Non una di meno and its traveling signifiers in a feminism without borders.

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Abstract

The advent of commercial social media provided social movements with new opportunities but also new challenges. Some of these challenges arise in the process of framing their demands and communicating them to their members as well as their audiences. Claiming that social media swiped away the need for centralized framing by movement leaders would be largely misguided. However, it is fair to say that social movements had to re-adjust their framing strategies in order to convey their messages to a public that seems to be relatively unwilling to engage in social mobilization, increasingly exposed to globalized news, and particularly eager to communicate via commercial social media platforms. Based on the above, this paper sets off to offer an analysis of the narratives that the Italian feminist network *Non una di meno* shares with the public via its official Twitter account (@nonunadimeno). In this paper, I argue that *Non una di meno* operates as an *organizationally enabled network* that frames its message through a combination of centralized decision-making and social media crowdsourcing. In particular, one of the processes of frame production in the context of *Non una di meno* involves concertation and coordination with other feminist movements and networks elsewhere in the world. I provide evidence of the above by showing data suggesting that *Non una di meno* makes frequent deployment of floating signifiers that are oftentimes borrowed from other feminist movements elsewhere in the world.

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Introduction

After a relatively long phase of latency, Italian feminism is experiencing a rather vibrant season of mobilization. Starting in mid-2016, feminist groups across the country gathered their voices in a single network called *Non una di meno*. The name of the network is an Italian translation of the name of the Argentinian movement *Ni una menos* and is roughly transposable in English as *not one [woman] less*. The creation of the network was mostly achieved through the concerted efforts of three key organizations, namely *Rete io decido* (roughly, *network I decide,* focusing on sexual and reproductive rights), Di.Re. (national network of anti-violence shelters), and Unione Donne Italiane (UDI-Union of Italian Women).

The first large scale initiative of *Non una di meno* has been a rally that brought roughly 200,000 people in the streets of Rome for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW) in November 2016. The event was advertised with a manifesto/call to action (*Non una di meno*, 2016) circulated via a newly created webpage on *WordPress* and on commercial social media through the use of the hashtag #nonunadimeno. The rally was followed by several initiatives at the local as well as national levels. More than two years down the line, *Non una di meno* is succeeding in keeping up the momentum, with wide popularity and relatively large participation in most of its initiatives.

Mindful of the above, this paper sets off to analyze some aspects of the narratives that *Non una di meno* shares with the public through its official Twitter account (@nonunadimeno). After a review of the relevant literature and a short section of methodology, the argument of this paper will be structured as follows. I start by making reference to my previous work on *Non una di meno* (Trillò, 2018), to argue that the Italian network can be said to be an organizationally-brokered network (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), that is, a social movement that produces its messages through centralized concertation and thanks to the choreographic leadership (Gerbaudo, 2012) of some of its key collectives and activists. I thereafter zoom in to focus on a particular aspect of the activist work behind the production of *Non una di meno*'s posts on social media, and namely concertation with other feminist movements across the globe. Finally, I present some examples from *Non una di meno*'s tweets to substantiate the argument that centralized production of frames and concertation with other feminist

movements often results in the circulation of empty signifiers (Laclau, 2005) that are borrowed from abroad and re-entextualized in the Italian context.

Theoretical background

The main theoretical source for this paper is the theorization of *the logic of connective action* proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2012). In their view, social movements operating before the advent of commercial social media used to articulate their grievances through *collective action frames*: messages emerging as the output of centralized consultation within a community of practices. Bennett and Segerberg define these framing practices as practices that follow the logic of *collective action*. The advent of new communication technologies as well as the acceleration of neoliberal capitalism pushed social movements to adapt at least some of their framing strategies. Social movements are increasingly framing their messages through *personalized action formations*: individual political viewpoints somewhat related to a loosely defined political identification, usually in the form of an umbrella term such as *we are the 99%*. The social action resulting from this latter process has been termed by the authors as *connective action* (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, pp. 774-776).

The crucial difference between collective and connective action lays in the role of institutional brokers. The former usually requires the brokerage of movement leaders in order to negotiate inter-group differences and to produce a narrative that can travel beyond the boundaries of the community producing it. The latter doesn't need institutional brokerage thanks to the affordances made available by commercial social media (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 777). Based on the above premises, Bennett and Segerberg (2012) suggest a threefold typology for present day social movements, with one category named *self-organizing networks* and responding to the logic of connective action, a second category named *organizationally brokered networks* and responding to the logic of collective action, and a third (hybrid) category named *organizationally enabled networks* and exemplifying the tension between the two logics.

