and/or the contingent and random actions that the experiences themselves entail (Bennett, 2010).

At this juncture, we shall focus on the daily strategies identified during the research, which we have split into three categories: Ethical, Aesthetic, and Political (Franco, 2019). Tensions and negotiations (re)shaped the individuals engaging in (trans) Feminist artistic/cultural practices in both Spain and Argentina during the COVID 19 pandemic. Those individuals used different strategies in the

complex network in which the body, sexuality, and power are reconfigured in a situated manner (Haraway, 1995). In other words, it is vital that we recognise ourselves in: our settings; our decisions (Ethical, Aesthetic, and Political); the socio-cultural options that open up; the things holding us back. Here, it is important to think about practices in the here and now without necessarily knowing where they will lead. Such an open-minded approach can reveal experiences that help us to know ourselves better.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The socio-anthropological methodology of the study is based on a relational and multi-situated perspective (Marcus, 2001; Shore, 2010). We focused on social, political, economic, gender, and racial dimensions involved in the cultural dynamics of various regions in Argentina and Spain. This methodology starts from the assumption that every human social process is embedded in social relations, which can take various forms: symmetrical, asymmetrical, conflictive, non-conflictive, and so on. Therefore, our field experience relies heavily on ethnography, understood as the direct and sustained presence of the researcher in the same space in which the study's interests are located (Guber, 1991). In this sense, this methodology is presented as the best one for considering the links between culture, art, politics, socio-sexual/gender identities, strategies, and experiences in pandemic contexts, forming the focus of our study. Here, it was vital that we were physically present and actively involved in different experiences in the Argentine artistic and cultural scene (mainly in Buenos Aires — CABA) and in Spain (mainly Barcelona) to produce knowledge. The importance of being in these cities lay in their being able to sustain cultural and artistic activities thanks to the institutional support they received over a year. During this time, these cities held events, both in-person and online, at various locations in both countries. The events included discussions,

workshops, and talks focusing on the cultural and artistic field. They involved artists, government officials, cultural managers, and other important figures in the cultural sphere from both countries. Those taking part in our study included people from various Argentine provinces such as Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, Chaco, Santiago del Estero, Buenos Aires, and Córdoba, as well as from several Spanish Autonomous Communities such as Valencia, Madrid, Andalusia, and Catalonia. These cities/regions were randomly chosen for the study, emerging from the people we encountered during the fieldwork in both countries.

Our corpus was formed by reviewing secondary sources bearing on:

(A) The survey and systematisation of training or reflection events:

linked to cultural/artistic practices and experiences, (trans)Feminism, and the pandemic, conducted in physical, virtual, or hybrid forms from 2020 to 2022. The places surveyed included: in Argentina, *Centro Cultural Kirchner* (CCK)³ and *Casa Brandon*;⁴ in Spain, the *Centre Cultura Contemporànea de Barcelona* (CCCB)⁵ and the cultural space *Ca la Dona*⁶ (similar to the cities, these were the places that cropped up from the people we met during the fieldwork).

We also reviewed and systematised journalistic, audio-visual, and social media material about activities that took place during the study period, focusing on the following cultural sectors: music, literature, design, and visual, graphic, and audio-visual arts; community and independent culture; and individuals researching in the field of culture and (trans)Feminist studies.

3 <https://cck.gob.ar/>

4 <https://brandon.org.ar/>

5 <https://www.cccb.org/es>

6 <https://caladona.org/>

(B) The analysis of quantitative information provided by:

The report “Gender and Creativity: Progress on the Edge of the Abyss” published by UNESCO in 2020 as a preview of the third edition of the UNESCO World Report “Reimagining Cultural Policies,” to mark International Women’s Day.

The “Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Cultural and Creative Industries” also published by UNESCO in 2021.

The “Culture and Equity. Arts, Culture, and Gender” report, published in 2021 jointly by the *Centro Cultural de España en Buenos Aires* (CCEBA) and the team from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Argentine headquarters.

(C) The specific review of laws related to various actions by the Argentine and Spanish governments concerning sexualities.

