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Recounting feminicide: the relational accountability of citizen data practices

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ABSTRACT

Feminicide is broadly defined as the gender-related killing of women and girls. Despite the increased efforts to document and measure feminicide, official data remain incomplete, inaccurate, or inexplicable. Angered at such paucity, citizens worldwide are using digital tools and platforms to account for missing data or to counter existing feminicide tallies. This paper presents a creative methodology for investigating digitally mediated citizen data practices against feminicide in Mexico. Based on a relational accountability approach, which builds on ethnometodology, feminist autoethnography, and critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA), I examine the discursive potency of five digital interfaces that document feminicide in Mexico: the digital maps *Yo Te Nombro* and *Ellas Tienen Nombre*, the digital memorial *Ecos del Desierto*, the Instagram account *No Estamos Todas*, and the multi-media project *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente*. The main empirical findings demonstrate that, rather than counting or objectively enumerating feminicide, these interfaces *recount* the killing of women and girls. As a result, in the shift from data sets to data stories, digitally mediated citizen data practices recounting feminicide are relational and situated in affective memories and embodied landscapes.

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Introduction

Feminicide (or femicide)¹ is broadly defined as the gender-related killing of women and girls. The crucial difference in comparison to the classification of intentional female homicide is the role of gender as the underlying motivation for the crime. The term “femicide” was introduced by the South African feminist and activist Diana Russell to bring attention to male violence against women at the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women in Brussels in 1976. “Feminicide” was repurposed by Marcela Lagarde in Mexico in the late 1990s. Instead of adopting the English term “femicide” (in Spanish, “femicidio”), feminicide aimed to highlight the State’s role in omitting, neglecting, and even colluding in the violent crimes against women and girls occurring at the border between Mexico and the U.S. Since then, Mexico has been central to the global recognition of feminicide (see Saide Mobayed Vega, Sonia M Frías, Fabiola de Lachica Huerta and Aleida Luján Pinelo 2023). Given my focus on

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Mexico, I use the term feminicide in this paper to underscore the role of the State in the prevalence of such crimes.

In the last four decades, feminicide has coalesced into its contemporary iterations across fields, disciplines, and contexts (Myrna Dawson and Saide Mobayed Vega 2023). Documenting and measuring the scope of feminicide is crucial for its attention and prevention. According to the United Nations, nearly 89,000 women and girls were killed intentionally in 2022 (UNODC 2023). However, despite increased visibility and attention, official feminicide data—produced by governments and international organisations—remain incomplete, inaccurate, nonexistent, or, when available, inexplicable.

The reasons for the current state of feminicide data are multidimensional and context specific. Scholars and experts have pointed to inadequate recording, wilful ignorance, limited resources, lack of political will, rampant impunity for the perpetrators, institutional corruption, patriarchy and structural violence (Catherine D'Ignazio 2024; Myrna Dawson and Michelle Carrigan 2021; Maria Gargiulo 2022; Saide Mobayed Vega and Maria Gargiulo 2024; Laura Rita Segato 2014; UNODC 2023). Angered by such paucity, citizens worldwide are using digital tools and platforms to account for what has been labelled as “missing data by producing counter-data” about feminicide (D'Ignazio 2024; Catherine D'Ignazio et al. 2022; Collectif Féminicides Par Compagnons ou Ex, Feminizid Map, Kathomi Gatwiri, Savia Hasanova, Anna Kapushenko, Lyubava Malyshcheva, Saide Mobayed et al. 2023).

In Mexico, there is an excess of death, a surplus of loss, and too much grieving (Mobayed Vega et al. 2023). In 2022, governmental statistics showcased that almost one thousand women were killed for reasons related to gender.² The sum is likely higher given the country's history of gross underreporting and failure to prosecute crimes from a gender perspective (see Impunidad Cero 2022; México Evalúa 2020; Mobayed Vega and Gargiulo 2024). Naming and counting feminicide has been first and foremost mobilised by activists on the ground (Mobayed Vega et al. 2023). Although data practices against feminicide precede the Internet, digital tools and technologies have intensified their production in recent years.³

This paper offers a creative methodology to investigate digitally mediated citizen data practices against feminicide in Mexico. Building on a relational accountability approach, which draws on ethnomethodology, feminist autoethnography, and critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA), I examine the discursive potency of five citizen digital interfaces documenting feminicide in Mexico: the digital maps *Yo Te Nombro* and *Ellas Tienen Nombre*, the digital memorial *Ecos del Desierto*, the Instagram account *No Estamos Todas*, and the multi-media project *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente*.

The main empirical findings demonstrate how, rather than counting or objectively enumerating feminicide, these interfaces *recount* the killing of women and girls each time users interact with the data, when the integrity of official data is questioned by citizens, when the cases are updated by producers, or when feminicide stories are mobilised for political action by activists. The use of recounting is also linguistic. Different to English, where “to count” means to enumerate, determine the number of something, or include, in Spanish, “contar” also means to tell a story. As a result, in the shift from data sets to data

stories, digitally mediated citizen data practices recounting feminicide are relational and situated in affective memories and embodied landscapes.

Investigating the accountability, mutual dependency, and interactions between digital technologies and cultural meanings of citizen data practices suggests attending to the digital not only as “an object or method of social enquiry but to the setting, or field, from which social enquiry operates” (Noortje Marres 2017, 39). Thus, the digital becomes a space where discourses are mediated, and social values and norms assigned to data are represented, gauged, explored, and contested.

Overall, this paper contributes to the fields of digital sociology, data feminism, and citizen data against feminicide—which, may be argued, is an emergent field of research and practice in its own right (Collectif Féminicides Par Compagnons ou Ex et al. 2023; D'Ignazio 2024; D'Ignazio et al. 2022; Helena Suárez Val 2020, 2022).

