



**#METOO OR THE ART OF CALL-OUT CULTURE**

Assessing the impact of Social Movements in International Relations

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Degree in International Relations

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Foreign Policy and European Union Track

Research Project

May 2021

*'Me Too' is about letting the power of empathy to stomp out shame*

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## **ABSTRACT**

We do no longer live in a state-centric world. New actors such as transnational companies, cities, or social movements are earning their place within IR. The aim of this research is to highlight social movements' relevance in IR as well as the need to uplift gender topics, by means of assessing social movements' impact through the #MeToo movement. This impact will be analyzed in three realms: political, cultural, and biographical, within the context of globalization and the 4th wave of feminism. Legal changes, an international convention, challenging shame and fear culture, an increase in reporting of sexual-related crimes, and achieving a feminist consciousness are just some of the outcomes of the outbreak of the #MeToo movement. Social movements have been at the forefront of social change. In the current era, social movements, among other non-state actors, have crystallized as important actors in international relations. However, the literature is still behind when it comes to highlighting their relevance. This research arises from the necessity to fill in this theoretical gap as a way to broaden the scope of recognized actors within the IR literature.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*I would like to express my thanks of gratitude to my supervisor Umut Oezkirimli, to Kaitlynn Mendes, to my friends and to family for their support during the elaboration of this project.*

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Motivation**

The idea that we do no longer live in a state-centric world has been widely accepted in International Relations, even becoming an axiomatic statement. New actors such as transnational companies, cities or social movements are emerging within IR. In fact, they are not emerging currently, but rather they start to be acknowledged as sources of power at an international level. This study will be devoted to the assessment of social movements' impact. Among the so-called "emerging actors", social movements have been the articulators of social change throughout history. Therefore, it is necessary to tackle their dynamics, their way of influencing international climate and their goals.

The study of social movements is at its early stages. It has mainly focused on decolonization and national movements. However, there are very few studies about feminism at an international level. Moreover, gender issues have reached their peak when it comes to international relevance. Consequently, it becomes necessary to analyze any issue from a gendered perspective. The juxtaposition of highlighting social movements' relevance in IR with the need to uplift gender topics within this same discipline is, to sum it up, the main goal of this research.

### **1.2 Research Design**

#### **1.2.1 Research Question and Hypothesis**

The research question of this research is: Which is the impact of social movements in International Relations? The hypothesis is that social movements are a major force of change in the contemporary era of International Relations, due to their impact in the political realm, with legal achievements, the cultural realm, challenging the mainstream narratives and the biographical realm, through feminist consciousness. This is a case-oriented research: the #MeToo Movement. Therefore, the independent variable is social movements, whereas the dependent variable is International Relations.

#### **1.2.2 Objectives**

The general objective of the research is to explore to what extent social movements impact on International Relations; that is to say, to find out whether they are a major or a minor force of

change within the international arena by means of using the #MeToo movement as a landmark example.

These are the specific objectives of this research:

- To examine how different IR theories categorized the role of social movements
- To analyze how social movements affect International Relations
- To assess the impact of the #MeToo movement in the international arena

### **1.3 Methodology**

The methodology of this final degree project will be a two-tiered theoretical approach. It will be based on the broader constructivist framework, which will provide the post-positivist epistemology. Besides, underneath the constructivist framework, the research will be framed within feminist theory, as it is aimed to uplift gender issues within International Relations, understanding feminist IR theory as the lenses through which issues are disentangled.

As for the methodology, this research will be drawn on a second-tier theory within social movement studies: Social Movements Impact Theory. In its early stages, in the 1990s, the theory was mainly based on categorizing social movements and protests in a dichotomous manner by stating whether they were a “success” or “failure”. Historically, social movements outcome theory has struggled with the operationalization of this impact analysis for lack of data. Nonetheless, there is “a general agreement that social movements can have a wide range of consequences that should not be reduced to the simple terms of success and failure” (Bosi and Uba, 2009, p. 409). Moreover, there is also a consensus that the impact of social movements is not always direct and quantifiable, that is to say, social movements can influence and shape reality in different ways.

Consequently, this research will be based on these two premises. Moreover, the methodology used will follow the one put forward by Marco Giugni, a political scientist and scholar from the University of Geneva and editor of *Mobilization: An International Journal*. In 2008, he published an essay for the journal *Sociology Compass* titled “Political, Biographical, and Cultural Consequences of Social Movements”. Giugni scrutinizes the literature on social movements outcome theory, concluding that there are three main realms in which social movements affect: the political, biographical, and cultural realm, acknowledging that the



political dimension is the one that has been studied the most, while the cultural and biographical tend to be underrated.

Given that my objective is to go beyond the dichotomy of failure and success while assessing the impact of social movements and develop a holistic analysis, and following Giugni's methodology, I will focus on these three realms: *political* (policy and legal changes), *cultural* (changes of values and ideas) and *biographical* (effect on the participants).

The methodology of this research will be analytical, combining qualitative and quantitative sources in order to assess the impact of the #MeToo movement on these three realms. Moreover, the impact will be classified within three categories regarding the degree of influence: *direct*, meaning that the impact is straightforward between the movement and the achievements; *indirect*, meaning that the social movement influences a factor that afterwards become crucial for a specific change in the different realms, and *conditional*, in the sense that the impact becomes effective when a specific condition is met. Giugni proposes these types of impact as a result of the evolution of the social movements impact theory overcoming the succes-failure dichotomy. Consequently, I will disentangle the impact of social movements in international relations including all three realms pointed out by Giugni and its juxtaposition with the type of impacts highlighted by this author.

I will also conduct an interview with Kaitlyn Mendes. She is a scholar and professor at Leicester University specialized in digital feminism and the #MeToo movement. The interview will be semi-structured in order to be able to deal with the topics tackled throughout the FDP, but at the same time leave some room for discussion.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature review for this final degree project will revolve around two main pillars. The first issue discussed will be social movements in IR literature, especially, the question of which theories have highlighted the importance and impact of social movements in International Relations. That is to say, I will provide the main insights that different authors have provided to the literature following a historical chronology. The second issue is the #MeToo Movement, the case study on which this FDP is based. Moreover, I will also tackle the controversies and criticisms that the movement has generated.

## **2.1 Social movements in IR literature**

In general terms, mainstream paradigms have been "theoretically incapable of capturing the significance" of social movements in IR (Davis and Peña, 2019, p. 5). Neither realism nor liberalism have included, acknowledged, or developed the relevance of social movements in IR, giving barely any scope to these actors. Consequently, social movements have suffered a limited coverage within IR literature.

### **2.1.1 Constructivism**

Social movements arrived at IR literature in the 1990s thanks to constructivism and post-constructivism, specifically, with Alexander's Wendt publication in 1992 of "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics". He was, together with other authors, one of the first scholars to acknowledge the diminishing role of states and the rising power and influence of other actors. Concretely, Wendt pointed out that "the significance of states relative to multinational corporations, new social movements, transnationals, and intergovernmental organizations is clearly declining" (Wendt, 1992, p. 424). Consequently, this dynamic is shaping a new world he categorized as "postmodern" (*ibid*). Currently, this affirmation has become almost axiomatic in IR theory.

In a similar vein, other constructivist authors have developed this idea of a post-state system. Martha Finnemore, Deborah D. Avant, and Susan K. Sell, among the first women to receive credit within a highly masculinized IR literature, put forward the idea of a multiplicity of power sourcing. In their book published in 2010, *Who Governs the Globe*, they came up with a definition for governors, that is to say, those that "exercise power across borders for the purpose of affecting policy" (Finnemore, Avand and Sell, 2010, p. 356). Among these governors, Finnemore, Avant, and Sell include social movements and civil society groups. One of the concepts they came up with was the "microfoundations of global space" (Finnemore, Avand and Sell, 2010, p. 359) which they define as those spaces, what Castells calls "arena", in which different non-state actors converge, coexist and influence different policy areas.

### **2.1.2 Post-Structuralism**

Although it was Wendt, Finnemore *et al.*, and other constructivist authors who lit the fuse of social movements' relevance and impact, the real boom came with post-structuralism.

Together Foucault, Sartre, Derrida, and many other post-structuralist authors provided the framework of deconstruction in which these other theories arose and social movements took advantage of. This deconstructing mindset, however, were already put forward by many feminist authors such as Wollstonecraft or Beauvoir. One of the main contributions, in this respect, is the idea that theorists or scholars are not outsiders, but insiders. That is to say, they shape the narrative and the way we conceive reality. Consequently, they point out, there is no final or absolute truth, challenging the modernist epistemology. As a result, that states are the only holders of power and authority is not an absolute truth as realists or liberals have been portraying since the emergence of the discipline. Rather, it is an idea that has been artificially constructed.