The following research tools were used:

(a) In-depth interviews with individuals involved in art, public functions bearing on gender spaces, and cultural management in both countries. The 14 individuals were crucial to the research (*cis*-gender [sic] women, lesbians, and transgender men and women, and gays). For confidentiality reasons, we shall not provide names in the text but will identify them only by letters and the cultural sector to which they belong: music, literature, design, visual arts, graphics, and audio-visual arts, community and independent culture, and individuals researching in the field of culture and (trans)Feminist studies.

(b) 15 participant and non-participant observations in the aforementioned artistic/cultural spaces (events, exhibitions, discussions, workshops, and courses) in physical and virtual forms so as to be part of the moments of discussion and reflection on the situation of cultural professionals during the pandemic.

(c) 15 informal conversations with relevant individuals from the cultural sectors (*cis*-gender women, lesbians, transgender women, men, and gay men) in both countries to identify tricky socio-gender issues. In these dialogues, we considered the three key questions mentioned in the introduction of this text.

The individuals we spoke to/interviewed were the result of ‘snowball sampling’ conducted between 2020 and 2021. The author of this text, as a participant in the *Red de Gestión Cultural Argentina* (Argentine Cultural Management Network) and a researcher in the cultural field, began contacting people involved in the arts/cultural sectors in both countries, who, in turn, introduced us to other individuals they knew, and so on.

The fieldwork let us to reconfigure socio-anthropological data for qualitative analysis, with the purpose of examining the various practices and strategies that those taking part in this study used to cope socially, culturally, emotionally, and economically with the pandemic lockdowns then in course. The selected units of analysis brought together people from the arts, academe, cultural management, with government functions or employees of the institutions mentioned, all of whom were involved in applying practices, initiatives, and actions recognising diversities in both countries.

RESULTS

Since the beginning of the 21st Century, members of Feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements have been occupying public and cultural spaces, demanding recognition of their rights. In this regard, understanding the laws and regulations that have been fought for and won is vital for grasping the transformations in the cultural sector from a (post)Feminist perspective. Table 1 was drawn up during the research process, reflecting the investigation and systematisation of secondary sources, along with field records and interviews with cultural figures. The first column lists the key national legis-

lation bearing on sex and gender rights. The second column lists socio-cultural actions recognised by the interviewees. This reconstruction of the unfolding

story from the beginning of the 21st Century facilitated clear observation of the normative advances that were underway when the pandemic struck.

Table 1 Intersections between politics and the artistic/cultural field from gender and sex-based regulations of the early 21st century

YEAR	NATIONAL LEGISLATION Organised social movements		SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIONS Recognised by those taking part in the study	
	Argentina	Spain	Argentina	Spain
2000				Feminist gatherings in Córdoba.
2002	Act 26.862, Medically Assisted Production also known as 'Human Assisted Production Act' or 'National Assisted Fertilisation Act'. Act 25.784, Female Union Quota.		17th National Women's Meeting (ENM) in the city of Salta (Salta province). In an inter-neighbourhood assembly (formed during the 2001 crisis), Dora Coledesky denounced that the issue of clandestine abortions was as urgent as hunger and unemployment. The Assembly for the Right to Abortion is created towards the end of the year.	
2004		Organic Law of Measures of Comprehensive Protection against Gender Violence.	19 th ENM in the city of Mendoza (Mendoza province).	

2005		Act 13/2005 amends the Civil Code concerning the right to marry (adds a second paragraph to the current Article 44 of the Civil Code).	20th ENM in Mar del Plata (Buenos Aires province). - The Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion is created.
2006	Act 26.150, Comprehensive Sex Education (ESI). - [First presentation of the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (IVE) Bill].		21 st ENM in the city of San Salvador (Jujuy province).
2007		Act 3/2007, Gender Equality.	22 nd ENM in the city of Córdoba (Córdoba province).
2008			Ministry of Equality set up.
2009	Act 26.485, Comprehensive Protection to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence against Women in the Areas where they Develop Interpersonal Relationships.		24 th ENM in the city of San Miguel (Tucumán province). Feminist gatherings in Granada (transgender debate emerges).
2010	Modification of Article 2 of Act 26.618, Civil Marriage (known as the Equal Marriage Act).	The Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (IVE), or induced abortion, is regulated in Section II of the 2/2010 Organic Law on sexual and reproductive health and voluntary interruption of pregnancy.	25 th ENM in Paraná (Santa Fe province). Murder of Pepa Gaitán on March 7. This leads to the establishment of Lesbian Visibility Day (from this point on, public spaces in cities across the country are thronged every year).

