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Right-wing feminism and the securitization of migration: On the example of the german campaign 120 Dezibel

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Abstract

The "summer of migration" has facilitated a right-wing narrative that depicts migration and Islam as a security threat to European society, in which gender equality and women's rights are instrumentalized for political purposes. This political strategy, defined by Farris as femonationalism, and its effects constitute the object of this paper. For this purpose, I analyze the German campaign "120-Dezibel", which takes advantage of migrant-led sexual assaults against European women in order to promote a xenophobic immigration policy that affects the current political discourse on refugees and the ›European border regime‹. It's concluded that, by focusing only on perpetrators of foreign origin and in white European victims, far-right feminists place the origin of gender violence beyond European borders, detracting attention from the violence rooted within them, perpetuating a colonial and patriarchal mentality. Finally, that such campaigns evidence how getting involved in the feminist struggle alone is insufficient if the anti-racist struggle is ignored.

Keywords: far-right feminism, securitization, anti-Muslim racism, sexual violence, migration

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El feminismo de derecha y la securitización de la migración: el caso de la campaña alemana *120 dezibel*

Resumen
El "verano de la migración" ha facilitado una narrativa de derecha que describe la migración y el Islam como una amenaza para la seguridad de la sociedad europea, en la que la igualdad de género y los derechos de las mujeres se instrumentalizan con fines políticos. Tal estrategia política —definida por Farris como femonacionalismo— y sus efectos, constituyen el objeto de este trabajo. Para ello, se partirá del marco analítico provisto por las teorías de securitización, así como de las corrientes críticas de análisis de discurso para examinar la campaña alemana "120-Dezibel" (120-Decibeles). Aprovechándose de las agresiones sexuales de los inmigrantes contra las mujeres europeas blancas, esta campaña promueve una política de inmigración xenófoba que afecta al actual discurso político sobre los refugiados y el llamado régimen de fronteras europeo. Se concluye que, al centrarse sólo en los agresores de origen extranjero y en las víctimas blancas europeas, las feministas de extrema derecha sitúan el origen de la violencia de género más allá de las fronteras europeas, restando atención a la violencia arraigada dentro de ellas, perpetuando una mentalidad colonial y patriarcal. Finalmente, que tales campañas evidencian cómo implicarse únicamente en la lucha feminista es insuficiente si la lucha antirracista es ignorada.
Palabras clave: feminismo de extrema derecha, securitización, racismo antimusulmán, violencia sexual, migración.

Introduction

Argentinian anthropologist Rita Segato contends that aggressions and daily abuse against women are the foundation and pedagogy of all other forms of subordination. Furthermore, those forms of aggression constitute, according to Segato, an indicator to diagnose the historical transition of a society as a whole. Despite that, this issue has been forgotten by high politics and relegated to the private sphere (Segato, 2016: 96-98). An explanation to this lack of visibility can be found in how social life is organized according to a patriarchal structure, and in particular, to the patriarchal nature of the judicial system. This is because, as Rommelspacher (1998) points out, empathy and compassion are not granted by coincidence but to those nearest to us and who represent the established order. Thus, in a context of sexual abuse, whereas the perpetrator will receive empathy and understanding, the victim will

be criticised and held in contempt. Feelings, in a nutshell, will be conceded to the collaborators of power (Rommelspacher, 1998: 94).

Rommelspacher's proposal provides examples to explain the impunity and ghettoisation of femicides and sexual violence against women that is —largely— perpetrated by men. At the same time, however, it draws attention to a phenomenon which under this logic could be seen as an anomaly: the disproportionate attention given to sexual violence perpetrated by non-white men against white European women, and its inclusion as one of the central issues of the political agenda of nationalist right-wing parties in the past several years. This phenomenon is possible in a historical moment in which the global rise in refugee numbers has facilitated a right-wing narrative that depicts migration and Islam as a security threat to European society, in which gender equality and women's rights are instrumentalized for political purposes. The prejudices around refugees and asylum seekers and their characterisation as members of a culture that is inherently misogynistic have allowed feminist far-right groups to elaborate a securitization discourse that foregrounds Muslim men and, to a lesser extent, other non-western immigrants, portraying them as bearers of violence against women who otherwise would not be present in European societies.