These post-structuralist theories such as Feminism, Postcolonial Theory, or Green Theory saw in social movements the biggest exponent of their claims within IR. Especially, when it comes to their double impact: on the one hand, the achievement and influence of concrete measures at an international level. On the other hand, they they shape people's minds, challenge the mainstream narrative, and they contribute to raising awareness regarding different issues.

### **2.1.3 Social Movements Literature**

Many other disciplines have portrayed the importance of social movements, particularly from a historical perspective, as the architect of social progress throughout history. However, despite the multiple examples of standard texts tackling or mentioning social movements as an important actor in the international arena, very few have been published in the field of IR. For instance, if we observe, as an example, one of the leading journals in the field, *International Organization*, we can see that since 1974 the journal has published only one article with the word "movement" in its title (Davis and Peña, 2019, p. 2). This reveals how underrated the topic is within mainstream literature.

More recently, in the 2010s, the literature kept on growing, especially when it comes to the merging of social movements in the internet era. In this context, the contributions of scholars such as Castells or Pleyers have been key. These authors, among others, have analyzed the dynamics and idiosyncrasy of social movements in the era of globalization and technology. Castells coined the term "networked social movements" (Castells, 2015, p. 249), understanding social movements as a net of actions and smaller actors, rather than a fully organized and orchestrated entity. Furthermore, Castells also put forward the idea of the "space

of autonomy” of social movements (Castells, 2015, p. 250). This space is characterized by being hybrid, in the sense that social movements have historically featured the occupation of public space. However, in the contemporary era, they are also featuring in cyberspace in which they can exponentially expand their scope.

As for Geoffrey Pleyers, it was in 2010 when he published the book *Alter-globalization: Becoming Actors in a Global Age*. Within this book, he featured a large number of social movements, protests, and initiatives around the world. Specifically, he focused on those initiatives against neoliberal globalization which maintained the need for an alternative - for instance, Via Campesina, World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Protests against the GATT or the G8. All these authors agree on recognizing social movements as one of the main historical architects of social change. More concretely, Castells categorize them as the “levers of social change” (Castells, 2015, p. 216). That is, in fact, the departure point of social movements’ impact.

Furthermore, their impact depends, according to Castells and Pleyers, on the capacity of institutions and political actors to process their demands. Social movements focus their critiques on the inactivity and incapacity of the political class to deal with the issues that affect citizens. However, the capacity of influencing these political actors on the issues that these movements advocate for is what these movements rely on when it comes to their success. That is to say, being able to maintain their coherence as “outsiders” of the system, but also being able to take advantage of it by influencing those with decision-making capacity through agenda setting. The influence within this kind of movement is what Pleyers describes as the top-down approach, making their impact more pragmatic and tangible. On the other hand, there are movements based on a more bottom-up approach. These movements aim to impact the mindset, to challenge the mainstream narrative, to provide an alternative, rather than looking for influencing policy or political actors. Their objective is to influence the collective imaginary. Therefore, their impact is more normative and intangible rather than pragmatic. (Pleyers, 2010, p. 12) Nonetheless, very little has been said about feminist movements at an international level, that is to say, use these frameworks and apply them to gendered issues and feminist mobilizations.

## 2.2 #MeToo Movement

If we put the focus on the national level, there are several examples of books showcasing the impact of the #MeToo movement in a specific country. Take for instance, the *#Balancetonporc*, written by Sandra Muller, who coined the French version of the hashtag. Another good example is Nuria Varelas's book, titled *Feminismo 4.0: La cuarta ola*, where she devotes specific attention to the movement in the Spanish-speaking countries and the boost that the #MeToo provided to feminism in Spain. Beyond Western countries, another good example comes from Chao-Nam Joo. The title of the book is *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, in which she explains the history of a young woman survivor of sexual violence. Finally, Karan Puri's book, *#MeToo*, reached the headlines in India and also encouraged many women to share their stories. There are numerous examples of these kinds of books portraying the #MeToo movement, either from a scholarly or from the survivor's perspective. However, all of them keep the scope at a national level.

Despite much of the literature sticking to the national perspective, there are still a few important contributions to the literature on #MeToo. Most of this literature is, actually, short articles and newspaper articles, due to the fact that it is a very mediatic movement, but also a recent one. Consequently, there are very few books and academic articles dealing with the #MeToo movement, especially with international scope. However, there are some examples. For instance, the book edited by Bianca Fileborn and Rachel Loney-Howes, *#MeToo and the Politics of Social Change* (2019). For instance, one of the concepts they bring to the table is the framing of sexual violence targeted by the movement as a "continuum of sexual violence", ranging from nonphysical acts to physical ones such as rape (Fileborn and Loney-Howes, 2019, p. 7). The editors aim to frame the movement in the "dialogue with historical critiques of feminist efforts to raise awareness about sexual harassment and violence." (Fileborn and Loney-Howes, 2019, p. 4). That is to say, putting into historical perspective the #MeToo movement as a result of the feminist fight that has come a long way for more the 200 years.

### 2.2.1 Criticisms and controversies

Social movements, and especially feminism, have always faced resistance, backlashes, and controversies. The #MeToo movement is no exception in that regard. It is important to highlight that feminism has never been a unitary movement. Feminism is also an arena, a space of cohabitation of paradigms from across the whole political spectrum. Indeed, the

controversies and criticisms regarding the movement arose due to the collision and cohabitation of different oppressions and their movements. Actually, this debate could be framed, as Castells and Pleyers point out, as a clash between a top-down and a bottom-up approach.

One of the biggest criticisms that #MeToo has faced came from black feminism. Some activists have criticized the extent to which the movement has been inclusive. Definitely, celebrities are amongst the most privileged people. Consequently, they have the means to denounce these situations with less fear of retaliation. Furthermore, many African-American activists have also criticized what Alison Phipps, professor of Gender Studies at the University of Sussex, describes as “political whiteness” (Phipps, 2019). Although the movement was created by black activists, when it comes to media coverage, the faces of the movement have been mainly white and privileged. Shanon Lee, journalist and sexual violence survivor, reminds how black women have been denouncing sexual violence and saying “me too” since the slavery era. Moreover, Lee also points out how the stigma and the lack of resources of black women made them more vulnerable when it comes to reporting sexual violence (Lee, 2018).

Another criticism, or better-said controversy, of the #MeToo movement, is concerning the stigma that black men have as sexual predators. Journalist and civil rights activist, Dahleen Glanton, echoed this view in an article published in the *Chicago Tribune*, where she disentangled how the #MeToo movement could deconstruct this myth regarding black men (Glanton, 2017). Moreover, Tarana Burke herself acknowledges in an interview for the *Daily Show* with Trevor Noah, that there is a historic and structural stigma of black men being falsely accused of sexual violence, due to racism. However, Burke points out that, except for the native community, sexual predators and perpetrators are mainly from the same community of the victims. Consequently, Burke highlights how we should be able to hold two truths at the same time. On the one hand, being aware of these historical trends regarding black men, but on the other hand, being able to name the perpetrators and break the silence. Therefore, Tarana Burke concludes, it is important to deconstruct both narratives (Burke, *Daily Show* with Trevor Noah, May 30<sup>th</sup> 2018).

The ultimate opposition to the movement came from France. However, it expanded throughout Europe and reached, again, the covers of *The Times* and *The Washington Post*. Only two months after the movement started, its epicenter being Hollywood, more than 100 French

women from the entertainment industry published a public letter in the renowned French journal *Le Monde*. These professionals claimed that the #MeToo movement has “gone too far” and that it fosters “hate towards men”. Moreover, they denounce it for being based on a “moral puritanism” that portrays women as “eternal victims”. Finally, they point out that “Rape is a crime. But insistent or clumsy flirting is not a crime, nor is gallantry a chauvinist aggression” (*Le Monde*, January 10th 2018).

### **2.3 Academic Relevance**

Consequently, and taking into account what is stated above, this thesis is relevant because of two main reasons. On the one hand, the momentum. The idea of the emergence of new actors in international relations and global governance is not new. However, it has crystallized in the past decade. Cities, social movements, and transnational companies have challenged the realist hegemony in IR, creating a wide consensus in academia on the idea that the current global order is post-statist. Consequently, it is fundamental to understand how they work and in which ways they influence. In this same line, momentum is also key when it comes to the gender perspective. Feminism has been present for more than two centuries. However, in the last few years, there has been a growing social awareness on the issue especially since the arrival of the #MeToo movement, putting again the issue on the international agenda. This has been categorized by some scholars such as Nuria Varela as the 4th wave of feminism (Varela, 2019). Consequently, both social movements and gender issues are experiencing a momentum of attention in the international arena.