Many built upon Bennett and Segerberg's theorization to argue in favor of one or the other mode of social movement organization. For example, Papacharissi (2015) has argued that some present day forms of social mobilizations rely mostly on affective communication via social media platforms.

She further articulates that the polyphony of voices emerging from individual social media accounts participating in a personal action frame is then structured from below through group-based systems of validation such as *collective framing* (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013) and *networked gatekeeping* (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). The former refers to the process through which the collectivity participating in a connective action jointly selects those frames that will eventually become key for a movement by circulating them more frequently than other content (for example, by retweeting them). The latter refers to the process through which opinion leaders emerge in the context of a connective action with little or no regard for their standing before the beginning of the mobilization.

Others have consistently argued for the continued relevance of social mobilization in the analogical world in light of the inequalities shaping participation and visibility online. Christian Fuchs (2013b), for example, recurrently argues that commercial social media platforms are inherently non-participatory spaces. This is because the production and circulation of social media content is overwhelmingly dominated by big corporations and other actors who have preferential access to visibility because endowed with a disproportionate share of material, symbolic, and discursive resources (Fuchs, 2013b). Fuchs advances his propositions in open polemic with those scholars celebrating the participatory potential of social media platforms, and most prominently with Manuel Castells (2009; 2012). In opposition to Castells' views, Fuchs contends that social media might facilitate collective action, but can hardly be said to drive it.

A middle ground position is possibly that adopted by Paolo Gerbaudo (2012), who argues that physical dispersion of people and societal pressure for the adoption of individualized lifestyles under neoliberal capitalism are making collective mobilization increasingly difficult. Given these premises, effective social mobilization currently requires the work of a core group of *choreographers* (movement leaders) and some level of technological mediation (social media). Gerbaudo draws from Laclau (2005, p. 69) to argue the leaders of new social movements are those who provide the public with *empty signifiers* to fill with their own grievances. The crucial difference with the *individual action frames* proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2012) is that, according to Gerbaudo, framing is not spontaneous or crowd-sourced (*a la* Papacharissi), but provided by the choreographers (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 43). Once the *scene* is set,

however, those participating in the public mobilization enjoy substantial free-dom in how to navigate the space of political visibility made available to them.

I further articulate on this perspective on social movements and social media by borrowing from Alice Mattoni's (2017) work in the Italian context. Mattoni contends that social media scholars and social movement scholars are still struggling to build fruitful synergies with each other. In her view, one of these possible synergies might come from focusing on media practices and media ecologies in the study of social movements and their use of social media. The former refers to a set of heuristic tools for the empirical observa-tion and analysis of the communicative dimensions of social movements. The latter refers to the study of a specific media technology in the context of the wider media ecology in which is set, that is, in relation to the other forms of media communication adopted by the social movement under consideration (for example, radio, tv, leaflets, etc.).

Mattoni (2017) identifies three main advantages of this approach. Firstly, a media ecology/media practices approach can help in uncovering the fact that social media communication exists alongside other communication practices by social movements. That is to say, social media were added to other strat-egies of communication by social movements in a cumulative process that, however, did not radically undo previous practices. Secondly, this approach can highlight that temporality is crucial to social movements. In particular, looking at the wider ecology of media communication by social movements will almost certainly suggest that social movements use social media in dif-ferent ways depending on the stage of the protest cycle currently occupied (wave of contention, between waves, latency). Finally, this approach can shed light on the fact that social movements always used new media in an agentic way. The most historically relevant case is that of the radio, but it is by no means the only one. In this respect, social movement's adoption of so-cial media is in not a radically *new* way of doing social mobilization but falls within a well-established media practices and traditions.

Methodology

My research falls under the broad umbrella of social media critical dis-course studies (SM-CDS), defined as socially committed, problem oriented, textually based, critical analysis of social media discourses (Khosravinik,

2017). Following KhosraviNik, I define social media communication as *an electronically mediated communicative paradigm across any electronic platforms, spaces, sites, and technologies* in which people can (i) work together in producing and compiling content; (ii) perform interpersonal communication and mass communication simultaneously or separately; and (iii) have access and respond to organizationally-generated or user generated content.

A crucial feature of SM-CDS is its attention to context. KhosraviNik (2017) argues that context should not be understood only in its horizontal sense (that is, what goes among users on a given platform or across platforms). Rather, any analysis of text should also account for *vertical* contextual elements, such as for example sociological factors like access, visibility, and identity (in turn based on class, race, gender, etc.). KhosraviNik (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2015) grounds his critique of contextualization in an attempt to bridge the Habermas-Foucault divide in critical discourse studies. In his interpretation, critical discourse scholars should concede that social media discourses operate both through the Foucaultian logic of power *of* discourse and Habermasian logics of power *in* discourse. The former refers to the macro-structural forces behind discourse that work to produce objects and subjects of knowledge. The latter refers to those micro-level instances in which individuals communicate in an attempt to influence each other and in the process construct, challenge, or perpetuate supra-individual discourses.