In the following, an analysis will be made based on critical approaches of how far-right feminist groups have contributed to the change in perspective from the protection of refugees to the protection of European society and especially of white European women from refugees. To this end, a review of key reflections in the debate on the securitization of migration, racism and its link to right-wing feminism will be undertaken. These reflections will be incorporated into the analysis of the German campaign "120-Dezibel", an example of the appropriation of the feminist agenda for the promotion of an anti-immigrant policy. These kinds of campaigns show the cognitive dissonance between the self-perception of European society as cosmopolitan, non-racist and egalitarian, and its reality.

Securitization of migration and right wing feminism

Agamben claims that today the state of exception has reached its maximum worldwide deployment in which governmental violence, while

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ignoring international law externally and producing a permanent state of exception internally, contradicts and suppresses the normative aspect of law with impunity. As a result of this, "human action with no relation to law stands before a norm with no relation to life"[2] (2003: 86-87). Agamben´s affirmation sheds light on how the prevalence of a securitization rhetoric over the rhetoric of human rights in the political debate has led to a change in the perception of migration. As a consequence, migration is no longer depicted as a natural social phenomenon or as a reaction towards a humanitarian crisis, but rather as a threat and as a source of insecurity that needs to be combated. This leads to the criminalization of immigrants and asylum seekers, as well as their portrayal as the carriers of values and practices that do not fit in a more "open" European society.

Drawing on the approaches of some of the main securitization scholars, Bourbeau defines securitization as the social process of "integrating discursively and institutionally an issue into security frameworks that emphasize policing, control and defense" (Bourbeau, 2015: 395). The author distinguishes two main logics in the literature of securitization processes: the logic of routine and the logic of exception. The logic of routine maintains that securitization is a "collection of routinized and patterned practices, typically carried out by bureaucrats and security professionals, in which technology holds a prominent place" (Bourbeau: 2014: 188). Whereas this logic has been fostered by a variety of scholars, one of its main representatives is Bigo, a key figure of the so-called School of Paris, who maintains that security decisions and practices foster a sense of unease and insecurity, or encourage this environment if it does not already exist (Bigo, 2002: 66). In regards to the securitization of migration, the author maintains that this is produced "from the correlation between some successful speech acts of political leaders, the mobilization they create for and against some groups of people, and the specific field of security professionals […along with...] a range of administrative practices (*Ibid*.: 67).

In contrast to the School of Paris' proposal, the logic of exception, proposed by the Copenhagen School (CoS) and inspired by the work of Carl Schmitt, focuses on the speech acts that "legitimize exceptional

2. Own translation.

policies and practices in the face of an existential security threat" (Bourbeau, 2014: 189). According to the CoS, the speech act of labelling an issue as a "security issue" removes it from the day-to-day political agenda and gives it a sense of urgency and relevance that legitimizes the deployment of extreme measures (Bourbeau, 2014; CASE, 2005). Despite this distinction, Bourbeau argues that these logics must not be considered separately or as mutually exclusive, and claims that "securitization is first and foremost about performance: the process of doing something" (2014: 193). He suggests that the securitization process does not have a specific sequence and that neither of the two logics prevails over the other, but rather that they interact and reinforce each other in different ways.

The securitization of migration, defined as "the application of a security framework to the movement of people" (Bourbeau, 2011: 11) lies, especially but not exclusively, in the framework of the societal security agenda in which threats to identity appear as the element that fosters the construction of "us" opposed to "them". Here, the most important referent objects are "tribes, clans, nations (...) civilizations, religions, and race" (Buzan, Wæver, De Wilde, 1998: 124). In the face of this threat, society will react either through activities carried out by the community or by placing this issue in the State agenda, where it should be tackled at a legislative level or through migration control practices (*Ibid*: 123). In this regard it is worth mentioning that, according to the study Religionsmonitor 2017, carried out in Germany, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity are considered as enriching religions by the majority of respondents and only a 10% categorize them as threatening. In contrast, Islam is considered only by one third of the German populace as enriching, and every second person perceives it as a threat. Even if in the last years such perception has diminished, the perception of threat has remained relatively high since 2013. A similar situation can be found in the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland (Religionsmonitor, 2017: 12).