On the other hand, the need for specific literature. Social movements have been the architect of almost all the social changes achieved throughout the last two centuries. However, it has not been free of cost. Social movements have been targeted throughout history, and still nowadays, by repression. Therefore, among all emerging actors, focusing on social movements is an exercise of historical memory and political decency. Furthermore, there is a lack of literature from the IR perspective when it comes to feminism. Definitely books such as Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* paved the way. Nonetheless, gender issues are still marginalized in mainstream literature. Therefore, it is key to uplift these issues as well as generate literature within this realm.

### **3. Discussion**

#### **3.1 Introduction to the movement**

The #MeToo movement was born in 2006 by the activist Trana Burke, as a way to provide a healing path for survivors of sexual violence in black and brown communities. Moreover, the movement aimed at “building a community of advocates determined” (#MeToo movement, n.d) and committed to the eradication of sexual violence. Back then, they raised awareness through Myspace. The ultimate goal was to provide legal, moral, psychological, and any other kind of support to black and brown girls who have undergone sexual violence. However, it was in 2017 that the movement crystallized and reached headlines and mediatic coverage all over the globe when the accusations of sexual assault, rape, and harassment perpetrated by the famous Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein went viral. Dozens of actresses and fellow professionals put forward their experiences and called out the producer. Such renowned personalities gave the movement immediate and top profile visibility.

Moreover, the catalyzer arrived on October 15th of that same year. Alyssa Milano, actress and singer, posted a tweet with the following proposal: “If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem” (Milano, 2017). The objective, like Mendes, Keller, and Ringrose highlight, was “to showcase the magnitude of the problem of sexual violence” (Mendes, Keller and Ringrose, 2018, p. 1). In only 24 hours, the hashtag was used more than 500.000 times on Twitter (Jarvey, 2017), and more than 12 million posts on Facebook (*CBS News*, 2017). Only through cyberactivism and social media, thousands of women created a sorority chain, a healing space in which they were able to express themselves, to heal the trauma, to find support and comfort

#### **3.2 Context: Globalization and the 4<sup>th</sup> wave of feminism**

When it comes to the assessment of the impact of this movement, we have to be aware of the context, despite disagreements between scholars within Social Movements Impact Theory. On the one hand, the authors of the “early studies”, especially the main theorist William Gamson, did not credit political structures and context as variables to include when analyzing the impact of social movements (Giugni, 2008, p. 1584). On the other hand, other authors, called by Giugni as a “new wave”, argued that it was fundamental to acknowledge the political environment and the social context. (Giugni, 2008, p. 1586) Definitely, within contemporary



social movements, there is general agreement that context is a fundamental factor when assessing the impact of social movements. The #MeToo movement must be framed within the 4th wave of feminism.

Since the 1990s there has been a non-stop process of globalization, leading to a blurring of national boundaries in many realms such as cultural, social, commercial artistic. Social movements and mobilization have been no exception. This process has led to an increasing cultural and social homogeneity, widening the scope of mobilization, especially virtually, of campaigns and movements. The 4th wave of feminism is also framed within the globalization process. Categorization of feminism among waves can be reductionist to certain extent, due to the fact that not all the regions and countries work at the same speed. However, the main theorists, including Varela, Enloe, Greer or Phumzile full names have argued that we are currently experiencing a 4th wave especially due to two main factors: technology of communication and fully-fledged globalization. These factors are also key to explain the impact of the #MeToo movement, as Mendes also highlights (Annex 1)

Contemporary feminism is characterized by sharing tactics, ideas, conferences, round tables, discussions and knowledge, especially through social media platforms, indeed, “learning from each other’s experiences” (Castells, 2015, p. 240), acquiring global level. Definitely, this wave is the most global of all feminist waves. It is perfectly summarized by Enloe’s statement: “the patriarchy is not invincible” (Enloe, 2017). It is irreverent and unapologetic with a broader understanding of the axis of oppression and its ramifications. Inclusivity and intersectionality are also key concepts within this new wave. Furthermore, activism is hybrid, as Castells highlights, featuring cyberactivism and the fight in social media, but keeping street tactics from the early 2000s movements. Moreover, they also have a very rooted global conception, despite always keeping the local focus. The #MeToo has been, without doubt, one of the main features of this new wave, and the main catalyzer of putting back the gender issues in the international agenda. Consequently, the #MeToo movement and the 4th wave of feminism are two mutually constitutive elements.

### **3.3 Political Realm**

The political realm, according to Giugni’s methodology, includes any effect of the movement that alters or shapes the political environment in any way, including legal changes, political achievements, policy outcomes, among others. The political sphere is mainly divided in two

types of outcome. On the one hand, we have Gamson's concept of "acceptance", which Kitschelt called procedural, which means being accepted within the political environment as a legitimate actor. On the other hand, there are "substantial" changes according to Kitschelt (Gamson's new advantages), the actual gains of the movement. Finally, Kitschelt added to the procedural and substantial, which were already put forward by Gamson, structural changes, those that "change the structural conditions in which movements act" (Kitschelt cited in Giugni, 2008, p.1584)

First and foremost, to analyze the impact of the #MeToo movement in the political realm, we need to acknowledge that this was not the goal of the movement. The #MeToo initiative started as a healing space in which victims of sexual violence shared their experiences. Moreover, the objective was also to raise awareness among communities regarding sexual violence and break the fear and shame culture. Therefore, the objectives were mainly focused on the cultural and biographical aspects. However, the #MeToo did not happen in a vacuum, as I have previously mentioned, but in the framework of the 4th wave of feminism. Consequently, although this wave is more focused on changing the culture and achieving meaningful equality in Western countries, rather than legal or political changes (since most of them were already achieved), it definitely impacted the international political environment in several ways.

Another important feature to consider, coming back to the context of globalization, is that due to this process, there has been some sort of a divorce between power and politics. It is also important to note in this context that politics remain a national domain. Therefore, although the level of analysis of this research is international, some national achievements will be used as examples of the impact of the #MeToo movement as they are a consequence of the worldwide influence of the movement.

### **3.3.1 Acceptance**

The #MeToo reached the political arena since its outbreak at the end of 2017, despite the fact that this was not the goal of the movement. However, #MeToo activists quickly realized that these healing spaces and net of advocates needed a political environment favourable to operationalize their demands. Moreover, in the US, where the movement was born, they were rapidly criticized by conservative platforms. Activists quickly acknowledged what Carol Hanish (second-wave feminist author) pointed out that the personal is political.

The movement started in the US, but it was quickly expanded throughout the entire world with women all over the globe telling their stories of sexual harassment including Europe, China, Japan, India, Mexico, Egypt, among many other countries. In only 24 hours, the hashtag was used more than 500.000 times on Twitter (Jarvey, 2017), and more than 12 million accounting all social media (CBS News, 2017). Moreover, the movement, with its differences, reached covers and headlines at an international level. In fact, the #MeToo activists became the person of the year in 2017, according to the journal *the Time*. They were called the silence breakers. This landmark decision shows how the movement achieved Gamson's acceptance, that is to say, being acknowledged as a political actor, in this case, within the international system.

### **3.3.2 New advantages**

The legal achievements are a fundamental part of the political realm. On the one hand, which laws are passed depend on the political support they have in the legislative branch. On the other hand, the legal framework is fundamental in order to establish which tools are available to deal with each specific problematic. When it comes to the international legal framework, it is still at a preliminary stage of development, especially due to the lack of enforcement capacity of binding treaties. Moreover, when it comes to substantial changes, as Kailtyn Mendes points out, movement like me too does is it gets people to recognize that there is a problem in the first place, and it is going to take time for broader changes to happen, more tangible changes to happen (see Annex 1).

When it comes to legal achievements, the main impact we have to highlight is the *Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work*. This convention was adopted in the 108th session of the International Law Commission within the UN, celebrated in June 2019, by initiative of the International Labour Organization. It will come into force on the 21st of June of this year, after two years of its ratification. The treaty establishes a legal definition for gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace, as well as providing tools for training in this realm and raising awareness. However, the ratification of the convention is still at early stages, with only 13 countries having ratified it. This treaty aims to fill a regulatory gap, and was being discussed before the mediatic peak of the #MeToo movement at the end of 2017, the movement showed the magnitude of the issue which urged the involved parties to take the required steps quicker. Moreover, it also raised the mediatic profile of the issue, providing more visibility (Lieberman, 2018).