Arguably, KhosraviNik's (2017) approach is particularly fruitful in the study of social media adoption by social movements. Openness to ethnographic engagement with the context of production might be crucial in uncovering the extent to which a social movement is a self-organizing network, an organizationally enabled network, or an organizationally brokered network (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Attention to vertical contextualization can accommodate the focus on media practices/media ecologies suggested by Mattoni (2017). Vertical contextualization can also help in identify the *choreographic* leaders of a movement and study their role in the production of the more or less *empty* signifiers offered to its adherents (Gerbaudo, 2012). In turn, attention to horizontal context can reveal the extent to which the message of a movement is re-directed by its participants through bottom-up systems of validation and affective reactions to unfolding events (Papacharissi, 2015).

Based on the above, I conduct a broad analysis of the discourses circulated by the Italian feminist network *Non una di meno* via its official Twitter account (@nonunadimeno). The timespan under consideration covers from 19 September 2016 until 3 November 2018, that is, roughly twenty seven months, from when I became aware of the existence of the *Non una di meno* network until the days immediately before the first presentation of this paper at the 3rd AAHD Congress in Rosario, Argentina. The data sampled for this paper comprises 6,005 tweets and the relevant metadata. Analysis in this paper relies heavily on one semi-structured interview with one of the activists managing the social media communication of *Non una di meno* (November 2017) and on my own participant observation in three of the national assemblies of the movement (November 2016, February 2017, November 2017). Further contextual data is drawn from six further interviews conducted with people managing social media profiles that regularly tweet about gender issues in the Italian context that were conducted as part of my doctoral research.

Non una di meno, its media practices, its media ecology

In this section, I outline some of the media practices of *Non una di meno* based on insights gathered in a semi-structured interview with one of the activists managing the communication of the movement. The interview lasted around ninety minutes and took place in person in Rome in November 2017 as part of my doctoral fieldwork. I also build on some of my previous work on *Non una di meno*, and in particular on my analysis of the posts published by the network and its adherents at #nonunadimeno between September 2016 and August 2017 (Trillò, 2018).

Non una di meno communicates with its audiences and adherents via a wide array of channels, namely a blog on *WordPress*, a *Facebook* page, a *Twitter* account, and (more recently) an *Instagram* account. In addition to these communication channels, many of the local chapters of *Non una di meno* independently circulate their own material through other accounts and pages characterized as local *Non una di meno* outlets (for example, *Non una di meno* – Milan). During the first year of its activities, much of the communication of *Non una di meno* was administered by a press office that somewhat responded to one of the working tables within the movement, namely the one dealing with violence against women in/by the media system. Most of the

deliberation within the working table took place during national/local assemblies, but was also facilitated online with discussion on a national mailing list hosted by the non-proprietary server *we rise up*.

After IDEVAW 2017, *Non una di meno* updated its internal structure; the working table were mostly set aside in favor of territorial units. The press office was obviously not dismissed. It continued carrying out its work in consultations with the broader ecology of *Non una di meno*'s activities. Around the time of the restructuring of *Non una di meno*'s workflow in late November 2017, all the activists involved in the communication of the network at the national and local level agreed to join a private *Facebook* group for the purposes of closer coordination of their activities. The number of people involved in the management of the social media accounts is actually quite wide and can be said to be somewhere around thirty activists. However, a smaller unit of around five Rome-based activists manages most of the day to day workflow.

Some degree of international coordination with social movements abroad was also present. In particular, campaigns taking place around key celebrations such as International Women's Day (IWD) and IDEVAW are regularly developed in concert with other feminist movements elsewhere in the world. For example, the communication of the campaign for Women's strike on IWD 2017 was developed in consultation with comrades from feminist movements across the world on a private Facebook group called *Paro des mujeres*.

Facebook was recognized by *Non una di meno* activists as the main platform for the broadcasting of the movement's message to its perspective supporters, while *Twitter* represented an outlet needed to catch the eye of traditional elites. Particularly, *Twitter* was considered to be the most effective medium for communication and reporting *on the spot* from rallies, assemblies, and other initiatives. Instagram is considered to be particularly relevant for communication with younger audiences. The *stories* affordance of *Instagram* as a platform is also being tested as a potentially powerful tool to share day to day information and advertise upcoming events.

Based on the above, it is relatively safe to argue that *Non una di meno* is an organizationally brokered network that works through the logic of collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). *Non una di meno* has a clearly identifiable group of choreographic leaders that manage the production and circulation of its frames via social media as well as other platforms.