Citizen data and data activism

Data practices have been productive for feminists and sociologists studying, engaging, and questioning the inherent power dynamics imbued in data. A long tradition of counterdata practices has emerged from communities often left uncounted (see Mimi Onuoha 2016). The rise of digital communications, technologies, and platforms has resulted in a vast digital toolkit available to citizens to resist and contest human rights violations by using data as a mechanism for action. Frameworks such as “data activism” (Jean-Marie Chenou and Carolina Cepeda-Más mela 2019; Collectif Féminicides Par Compagnons ou Ex et al. 2023; Miren Gutiérrez 2018; Stefania Milan 2017; Stefania Milan and Lonneke van der Velden 2016) and “citizen data” (Jennifer Gabrys, Helen Pritchard and Benjamin Barratt 2016; Jonathan Gray, Danny Lämmerhirt and Liliana Bounegru 2016; Francisca Grommé, Funda Ustek-Spilda, Evelyn Ruppert and Baki Cakici 2017) have emerged to explain such digitally mediated data practices.

Data activism occurs when individuals or collectives use (and reuse) existing data infrastructures to trigger change. At its start, data activism was understood as a reactive response to pervasive and harmful datafication (Milan and van der Velden 2016). Similarly, citizen data are gathered and generated “outside the domain of scientific research, using a broad range of monitoring technologies and techniques” (Gabrys, Pritchard, and Barratt 2016, 1). Relevant to these practices are the effects and changes citizens provoke with their actions, which aim to counter, contest, or respond to data scarcity, absence, or inadequacy. Like data activism, individuals engaging with citizen data practices use data infrastructures to mobilise and communicate objectives, seeking to expose or reveal what is unseen or unnamed.

The distinction between the terms lies in the underlying intentions behind data production. To this end, Aristea Fotopoulou (2020) expands on citizen data practices by focusing on the processes enabling data production rather than their outcomes. In her work on data practices from a feminist perspective, Fotopoulou underscores the politics and power relations inherent in the everyday interaction with data, digital technologies, humans, and non-humans. Accounting for the materiality and embodied labour of data practices suggests prioritising the “agency of humans and the significance of sociocultural

contexts over accounts of object-oriented ontologies of data" Fotopoulou (2020). Indeed, the technical and the political are inevitably intertwined.

Digitally mediated citizen data practices are distributed and accessed through digital platforms, whose anatomy is fuelled by data and furthermore automated and organised by algorithms and interfaces (José van Dijck, Thomas Poell and Martijn de Waal 2018, 9). Digital interfaces are devices or programmes facilitating users' communication with a system. They are the point of interaction where different digital artefacts, users, and producers connect, communicate, and interact. Interfaces include buttons, menus, and other elements that retrieve information or feedback from the system.

Another notable term is affordances, perceived as the potential actions, uses, and relations that technologies allow. The latter fits into what Peter Nagy and Gina Neff (2015) define as "imagined affordances," which "emerge between user's perceptions, attitudes, and expectations; between the materiality and functionality of technologies; and between the perceptions and intentions of designers" (Nagy and Neff 2015, 1). For example, zooming in on an image, scrolling down, or clicking on a map are all affordances.

Digitally mediated citizen data practices against feminicide

Each time a woman or a girl is killed, scattered remains of her story populate the digital space. Chiara Bernardi (2018) coined the term "digital dust" to describe the bits of information about feminicide cases spread across website articles, blog posts, and photos. To account for what remains officially uncounted, individuals collect fragments of feminicide cases and turn them into variables spread across Excel databases, social media accounts, digital memorials, and digital maps. I refer to these practices as "digitally mediated citizen data," "digital projects," and "digital interfaces," as these terms correspond better with the action-ability (the interaction layer) between the users and the digital system.

Feminicide data produced by citizens speak directly to an unevenness of power by recounting what is otherwise omitted, silenced, or neglected by the State (D'Ignazio et al. 2022). By April 2023, *Feminicidio Uruguay*⁴ had traced over 90 digitally mediated citizen data practices documenting feminicide worldwide, showcasing exponential growth since 2015. Although most of these projects are in Latin America, they also exist in Russia, Poland, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, France, and Turkey—to mention a few.

Consequently, scholarship on citizen data practices specific to feminicide has become a burgeoning field (Collectif Féminicides Par Compagnons ou Ex et al. 2023; D'Ignazio 2024; D'Ignazio et al. 2022; Suárez Val 2020, 2022). Catherine D'Ignazio's book *Counting Feminicide* (2024) offers a comprehensive overview of the anatomy of feminicide counterdata science projects. Drawing on in-depth interviews with activists and organisations, and a collection of over 150 citizen projects documenting feminicide globally, D'Ignazio approaches data activism against feminicide as "data feminism in action" because these projects challenge power by accounting for uncounted deaths and missing information in feminicide cases.

To summarise, in recent decades, the proliferation and increased accessibility of digital technologies and platforms have provided individuals and collectives with a broad digital

toolkit to produce data. Frameworks such as “data activism” and “citizen data” study practices of data-making as a mechanism to advocate for justice and accountability, addressing what has been missing, neglected, or ignored. Citizen data practices against femicide can be investigated within these frameworks. In the next section of the paper, I develop a methodology to analyse such digitally mediated data practices.

Methodology & methods: relational accountability

The empirical data informing this paper fits into a broader multi-method research project on femicide data practices across scales—from global institutions and national governments to citizen data—focusing on Mexico. The data collection specific to this paper was carried out between April 2021 and July 2022, where I investigated digitally mediated citizen data practices against femicide in Mexico.

The methodological design is based on a relational accountability approach where the researcher aims to unravel and critically reflect upon the meanings and interactions with empirical data. Harold Garfinkel’s (1967) ethnomethodology and feminist autoethnography, exercised through André Brock Jr.’s (2018, 2020) critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA), informs this approach. As for the method, I recorded my screen while interacting with five citizen projects documenting femicide in Mexico. The material was uploaded and analysed using ATLAS.ti. After coding the data, common themes surfaced following an inductive, grounded theory position.