Another legislative impact of the #MeToo movement concerns Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA). This debate has emerged more abruptly in Anglosaxon countries where this kind of agreement is very common. NDAs are meant to ensure confidentiality in the workplace, among different companies or between employer and employee. However, this kind of agreement became a huge pitfall for women who suffered harassment or sexual violence within the workplace to tell their stories. Activists and scholars argued that certain clauses from these contracts prohibited providing any information, including harassment, without facing costly consequences. Moreover, “these provisions silence victims, harm victims’ careers, and allow perpetrators to continue their misbehavior without facing public scrutiny” (Durham and Odia, 2019, p.16). Furthermore, activists denounce these contracts, claiming that they lead to the purchase of the silence of survivors, constituting, consequently, a double victimization.

As a result of this, since the beginning of the #MeToo mediatic wave, the NDAs became a target of the movement, and was part of the achievements of Burke’s initiative. As a consequence of the pressure, several states from the US started passing laws prohibiting or regulating clauses within NDAs. By the winter of 2019, 16 states (Tippet, 2019) have already introduced bills in order to ban settlement agreements when it comes to harassment or sexual misbehaviour within NDAs, making the NDA non-enforcable if they prohibit disclaiming information concerning these matters.. After all the barrage of state level legislation, in 2019, the Be Heard Act was introduced. This act bans certain type of NDA which includes clauses related to sexual harassment. Furthermore, this controversy also expanded outside US borders, for instance in the UK. British activists also put the spotlight on NDA, which are currently under legislative revision, to the point that former prime minister Theresa May claimed in a press conference “it is clear that some employers are using them unethically” (Addley and Sabbagh, 2018), referring to NDA agreements. A similar situation happened in Australia concerning NDAs controversy. In February 2019, as a result of the claims of #MeToo movement, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Enhancing Whistleblower Protections) Bill was passed (Williams, 2019) to protect those who expose their companies or bosses for wrongdoings, with special regard to sexual harassment.

#MeToo also occasioned a wave of legal changes on issues revolving around sexual violence, consent, harassment, among others. Some of them were already introduced in different legislative bodies and the #MeToo was the catalyzer for them to be passed. At the same time,

other initiatives were introduced as a response to the demands in the streets and screens of the feminist movement.

For instance in France, the French version of the hashtag, #Balancetonporc, regardless of the controversy with Deneuve and other actresses who called the movement as “puritanism”, became viral. Consequently, Marlène Schiappa, secretary of equality of Macron’s cabinet, announced, in August 2019, that the government will pass a new law where cat-calling would be categorized as a criminal offense, and will entail on-the-spot fines up to 750€ (O’Gardy, 2018). Schiappa claimed that they need to respond to the demands of the movement and that this specific type of sexual harassment was not defined by law. Only one year after its implementation, more than 700 fines have been imposed (Batha, 2019). Another legal achievement by the movement took place in Sweden which, after years of lobbying on behalf of anti-rape activists, finally in 2018 changed the concept of rape legally and categorized it as “sex without consent” (Carrol, 2020). As a result, prosecutors will not have to prove coercion or threat in order to give convictions of rape. Only two years after, according to Reuters, rape conviction rate rose by 75% after the law change (Batha, 2020). Similarly in Iceland, an amendment to current legislation on sexual violence was introduced, reinforcing the concept of consent, and making it “clear and explicit that sexual intercourse or other sexual relations with a person without his or her consent is rape”. (Sadley-Venis, 2018) Together with Iceland and Sweden other countries, either through the legislative as in Denmark or through the executive as in Greece or The Netherlands, changed the legal categorization of rape as a result of the pressure of feminist activists after the #MeToo movement put the issue of sexual violence in the agenda (Amnesty International, 2020).

On the other hand, we can find countries such as China, South Korea, Japan, Mexico or India where the impact in social media of the #MeToo was also notable. However, there was no legislation passed.

### **3.3.3 Impact**

When it comes to the assessment of the type of impact that the #MeToo has had when achieving these legal features, we can conclude that it has been *conditional*, that is to say, “where mobilization leads to an outcome of interest only in some specific conditions” (Bosi and Uba, 2009, p. 410). In this case, as we have witnessed the condition to be met is either to have a public opinion overwhelmingly in favour of the movement or to have a government willing to

legislate on the matter. We can see proof of that in those countries such as the US, UK, Australia, Iceland, Sweden or France, where there has been political willingness to hear the demands of the movement, which are necessary to enact the legislative process. On the other hand, there were countries where the #MeToo movement reached headlines and visibility, but there were no laws or policies implemented, due to the lack of political willingness, among other reasons.

### **3.4 Cultural Realm**

The cultural realm has received, according to Giugni, by far less attention by scholars of social movements. However, it is through their capacity to influence their broader cultural environment that movements can have a deeper and lasting impact. Among the different dimensions of the cultural realm Giugni puts forward this section will be based on the social-psychological approach examining the role of social movements in shaping the general public's values and beliefs (Giugni, 2008, p. 1591). Although media coverage will be also mentioned.

First of all, a couple of contextual concerns need to be mentioned. First of all, we have to acknowledge that the #MeToo movement happened in the context of the 4th wave, therefore, the cultural changes, although #MeToo being a fundamental booster factor, is not the one and only factor for this change of beliefs and values, due to the fact that the feminist movement had already made some advances in some of those aspects. Secondly, the context of the globalization of culture is fundamental to understanding this movement, unlike the political realm due to the fact that politics has not yet been globalized. We are, according to UNESCO, in a period of unprecedented acceleration and intensification in the global flows of capital, labour, and information, which is having a homogenizing influence on local culture. (UNESCO, n.d) This homogenization has been a key trigger factor for social movements, especially those that have a transnational dimension.

#### **3.4.1 Shame and fear culture**

The #MeToo movement is a particularly well-suited example for analyzing the impact of social movements in culture due to the fact that it is exactly this realm, together with the biographical, that the movement targeted. Culture plays a huge role in dealing with sexual violence, at different stages. First of all, prevention; to prevent sexual violence, it is imperative to have a culture that educates and reproduces values revolving around respect and consent.

Secondly, during the violence, some harassment or minor sexual violence offences happen to witnesses, therefore, a culture that incentivizes and provides tools to react to these situations and that encourages to not remain silent is also fundamental in that regard. Finally, in the aftermath of the violence, at a cultural level, it is fundamental to believe the histories of the victims and abolish re-victimization.

The #MeToo movement aimed to change the cultural paradigm from a culture of shame and fear to a “call-out culture” (Mendes, Keller and Ringrose, 2018, p. 1). The culture of shame and fear is a pivotal part of the so-called rape culture. This term was coined by US feminist scholars in the early 70s, appearing for the first time in 1974 in Cassandra Wilson and Noreen Connel’s book *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women*, referring to the normalization and social acceptance of sexual violence, manifesting itself in different waves such as victim blaming, sexual objectification, sexual violence trivialization or denial of sexual violence as a widespread practice. #MeToo picked up the job of second-wave US feminists in raising awareness concerning sexual violence by showing the magnitude of the problem through cyberactivism. The digitalization of feminist activism concerning sexual awareness has enabled its mainstreaming, and consequently enabled it to challenge mainstream culture.

The call-out culture established by the #MeToo movement aimed to end the impunity of the perpetrators, especially social and cultural impunity. Consequently, it took part also in the cancel culture, prior to its negative connotation in social media. Sharing stories led to the signaling of those men as perpetrators of sexual violence and harassment, and condemn them to social ostracism in order to end their political, social or economic power. Moreover, the #MeToo movement created a net of advocates who raise awareness concerning sexual violence, creating a sort of “imagined community”, just like Benedict Anderson described a nation. Moreover, this community of advocates provided the support and sorority that empowered many women to share their experiences, as well as showing the magnitude of the issue. This change of culture is shown by the Time’s up hashtag and movement, which came hand to hand with the #MeToo movement. Time is up for impunity and social praising for sexual perpetrators, which consequently led to resignations and redundancies of powerful men from the movie industry, and then expanding to ministers, top executives and CEOs from all over the world. Consequently, this changed the fear from outside, and created a support system for women to overcome the shame and the psychological trauma of explaining out loud their history as sexual violence survivors.

However, we have to acknowledge that the social change occasioned by the #MeToo movement is still at early stages, particularly due to the fact that the movement targeted the cultural and the biographical realm to obtain changes, rather than the political. Therefore, this change of mindset needs at least a generation to crystallize. Nonetheless, we could agree that the #MeToo movement has changed the social and cultural awareness and sensitivity towards gender based sexual violence. Moreover, it changed rapidly, and lasted. When it comes to the media, furthermore, it is worth mentioning that “sometimes maybe there is too much focus on like these really big powerful figures and not not as much on kind of the day to day reality of sexual violence” (Annex 1).