Nono una di meno as a signifier:
Empty, not-so-empty, traveling

In the discussion thus far, I argued that the leaders of *Non una di meno* are fairly active in defining the identity for the movement, framing its messages, and conveying them to the adherents and the wider public. This notwithstanding, my wish here is that of expanding on this argument by claiming that their leadership remains *choreographic* (Gerbaudo, 2012). Key activists within *Non una di meno* do produce specific messages for the movement, signaling centralized framing and a control over the movement's narrative. However, *Non una di meno* also makes large use of more or less *empty* signifiers. Its adherents are *de facto* free to ascribe virtually any meaning to these signifiers, filling them with their own grievances and potentially steering the message away from the one originally intended by the movement leadership. In what follows, I present evidence to corroborate this claim. For the purposes of presentation in this paper, I refer to only one example, namely that of the name of the movement itself.

Non una di meno*: Empty signifier?*

After a few months of behind the scenes concertation, Italian feminist groups ended the latency phase of their mobilization and launched a national assembly (in Rome on October 8th, 2016) to kick off a new wave of contestation. The outcome of the assembly was a manifesto/call to action announcing a rally in Rome to mark IDEVAW 2016. This is a short document (527 words, excluding the title) followed by a list of the lead organizers, of the organizations joining the cause, and of the individuals offering their personal endorsement. In its first paragraph, the document invites all women (implied in the use of the sole feminine form) to join the rally in Rome in order to "scream our anger and voice our wish for self-determination" (Non una di meno, 2016). The text argues that widespread violence against women is a structural phenomenon demanding structural solutions. Anger is mostly aimed at political institutions (*la politica*) for failing to address the growing number of femicides in the country. In particular, the government-issued anti-violence plan is presented as oblivious of the structural character of violence against women.

The manifesto/call to action constructs two main social actors, and namely a collective *us* made of *women* and an *other* made of political institutions

that produce the structural conditions for their subordination. Women are constructed simultaneously as subjects of mobilization within *Non una di meno* and as the objects upon which structural violence is predicated. Institutions (the media, the healthcare system, the job market, etc.) are presented as unwittingly or purposefully putting in place structures that ultimately result in systemic violence. That is to say, institutions collectively predicate a wide range of forms of violence against women.

A specific passage in the manifesto/call to action is particularly relevant for the purposes of my argument in this paper. The passage reads as follows:

> Enough now! This is the shout that is emerging in multiple parts of the world. In Poland, in Argentina, in Spain, the strikes and protests of the women who rebel against femicide and fight for female self-determination paralyzed entire countries. Women's bodies invade streets, build bridges and common narratives from one end of the world to the other. Mobilization spans well beyond national borders and bring to the fore the political might of women[2] (*Non una di meno*, 2016).

In this passage, *Non una di meno* speaks through its collective voice to produce links with other feminist movements elsewhere in the world. *Non una di meno* specifically mentions the Argentinian movement, from which it borrows its name, and other movements in Europe that happened to mobilize around the same time. While the word *sisterhood* is not specifically used, the narrative adopted in the passage clearly words to discursively produce a common struggle against violence in which all women across the world are joined. In the lines that follow, this statement is qualified to include migrant women and queer women as subjects who are also part of the collective *us* joint in this struggle. Crucially, this struggle is transnational in character and might be said to go as far as advocating for the end of nation-stats.

The fact that violence against women is a systemic phenomenon demanding large scale social restructuring is obviously undeniable. Mindful of

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[2] "Adesso basta! è il grido che si alza da più parti nel mondo. In Polonia, in Argentina, in Spagna gli scioperi e le proteste delle donne che si ribellano alla violenza e al femminicidio e lottano per l'autodeterminazione femminile hanno paralizzato interi paesi. I corpi delle donne invadono le strade, costruiscono ponti e narrazioni comuni da una parte all'altra del mondo. La mobilitazione dilaga ben al di là dei confini nazionali e porta alla ribalta la potenza politica delle donne." (Non una di meno, 2016).

this, it is interesting to notice that such a broad definition of the problem at stake unlocks a virtually endless range of discursive possibilities. That is to say, the expression *Non una di meno* can be taken to mean virtually anything as long it has to do with violence against women. Its ambitious objectives cover all fields of social contestation (media, education, labor, healthcare, etc.), in most cases aiming for changes so deep that they could be defined as revolutionary. Its main subject is undeniably a collective *us* made of *women*, but it is not closed to the participation of other subjectivities. For example, it is hard to imagine achieving such profound social transformation without the participation of men as allies, regardless of what this would entail in practice. Similarly, its vision of social reform almost necessarily demands international cooperation, as national solutions would likely be insufficient.