2012	Act 26.842, Prevention and Punishment of Human Trafficking and Assistance to its Victims.	27 th ENM in the city of Posadas (Misiones province).	Act 26.743, Gender Identity
	F.A.L. case, Article 86 of the Penal Code, and the Supreme Court of Justice ruling recognising the right to legal abortion in certain circumstances.		
2013	Act 26.862, Medically Assisted Production also known as 'Human Assisted Production Act' or 'National Assisted Fertilisation Act'.	Twenty-eighth ENM in San Juan (San Juan province).	
		Creation of the "Ellas hacen" programme.	
2015	The Ministry of Health of the Nation published the Protocol for the Comprehensive Care of Persons with the Right to Legal Abortion (ILE).	30 th ENM in Mar del Plata (Buenos Aires province).	#NiUnaMenos
		Murder of Chiara Páez. Leads to the #NiUnaMenos (Not One Less) Movement, calling for demonstrations in every city under the slogan: "A femicide every 19 hours." - #NiUnaMenos.	
2016	Act 2/2016 on Gender Identity and Expression (known as the Madrid Transgender Act).	31 st ENM in Rosario (Santa Fe province).	The controversial "La Manada" gang rape takes place, sparking a debate about "abuse" and "rape."

2017	Act on Gender Parity in Political Representation Areas (applied for the first time in the 2019 elections).	State Pact Against Gender Violence.	32 nd ENM in Resistencia (Chaco province).	- 8M. Movement. International Women's Strike.	- #MeToo Movement (begun on social media).	- Specific protocols for addressing gender violence within National Public Universities begin to emerge.	8M Movement. International Women's Strike.	- #MeToo Movement (begun on social media).	Murder of Micaela García. Leads to the passing of the Micaela Act in 2019.
2018	Act 27.452 "BRISA" Financial Compensation Regime for Girls, Boys, and Adolescents.	The Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (IVE) Bill is discussed in Congress for the first time. It is defeated.	33 rd ENM in Trelew (Chubut province). For the first time, a march against trans femicides is held.	"Martes verdes" (Green Tuesdays, vigils for the discussion of the IVE in the National Congress).	Reactions to Sam Fernández's presentation during the PODEMOS Autumn School.				
2019	Act 27.499 "MICAELA," Mandatory Gender and Violence Training.	Act 27.539, Female Quota and Access to Musical Events for Female Artists.	34 th ENM in La Plata (Buenos Aires province). The Federal Internationalist Campaign "Somos Plurinacional" (We Are Plurinacional) held.	- Staging of the Chilean performance "Un violador en tu camino" (A rapist in your path).	Staging of the Chilean performance "Un violador en tu camino" (A rapist in your path).				
2020/ 2021	Act 27.610, Access to Voluntary and Legal Interruption of Pregnancy and		35 th ENM takes place virtually (some workshops and low participation).						

Post-Abortion Care for All (IVE/ILE).

Act 27.611, Comprehensive Health Care during Pregnancy and Early Childhood (1000 Days).

Act 27.636, "DIANA SACAYÁN - LOHANA BERKINS," Promotion of Employment for Transvestites, Transsexuals, and Transgender People.

- Comprehensive Recognition Programme for Contribution Periods for Care Tasks (Decree 475/2021 of ANSES).

Presidential Decree No. 476/21, which incorporates the "X" nomenclature in the National Identity Document (DNI) as an option for those who do not identify with the female or male gender.

2021 (36th ENM) held in person but decentralised by regions (low turn-out).

1st National Women with Disabilities Meeting.

Source: Author. Our deepest thanks for the collaboration of Ph.D. candidate Yanina Kaplan (UBA/CONICET) and Ph.D. candidate Javier Torres-Fernández, member of the Women, Literature, and Society Research Group (HUM874) at the University of Almería. Note: In Spain, an 'Organic Law' has a special status more akin to a 'Fundamental Law' or The Constitution. All other, lower tier laws are referred to as 'Acts' in the Table.