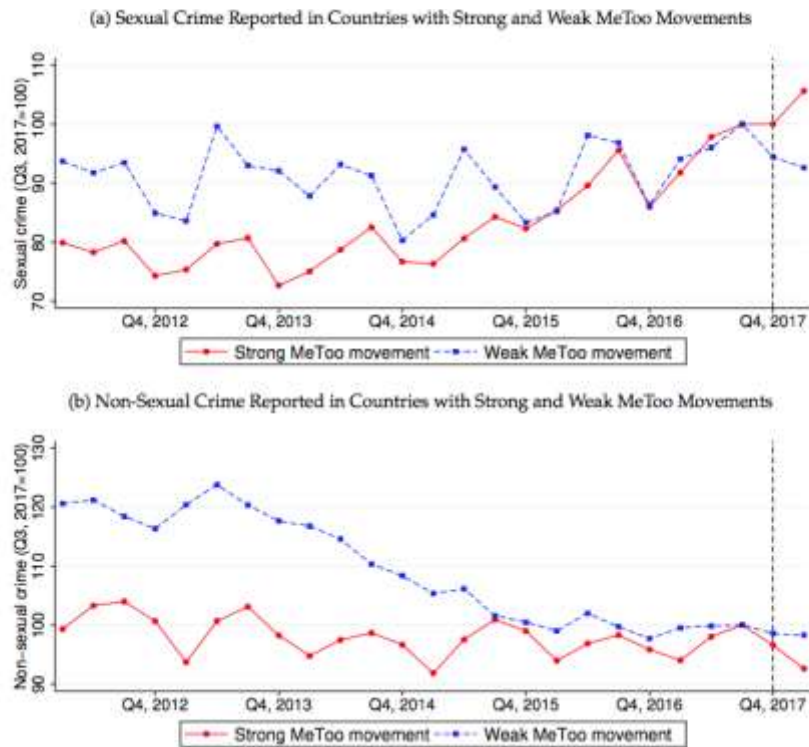
### **3.4.2 Reporting sexual violence**

Proof of this cultural change is the study conducted by Ro’ee Levy (MIT) and Martin Mattsson (Yale) on how the reporting rate of sexual-related and non-sexual related crimes evolved in 30 OECD countries, after the eruption of the #MeToo. As the authors themselves recognise, this is the first study concerning the impact of #MeToo in sexual crimes reporting that has been conducted. Mattsson and Levy conclude that there has been an average increase of 10% within the first six months, and the effect persisted - at least at the level of 15%. They put the focus of the effect on the rapid change of social norms and information, due to the fact that the strong effect on reporting took place before any significant changes of policies or legislation (Levy and Mattsson, 2020, p. 2).

Levy and Mattsson constructed a database of the number of crimes reported, covering almost 90% of the OECD population. They also take into account the interest, categorized by Google search, of each country in order to classify them between “strong #MeToo”, those countries above the OECD average interest, and the “weak #MeToo”, those under the OECD average. Overall, they found out that in 2018, there was an increase of 85% in search interest of sexual violence and misconduct compared to the period of 2010-2017. Moreover, as Figure 1a depicts, the sexual crimes reported in countries with strong MeToo movement increased, while those with Weak MeToo decreased. This study proved that the #MeToo became a key factor in increasing sexual related crimes, while it was not in non-sexual related crimes. Moreover, they analyzed the effect of the movement in the arrests related to these crimes, concluding that there was an increase of arrest, despite being smaller than the effect on reporting.



Figure 1: Crimes reported over time



Figures (a) and (b) show the number of reported sexual crimes and the number of reported non-sexual crimes, both normalized to 100 in Q3 2017 for each country, and averaged separately for the countries with strong and weak MeToo movements. Figure (c) shows the difference between the normalized num-

Source: Levy, R and Mattsson, M. (2020) 'The Effects of Social Movements: Evidence from #MeToo', *SSRN*

Furthermore, the authors did not find large and persistent evidence of significant deviations across racial and socioeconomic groups, as common criticisms of the movement have stated. Finally, they conclude that their study shows that movements can have a “large, long-lasting effect on social norms” (Levy and Mattsson, 2020, p. 27) which will influence the individual behaviour towards taking meaningful changes in their personal decisions. (*ibid.*)

### 3.4.3 Impact

When it comes to the impact of the cultural realm, I can conclude that the impact has been direct, due to the fact that the movement could achieve the desired outcome, or at least one of them, in this case to end the culture of impunity and shame. However, I could not conclude that the MeToo movement has

changed culture totally, due to the fact that culture is not static and evolves throughout the time. Moreover, culture is the sum of the beliefs and values of an entire collective. Therefore, we can conclude that the the #MeToo movement has represented a boost in terms of cultural impact and change towards ending the culture of shame and fear. This impact has been straightforward when it comes to social norms. Consequently, we can conclude that this impact has been direct.

Furthermore, when it comes to reporting, I will categorize this impact as indirect. Because the #MeToo has changed the prevalence of cultural impunity towards sexual harassment, and this new rising cultural paradigm is what has encouraged victims of sexual harassment to report more massively.

### **3.5 Biographical realm**

The biographical or personal realm aims to study the “effects on the life-course of individuals who have participated in movement activities, effects that are at least in part due to involvement in those activities” (Giugni, 2008, pag. 1588) - that is to say, the impact of the movement in the everyday life of their participants.

When it comes to contextual factors, the 4th wave of feminism and globalization, unlike the other two realms studied, are not fundamental factors in order to explain it. Individual experiences depend on each one’s individual context, axis of oppression and surroundings. However, these two factors definitely contextualize the reality of these women. Thus globalization has made the conversation on sexual violence reach the international level, homogenize to a certain extent the history and experiences of survivors. Consequently, this part of the analysis will be devoted to identify the positive and negative effects of the #MeToo movement on the participants of the movement across countries.

#### **3.5.1 Positive Effects**

Again the #MeToo movement is one of the best examples to study the impact of social movements in its activists and sympathizers, especially because this was the main goal of the original movement: providing legal, moral, psychological and economic support to victims of sexual violence or harassment. That is to say, establishing a network of support in order to accompany the victims through the healing process. This is exactly the first positive impact of the movement - the support and the healing.

Healing took place by means of sharing the experience, by creating a feminist consciousness. Participating in the hashtag and engaging in digital activism allowed sexual violence survivors to “understand sexual violence as a structural rather than personal problem” (Keller, Mendes and Ringrose, 2018, p. 238). It also highlighted what the feminist movement has been shouting for decades in the street: you are not alone. Therefore, through engaging with the hashtag and the movement, the survivors found a partnership and sorority with other women who have undergone similar experiences. Moreover, for Mendes, this consciousness becomes, for many survivors, an alternative form of justice (see Annex 1).

Another positive outcome is the overcoming of the stigma of being a victim of sexual violence. Moreover, each survivor by overcoming its own stigma helps to create a social climate favourable to the elimination of such stigma and provide visibility. Therefore, impacting the cultural realm is on some occasions intertwined with the biographical one. The above mentioned feminist consciousness and the understanding of sexual violence as a structural problem, rather than a personal issue, is key for survivors to take the first step and share their stories.

Resources are also a key positive impact of the #MeToo movement. The high profile cases together with the media coverage have spread awareness of the movement throughout the world. Consequently, thanks to the digital activism and the bravery of the survivors in explaining their histories, they have built up momentum. This momentum manifests itself in different shapes. One of them is resource mobilization. Organizations and individuals around the world have realized the magnitude of the issue and are willing to collaborate with donations, together with some companies and individuals aiming to do purplewashing. Particularly, to the #MeToo Burke’s initiative and the Time’s Up Legal Defense Fund. The first one provides moral, social and psychological support to sexual violence survivors; the second one aims to provide legal support for the reporting and the judicial process. Both organizations have obtained millions of dollars which have allowed them to provide all the means to survivors, which if it was not for the momentum and the social awareness would not have access to them.

### **3.5.2 Negative effects**

Among the negative effects of engaging in the movement, the first one that should be highlighted is hostility within social media, known as trolling. Participating in social

movements has never been historically free of opportunity costs. Digital activism is no exception in that regard. In fact, 72% of the surveyed by Killer, Ringrose and Mendes had trolling and only abuse as a common experience (Keller, Mendes and Ringrose, 2018, p. 242). Most of the answers were, according to the authors, low-level comments, such as insults. Another group of comments double guessed their witnesses, through telling doubts over survivor's lifestyles or that what happened to them was deservedly so, or even permanent cyberbullying or death threats. Both types of comments constitute a revictimization.