Ethnomethodology

In ethnomethodology, everyday activities become *account-able* (Garfinkel 1967) to those enacting them, unravelling what might otherwise be dismissed or labelled as common-sense. At the core of this perspective is participants’ own “reflexive” or “incarnate” way of accounting for what they do and how they do it, instead of the researcher coming up with an explanation or theories for why they do so. In other words, ethnomethodological accountability is a method where practices become visible and reportable.

Feminist autoethnography

Digital interfaces documenting femicide are meeting points, turning into open places for recognition and reflection. Yet this recognition and reflection occurs in interaction with the user, involving a degree of agency that is always embodied, self-reflexive and situated (Haraway 1988). To that end, my use of autoethnography becomes a powerful tool to unravel the interactions and meaning-makings afforded by the medium. Autoethnography, as Elizabeth Ettorre (2016) highlights, places the “I” “firmly within a cultural context and all that implies” (2). In a similar vein, Tony E. Adams, Stacy Linn Holman Jones and Carolyn Ellis (2015) define autoethnography as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (1). Thus, feminist autoethnography actively demonstrates how the personal is political as it generates in-between,

transitional spaces that occupy the intersections or borderlands of emotions embodied in the narrative (Ettorre 2016).

I expand the possibilities of autoethnography as I interrogate my mediated relational connections and decisions interacting with feminicide data. With this, I hope to also elicit a shared sociocultural and technological experience around feminicide, partly through its data and partly through the affective engagement that unfolds in making its processes accountable.

Critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA)

I expand the relational accountability methodological approach to the materiality of digital interactions using CTDA, whereby Brock gives technology a discursive potency for making cultural meaning. CTDA operationalises digital technologies (interfaces, clients, hardware, software) as texts. Discursive actions are enacted not just through their symbolic representations but also through their digitally materialised practices. CTDA is a qualitative and interpretative methodology. The analysis elicited “reads the doings of graphical user interface design (GUI), narrative, and context of use against the discourse of its users” (André Brock 2020, 9). CTDA is highly concerned with the interface’s symbolic articulation/accretion of meaning. Therefore, the Internet as a medium is vital to understanding the contexts and cultures of use where meanings are enacted and integrated into our everyday. Both the representation of culture and the affordance of the medium provide the infrastructure that sets up the interfaces analysed for this paper.

CTDA is interpretative and critical, demanding deep descriptions and thorough socio-cultural context explanations. Using CTDA, I interrogate the meaning-making of culture and the technological affordances of digitally mediated data practices. For these data practices are inevitably “marked by a commonly lived history” (Lauren Berlant 2008, viii).

To reiterate, relational accountability is a methodological proposition that unravels our everyday interactions and data-making practices, where the “I” becomes inherently relational and situated. Autoethnography enables an exploration of such relationality, not in terms of the autobiographical, but to “make sense” of a collective historical experience. I exercise relational accountability by implementing CTDA to interfaces documenting feminicide in Mexico. I emphasise a “technology-aware” understanding of interacting with feminicide data, for which I follow the medium’s affordances (Alessandro Caliandro 2018). Finally, a crucial axis integrating *ethnomethodology*, feminist autoethnography, and CTDA is the shared cultural understandings through which relationality is mobilised (hence the “ethno”).

The method and coding process

How was the relational accountability methodology implemented in practice? For analytic purposes, I chose five different and versatile digital projects documenting feminicide in Mexico—following a rationale I describe below. I used grounded theory and an interpretative, open, and exploratory approach to assess the interplay between interfaces, producers, and my usage, highlighting the diversity of cultural/digital artefacts (videos, timelines, photos, maps, etc.).

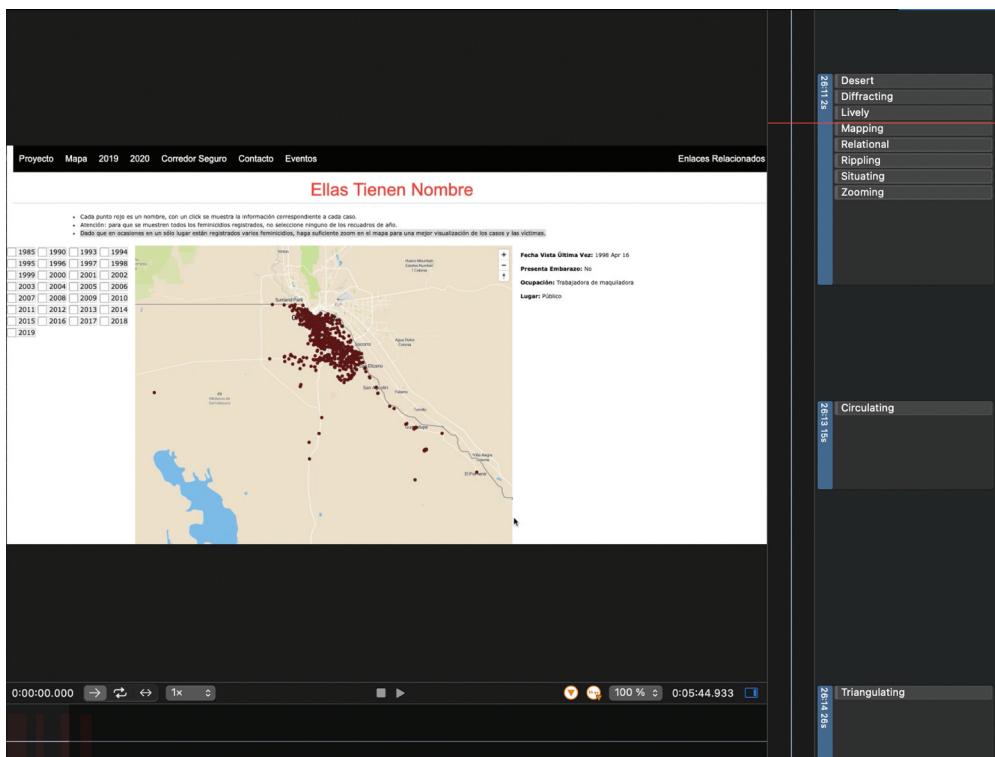


Figure 1. Snapshot of data coding process using ATLAS.ti.