In light of the above, it is safe to state that *Non una di meno* can be interpreted as a signifier that is mostly empty. Much like *we are the 99%* and other similar slogans, *Non una di meno* can potentially signify anything that is loosely related to the struggle of women against violence. In this sense, *Non una di meno* shares some of the features of the choreographed social mobilizations studied by Gerbaudo (2012). The slogan *Non una di meno* was provided by a group of choreographic leaders as a frame through which private individuals could perform their protest.

Non una di meno*: Not-so-empty a signifier, after all?*

Despite the above, the extent to which *Non una di meno* is indeed an empty signifier should not be overstated. Differently from, for example, Occupy Wall Street (Gerbaudo, 2012; Fuchs, 2013a; Papacharissi, 2015), the leaders of *Non una di meno* never aimed for a full cover up of their role as choreographers. These choreographic leaders regularly work to set the boundaries of social mobilization within *Non una di meno* and to steer the protest towards their preferential interpretation of what the phrase *Non una di meno* should mean. While this practice is probably not dissimilar from that of other choreographic leaders who prefer to stay *behind-the-scenes*, relative visibility grants *Non una di meno*'s leaders more power in steering the protest.

In the lead up to the rally in Rome for IDEVAW 2016, the leaders of the movement weighed in on more than one occasion to make sure that the protest did not depart too much from their intended goals. Some of these

processes were visible on Twitter. In multiple threads, the movement leaders communicated the forms in which the rally was supposed to be performed and clarified the positionality of the movement on a range of issues. A poignant example is the reaction of the movement against the risk of institutional capture. The thread reads as follows:

> Nonunadimeno was born as a bottom-up process organized by the self-administered entities that fight against machist violence on the ground everyday / Starting with the call to action [link to the call] we chose that our decision-making and logistic structure would be based on local assemblies / These are creating paths that started at the national assembly of 8/10 [link to the report of the assembly] / An assembly featuring the participation of hundreds of women who shared their local experiences and jointly produced the call to action for the #26N / The call to action for the #26n [link to the call] is the official one that came out of the joint effort of those partaking in the process / The call to action coming out of the assembly states that we do not accept the endorsement nor the interference of parties/unions/institutions / Not in the form of flags or symbols at the rally, nor in the form of public declarations replacing the voice of the assemblies[3] (@nonunadimeno, 16 November 2016).

The message is clear and echoes the one contained in the manifesto/call for action. *Non una di meno* speaks with the voice of a collective *us* made of *women* that stands in opposition to a collective *other* made of *institutions*. Crucially for the argument in this paper, *Non una di meno* has a central structure as well as a number of local hubs. These hubs gather grassroots inputs

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[3] "Nonunadimeno nasce come percorso dal basso delle realtà autorganizzate sui territori che ogni giorno lottano contro la violenza machista / A partire dall'appello [link] ci siamo date come modalità organizzative e decisionali le assemblee territoriali / Percorsi che stanno costruendo la partecipazione a partire dall'assemblea nazionale dell' 8/10 / Assemblea partecipata da centinaia di donne dei territori che si sono confrontate e dalla quale è uscito un appello condiviso per il #26N / L'appello per il #26n https://nonunadimeno.wordpress.com/2016/10/27/non-una-di-meno/ è l'appello ufficiale uscito dal confronto tra le partecipanti al percorso / Nell'appello uscito dal confronto assembleare si ribadisce che non accettiamo patrocinii né ingerenze di partiti/sindacati/istituzioni / Né sottoforma di bandiere e simboli alla manifestazione né come presa di parola al posto delle assemblee. / Non accetteremo strumentalizzazioni né cappelli politici. I soli cappelli saranno quelli di glitter dello spezzone transfemminista queer" (@nonunadimeno, 16 November 2016).

and feed them back into the overall narrative of the national movement.

The work and nature of the movement is further articulated in a thread published by the @nonunadimeno on 18 November 2016. The choreographic leaders of the movement clarified their specific aims by stating that:

> We will be a sea tide [link to communique by the movement] / We are a diverse ensemble of different forms of life and life choices, we are an ensemble of different political compositions / Anti-violence centres, home-shelters and anti-trafficking centers, self-administered family planning centers, and occupied and re-generated community spaces / The rally will be an expression of what we advocate every day with determination / No space for machists, no waving of party- or union-related identities. / We question the norm of quotidian living with its injustices and mandated social order / We are not interested in individual emancipation but in real freedom, that can only be achieved in its collective dimension / We defend the autonomy of this journey from those who [instrumentally] wave the flag of violence against women or those who use it in a dogmatic way / Also against those institutional attempts to "neutralize" the political premise that violence against women has a structural and systemic dimension / The journey of Non Una di Meno will not be finished on 26 November; it will relaunch the drafting of a feminist national plan against gender based violence / A document built from the bottom up that wishes to gather definitions, practices, and methodologies against male violence on women[4] (@nonunadimeno, 18 November 2016).