Digital activism may seem, a priori, an "easier and safer space to engage in feminist discussion" (Keller, Mendes and Ringrose, 2018, p. 243). However, these three scholars found out that most of these women faced increasing clashes within their everyday relationships due to their digital activism. Therefore, although the feeling of sorority and support when engaging in the hashtag was massive on behalf of those using it, there were several experiences of dismissal by their friends and relatives.

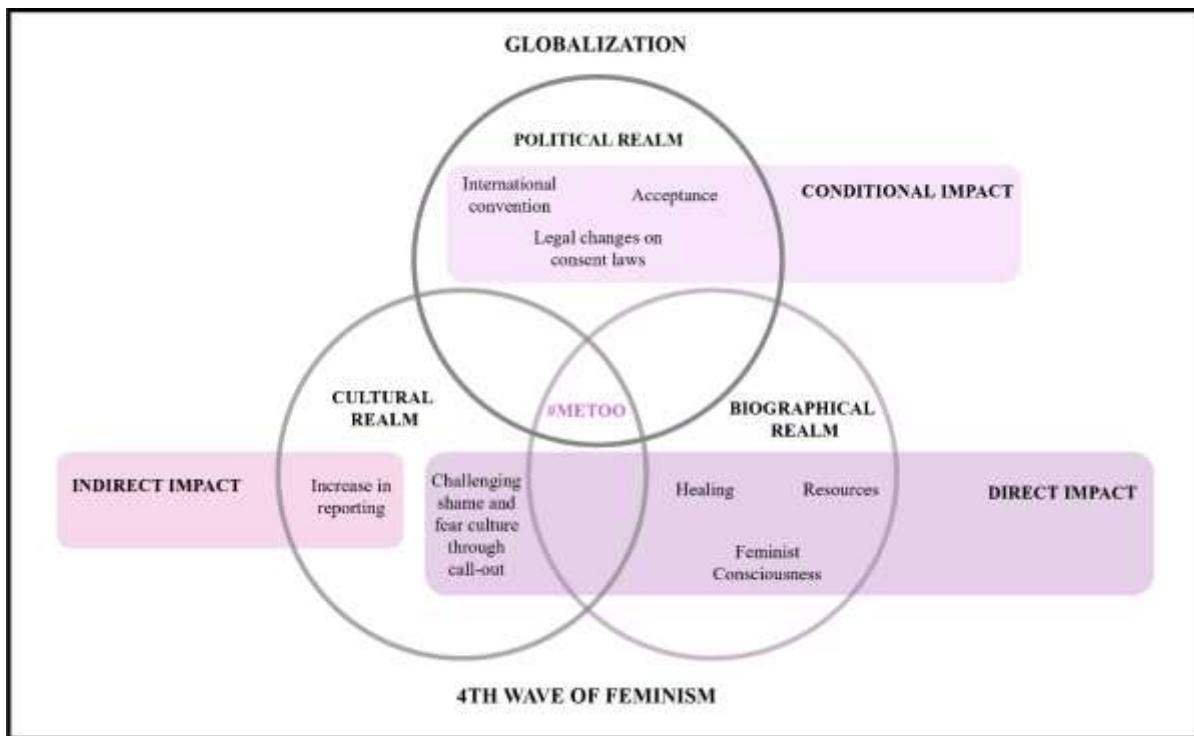
### **3.5.3 Impact**

In order to categorize the impact of the #MeToo movement within the biographical realm, I would like to reiterate the fact that this is different for each one of the participants. Moreover, this impact can be positive in many regards (resources, consciousness, sorority, among others), but also negative (trolling and revictimization), provided that both can be complementary. Nonetheless, regardless of the idiosyncrasy of the impact, I can conclude that it is direct, that is to say, it is a straightforward effect of engaging in the movement. This impact although having the effect on an individual level has an international dimension, due to the digitalization of activism. The fact that the movement happened mainly in social media globalized automatically the conversation. Therefore, feminist consciousness, sorority, resource mobilization took place at an international level, making the net of advocates transcend the national boundaries, as well as the negative experiences and trolling.

### **3.6 Findings**

Initially the findings were planned to be categorized within a table. However, the results of the research show that social movements are much more fluid than our initial assumptions, and the different realms are intertwined. Therefore, they will be presented through a Venn Diagram which provides a more accurate picture on the interrelationship between the different realms.

Figure 2: #MeToo movement impact



#### **4. Conclusions**

The #MeToo movement is one of the best examples of high-impact contemporary international social movements, particularly with its use of social media and its transnational dimension. When assessing its impact at an international level, several conclusions can be drawn. First of all, the political realm. Despite not being the primary goal of the movement, #MeToo has obtained several achievements. On the one hand, we have the celebration of an International Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, sponsored by the International Labour Organization in order to provide an internationally agreed and legally binding definition of sexual harassment and Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the workplace environment. On the other hand, several states have introduced changes to their legislations as a response to the claims of the #MeToo movement. These changes have occurred mainly related to NDA agreements' clauses that prevent victims from reporting sexual harassment and violence cases (US or Australia), offering them a chance to report their cases as well as creating an opportunity to revise the concept of consent within their legal systems (Sweden, Iceland, Greece or the Netherlands).

Secondly, the cultural realm. Unlike the previous realm, the cultural dimension was within the primary goals of the movement. It has challenged rape culture, particularly shame and fear

culture, and generated a call-out culture, that is to say, defying the social stigma through collective consciousness with the aim to change fear from outside. Due to social pressure and the rapid change in the cultural paradigm of sexual violence, within the first year, only in the US, more than 200 top-profile men resigned or were fired due to their misbehaviour, followed by thousands of others all around the globe, making this one of the main impacts of the #MeToo. A proof of this impact of the movement in empowering women to speak up and tell their histories of sexual survival is the study that was conducted by Levy and Mattson. These scholars scrutinized how #MeToo altered sexual crimes reporting in 30 OECD countries. They concluded that reporting of sexual violence, on average, rose by 11%. Moreover, they highlighted that in those countries where the #MeToo was stronger, in terms of interest, the reporting increased more substantially than those with a weaker movement. Therefore, despite the lack of acknowledgement of its importance throughout social movements studies, the #MeToo has proven to change the cultural climate.

Thirdly, the biographical realm. In fact, impact within dimension was the ultimate goal of the original movement led by Tarana Burke. This study concludes that when focusing on the impact of the movement at an individual level, with an international perspective, establishing a pattern would be difficult. This consideration has been reached due to the fact that each personal story is coloured by someone's own personal upbringing and axis of oppression. Therefore, within this realm I have focused on highlighting some of the positive and negative outcomes of the movement for those engaging in it. On the one hand, the #MeToo movement has allowed participants to come to realize that sexual violence is a structural problem rather than a personal one. Through the creation of a feminist consciousness, women from all across the globe have been able to overcome their personal stigma. Moreover, due to the media coverage and social impact, the movement has generated millions of dollars in resources to help the survivors. On the other hand, as an externality of engaging in the movement, most of the women participating faced re-victimization.

Coming back to the research question, the hypothesis has been validated. social movements, through the exemplification of the #MeToo movement, have proven to have a substantial impact at an international level. This impact is different in each movement due to the fact that not all them have the same objectives and aim to have an influence in the same realms. In the case study of this research, it has proven to impact the political realm, with the celebration of international conventions and legal changes in dozens of countries, the cultural realm,

challenging rape culture and creating an increase of sexual-related crimes reporting, and the biographical realm, challenging personal stigma and leading to the mobilization of resources, despite increasing trolling and revictimization.

Social movements are one of the key actors of the contemporary era in International Relations, despite the neglect of mainstream theories. They influence the international arena in many ways; on the one hand, achieving legal changes and policy outcomes, as well as putting the issues of social concern in the international agenda: on the other hand, changing social norms, raising awareness and achieving long-standing cultural and social changes that help to uplift the most marginalized communities. Social movements are not new; they have been historically ahead of the curve and social changes. Feminism, decolonialism, LGBTIQ+ rights, anti-racism have been around fighting for their rights since centuries. They paved the way for current social movements. However, due to globalization, they have widened their scope and reached a global dimension, consequently, becoming an actor of International Relations. We are still at the beginning of the study of social movements in International Relations. This research aims to do its bit in uplifting social movements and gender issues within International Relations.

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## Annex 1

Alejandro:

Good morning.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Hi, you can call me Katie.

Alejandro:

Okey, Thank you. First of all, I just wanted to thank you for being able to do this interview, and it is a pleasure and an honor to talk to you.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

No problem. I am happy to do it.