I recorded my screen as I explored these different interfaces to query my interactions with the data and the technological affordances enabled by the medium. Then, I uploaded the videos to the qualitative data analysis and research software ATLAS.ti. Aided by this interface, I immersed myself in the thematic analysis by coding video segments and screenshots, including the backends of these websites.

The coding process followed the interpretative virtues of grounded theory, which starts as soon as data are gathered. As a result, “by coding, researchers scrutinize and interact with the data as well as ask analytical questions of the data” (Uwe Flick 2014, 156). I engaged in an interplay between coding and data collection. Common themes emerged using a critical qualitative analysis. Given space limitations, I have grouped codes into two broader categories: “relationality”⁵ and “situatedness.”⁶ Figure 1 showcases a snippet of this querying process.

Selected case studies

As covered earlier, Mexico serves as a poignant example of citizen practices against the gender-related killing of women and girls because of the epistemological legacy—from “femicide” to “feminicide”—and the normative shifts it sparked globally (see Mobayed Vega et al. 2023). Between April 2021 and July 2022, I traced 20 digitally mediated citizen data projects documenting femicide in Mexico. I categorised them according to the digital environment (including their different digital artefacts) and type of interface, kind

of producer (individual or collective), geographical scope, and the time frame covered (**Table 1**). I define a digital environment as the diversity of elements that allow interfaces to become alive and animate (i.e., GUI, digital artefacts (photos, videos, Excel sheets) and the software used by producers (i.e., JavaScript, Mapbox, Instagram, Ushahidi, Blogspot).

Table 1. Selected case studies of digital interfaces recounting femicide in Mexico.

Name of the project and year of creation	Interface description (ID), digital environment (DE), geographical scope (GS)	Producer
Ecos del Desierto (2016)	ID: Digital memorial displaying the stories of eight femicides in Ciudad Juárez between 1998 and 2013 recounted by the victims' mothers. DE: Developed using JavaScript. Digital artefacts include an interactive timeline, eight embedded YouTube videos (10-minute documentaries), scanned newspaper clips, flyers, and photographs. GS: Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua	Feminist organisation, CEDIMAC (Direction and photography by Alejandra Aragón)
Ellas Tienen Nombre (2015)	ID: Digital map showcasing femicide in Ciudad Juárez from 1985 to 2019. Information is amplified with videos counting femicide from 2019 to 2022. By June 2024, the last year of an update is 2022. DE: Mounted on Mapbox Studio's API, which, according to their website, is "like a Photoshop, for maps." Digital artefacts include infographics, photo videos designed with Canva, and a digital, interactive map. GS: Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua	Individual, Ivonne Ramírez
La Muerte Sale por el Oriente (2014)	ID: Multi-media project comprised three axes: photography, territorial intervention in the State of Mexico, and digital mapping of femicide cases. By June 2024, the project is ongoing. DE: Built using WordPress, a content management system (CMS). Digital artefacts include photography, a Vimeo video recording of the territorial intervention, and a digital map mounted on Google Maps. GS: The State of Mexico	Individual, Sonia Madrigal
No Estamos Todas (2017)	ID: Social media platform (Instagram account). In the <i>No Estamos Todas</i> project, graphic designers recount femicide victims through illustrations and storytelling. By June 2024, the social media account is active. DE: Instagram platform. Digital artefacts include Instagram posts with femicide victims' illustrations and text. GS: National	Illustrators' collective, <i>No Estamos Todas</i>
Yo Te Nombro (2016)	ID: Digital map which displays femicide victims in Mexico from 2016 to June 2021. By June 2024, the data can no longer be accessed. DE: Digital map mounted on a Blogspot (a content management system) and Ushahidi (open-source software to collate and map data). Digital artefacts include digital maps, embedded YouTube videos, a comment section, and graphs. GS: National	Individual, María Salguero

The five selected case studies that illustrate this paper result from thoroughly exploring and dissecting different digital interfaces documenting femicide. The sampling strategy exemplifies four distinct types: the digital maps *Yo Te Nombro* and *Ellas Tienen Nombre*, the digital memorial *Ecos del Desierto*, the social media account *No Estamos Todas*, and the multi-media project *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente*. I based my choice on prominence, location, and type of producer. The five case studies had national coverage and notoriety.

María Salguero's *Yo Te Nombro* is the most renowned citizen data practice against femicide in Mexico, with almost 10,000 cases recorded from January 2016 to when it was last updated in July 2021.⁷

In terms of location and given the relevance of Ciudad Juárez in the global genealogy of femicide (Saide Mobayed Vega 2023), I have chosen two different interfaces that refer to this city, the digital memorial *Ecos del Desierto* and the digital map *Ellas Tienen Nombre*. Similarly, *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente* covers femicide in the State of Mexico, another state with increased attention concerning gender-based violence and femicide (see Manuel Amador and Rafael Mondragón 2020; Humberto Padgett and Eduardo Loza 2014). Concerning the producer, I selected three projects created by individuals (*Ellas Tienen Nombre*, *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente* and *Yo Te Nombro*) and two by collectives (*No Estamos Todas* and *Ecos del Desierto*).

It is important to stress the limitations of this methodological proposition. First, autoethnography reflects only my user experience, lacking intercoder reliability. However, as Brock suggests, "each iteration—reposts and shares—is yet another moment of production; each interactant has a different interpretation" (2020, 159–60). With this work, I aim to incite future interventions in the field to complement or contrast my findings. Also, due to space limitations, I acknowledge that this paper does not showcase my autoethnographic voice as extensively as I would have liked.

Ethical challenges

Researching the violent killing of women is a complex and profound undertaking that cannot be separated from the ethics of naming and portraying their faces and stories. These dilemmas require critical redress and attention, which is my aim in this section. Fearful of reproducing "damage-centred research" by documenting the pain of others, Eve Tuck's work on "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities" provides valuable advice on cautionary approaches (2009). Rather than ready-made solutions, I have questions I remain concerned with and find relevant to disclose to trigger a conversation amongst those interested in and researching this space.