In the table, the three laws bearing on the various actions taken by Argentina and by Spain on sexualities are highlighted in bold. These laws were the ones most identified by the people interviewed in both countries as milestones of the Feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements. All the participants in the study said they knew or had heard about the following legislation:

(1) Act 13/2005, allowing Same-Sex Marriage in Spain (2005) and Amendment of Article 2 of Act 26.618 of Civil Marriage (known as the Equal Marriage Act) in Argentina (2010);

(2) Act 2/2016 on Gender Identity and Expression (known as the Madrid Transgender Act) in Spain (2016) and Act 26.743 on Gender Identity in Argentina (2012); and finally;

(3) Organic Act 2/2010 on sexual and reproductive health and voluntary interruption of pregnancy (decriminalisation of the practice during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy) in Spain (2010) and Act 27.610 on access to voluntary and legal interruption of pregnancy and post-abortion care for all (IVE/ILE) in Argentina (2021).

However, artists in both countries have not always recognised these laws when narrating the specific actions that brought them closer to (trans)Feminist movements or that caused them to “lift the patriarchal veil”⁷ in their lives or in their cultural productions. This indicates that many of the interviewees do not belong to (trans)Feminist movements and are therefore not aware of the legislative advances achieved by these movements and their activism.

What they highlighted as a common thread in their lives and practices are socio-cultural protest movements, which took various forms worldwide: the first *≠NiUnaMenos* (Not One Less) movement in 2015 (100% of the study participants); the 8M International Women’s Strike in 2019 (96.55%); the “Un Violador en tu Camino” (A Rapist in Your Path) performance in 2019 (68.96%); the viral #MeToo movement on social media (58.62%); the National Women’s Meeting (ENM) in Argentina (51.72%); Feminist Gatherings in the Spanish State (34.48%); to a much lesser extent, the recent National Women’s Meeting with Disabilities in Argentina (3.44%) in 2020. On the other hand, the vigils in Argentina in 2018 (popularly known as ‘Green Tuesdays’) in support of the IVE Bill, were mentioned by 37.93% of our interviewees in both countries as “a rebellious and hopeful movement.” These gatherings organised by the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion (created at a National Women’s Meeting in Argentina in 2005) led to countless artistic, poetic readings, dances, songs,

the design of images/scripts/stories, among many other artistic/cultural/political actions (Spataro, 2018; anonymised, 2019; among others).

MG told us during an informal conversation that they first called for a meeting in “February 2018, and then they continued from the beginning of the parliamentary process (around April) until the 13th of June (...) later they resumed sporadically on some occasions.” (MG: teacher/researcher and member of the Campaign, 2021). These meetings have been supported by many (trans)Feminist movements around the world and have been replicated in various places in “Abya Yala,”⁸ demanding the decriminalisation of abortion.

These practices and performances made them feel that “their bodies were there,” letting them become emotional, embrace one another, and reinterpret their own artistic/cultural practices as mirrors of sexualised inequalities in their daily lives. In many cases, they were already doing so without realising it (AL – actress, director, and screenwriter; Argentina, 2021), or, as LC (actress and puppeteer; Spain, 2022) told us:

“(…) I’m not exactly sure how to address this issue because, in my case, it’s cross-cutting, I don’t do anything thinking it has to be Feminist, it’s Feminist because I am Feminist, so things spring from being Feminist... there is no other reading... it’s not intentional.”

In the narrative of their practices, we also find how they wove care strategies into their own life experiences, which later led them to shape artistic/cultural strategies: “(...) women had to be silent and embroider their silences practically... over time, we made into Art” (EM, visual artist; Spain, 2022); C, a dance edu-