Alejandro:

Thank you. So I was, I had a couple of questions prepared, but I think it will perfect if this some sort of open conversation, feel free to say, or to point out anything you consider. I will start by explaining to you a little bit what the project is about. This is the final thesis of our undergraduate studies.

So it is about the impact of social moments in International Relations. There are mainly three actors which are emerging in the literature of international relations in terms of importance, which are transnational companies, cities and social movements. I have decided to tackle social movements because something I have been related to at a personal level and at an academic level. The is the idea to prove, or to explain how the #MeToo movement has an impact at an international level.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Yeah. That is a really original take on it. I do not think I have met any international relations students doing this kind of work before. So I think that is great, it is a very interesting angle.

Alejandro:

Yes, totally. It is also challengin though, to have an international perspective on the #MeToo movement that is so embedded with the culture of each country.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Yeah, definitely.

Alejandro:

So mainly I am using a methodology proposed by Michel Giuni, which is a scholar from the University of Geneve, which is like tackling the impact of social movements in three realms:

the political, the cultural and the biographical. Actually, that is also challenging because at the end of the day, social moments in international relations have been tackled based on a failure and success dichotomy, and very much focused on the political realm, which are like the substantial changes. But at the end of the day, if I think that the #MeToo is a very good example, it is exactly because it has mainly focused on the cultural and biographical dimension.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Definitely. When they say biographical, do they mean personal? Like on the individual level?

Alejandro:

Yes, exactly.

Alejandro:

Thank you. So my first question is actually that, like, if you think that the me too movement has had an impact, and what would you say about this impact at an international level?

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Yeah, I think it has had a huge impact, but that impact can be very difficult to measure for some of the reasons that you just explained. So it can be very difficult. In some cases, because of my research I have spoken with some people who have used the #MeToo movement, and they, for example, were very adamant that it has led to tangible changes on political level in terms of laws. For example, so in Sweden some directly linked it to laws around consent. But I would also say sometimes it is not such an easy, direct correlation. It is not like we have new laws that are called me too laws. So it is very possible that there have been other laws that have been introduced and other parts of the world that were perhaps inspired by me too, but it will not only have been the #MeToo movement. So I think that yes, I think it has happened, but I think it is much harder to pinpoint. But in terms of the cultural level and in terms of the biographical a hundred percent, I mean like that for me is so much, there is so much more evidence of that. So culturally, the fact that we are talking about sexual violence so much more. For example, I have a friend who now does work on what they call intimacy coordinators, within Hollywood or the film industry. So there has been a huge rise in when in plays or film or television there are intimate scenes rather than just being like, go for it, it is very carefully choreographed exactly where hands go, how touching works. And part of that has been in response to the ways that like sex scenes, for example, have been an excuse for male actors to just like grope female actors, or there have been a few examples of women, you know, not knowing exactly what was going to happen and being surprised. So you can look culturally within those industries and see changes. You can look culturally at lots of other educational institutions. I mean, Leicester University where I am based, for example, has introduced this whole new report and support for people who experienced sexual violence.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

And then on the individual level, just talking to people and as I do, as part of my research, it has absolutely snapped something for them. I do not know if you have come across it, Sarah Ahmed, she is a cultural theorist who talks about feminist snap. It is like a breaking point where people realize; this has happened to me. It is a problem. I should not have to put up with it anymore. I have had many participants that recognize that they started being feminist or engaging through these kinds of movements. So it just, again, it took experiences that they had just normalized and seen as not a problem and made them understand them is actually this is not something I should have to put up with.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

I am so sorry. That was like a long-winded answer way of saying yes, I think it has definitely had these impacts and this is not just located in Britain where I am based, I am from Canada, you know, I have been doing research there with a colleague. Actually, we just had a paper published this week on the, #MeToo in the Indian education. So looking at within the Indian education system, it had changes there too. I was actually in France when like around the time of me too. And so there was balance ton porc, which is like the French equivalent of Me too, you know, tons of conversations I saw actually in, when I was in Paris, I saw actual in two groups sprout out. So feminist groups that organize specifically around that hashtag. So I think that it is global, but I think as you said, it may happen in different ways in different countries.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

We should not assume that the changes in the laws and the cultural response would all be the same. But I think on an individual level, I think it absolutely has made a lot of people recognize things that were problematic that maybe they did not before, or maybe they knew they were problematic, but they are more likely to speak out. And this is what I write about is how speaking out, you know can not get a law to change unless people think that there is a problem in the first place. So what I think a movement like me too does is it gets people to recognize that there is a problem in the first place. And it is going to take time for broader changes to happen, more tangible changes to happen.

Alejandro:

Totally. I totally agree with all you have said. Like, I have been doing a lot of legal analysis of what have been the legal changes.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Interesting.

Alejandro:

And there are some surprising findings because when I entered this moment, I thought I would not find a lot in the legal realm, but I found some relevant legislation changes. For instance, concerning NDA.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Fascinating. Yeah. Okay. That is a good one. Which ones?

Alejandro:

Mainly the Us also, Australia and New Zealand, and in the UK, there have not been changes, but when Theresa May was still as prime minister, she also acknowledged in a press conference that they were going to do a commission meeting on the matter.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

That is interesting. So you have actually found changes in laws around non-disclosure agreement. Yeah,

Alejandro:

Totally. In 16 states of the US. And then there is like a federal law, which is called the Be Heard Act on the verge of being passed.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Cause that is so interesting. What does it do? What do these laws do?

Alejandro:

Within NDA agreements, there are clauses that prohibit the people that signed it, mainly women, to explain their stories about sexual harassment and sexual violence, in general within the workplace. A lot of them were prevented from going to court or from explaining them because of these nondisclosure agreements. One of the renowned cases was the former assistants of Harvey Weinstein. These changes mainly prohibit these clauses within NDA agreements.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

I know. Yeah. That was very interesting. Okay. Oh, that is really interesting. That is good for me to know for when people, because I get asked these kinds of questions a lot as well. Okay. That is great.

Alejandro:

Also the International Labor Organization established an international convention on the elimination of harassment and violence in the workplace. So that was also interesting. It has not been ratified by many countries, but still it gives an international binding definition of what sexual harassment is. So that, that is interesting. And then we have similar laws like Sweden on consent, but also in Iceland, the Netherlands and Greece.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

So fascinating. Great. Okay. This was really good to know Alejandro and I know, I mean, it is funny because I don't, and it is not a law per se, but even like my first, one of my participants saying like in Northern Ireland, they linked to the me too movement to changes for better relationship and sex education. So it has even led to, I think a lot of I mean that is not a law change, but maybe policy changes or kind of curriculum changes as well.

Alejandro:

And that is my second question. At the end of the day, me too movement does not happen alone. There are some scholars that frame it in like a fourth wave of feminism. So like it is not specifically about sexual violence, but it has opened like the door to talk about like gender issues and like other changes of law or other issues that are being and tackle that are not specific of the me too moment, but with gender issues in general. So how the fourth wave of feminism affected the movement, as its context?

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Yeah, I mean, I think it is what there are problems with that wave metaphor because it is very Western specific. And there have been critiques for example, of how it has ignored the activism of like black women, black feminists, who, you know, their accounts kind of seem to fall in between when the waves happen. But if we are going to use this kind of metaphor of like, it is a swell of visible feminist activism, that is very mainstream. And yeah, I think it is definitely part of the fourth wave. I mean I actually just published an article a couple of weeks ago, maybe last month, that talks about the digital footprints of #MeToo. So it looks at all of these other activist movements online that paved the way for #MeToo, so I have written another book about something called the walk movement, which was also an international movement that I think was the key catalyst in bringing the term rape culture to the public eye or it really helped popularize it.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

I mean, I have been studying other hashtags that have gone viral, but just not in the same scale that #MeToo had gone viral. It has definitely part of that. And I think it has part of this broader fourth wave of feminism. You are absolutely right. There is so many more issues that are really kind of coming to the fore. So around trans rights you know, there's just, there's just loads and loads of different kinds of feminist issues that ha that are gaining lots of attention. So, you know, violence against women, sexual violence or gender based violence, I think has, has long been a feminist issue, but there are other issues around like PE that kind of discrimination, harassment, these sorts of things.

Alejandro:

Yeah. I agree with the waves. I think it is kind of reductionist, that is why I have also put that down the paper. It is important to acknowledge the flaws, at the same time it is useful for the mainstream reader to understand.



Kaitlynn Mendes:

Exactly what is going on.

Alejandro:

And now that you brought this issue to the table, other movements, what is the main difference of the #MeToo movement? Or what has the #MeToo movement done good, or why has it reached such a scale and such like a mediatic boom compared to other similar movements?