The perception of threat plays a key role in the securitization of immigration, since it depends, according to Huysmans, on the formulation of credible statements about migrants and refugees in which they are represented as a factor that endangers the survival of the political units in question. Under this paradigm, trust in the other is replaced by suspicion and fear, and it is precisely the institution of "a politics

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and administration of fear, not only as an emotion but as a currency and an organizational principle" in social and political relations that distinguishes this approach from the rest (Huysmans, 2006: 58, 61).

Who can securitize? Internet as the new arena of securitization

A discourse that presents something as an existential threat constitutes a securitizing move and does not immediately create securitization, to this end, it is necessary that the audience accepts it as such, that is to say, a certain level of resonance is required to legitimize emergency measures (Buzan *et al*., 1998: 25). According to the CoS, not every subject can be a securitizing actor. Social capital and power are essential elements to legitimize the securitizing moves, which in turn, must be accepted by the audience (Bourbeau, 2014: 190). When it comes to define who the securitizing agents are, the CoS focuses almost entirely on sovereign and elite politics. On its part, the School of Paris, as above mentioned, is narrowly focused on the security professionals. Bourbeau indicates, however, that novel approaches account for the way in which securitization process involves other agents, such as the media, religious actors and NGOs (2014: 192). Media, for example, could act either as initiators of the securitizing process, even before the formulation of the political agents, or as transmitting players supporting the moves done by the political agents or articulating the security demands of the audience (Bourbeau, 2011: 46).

In recent years, the Internet has turned into a new arena where both governmental and non-governmental actors are doing their part to securitize migration and to influence public opinion and shape ideology. The above evidences how in spite of its auto perception as non-racist and cosmopolitan, anti-islamic stereotypes are fostered to a large extent in Europe. By classifying and perceiving Islam as an political Ideology related to intolerance, misogyny, archaism and violent extremism (Religionsmonitor, 2015: 29-31) both religious intolerance and the implementation of exceptional security policies and practices are not only justified but categorized as urgent. This has proven to be a successful strategy for right-wing radicals, who are, as a rule, anti-islamic, and who also connect this attitude with a concrete agenda

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according to their slogans (*Ibid*.: 34), in this case with gender equality and women's rights.

120 Dezibel and the construction of a securitization discourse

An example of the appropriation of the feminist discourse for a racist agenda in which violence against women is instrumentalized to generate an anti-immigrant sentiment and to collaborate with the securitization discourse is the online campaign "120 Dezibel". The name derives from the volume of a usual pocket alarm that, according to its representatives, every European woman carries in her purse. 120 Dezibel seeks to take advantage of migrant-led sexual assaults against European women and to capture the impulse generated by the MeToo campaign in order to promote a xenophobic immigration policy in the name of feminism.

Launched in January 2018, the online campaign exhibits a video in which German and Austrian women denounce sexual offences and murders perpetrated by immigrants in the cities of Kandel, Malmö and Stockholm. Twisting the feminist claim about the lack of attention to gender violence, 120 Dezibel accuses the European States for being accomplices in sexual violence and murder of "its own daughters" who have been abandoned and forgotten. Accompanied by dramatic music, the activists portrayed in the video maintain that the current migration policy is to blame for this sacrifice:

> We are not secure, cause you are not securing us, cause you refuse to secure our borders. Cause you refuse to control who is coming in, cause you refuse to deport criminals (...) Because of your immigration policies, we are facing soon a majority of young men that come from archaic, misogynistic societies. You knew that and you accepted it, you abandoned us, you sacrificed us. You are preaching feminism and women's rights but you are the true enemy of women (120 Dezibel).