Anonymity versus naming

I recognise the agency and potency of these interfaces in recalling the names and details of women whose lives were extinguished by misogyny, patriarchy, and racism. I also recognise the affective engagement of families and communities in recounting their stories in the quest for justice and accountability vis-à-vis unjust states. I like to think about these women as energy that cannot be destroyed but transformed, energy that ripples as data sets in digital maps, digital memorials, and this paper.

Many of these projects and interfaces seek to name, identify, locate, or document victims. Since naming has become a relevant vehicle against impunity in data practices against femicide, I have included their names and stories in this paper. Yet, I question the role of consent. Who controls these data? How and who should I anonymise?

Internet archiving: "the internet never forgets"

Furthermore, what are the ethics of using something that happens to be preserved but that the author has intentionally discontinued? Whenever I find a new interface that

recounts feminicide data, I archive it using WayBack Machine, “the World Wide Web digital archive.” I do so because sometimes these websites cease to exist, given the inherent instability of the Internet. However, this also shows our degree of responsibility and urgency to preserve and share—sometimes, out of fear that these projects will vanish, sometimes out of our will to keep them alive. How do we know when not to archive? What if interfaces were taken down deliberately by the owners? One way to navigate these questions is by verifying with data producers whenever possible.

Recounting feminicide: affective relationality and situated landscapes

A leak can be a lead.

—Sarah Ahmed, *Complaint!*, 2021.

With each feminicide, there is a risk of the case becoming overly mediatised as the information about it is shared and shaped across different media, with the death repeated again and again, the loss reverberating. If I were to give an analogy of how this “death overspill” ripples on the Internet, I would say that each time a feminicide becomes mediatised, a leak occurs, “affect amplifies” (Suárez Val 2022). Bodies turn to drops that outflow into interfaces shaped with digital/cultural artefacts that recount for them between data sets and data stories. A leak can be a lead, as Sarah Ahmed argues. Drops multiply, expand, and join bodies of water.

Data leaks⁸ permeate and soak digital interfaces to offer diverse ways of recounting feminicide data. Unlike English, where “to count” means to enumerate, determine the number of something, or include, in Spanish, “contar” also means to tell a story. Numbers become secondary in the quest to tell their stories and memorialise their lives (Collectif Féminicides Par Compagnons ou Ex et al. 2023; D’Ignazio 2024; D’Ignazio et al. 2022; Saide Mobayed Vega 2022). The logic of recounting is further imprinted in the names chosen for these projects which seek to include [i.e., *Yo Te Nombro* (I Name You), *Ellas Tienen Nombre* (They Have a Name)], to pluralise [i.e., *No Estamos Todas* (Not all of Us are Here)], or to situate [i.e., *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente* (Death Comes Out from the East)].

Citizen data practices against feminicide in Mexico engage in what Francesca Romeo (2020) defines as “digital necroresistance,” a tactic that “confronts death not as a limit, but as a productive site that transforms the expired body into a political engagement” (265). Aided by the affordances of digital technologies, digital necroresistance in the context of data against feminicide reimagines normative ways of counting death. In this way, the interfaces analysed here disclose worlds and envision other possibilities for engaging with feminicide data. These interfaces mediate and are mediating worlds where meanings are brought into being through various attributes, affordances, and methods of interaction.

Finally, rather than just “counting” or “countering” feminicide data, digitally mediated data practices query the everyday—rather than the exceptional—order of death, as recounting feminicide ripples beyond data sets and into data stories and settings (Donna Haraway and Thyrza Goodeve 2018; Yanni A Loukissas 2019). Indeed, in these interfaces, feminicide is recounted iteratively each time we engage in these stories or when their content is used to mobilise political action. This is where the shift from data sets to data stories occurs and why I argue they are fundamentally relational and situated.

Digitally mediated feminicide data are relational

Relationality is foundational to digital interfaces recounting feminicide. Relationality is not only concerned with the user's interactions with the medium but with the transformative effect of loss, which is what often triggers the emergence of these data practices (Collectif Féminicides Par Compagnons ou Ex et al. 2023; Suárez Val 2022). The latter is encapsulated in Judith Butler's (2004) intake on the productive force of grief. At the heart of their proposition are the relational ties of an emerging political community awakened by a "fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility" (42). With loss, Butler asserts, something about who "we" are is exposed, something that reveals an interconnection with others—"the bonds that compose us" (42)—which we may not have been aware of otherwise. For as long as I can remember, I have been deeply affected by the pervasive violence that continues to shake my country, unveiling something about who I am, whom I am connected with, and how I navigate the world.

Researching on or working with topics related to feminicide is rarely fortuitous. Coming of age in a *feminicidal* Mexico changes the contours of your identity and belonging. The relational impact of recounting feminicide is captured in an article co-written by Sonia Madrigal (*La Muerte Sale por el Oriente*), Ivonne Ramírez (*Ellas Tienen Nombre*), María Salguero (*Yo Te Nombro*) with Helena Suárez Val, where they reflect on "how feminicide cuts through us" (Helena Suárez Val, Sonia Madrigal, Ivonne Ramírez and María Salguero 2020, 68).

Relations are performed through the act of recounting. Such relationality can come into being through the researcher's agency and interactions with these data—including my practices of making meaning. Each pin, cross, or photo that recounts a feminicide is connected to the others through the repetition of difference based on diverse categories. To illustrate this, I have connected a couple of cases across these digital interfaces. Following the analogy of feminicide cases being water drops that spill and leak from the digital space, I traced how the same feminicide is recounted across these interfaces, including the different digital artefacts used to retell stories. I was attentive to my interaction with these cases and the variations vis-à-vis the medium through which they were accessed. The chosen cases have deeply resonated with me in various ways, many of which were revealed through the analysis.