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Well, I think, I think the reason it is so hard to always know. I do not know if you know this, but three days before the me too movement went viral, balance ton porc, went viral in France and there was also another movement, I think it was in Spain. So there were actually like there was something about this time part of it, I think, you know, you could link it to very public allegations against people like Harvey Weinstein, Bill Cosby, you know, like celebrities, the fact that it was Alyssa Milano, a Hollywood celebrity who sent that first tweet was also significant.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

And what I look at other movements that have gone viral. There have been other movements that I studied, like have been raped never reported, started by journalists. Also balance ton porc was started by a journalist. So I think for movements to get viral, they kind of need to be started by people who have some sort of presence or like authority. And that is also problematic. Because for example, you probably know this, but the me too movement, not the hashtag but the Me too initiative was started by Tarana Burke back in 2006. So, you know, black women have been speaking out against the violence that they have experienced for a long time, but that tends to get overlooked by the media. So they tend to only pay attention when it is white Hollywood, you know, celebrities. That is when these forms of activism really get noticed. So that is a problem.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Yeah. So it is always hard to know exactly what it is about the movement that made it effective that made it I like the scholar, Sarah, she talks about what makes it sticky. There was something about it that makes you want to contribute or share or pass it along. It is really, really hard to pin down what exactly that is. But it seems as though there was something at around that time, because it was not just in the states, it was in France, it was in Spain. You know, there were other hashtags that were really trending in like Mexico, for example Latin America has been like a really kind of like hotbed of activism. So there was something going on around this time where people were ready to kind of like talk and this movement just gave them, I think, a real opportunity or maybe it was easy. I do not know what it was exactly about it, but there was maybe this, the simplicity of the phrase, you know, you could join this movement and just say something like me too, you know, you didn't have to go into a lot of details, but you could signal that some, you know, you were part of this movement or you supported this movement.

Alejandro:

I have actually read the book about balance ton porc from the journalist who coined the hashtag, Sandra Muller, I think.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Great. Okay. So yeah, you are familiar with that.

I think the positive impact for me would be that it has made more people, feminists, it has opened their eyes up to feminism. It has challenged their idea that we live in this post-feminist society where everything is equal. So I think there are more people who are willing to challenge that idea, even if they do not call themselves feminists, I do not really care. You know, if you call yourself a feminist or not, but making more people recognize that gender oppression is real. And hopefully that is a great way to recognize racial oppression as real, you know, homophobia, transphobia, all of these other sorts of oppressions, show that they are real, that they are structural. And they need to be tackled. So that has been, I think the benefit. I think maybe the challenge is that for some people change has not happened fast enough. So there is still, you know, while there is a lot of lip service to, of course sexual violence is wrong and we should do something, you know, we have not seen increases in perpetrators being convicted.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

And that is also assuming that we think that the judicial system is always the best way to go. It is not for survivors because like data shows, you know, it, it, you know victims are not treated well, they are, slut-shamed and disbelieved. So maybe the fact that it has not led to not that much laws. But, so for example, I know universities will have policies on sexual violence or harassment, but it does not necessarily mean that victims are getting justice through those policies. So I think that has been the most challenging thing is that people think or hope that there would be more cultural change and that has just proved a lot slower. It has happened, but it is not as transformative or as quick cause I think people would have liked.

Alejandro:

Also regarding some of the controversies up there of the movement, like, especially this kind of like Western movement vs more daily life women working for their community?

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Yeah. I mean, that is true. I cannot remember what the hashtags were, but I do know that there were some black women that boycotted the #MeToo movement when it first emerged starting different hashtags. That is obviously an issue and I mean, the ways that black women migrant women, trans women, or even men, you know, some, some people's experiences just are not heard, even though they are talking, they are re sharing their experiences. They are not recognized, they are not listened to in the same way as white middle-class women's voices. There is a problem there, I suppose, with the media and like what they are covering, what they

are paying attention to. But the movement, like you say, it has spread all over the world and it's not just, okay, so places like India, which I'm just slightly more familiar with it.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

The movement has spread all over the world, for instance to India. It started linked to Bollywood, it kind of like Hollywood, right? Like cases against well known actors. You know, well-known people, but it spread, China is also a very interesting case. Again, it tends to be against well known people with authority. So people within academia, people within the entertainment industry. So yeah, I guess sometimes maybe there is too much focus on like these really big powerful figures and not as much on kind of the day to day reality of sexual violence which is probably someone that, you know, a partner, a friend. So there could definitely be more focus on that. So rather than just like, which big celebrity has been, you know, recently accused and yeah, that iss definitely an issue with the media. It is not that there are not journalists who want to cover those stories, but there are other pressures within media organizations that suppress them. So that was like a really random tangent, but there you go.

Alejandro:

That is a very interesting point. Now that you mentioned reporting, is one of the features of the cultural realm. I have also analyzed how the me too movement increased reporting of sexual related crimes in 30 OECD countries.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Okay. Interesting.

Alejandro:

Yeah. It has increased by 11%. And coming back again to the cultural realm, maybe you have any more input of what has been the the impact on the cultural dimension, or how would you describe it?

Kaitlynn Mendes:

So from my research, just things that people have told me people have told me how they started having conversations about things like consent. Past experiences that has then helped them find other survivors of sexual violence, who they did not know. It has helped them form communities. It has helped them find healing people who shared their experience on the hashtag or to another person and being told, I believe you, or it was not your fault.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

And I think, you know, sharing your experiences, having them believed, having them validated, not being judged is really, really powerful for a lot of people. And it helps them find some form of justice, alternative forms of justice, which I don not think should be dismissed. You know, I do, I am actually quite critical of this idea that everyone who has been raped or assaulted once their perpetrator go to jail or that that is always the best outcome.

It is not for a lot of people in part, because maybe it is a family member or someone that you really care about. You know, there can be lots of really complicated reasons why people do not want their perpetrators to go to jail. Maybe they do not think jail is what they need I had with this India study. Some of them talked about how they wanted the perpetrator to get help.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

I have had other participants tell me about how they ended friendships with people, you know, people who are perpetuating. So they will call out their friends when they are perpetuating rape culture. Those are kind of some of the big ones. So, personal healing, finding communities of others, feeling more empowered to call out these harmful behaviors in the past. And like, for me, those are things that shouldn't just be dismissed because I think that those can have really like powerful impact.

Alejandro:

Totally. I found that very interesting. And I have based most of my cultural analysis part on this area of calling out culture. Because I also read your article on the me too dealing with rape and call-out culture.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Oh yeah.

Alejandro:

It is that, that is very interesting. That is the key and the main point that brought me to analyze the cultural realm.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

That definitely. So call-out culture is huge. And people are finding different ways.

Alejandro:

Would you say that call-out culture is related with cancel culture?

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Oh, that is a good question.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Yeah, it is interesting in the UK right now, there is a well-known actor who 20 coworkers have just come out against him. And it is interesting. Cause now like his contracts are being canceled. So I guess you could call that cancel culture because he is now being literally canceled. So there are obvious harms, some harms to cancel culture. I suppose it is kind of in the eyes of the beholder. I think those people need to be quite down because the statistics show like the exact opposite. So I would not mind them being canceled, but I obviously would

not let people who are coming forward sharing experiences to be canceled. So sorry. That is like, that is a really complicated question. And I think it can be at different areas. It depends on who is being canceled and why.

Alejandro:

So like for me, call-out culture actually is part of what you were saying, like alternative forms of justice at the end of the day, like taking that person out of the position of power and authority.

Alejandro:

When I was doing this kind of like legal analysis, I saw that and most of them, actually I would say 99% of them happens in the West. However, we have witnessed how the #MeToo is big in South Korea, in Mexico, would you say that this kind of cultural dimension has reached all these countries and it has not translated into legal changes yet?

Kaitlynn Mendes:

In some countries like Mexico and like South America in general, they have been on this issue for a long time. So me too, maybe in a sense they do not need #MeToo as much because they have been talking about femicide and sexual violence against women for a long time. And maybe #MeToo, for some countries or some places has given them maybe more of an opportunity to come forward and say, look, this is not just us. This is not just me. I am not just crazy it is happening elsewhere. But even places like South Korea is interesting because there has been a lot of activism against like spy cameras, for example, for many years, but maybe #MeToo has helped them took these issues into kind of like a broader global phenomenon.

Alejandro:

I think that's all I wanted to ask. Yeah, totally.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

It sounds like a very interesting dissertation. Good luck with it. Please keep in touch. I would love to hear what else you are doing, and send it to me when you are doing. I would love to read it. Cause especially finding about the laws and things like that. I find it very interesting.

Alejandro:

I would send it totally.

Kaitlynn Mendes:

Okay. Thanks so much. Take care. Bye.