With this message, the activists not only feed the ideas that link Islam with oppression of women, reinforcing the securitizing discourse, but they go even further and demand the implementation of securitization practices of migration such as deportation and border control. Whereas 120 Dezibel presents itself as the outcry against imported violence and "foreign infiltration" and holds a nationalist and whi-

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te supremacist discourse, it portrays European women as defenceless victims of misogynist and dangerous immigrants, and raise the alarm of an imminent threat:

> We are the daughters of Europe. We remember every raped, abused, murdered and forgotten girl. We will put them in your mind. We were silent for too long, now starts our resistance. Mothers, women, sisters, daughters of Europa, this State will not protect you. Nobody knows who will be next. You need to stand up for yourselves (...) 120 Dezibel is the name of our movement of resistance of women for women. 120 Dezibel is the real outcry against the true menace for women in Europe (120 Dezibel).

Nevertheless, the activists refer neither to murders nor to any sexual violence against women perpetrated by white European men, nor to the murders and sexual violence suffered by non-European women.[3] Ironically, despite presenting itself as a feminist movement, the campaign was launched by Martin Sellner, and the website is registered by Daniel Fiß, both members of the Identitarian Movement, a group represented mostly by men. Originating in France, the Identitarian Movement is a right-wing extremist entity that represents the ideology of "ethnopluralism" and calls for a closed and ethnically homogeneous "European culture" threatened by "Islamization". The movement, which has rapidly spread in Europe, promotes the creation of white ethno-states and the exclusion of migrants and non-white residents. The German branch of the movement founded in 2014, was designated as an extremist body by Germany's domestic intelligence agency. The agency declared that the movement "ultimately aims to exclude people of non-European origin from democratic participation and to discriminate against them in a way that infringes their human dignity" (Deutsche Welle, 2019). Its sympathisers claim that they are maintaining their tradition, fatherland and families as "pure" and free from the perceived foreign threat. This narrative is compatible with that of Alternative for Germany and other right-wing groups, whose members also proclaim that the liberty of women is menaced by immigration and Islam, and that have coined terms as "rapefugee" or "violation jihad". Paradoxically, one of the most prominent women acti-

3. According to the Budeskriminalamt, more than 80% of sexual offences are committed by the victims' partners, most of the time in couples of the same nation.

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vists of the party is Leyla Bilge of Kurdish origin, who organised the Women's March in February 2018, in which members of Pegida also took part, in order to protest against migration laws that they claim are jeopardizing the security of women (Der Tagesspiegel, 2018).

The strategy of adopting women's rights and gender equality language as part of the anti-immigration and anti-Islam campaigns of 120 Dezibel is not an exceptional case, but a trend among the right-wing parties and political groups that has spread in Europe since the mid-2000s. This question as analysed by Farris (2017) is briefly presented below.

Femonationalism, or how the Right brought women's rights to high politics

In her work *In the name of women's rights*, Farris (2017) addresses how the electoral accomplishments of nationalist right-wing parties in Europe, together with their anti-Islam slogans and the invocation of gender equality, have triggered fears of a return to fascism. By exposing the examples of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, Marine Le Pen in France and Matteo Salvini in Italy, the author illustrates how, despite their masculinist political style and lack of concrete gender policies, these politicians managed to move ahead with their anti-Islam agendas in the name of women's rights (Farris, 2017: 1-2), which unifies them in spite of their differences. Nevertheless, Farris argues that not only right-wing politicians, neoliberals and feminists have reproduced an anti-Islamic feminist discourse, but also some renowned feminists such as Élizabeth Badinter from France, Ayan Hirsi Ali from the Netherlands and the German Alice Schwarzer, a fierce opponent of Islam as a misogynist religion and culture (*Ibid.*).

Despite the severity of this problem, the author claims that the anti-Islam campaigns have not received the attention they deserve. Thus, counteracting this tendency, she presents a theoretical framework to analyse the use of gender equality within xenophobic campaigns and coins the term "femonationalism" —short for "feminist and femocratic nationalism"—, which refers to:

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> the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam (…) [but also anti-immigration] campaigns and to the participation of certain feminists and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality (…) [In order] to advance xenophobic and racist politics (...) while, on the other hand, it captures the involvement of various well-known and quite visible feminists and femocrats in the current framing of Islam as a quintessentially misogynistic religion and culture (*Ibid*. 4).