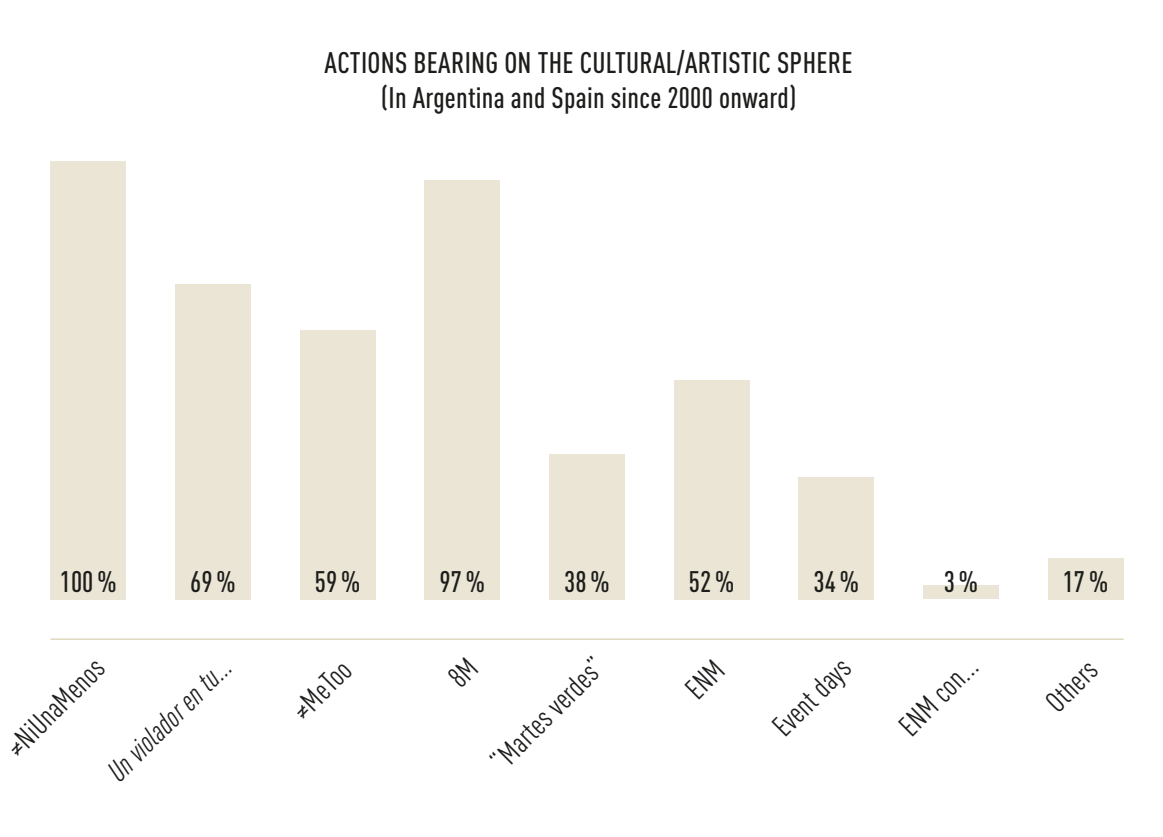
7 Quotations will be cited without referring to any specific individuals when the text is taken from common phrases spoken by people with whom we have conversed in various formal and informal situations.

8 This way of referring to what we know as ‘America’ engages in dialogue with the emergence of indigenous, community-based, and/or popular feminisms. In this regard, we recommend reading the following texts: ‘Feminisms from Abya Yala. Ideas and Propositions of Women from 607 Peoples of Our America’ by Francesca Gargallo Celantani (2014) and ‘Popular Feminisms. Pedagogies and Politics’ by Claudia Korol and Gloria C. Castro (2016).

cator, and LC were united by “respectful upbringing and breastfeeding,” which connected them to “that Feminist being/doing”; LK (co-ordinator of CB, Argentina, 2021) was driven to create an LGBTIQ+ cultural/artistic space by her own life experience, showing

that there was no place “for lesbians to have a good time”; and CB (non-binary poet, Argentina, 2021) was driven by their own search for their sensitive work to “remember their dissident sayings” about their own situated experiences.

Figure 2 Actions bearing on the Cultural/Artistic sphere (In Argentina and Spain from 2000 onward)



Source: Author.