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[4] "Saremo marea. / Siamo un insieme variegato di forme e di scelte di vita, siamo un insieme di differenti composizioni politiche / centri e sportelli antiviolenza, case rifugio e dei Centri anti Tratta, Consultorie autogestite e spazi occupati e rigenerati / Il corteo sarà espressione di ciò che portiamo avanti ogni giorno con determinazione / Nessuno spazio ai machisti, nessuno sbandieramento di identità partitiche e sindacali. / Mettiamo in discussione la norma, la vita quotidiana con le sue ingiustizie e l'ordine costituito / non ci interessa la mera emancipazione individuale ma la libertà reale, che non può darsi se non nella dimensione collettiva / Difendiamo l'autonomia di questo percorso da chi sventola la bandiera della violenza contro le donne o da chi ne fa un uso dogmatico / Anche contro tentativi istituzionali di neutralizzare l'assunto politico della violenza alle donne come dimensione strutturale e sistemica / Il percorso NonUnaDiMeno non si esaurirà nel 26 novembre ma rilancia con la stesura di un piano femminista contro la violenza di genere / Un documento costruito dal basso, che aspira a raccogliere definizioni, pratiche e metodologie contro la violenza maschile sulle donne" (@nonunadimeno, 18 November 2016).

In this thread, the leadership of the movement further restated that *Non una di meno* speaks through the voice of a collective *us* made of *women* who voice their protest against an *other* made of *institutions*. In the posts above, *Non una di meno* denounces gender based violence as a structural problem and demands systemic solutions. Noticeably, *Non una di meno* rejects an atomistic vision of society in which emancipation from violence is an individual achievement. Rather, the movement fights for the recognition of violence against women as a political issue that demands systemic solutions. These solutions were in part produced articulated and therefore *fixed* by *Non una di meno* in a feminist national anti-violence plan. Drafted from the bottom-up, the plan was published one year later on the occasion of the 2017 edition of IDEVAW (Non una di meno, 2017). The plan includes eight main areas, each addressing a different site for sexist violence. These are, namely, support for those trying to escape violence, sexism in social movements, sexism in the legal system, sexism in the media, sexism in the healthcare sector, sexism in the education system, migrant feminism, and sexism in the welfare state system.

In light of the above, it is possible to offer some reflections that further articulate on what I previously argued in this section, namely that the slogan *Non una di meno* can be said to be an empty signifier that the movement's leaders produced as a space of political visibility in which its adherents can quite freely perform their protests. While in part correct, such and interpretation of *Non una di meno* would be rather reductive. *Non una di meno* is a movement that has a clear structure, articulated in working tables (for the first year of its activities) and in local hubs (throughout its work to date). The movement leaders do make strategic use the movement's slogan as an empty signifier in order to draw in a large number of adherents but are also quite keen on retaining control of the overarching narrative of the movement. In this sense, they have proven to be willing and able to weigh in and steer the conversation away from perceived threats to the movement such as that of institutional capture, as presented in the examples above.

It is also necessary to add that the publication of *Non una di meno*'s anti-violence plan substantially narrowed down the number of grievances that could be encompassed by *Non una di meno* as an empty signifier. In other words, the publication of the anti-violence plan at least temporarily fixed the meaning of *Non una di meno*, ruling out the possibility of using it as an

umbrella expression for anything remotely related to violence against women. To be sure, the anti-violence plan is very broad and covers a wide number of areas of political intervention. That is to say, the plan is to be taken as a programme rather than a set of specific actions to undertake. In this sense, the plan only marginally narrows down the objectives of *Non una di meno* as a movement and the meaning of *Non una di meno* as an umbrella protest slogan. This notwithstanding, these developments suggest that interpreting *Non una di meno* as a signifier that is completely *empty* would be rather reductive.