Femonationalism is understood under three dimensions, namely: as convergence, as ideological formation and as neoliberal political economy. The first dimension appeals to the convergence of different actors and movements, that are far from homogeneous but who are brought together by the instrumentalization and exploitation of the mainstream idea of gender equality with the aim of consolidating a nationalist project (*Ibid*.: 6,8). Farris contends the fact that the strength of femonationalism lies especially in the participation of feminists, femocrats, and female politicians and public figures of Muslim background in the reproduction of the narrative that depicts Muslim men and women as oppressors and victims; a tension that, however, could be weakened through the confrontation of its contradictory components (*Ibid*.: 9-10).

In the second dimension, femonationalism as ideological formation, Farris refers to the subjacent philosophy of femonationalism. First in regards to the idea of Western supremacy, that allows them to establish a parallel between the current positioning of Muslim men and women —being the latter portrayed as passive victims of the former—, and the convention proposed by Spivak of "white men [claiming to be] saving brown women from brown men" (*Ibid*.: 11). Second, it refers to the mobilization of feminism in the promotion of an anti-immigration and Islamophobic discourse spread by the massive media apparatus especially since 9/11. In the German case, the New Year's Eve event in Cologne was a fundamental phenomenon that appeared to reinforce the link between Islam and violence against women. Finally, the author addresses the economic interests hidden behind the gender agenda of the different actors that foster xenophobia (*Ibid*.: 10-12).

The third and final dimension is femonationalism as neoliberal political economy. In this dimension, neoliberalism is conceived as both the context in which femonationalist convergence emerges and as a

constitutive element. In a time of European crisis of social reproduction, it plays an important role in institutionalizing the ideology of femonationalism with the aim of re-organizing the productive and the socially reproductive spheres. This is indicative of a crucial contradiction, since this dimension shows how while femocrats preach the emancipation of women and access to the productive public sphere, non-western female migrants are confined to care and domestic work (*Ibid*.: 13-17). Furthermore, femonationalism promotes a policy of female victimization, concealing the fact that women can also embody the patriarchal order and uphold anti-pluralistic political agendas, a question which is addressed in the following section.

Racism and feminism in right-wing politics

Rommelspacher (1998) points out that whereas violent acts are almost exclusively committed by men, women tend to distance themselves from racist and male-chauvinist behaviour. However, such a difference diminishes —to a relatively small extent— when it comes to the electoral behaviour.[4] For instance, a racist political agenda could be interesting to white women who perceive in black men the prototype of a rapist, an idea that turns out to be quite convenient to avoid confronting the violence inflicted by white men. In doing so, "sexism stabilises racism"[5] (Rommelspacher, 1998: 98). These ideas are derived in part from Western women's self-conception of having reached freedom and emancipation, especially in comparison to other cultures categorized as repressive of women, which has been a "standard strategy of Western domain"[6] (*Ibid*.).

In her approach to racism and sexism, Rommelspacher alludes to the way in which racism and antisemitism were denied in the feminist debate by two different positions: the thesis of the primacy of patriarchy and the equation of racism with sexism. In regards to the first, the

4. In the European election of 2019 in Germany, Alternative for Germany won 11 seats. The distribution of votes by gender given to the far-right party was 13% of men and 7% of women.
5. Own translation.
6. *Ibid*.

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author states that, despite the fact that patriarchy determines all our relations, it should not make other power relations meaningless. To Rommelspracher, focusing only on the power structure of patriarchy would assist in preventing women from participating in politics and from assuming responsibility for the ideologies of a society, both of which are fundamentally male inventions. In the context of National Socialism, whilst men developed the race ideology and established racist laws, women, placed at the margins of politics, suffered discrimination and had to bear the consequences of war (*Ibid*.: 102-104). Nevertheless, appealing to the thesis of female resistance, Rommelspacher claims that women were responsible for the reproduction of racist behaviour in their proximity, since in such contexts they could decide whether or not to collaborate with the system. She states that despite the discrimination against them during National Socialism, many of them were enthusiastic, since this aspect coexisted with the revaluation of their work as mothers of the "Aryan race" and the "German people".[7] This interaction between racism and sexism was evident in the promotion of "Aryan" natality and maternity contrasted against the sterilisation and genocide of women who did not meet the racial ideal. There is no denying that resistance against the National Socialist regime was opposed by other German women, but this resistance was only seldom against racism and antisemitism (*Ibid*: 1998: 104-106).