These subjective narratives are reconfigured as common individual and sensitive practices and are enhanced as collective artistic/cultural strategies in both countries. In Argentina, Act 27.539 on Female Quota and Access for Women Artists to Musical Events in 2019 made provision for a minimum of 30% women and trans people in the performing arts (a measure strongly resisted by theatres themselves). In Spain, Organic Law 3/2007 stipulates gender

equality between women and men, applicable to all aspects of life, with no specific regulations in the cultural field.⁹

⁹ We recommend reading the study on Gender Inequality in the Art System in Spain (2020). Available at: https://www.academia.edu/44733634/Estudio_sobre_desigualdad_de_g%C3%A9nero_en_el_sistema_del_arte_en_Espa%C3%B1a_Study_about_gender_inequality_in_the_Spanish_art_system

Despite both similarities and differences between the legislation in both countries, when it comes to rights in the artistic/cultural field, the Social Sciences reveal that crises tend to deepen inequalities. The report by Bridget Conor, “Gender and Creativity: Progress on the Precipice,” published by UNESCO in 2020 as a preview of the third edition of the UNESCO World Report on Cultural Policies, on the occasion of International Women’s Day, states:

“Crises raise the vulnerability of marginalised groups, including women, and can reinforce the idea that women are less important and ‘more expendable’ for creative work than men. This is especially crucial now as COVID-19 continues to spread, and we still do not know its long-term effects on cultural and artistic production. Very few initiatives to support artists and creatives affected by the pandemic incorporate an intersectional gender perspective (UNESCO, 2021b: 6).”

While both countries provided economic support for the artistic/cultural field, particularly during the strictest lockdown periods,¹⁰ it is also true that culture and its spaces were not designated as essential activities for us, even though cultural consumption in terms of streaming shows, films, television, radio, podcasts, etc. soared during the pandemic. In Argentina, cultural and artistic activities were among the last to escape lockdown and get permission to re-open. It is also true that both nations’ support measures for culture were inequitable. This was so given that both Spain and Argentina failed to take a true (trans)Feminist perspective mind when drawing up the legislation. The oversight is all the more surprising given that these countries had hitherto been leaders in fostering such rights.

Furthermore, nurseries, schools, and universities were closed; teleworking soared, and care activities – where women account for over three-quarters of those employed (ILO, 2020) – rose to 100% during the strictest lock-downs. This boosted the time spent on household chores and care. The poorest households (with the high percentages of migrants in both) found themselves in lock-down in overcrowded dwellings, lacking basic services (food, healthcare, Internet connection for continuing education or work, etc.). There was also violence, with women and children being the worst affected (highlighting the intersections between ethnicity/race, age, migrations, etc.). Furthermore, the situation worsened for the trans/transvestite population, much of which already worked in the ‘informal economy’, and that faced problems accessing housing, and healthcare (anonymised, et al., 2021).

In this dilemma between health care on the one hand and the guarantee of gender equity and cultural diversity rights on the other, the cultural individuals taking part in this study struggled and/or negotiated their own artistic/cultural practices in ways that stuck to the pandemic lockdowns. In doing so, they came up with various ethical, aesthetic, and political strategies, as we will see below.

The Sensitivity of Culture and Gender Issues

We saw that the actions of the people in this study both stress and support the idea that the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ communities in the artistic and cultural sphere should be protected by the aforementioned three laws. We know that legislation catering to these groups has led to measures being taken in both countries to protect such rights. These measures include: LGBTIQ+ cultural centres; violence protocols in various sectors; gender equity on stage; self-perceived name contracts; rights related to one’s body - motherhood, abortion. The problem with the pandemic lockdowns was that they forced people to stay at home. This is why one needs to consider various aspects such as economic, emotional, spatial, social, health, and gender-related factors. Such restrictions were in stark

10 In Argentina, lines of credit for SMEs, zero-interest loans for cultural industries, support programs for cultural projects of third-sector organizations, financial assistance for cultural centres, among others, were established. In Spain, in the City Council of Madrid, for example, the support was channelled through CREA SRG. To see more measures implemented for the cultural sector, see: <https://www.cultura.gob.ar/medidas-en-el-sector-cultural-ante-el-covid-19-8932/> and <https://creasgr.com/linea-covid-19-liquidez-cultura>

contrast to the physical and communal activities that such movements engage in to fight for their rights. During lockdown, people were stopped from making a living (something that hit those working in culture, especially given the high proportion of informal, unstable jobs in the sector). They were also stopped from challenging, adapting, negotiating, and changing how they were recognised (in terms of their identity, social standing, and political involvement in the cultural field).