I will focus on the feminicide of María Sagrario González Flores, which happened in 1998. I first found out about her story in *Ecos del Desierto*. The affective connection between this case and the ignition of pink crosses along Ciudad Juárez (and then the rest of the country) motivated me to look further by searching for María Sagrario in another interface. I grew up encountering these crosses, whether in the media or during my daily commutes.

Knowing that *Ellas Tienen Nombre* recounts feminicides in Ciudad Juárez since 1985, I went on to find her there. This interface design is mounted on Mapbox Studio's API, which means that, compared to the use of JavaScript for *Ecos del Desierto*, where the website is tailor-made, the producer is constrained to Mapbox Studio's affordances. There is no search bar, so I clicked on 1998, the year I knew María Sagrario was killed. I zoomed in and out on the geography of Ciudad Juárez, red dots becoming parts that assemble a borderless whole. I clicked on all of them, searching for her name. After clicking, scrolling, and reading about the lost lives of other women, I found her. A text displayed

when I placed the cursor on María Sagrario's red dot. Data leaked and spilled over: name, date, age, the address where the body was found, and whether she had kids or was pregnant, among other information (Figure 2).

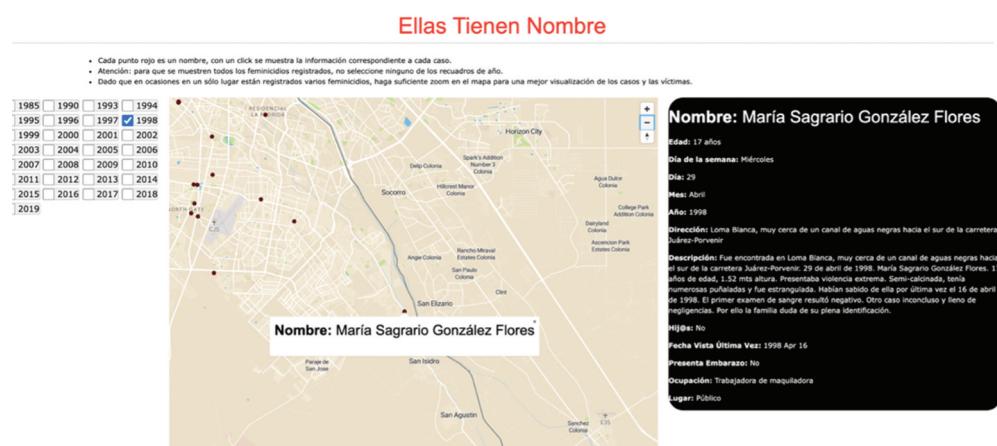


Figure 2. María Sagrario González Flores case in *Ellas Tienen Nombre*. Source: <https://www.ellastienennombre.org/>.

I returned to *Ecos del Desierto*, where María Sagrario is recounted differently through digital artefacts in videos and photos showing me her house, her room, her mother. One of the last scenes of the video shows a printed, black and white full-body image of María Sagrario stuck to a wall in Ciudad Juárez. María Sagrario stared back at me, standing next to the flyers of other missing women and girls. I appreciated seeing María Sagrario inhabiting the streets of her illuminated city and my computer screen, creating novel forms of recounting and remembering her loss (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Screenshot of a photo of María Sagrario in Ciudad Juárez, taken from Paula Flores' video in *Ecos del Desierto*. Source: Video by Alejandra Aragón in <http://ecosdeldesierto.org/>.

Another femicide that reverberates and spills across interfaces is that of Silvia Kezaline Corona Montoya, which happened on June 9 2019. I remember reading about this case on an early summer morning during my commute to work, a familiar sense of sadness and indignation washing over me. This case is recounted in *Yo Te Nombro, No Estamos Todas* and *Ellas Tienen Nombre*. In the latter, Silvia Kezaline is in a video that enumerates all the femicides in Ciudad Juárez in 2019—she is assigned the number 72—and appears as a dot on the map. I learned about the streets where her body was found, how she died, that she studied psychology and liked CrossFit (Figure 4).

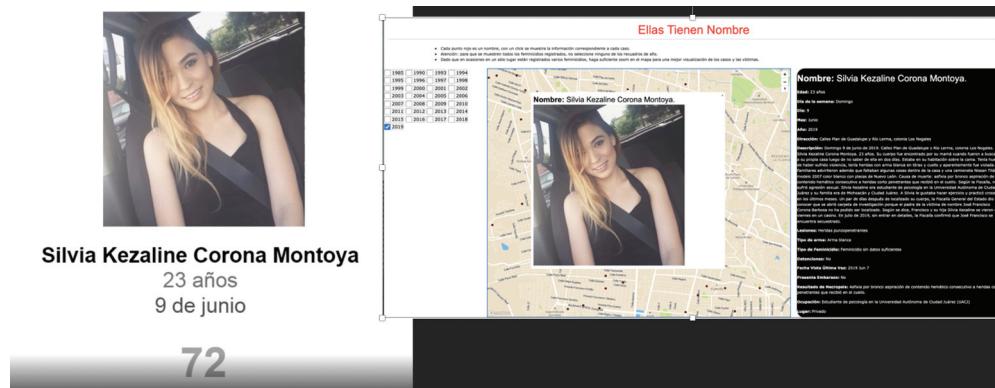


Figure 4. Feminicide of Silvia Kezaline Corona Montoya in *Ellas Tienen Nombre*. Source: <https://www.ellastienennombre.org/>.

Finding Silvia Kezaline in *Yo Te Nombro* was easier as the interface has a search box (Figure 5). Five pages with 76 results displayed when I typed in her name, which suggests that 76 women named “Silvia” have been killed in Mexico between 2016 and 2021. “#Feminicidio Silvia Kezaline Corona Montoya” is the first on the list. I saw the different variables Salguero used to categorise the case. Brown, green, blue, and purple squares display distinctive features, such as age, whether the perpetrator’s identity is known, and whether she was killed at home.

Figure 5. Silvia Kezaline Corona Montoya recounted in *Yo Te Nombro*. Source: <http://mapafeminicidios.blogspot.com/p/ultimo.html>.