In respect to the equation of racism with sexism, Rommelspacher contends that by placing women in the same position as other discriminated minorities, the specificities of the relationships among them vanish. This approach is frequently employed in the analysis of colonialism and refers to the way in which women were discriminated in the same manner as ethnic minorities, assuming that colonial racism works under the same logic of sexism, and hence establishing a parallel between the construction of "the woman" and that of "the savage"[8] (*Ibid*.: 106). Nevertheless, this position fails to consider the distinctions between different groups of women and men and their positions in social hierarchies. Countering this one-dimensional pers-

7. A current reference to this practice could be found in the AfD's campaign posters that show a pregnant white woman, whose face is partially hidden with the slogan: *Neue Deutsche? Machen wir selber* ("New Germans? We do it ourselves").
8. Own translation.

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pective of white feminism and aiming to fulfill the complexity that this phenomenon demands, the author resorts to the thesis of complicity of women which states that "even though womens' behaviour is influenced by the asymmetries of gender relations within the patriarchal system, they indeed have responsibility"[9] (1998: 109). The role of women must be analyzed, according to this posture, not only with regard to men but also to other people and relations. Women do not act only in this way but also as members of determined social groups. To take one example, the author refers to National Socialism as a period in which belonging either to the "Aryan race" or to the persecuted would determine to a large extent one's chances in life. As part of the construction of an emancipatory self-image, women must be considered in history as a subject —both in resistance and in complicity—, and not only as powerless beings, even if it implies to recognise their potential cruelty and moral failures. This is crucial since, as Rommelspacher contends, the relative impotence of women is still used as an argument to prevent their access to politics and to the ideology construction (1998:112-113).

Although racialized discourses persist, there has been a shift in the last sixty years. This is evident in the way biologic racist discourses have been replaced by those referring to cultural racism (See Hall, 2000; Grosfoguel, 2014). Nowadays, cultural racism in which religion occupies a central position, does not sustain a racial superiority, but rather the incompatibility among different cultures. Here the focus is placed on the inferiorization of costumes, practices, beliefs and values of a determined group. In the case of Islam, Grosfoguel argues that despite the fact that Islamophobia is a long-term form of racism, it has re-emerged with force since 9/11 embedded the securitisation discourse that has spread the image of Muslims as terrorists and violent subjects that threaten Western societies. Such an exaggerated image reproduced in Western media (See Poole, 2006; Powell, 2011; Moore, Mason and Lewis, 2008; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010) has been fundamental to the emergence of a new wave of anti-Muslim racism whose origins date back to the culturalist racism prior to 9/11 (Grosfoguel, 2014: 92).

9. Own translation.

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Alongside this trend, Muslims have been characterised as members of a patriarchal and misogynistic society, a constant depiction that contrasts with the silence in communicating the oppression of Western women by white Western men, which translates into an orientalist distortion of history. To deepen in this question, Narayan provides a lens for understanding how even though violence against women is not a problem exclusive to non-Western societies, the narrative that depicts the Other as bearer of an intrinsically misogynistic culture becomes pervasive in a transnational context.

Imported sexual violence? Feminist issues in a transnational context

In developing her proposal, Narayan (1997) analyzes how an Indian feminist issue, namely dowry murder, is shaped in national context and subsequently affected and reframed by crossing national boundaries in a context of multinational reception. She attends specifically to the way in which this issue is publicly understood in the US as a "foreign" or "exotic" phenomenon of violence against women attributed to cultural reasons, disregarding its connections with the "familiar" phenomenon of domestic violence suffered by local women.