The COVID-19 lockdown forced the various sections of society to adapt. The cultural sector, in particular, went through long standstills or had to follow strict safety measures. Many artists, workers, and officials at cultural centres in Argentina (CCK) and Spain (CCCB) agreed that the crisis hit their income harder than anything they had seen before. This was because they could not perform live, leading to cultural venues either closing down or changing how they worked. While digital activities and ways of supporting oneself were broadly similar in both countries, the financial and structural strictures facing cultural institutions were different, given that Spain is a wealthier nation than Argentina.¹¹

The need for individuals and cultural spaces to reinvent themselves during the pandemic forced, deepened, and spawned new forms of activism and advocacy through online spaces such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Zoom, and WhatsApp. These virtual settings brought together the plurality of Feminisms and LGBTIQ+ collectives, creating an instant dialogue or viralisation of what was happening in the world, thereby reshaping a “global Feminism of instant dialogue.” Paradoxically, this surge in Feminist actions and reflections (in the form of talks, workshops, films, discussions, performances, etc.) sparked a lot of hate speech and also revealed the fragmentation of movements within both countries (for example, the deepening of TERF - Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist - activism

and discourse, which has even been expressed by Spanish government officials).¹² Furthermore, little public money was budgeted for such groups. That said, one should note that Argentina has a Ministry for Women, Gender, and Diversity (one that cannot be considered institutionalised Feminism). This has helped in taking gender measures — something that contrasts with the general situation in Spain’s Autonomous Communities.¹³

Yet the subsidies provided by both States for their gender populations¹⁴ were not made in a co-ordinated manner, nor did they address inequalities stemming from ethnicity/race, age, migration, etc. In this sense, the pandemic boosted demands for gender politics and intersectional perspectives in public policies. The demands were made by Feminists participating in governments, Black Feminists, Lesbians, Trans people, and women unionists. They involved (re)developing strategies stressing diversities/disruptions and living conditions (particularly, in the Spanish State, Feminisms for Independence in Catalonia, Feminisms in The Basque Country, etc.). Oddly enough, during interviews we noted that different groups are coming together more often, and this is leading to discussions on ethics and politics related to sexuality, gender, and the human body. These discussions are challenging the (trans)Feminist movements, and individuals like GB (an LGBTIQ+ group activist), who was involved in drawing up Spain’s 2022 Trans Act. They all highlighted the importance of ideas such as caring for one another, sisterhood, strengthening their networks, and reconnecting with their local roots. They do what they can to maintain a united front in pressing the demands of the broader movement. This perspective was shared by several interviewees,

¹¹ Ditto Note 10.

¹² <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20190715/463469583311/feminismo-transexualidad-mujeres-identidad-genero-amelia-valcarcel.html>

¹³ <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos/medidas-en-materia-de-genero-y-diversidad-en-el-marco-de-la-emergencia-sanitaria>

¹⁴ Ditto Note 10.

including MF, an activist, researcher, and writer in Spain in 2022; A, a rapper from Spain in 2022; and AL, a filmmaker from Argentina in 2021.

The Politics in and from the (Trans)Feminist Movement

As noted earlier, the links between sensitivity to culture and sensitivity to gender issues materialised in the experiences mentioned in the previous section. These intersections between The State and the acquired citizenship rights in a cultural sector compelled us to review, discuss, and/or uphold the agreements reached within the (trans)Feminist movement. These pandemic processes reshaped artistic aesthetics, linked to online-streaming actions: experiential displays of innovative body designs, films shot on cell phones, songs composed from home, millions of discussions, book presentations on the subject, and academic gatherings, among others. In addition, discussions among sectors and generations revealed where various ideas on Feminism, sexuality, and the human body intersect within the artistic and cultural world. These discussions made it clearer than ever that “we are not alone” in our thoughts and experiences, as A, a rapper from Spain in 2021, put it (rapper, Spain, 2021): “we are all linked, and this stems from the fact that despite our differences and diverse backgrounds, there’s a sense of unity and sisterhood among us” (SJ, an actress and singer from Spain in 2021). Additionally, these artistic expressions on the Internet have led to conversations, whether intentional or not, about social, economic, and political rights. They promote ways of ‘navigating’ the world, such as using various colours, dances, clothing, and featuring people of different sizes, colours, abilities, from various regions, social backgrounds, dialects, and more. These ways of ‘navigating’ the situation were used to politically exploit the movement’s experiences of lockdowns. At the same time, these new approaches made Feminists uncomfortable about their self-image and whether they are still following Feminism’s principles and narratives. Here, some in the movement started asking who Feminism should focus on, a question that others thought had been had long been settled. At the same time, the methods and expressions commonly used on social