Finally, while scrolling down on their Instagram account, I found Silvia Kezaline in *No Estamos Todas*. She is there twice, covered in orange tulips (Figure 6). I learned that she was “full of light,” that she worked in a beauty salon, that the last person who saw her alive was her father, and that he had gone missing. Illustrators of *No Estamos Todas* do not aim to portray the victims precisely as they were but rather to create representations that capture a connection between the victim and the illustrator. *No Estamos Todas’* recount of feminicide perfectly illustrates the relational feature of feminicide data. It is precisely here where I see the potency of these digital interfaces. Although these women’s lives have been taken, they have not left us; their energy has transformed. It radiates from hearts to data sets and data stories.

Relationality also takes shape as the need to recount memories, create a space for

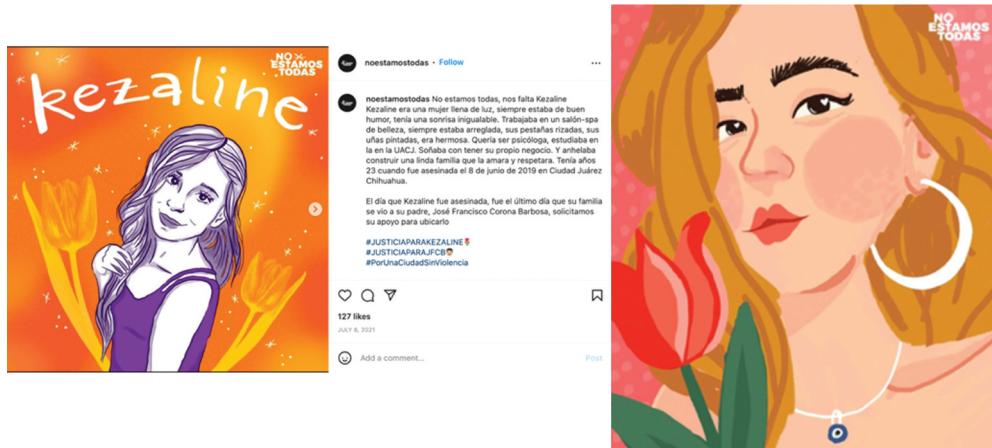


Figure 6. Feminicide of Silvia Kezaline Corona Montoya recounted in *No Estamos Todas*. Source: illustration on left by Luisa Franco for #noestamostodas: <https://www.instagram.com/noestamostodas/?hl=en>.

mourning feminicide victims, and generate archives. Loss is reinterpreted, animated, and sustained by what remains, becoming a constant abiding to the present (David L Eng and David Kazanjian 2003). In that regard, feminicide cases crystallise into feminicide stories that function as mnemonic practices, recording and transmitting memory.

How these interfaces devote to memory varies according to the affordances of the infrastructures that bind and animate what remains of feminicide stories. Although individuals mobilising social justice claims through digital platforms abide by the affordances configured by the designers and engineers of these environments, they also find novel or innovative practices to express themselves through that technology. “In doing so, they draw their own cultural, environmental, and social contexts to make meaning from their technological interactions” (Brock 2020, 10). For example, while some trace, recount and store feminicide stories through videos and photos (*Ecos del Desierto*, *Ellas Tienen Nombre*, *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente*), others use media reports, symbols in maps, and interventions (*Yo Te Nombro, Ellas Tienen Nombre, La Muerte Sale por el Oriente*). In contrast, others work with illustrations (*No Estamos Todas*).

Ecos del Desierto is also a potent example of the relational quality of recounting feminicide data in acts of archiving. Various layers of archives interact between the mothers of the victims, which display different elements of the cases (Figure 7), the

coding of the interface designed to display these data, and the role of users and (or, in my case, researchers) in archiving the archives.

Paula Flores Bonilla, mother of María Sagrario González, whose story is displayed in *Ecos del Desierto*, recalls, "Unfortunately, my daughter became an archive. A living file because I continue to ask for justice for Sagrario. My daughter is not dead. As long as I live and demand justice, she is still alive. She is alive, not physically, but in my heart, mind, memory, and many places [...]” (CEDIMAC and Alejandra Aragón 2016) (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Screenshot of Paula Flores' video showing the archive of her daughter María Sagrario González in *Ecos del Desierto*. Source: video by Alejandra Aragón in <http://ecosdeldesierto.org/>.

Throughout these interactions of use, I had a sense of premonitory disappearance, an urge to keep these stories alive. Memory is a need to preserve what has—or will—perish, a wish to remind us not of what happened but of what may come. Thus, recounting feminicide data further opens the possibilities of building heritage. That relationality can be found within my ATLAS.ti project, where I have deliberately archived feminicide stories through codes, screenshots, and videos.

Digital mediation and feminicide data

Interfaces that recount feminicide data are situated as data move from data sets into data settings. Echoing Loukissas (2019), we should question how local conditions influence data in everyday practices. Loukissas argues data are “entangled within a knowledge system and inscribed in a place” (15). The relational weight of reflectivity is central to recounting feminicide data. In *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente*, Sonia Madrigal situates feminicide cases in the State of Mexico both in the physical landscape and in the digital realm. She achieves the former by unsettling the barren landscape with a mirror in the shape of a woman’s silhouette where women’s bodies have been found. The mirror serves as a medium that expands the viewer’s perspective of the space beyond what the photo lens can capture and as a situated cautionary marker. This tangible device to remember is simultaneously a reflective presence and disembodied absence (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Photo of landscape interventions in *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente* by Sonia Madrigal. Source: Photo by Sonia Madrigal in <http://soniamadrigal.com/lamuertesaleporeloriente/>.