The asymmetry that both phenomena received (here Narayan contrasts the "spectacular visibility" of women murder over dowry in India with the difficulty to find data about deaths of women resulting from domestic violence in the US), is explained by the way in which feminist agendas are shaped by the conditions of their national contexts and their subsequent effects. One of these contextual differences is the existence of the visible category of "dowry murder" that describes this lethal form of violence. On the contrary, the fatal forms of domestic violence in the US lack a specific term to name them, an absence that prevents this issue of being one of public and political concern (Narayan, 1997: 95-96). In the case of Germany this lack has been lately a matter of dispute and an increasing demand of feminist organisations, which, influenced by the feminist movements of Latin America, lay claim to the recognition of "femicide" or "feminicide" as a specific form of violence towards women, since these kinds of murders are still classified as domestic violence and depicted merely as family dramas.

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Having a particular category to classify these forms of sexual/lethal violence not only has effect in terms of public attention but also in institutional terms, in the development of protocols or procedures designed to solve and prosecute them, as well as in the generation of data. Such mechanisms would help clarify the true proportions of violence against women perpetrated by both citizens and foreigners and thus demystify the idea that such violence comes only from abroad. That is to say, echoing Narayan, that harassment, rape and feminicides are not, as 120 Dezibel and other femonationalists claim, "'unlike 'things that happen here'" (*Ibid*.: 101). The above could enable the recognition of two ineludible facts: first the magnitude of the problem as a global one of which any woman can be a victim, and second, that any man despite his nationality, ethnicity or religion could be a perpetrator.

Feminist issues increasingly cross national borders due mainly to the increment of global migration and to the growing of feminist scholarship and information in a transnational scale (*Ibid*.: 88). The recent arrival of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe has been used by femonationalists to accuse the open doors policies of allowing the import of issues of public concern and political engagement conceived by the West as "authentic Third-World gender issues" into the region (*Ibid*: 103). I refer to the term "Third-World gender issues" because, even though the violence to which groups like 120 Dezibel refer is not in formal terms an "Other" —e.g.: clitorodectomy, infibulation or dowry-murders—, the perpetrators are perceived and depicted as "Others" and the cause of their violent behaviour is attributed to their purported belonging to a culture or religion repressive of women, in this case Islam.[10]

This depiction makes unnecessary the presence of "alien" features of violence in order to code the phenomenon as "Other", as in the case of use of fire in dowry-murder[11] addressed by Narayan. Furthermore, aiming to understand the phenomenon before us, the author coins the concept "dead by culture". This term describes the effect caused

10. Not to mention, the overwhelming importance given to the hijab debate in European media and politics, a topic which exceeds the aims of this paper.
11. Narayan affirms that instruments employed in violence against women must be understood according to the context in which they are used and that they could be less "cultural" and "exotic" than mundane or material. As an example she refers to how in India, burning a woman to death, "is no more 'exotic' than shooting her to death is in the us context" (1997: 102).

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when, by crossing borders, "dowry murder" is no longer categorized as domestic violence but as a "sort of bizarre 'Indian ritual' (...) that surely must be caused by 'Indian Culture'... [which in turn] becomes the diffuse culprit responsible for 'women being burned to death everyday in India'" (*Ibid*.: 103). This categorization combines and is reinforced by other narratives that depict non-Western societies as primitive or savage by nature, and frequently refers to religious views, or "traditional values" as virtually synonymous with "culture" (*Ibid*.: 112).

The classification of Islam as a threatening political ideology responds, according to Akbulut (2017), to a process of alterity of Islam that favors the maintenance of an idealized self-image which contrasts with the essential characteristics attributed to the Islamic religion. This, in turn, leads to the assumption that Muslims are the bearers of such attributes, depriving them of their status as subjects by determining them mainly by their religious affiliation. This practice of desubjectivation is used in many current debates especially in connection with topics such as integration or security policy, in which Islam is perceived as an explanatory analytical framework of different social conflicts (Akbulut:168). Thus, following Huysmans, the claim of the Islamic threat on behalf of the nationalist forces ends up affirming the "Christian roots of the West without having to reflect upon the Christian values that everyone shares", and "by silencing the fact that the nation has relied on, and thus has been shaped by, significant immigration waves in the past" (Huysmans, 2006: 50, 52). In the case of violence against women denounced by femonationalists, and following Narayan's line of argument, it is worth highlighting how whereas the Arab culture and the "Muslim views of women" are used as an explanation for this kind of violence, neither European culture nor Christianity are appealed to as explanations for violence against women exercised by white European men (Narayan, 1997: 105).