Non una di meno: *Encompassing traveling grievances?*

Discussion so far pointed out that *Non una di meno* is a movement with a clear structure, a leadership, and some programmatic goals that are temporarily fixed in its feminist anti-violence plan. These structures and objectives might narrow down the meaning of *Non una di meno* as an umbrella slogan while remaining broad enough to encompass most of what is commonly understood as contributing to the eradication of violence against women. This duality afforded great flexibility to *Non una di meno* in the adoption of protest frames coming from abroad that were re-entextualized by the movement in the Italian context. For the purposes of analysis in this paper, I will present here three examples: the metaphor of the sea tide, the endorsement of the global *Me too* campaign and its transformation in a national *we together* campaign, and the recent adoption of the *pañuelo* as part of the visual vocabulary of *Non una di meno.*

In the lead-up to its first nationwide mobilization for IDEVAW 2016, *Non una di meno* made large use of the metaphor of the sea tide (*marea,* in Italian). Examples include the communique by the movement on 18 November 2016 embedded in the tweeted thread reported in the previous sub-section. In Italian, this metaphor is usually adopted to signify a multitude. A very large number of something can be called *a sea tide* of that something. The choice of the water metaphor is relatively counter-intuitive at a time in which other water metaphors are used by conservative forces to speak of incoming migration towards Europe, usually with negative undertones (Abid, Manan, & Amir Abdul, 2017; Orrù, 2018). This notwithstanding, the notion of the sea tide is meant to convey the feeling that the *Non una di meno* mobilization is plural in its character, willing and able to take occupy the public space, and ultimately inevitable like a natural occurrence.

A closer look to the adoption of the sea tide metaphor in *Non una di meno*'s communication reveals that the metaphor did not originate within the ranks of the movement. Tracing the metaphor all way back to its origin is obviously beyond the scope of this research. In the narrow context of political mobilization on social media, it is possible to find tweets containing the slogan *somos marea* (often, #somosmarea) in the context of grassroots mobilization against austerity and precarity in the Galicia region of Spain in 2015. Soon thereafter, this mobilization joined the ranks of the wider anti-austerity protest of the 15-M movement with the name of *En Marea*. The metaphor achieved nationwide popularity when *Podemos* adopted it as part of its slogans.

Crisis internal to *En Marea* brought about its *de facto* collapse in 2018 (Huete, 2019), but the metaphor of the sea tide did lose its currency. The metaphor also traveled beyond the borders of Spain. In fact, it was recently adopted by labor mobilizations in Mexico as well as feminist mobilization in Argentina. The metaphor also broke the language barrier, with its Italian translation (*siamo marea*) gaining currency in the context of *Non una di meno*. The previous sub-section presents two examples of the use of the sea tide metaphor by *Non una di meno* in its early phases. More than three years down the line, the movement still makes broad use of the metaphor.

While the metaphor of the sea tide remained in the vocabulary of *Non una di meno*, it is by no means the only frame that the movement borrows from progressive counterparts abroad. For example, *Non una di meno* participated in the global *Me too* mobilization. Under a number of names and variations, *Me too* can be said to be as a movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault, especially in the workplace. There has been broad controversy over the origin of the phrase, but it is now commonly accepted that US-based activist Tarana Burke had been using *Me too* to foster solidarity among victims of sexual assault and encourage them to speak up since 2006. However, the slogan got popularized in 2017, when a Hollywood actress, Alyssa Milano, used it as a hashtag on *Twitter* (#metoo) to encourage victims to speak up in order to make visible the endemic character of sexual harassment (Guerra, 2017). *Me too* has been given large amounts of scholarly attention and is still object of a burgeoning corpus of literature. *Non una di meno* orchestrated a wide number of initiatives revolving around the broad theme of *Me too* as a broad call to action against workplace harassment. One of these

is the development of an Italian rendition of the *Me too* slogan, translated for the occasion as *quella volta che* (literally, *that time when*). Perhaps more successfully, *Non una di meno* developed much of its communication leading up to the IDEVAW 2017 rally around its own interpretation of *Me too*. In particular, *Non una di meno* attempted to re-entextualize *Me too* in the Italian context in a more communitarian endeavor with the English-speaking hashtag *we together* (#WeTogether). As succinctly summarized in one of the tweets by the official account of the movement:

> #MeToo is the story of the harassment I suffered, #WeTooGether is the story of the solidarity [I received] and of collective resistance[5] (@nonunadimeno, 18 October 2017).

In line with the rejection of an atomized society in which emancipation from violence is an individual conquest, *Non una di meno* re-interpreted *Me too* to advance a narrative of workplace harassment that emphasizes the collective dimension of the phenomenon as well as the collective dimension of the feminist reaction against it. *We together* remain to this date one of the most popular frames of the movement.

More recently, *Non una di meno* has been frequently speaking up in defense of sexual and reproductive rights. This is probably due to a combination of internal restructuring within the movement (Trillò, 2018) and because of a rise in visibility of feminist mobilization on the issue worldwide. *Non una di meno* has been particularly vocal in supporting its Argentinian counterparts in the *#abortolegalya* and *#quesealey* campaign throughout 2018 (Laudano, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2018). It is relatively well known that one of the key visual symbols of the mobilization of Argentinian women is the green *pañuelo* (neckpiece, scarf), regularly waved during rallies in support of a law for free and safe abortion in Argentina.