Madrigal recounts femicide data digitally using Google Maps embedded in the web content management system WordPress (Figure 9). As with the other maps, I zoomed in on places I have inhabited to see if I recognised the streets that have witnessed unspeakable violence. Not so far from my grandma's house, the body of an "unidentified woman" was found inside a black rubbish bag (Figure 9). Thus, recounting femicide manifests as an act of self-recognition. This occurs when our digital interactions with these interfaces trigger us to see our reflection vis-à-vis the multiple, relational data worlds we partake in. Either with a mirror or with a cross on a digital map, *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente* leads to both an awareness and a process of assimilation that says, "your body could end up here, too."

MAPA DE LOS REGISTROS PROPIOS MAP OF OWN RECORDS

← Mujer sin identificar

nombre
Mujer sin identificar

descripción
El cuerpo sin vida de una mujer fue abandonado dentro de bolsas negras en la colonia Alce Blanco, en este municipio.

Reportes indican que la mañana de hoy, pobladores alertaron a la policía sobre un bulto color negro abandonado en calle Nueva, colonia Alce Blanco, en Naucalpan.

Afirmaron que policías acudieron a verificar la información y hallaron el bulto en bolsas negras, abandonado en la calle sin pavimentar, junto a un chardo; dicha calle se localiza junto a un canal de aguas negras.

Figure 9. Screenshot of an "unidentified women" in *La muerte sale por el Oriente*. Source: <http://soniamadrigal.com/mapa/>.

The cross is another noteworthy digital and cultural artefact to situate and recount femicide (see Bernardi 2018). Like Madrigal's mirror, crosses signify more than place markers; they are warnings, reminders of where bodies have been found, and locators of stories. Four of the five projects analysed use crosses to recount femicide. Interestingly, *Ecos del Desierto* explains how crosses became the key symbol to represent femicides through the case of María Sagrario González Flores. In March 1999, a group of mothers whose daughters were killed started the organisation *Voces sin Eco*. As part of their actions, they began painting crosses across Ciudad Juárez and continue to do so today (Figure 10). Paula Flores, María Sagrario's mother, notes, "We saw this not just as an act of protest against the authorities, but also to protect the girls in our city [...]” (CEDIMAC and Aragón 2016).



Figure 10. Screenshots of Paula Flores and Irma Pérez painting crosses in Ciudad Juárez. Source: Video by Alejandra Aragón in <http://ecosdeldesierto.org/>.

Crosses are an excellent example of the culture/digital artefact in citizen data against femicide, blurring lines between “online/offline.” In *Yo Te Nombro*, I could navigate femicides cases represented as crosses in Mexico from 2016 to July 2021 (Figure 11), where crosses of assorted colours populate the geography of Mexico, each one representing a life taken. Crosses become a mechanism through which we can navigate, locate, delve in, read further. Yet they also turn into habitable markers of recognition. Although each cross represents a specific moment in time, it also contains an entire history of patriarchal oppression. A cross’s parts simultaneously show us a detailed presence and an overall absence of power structures. They resonate and get distorted. They expand and reduce as we navigate through their digital wholeness.



Figure 11. Crosses as digital artefacts in *Yo Te Nombro*'s homepage. Source: <http://mapafemicidios.blogspot.com/p/inicio.html>.



Figure 12. Instagram post of *No Estamos Todas* showcasing the use of crosses. Source: Illustration by *Versos Ilustrados* for *No Estamos Todas*: <https://www.instagram.com/noestamostodas>.

Crosses are also used in the Instagram posts of *No Estamos Todas* (Figure 12). Although the crosses ripple across all of them, each interface has its own culture of use—including the users' access device—thus enabling different interaction affordances. For example, I was more likely to access the *No Estamos Todas* project on the phone with the Instagram app than with the computer. Consequently, the femicide cases I explored were entangled in a sea of other random visual expressions which depended on the app's algorithms. In contrast, I usually navigated the other four via the web browser, suggesting users access them with a purpose (i.e., research) and, perhaps, with more care and attention.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding decades of activism against femicide in Mexico, the killing of women and girls persists as waves that move and flush across the country's geography. In this paper, I proposed a creative methodology to investigate digitally mediated citizen data practices against femicide in Mexico. Based on a relational accountability approach, which builds on ethnomethodology, feminist autoethnography, and critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA), I examined the discursive potency of five digital interfaces documenting femicide, the digital maps *Yo Te Nombro* and *Ellas Tienen Nombre*, the digital memorial *Ecos del Desierto*, the Instagram account *No Estamos Todas*, and the multi-media project *La Muerte Sale por el Oriente*. The main empirical findings demonstrated that, rather than counting or objectively enumerating femicide, these interfaces *recount* the killing of women and girls. As a result, in the shift from data sets to data

stories, I showcased how digitally mediated citizen data practices recounting feminicide are relational and situated in affective memories and embodied landscapes.

In this way, I aimed to relate and situate the researcher's agency to open the affective resonance and embodied experiences through the digitally mediated interactions by which I explored these projects. Finally, by exercising relational symbolic, material, technological, and self-accountability, I illustrated the potential of citizen data practices to participate—and provoke participation—in collective meaning-makings.

Notes

1. For the differences between "femicide" and "feminicide" see (Mobayed Vega et al. 2023).
2. In 2022 the *Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública* recorded 961 investigation files opened as alleged feminicide (SESNP 2024, 9).
3. One of the earliest uses of feminicide data can be found in the co-authored book *El Silencio que la Voz de Todas Quiebra* (Rohry Benítez, Adriana Candia, Patricia Cabrera, Guadalupe De la Mora, Josefina Martínez, Isabel Velázquez and Ramona Ortíz 1999). Esther Chávez Cano is considered the first citizen to document feminicide in Mexico in 1993.
4. Led by Helena Suárez Val, activist and scholar.
5. Most prominent codes in the "relational" category include affecting, associating, archiving, carrying, connecting, relating, sharing, rippling.
6. Most prominent codes in the "situated" category include accounting, bordering, crossing, localising, locating, mapping, situating, setting, place, impunity, desert, landscape.
7. To June 2024, the website is still available but without any data.
8. Which speaks directly to how leaks are conventionally understood regarding digital data and agree it is another line for further exploration.

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