Thus, the "death by culture" effect results in the tendency of victimizing Third-World women and their need to be saved from brown men by white men, as Spivak argues. But in a transnational context and in the construction of a securitization discourse it goes even further since this victimization and threat also extends to and focuses on European white women. This "Otherness" and its instrumentalization to securitize migration are key elements that allow us to understand the media imbalances that give excessive visibility to violence exerci-

sed by non-white perpetrators against white women, whereas violence against women exercised by white perpetrators and violence suffered by non-white victims remains underrepresented.

Conclusions

Although it is critically important to visibilize gender violence, the strategy of femonationalists imposes great social costs. By focusing only on perpetrators of foreign origin and in white European victims, adherents of far-right feminism place the origin of gender violence beyond European borders, detracting attention from the violence rooted within them. The idea that misogyny and sexism are imported discredits the feminist movements that fight against gender inequality and gender-based violence irrespective of its origin and thus it perpetuates a colonial and patriarchal mentality. Campaigns such as 120 Dezibel are evidence of how getting involved in the feminist struggle alone is not sufficient if the anti-racist struggle is ignored. The fight for women's rights demands an understanding of how all the different systems of oppression in which we live emerge and operate in an articulated way in which gender has to do with race and class position, but also with the human condition.

Moffette and Vadasaria maintain that, when it comes to posing the question of securitization of migration and its referent objects, it is necessary to transcend the governmentality approach and resort to the framework of racial governmentality, which helps visibilize the entanglements between securitization, anti-migrant violence and colonial modernity (2016: 294). Relying upon rationalities of racial difference, this framework refers to the ways in which "non-white populations, and notably their bodies, are read and treated as threatening and violent" in the racialized discourses and modes of governing (*Ibid*.: 295), as the case at hand shows. And in addition, how this stance consequently exonerates dehumanizing practices against them —e.g. racial profiling, deportation, imprisonment— are exonerated (*Ibid*.).

Questioning the way in which we think about securitization takes us back to the critical security perspective, specifically the security and emancipation approach. Here, emancipation is the guideline for both the theory and the practice of security, and thus a shift takes place

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whereby instead of privileging the state as the referent object par excellence, human beings are positioned as the ultimate referent of security. In particular, the focus is on the "the experience of those men and women and communities for whom the present world order is a cause of insecurity" (Wyn Jones, 1999: 123). It is also a shift towards the desecuritization of migration, which struggles to relocate security issues into "a context of ethico-political judgement in which one does not seek to found the political on the basis of existential insecurity" (Huysmans, 2006: 142). This would imply seeing immigration and refugees through the prism of a humanitarian and human rights perspective and not through the lens of a security policy.

Finally, in regards to the Western feminisms, the question is not whether it is necessary to occupy a specific place of oppression to engage with the feminist struggle. As allies in the fight against patriarchy, Western feminisms must recognise and denounce women's oppression in other societies, but this has to be done keeping in mind the privileged position they occupy. As Narayan points out, a better comprehension of ""context" and "comparative understanding", as well as attending asymmetries in the "cultural explanation"" of feminist issues are fundamental tools for feminist transnational cooperation and solidarity (1997: 88). Furthermore, and following Rommelspacher, it is important to remember that the repression and liberation of women can have different meanings in every class and culture, depending on the resources that women and men have at their disposal, and their meaning for the relationships (1998: 98); nevertheless this should not prevent the possibility of constructing a pluralistic political project. For this purpose, it is fundamental to bear in mind that whereas our societies are plural, the distinct forms of oppression and violence that women face are not derived from the differences between cultures, but from the patriarchal system that permeates society as a whole in its different manifestations, even in those created in the name of women's liberation.

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