In light of its close ties with the Argentinian comrades, *Non una di meno* also borrowed the *pañuelo* and added it to its visual identity in the lead-up to the rally for IDEVAW 2018. On its webpage[6], *Non una di meno* encouraged

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[5] "Il #MeToo è il racconto delle molestie che ho subito, il #WeTooGether è il racconto della solidarietà e della resistenza collettiva" (@nonunadimeno, 18 October 2017).

[6] Text available at https://bit.ly/2Yq1o1B.

its adherents to make their own *pañuelos* and wear them to the rally. The adoption of this visual symbol was justified via reference to the struggle of the Argentinian women and re-entextualized in the Italian context with the following explanation:

> The fuchsia pañuelo is a symbol of fight and of liberation for Non una di meno, a permanent symbol of rejection of systemic and structural violence [perpetrated] on women's bodies, a symbol for [mutual] recognition and of sisterhood[7] (Non una di meno, 2018).

Over the last few months, the fuchsia *pañuelo* imposed its presence in the visual vocabulary of *Non una di meno*. It is regularly used during mobilizations and in social media campaigns across platforms. Examples include the pictures below, taken from *Non una di meno*'s Twitter (see figure 1) and Instagram (see figure 2) accounts respectively.

Figure 1. Fuchsia pañuelo at Non una di meno's rally for IDEVAW 2018

[7] "Il pañuelo fucsia è un simbolo di lotta e di liberazione per Non una di meno, simbolo permanente di rifiuto della violenza sistemica e strutturale sui corpi delle donne, simbolo di riconoscimento e di sorellanza" (Non una di meno, 2018).

Figure 2. Social media banner advertising the Non una di meno rally for IDEVAW 2018

All of the examples in this sub-section are meant to showcase what follows. The leadership of *Non una di meno* as a social movement has been particularly attentive to popular trends in progressive politics across the globe and particularly skillful in producing versions of these trends that would make sense in the Italian context. In other words, *Non una di meno*'s leaders have been particularly good at identifying potentially popular signifiers originating abroad, re-entextualizing them in the Italian context, and offering them to the participants to the movement as somewhat empty yet bounded containers through which they could voice their protest.

In the case of IDEVAW 2016, the name of the movement (borrowed from Argentina) and the metaphor of the tide (borrowed from Spain) were offered by the leaders of the movement to their adherents. These proved to be spaces of political visibility that allowed them to voice their anger for systemic violence against women and showcase the might of feminist coalitions. In the case of IDEVAW 2017, the global appeal of the *Me too* campaign and the localized relevance of *Non una di meno*'s anti-violence plan merged in the *we together* campaign, which proved to be a space of political visibility that narrowed down the scope of *non una di meno* but also offered new frames of contestation. In the case of IDEVAW 2018, conservative attacks against women's sexual and reproductive rights in Italy encouraged *Non una di meno* to mobilize specifically on this topic, also adopting the *pañuelo* (borrowed from Argentina).

Conclusions: Traveling signifiers
in a feminism without borders

In this paper, I described *Non una di meno* as a social movement that works through to the logic of connective action and that therefore operates as an organizationally brokered network (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Trillò, 2018). I qualified this description with information on the media practices of *Non una di meno* and on the media ecology of its mobilization (Mattoni, 2017). I thereafter argued that *Non una di meno*'s leaders can be said to act as choreographers of the movement's actions (Gerbaudo, 2012). In setting the stage for the movement, these choreographic leaders provide their adherents with signifiers that are mostly empty.

Crucially for the purposes of this paper, many of the signifiers used by *Non una di meno* (including the very name of the movement) do not originate locally. Rather, they happen to be Italian renditions of campaigns that happen to be popular in the broader ecology of progressive mobilization worldwide. In other words, the choreographic leaders of *Non una di meno* often borrow slogans or symbols from other progressive formations, translate them into versions that would make sense in the Italian context, and then offer them to their adherents as frames through which they can voice their protest.

Individual adherents can ascribe virtually any meaning to these signifiers as long as they do not transgress some loose boundaries set by the choreographers. The very name of the movement can be said to be an example of this trend. However, it is important not to overstate the extent to which individuals can freely navigate the stage provided by the choreographic leaders of *Non una di meno*. Their ability to shape the message of the movement is, in fact, constrained by the choreographic role of the leaders, who have proved to be willing and able to (re)direct the message of the movement on the base of their political objectives (Gerbaudo, 2012).

Acknowledgment

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