media changed, often taking a less ‘sisterly’ tone with others. The social media posts were often terse, provocative, highly critical, and de-personalised.

Thus, the pandemic and the lockdowns forged virtual links, especially spanning generations and the world. These links often focused on shallow forms of activism through social media, making the discussion of who should be the central focus of Feminism a trendy topic (Romero Bachiller, 2020: 19). Social media links made news swiftly spread worldwide, affecting, highlighting, and changing people’s lives. In this situation, the artistic and cultural experiences created by the people we studied became ways of understanding, questioning, and assessing political matters and politics, whether they realised it or not. These experiences also redefined places for artistic, performance, and design experiments. They function as diverse labs and artistic and cultural practices that interact with various forms of (trans)Feminism.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper shows that those interviewed stressed the importance of securing the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ communities in the cultural and artistic world. The dialogues explored the experiences of (trans)Feminist individuals working in the artistic/cultural experiences in Argentina and Spain during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022). Our study focused on three key questions:

- (1) How did they square their artistic/cultural practices legitimising socio-gender rights with those underpinning pandemic lockdowns?;
- (2) How did they reinterpret the meanings and sensitivities of cultural and gender aspects during the pandemic?;
- (3) How did they give materiality to the intersections between The State and citizen rights in the cultural sector during lockdown?

A careful examination of their responses to these questions and charting of these dialogues let us come up with three dimensions that should contribute to studies linking culture, art, politics, and socio-sexual/gender identities.

This yielded an ethical dimension, showing us how behaviours, and ways of being and doing are resisted, challenged, and negotiated (reproducing ways of ‘navigating’ the world). In our case study, we saw how the health crisis led to a daily dialogue/co-existence between diverse (trans)feminist groups and more Conservative or radically right-wing women’s groups in both countries. This context prompted questions about sexuality, gender, and body, leading to the reworking of cultural/artistic strategies for care, sisterhood, the strengthening of networks, and the revaluation of individual trajectories. These efforts were to support a movement that prioritises the demands of the whole movement, notwithstanding differences among its constituent groups.

The aesthetic dimension revealed how the meanings of the cultural and the gendered are redefined as spaces for everyday political experimentation (re)producing ways of “navigating” the world. In our case study, we were able to observe how the use of colours, dances, clothing, the presence of bodies of different sizes, colours, abilities, provenance, and dialects became crucial in each experience.

Finally, there is a political dimension to grasping how The State and citizens’ rights interact in specific communities. In our study, we looked at two Spanish-speaking countries, Argentina and Spain, which are in different parts of the world but are culturally linked. We found that (trans)Feminist movements raised similar questions during the lockdowns about including diverse groups in the cultural and artistic fields of each country. When we explored the (trans) Feminist movement, we discovered how it brings out the political aspects of socio-sexual identities, cultural diversities, and inequalities in terms of intersectional rights for social justice.

These three dimensions (ethical, aesthetic, and political) give us a structured way to understand the practices and strategies we have described. The three threads are tightly interwoven and we distinguish between them purely for analytical purposes. Interviewees, whether wittingly or not, used these dimensions to shape their artistic, cultural, and personal experiences during the pandemic. This framework raises new questions and offers scope for honing our methods to better understand the processes in their local, interconnected forms during the pandemic. Last but not least, we readily acknowledge the issues and challenges posed in building suitable categories, methods, ethics and aesthetics for investigating political issues in the cultural/artistic field.

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