

WORLD CUP EUPHORIA AND FEMINIST VINDICATIONS. THE PUBLIC SPACE OF PASEO DE LA REFORMA, MEXICO CITY, IN 1986 AND 2019

De euforias mundialistas y reivindicaciones feministas. El espacio público del Paseo de la Reforma, Ciudad de México, en 1986 y 2019

World Cup euphoria and feminist vindications. The public space of Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City, in 1986 and 2019

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F0: Neuralgic point of demonstrations and claims in Mexico City: the Paseo de la Reforma and its Angel of Independence. Photo Vanessa Nagel, March 1, 2020.

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ABSTRACT

The huge crowded occupation of the emblematic Paseo de la Reforma, in Mexico City, during the 1986 Soccer World Cup, with the country going through a severe economic crisis, was a real trigger for the diversification of the demonstrations in this public space. It consolidated this place as the national epicenter for the vindication of rights and social demands of the Mexicans. In the 21st century, in the midst of another crisis, this time the generalized violence against women, the Paseo is once again redefining itself, encompassing its most emblematic and tangible elements, like the Angel of Independence. In this way, monuments have become the canvas for graffiti that struggles to transcend the ephemeral by holding the current claims. This article proposes a historical review of the most powerful moments of appropriation of this public space in 1986 and 2019, using the local newspaper, La Jornada, as its main source of data collection. The proposed methodology offers the reconstruction of a narrative told in real time, a true contribution to understanding how the boom of the occupation of the streets in the World Cup year engrained the appropriation of public spaces in subsequent years. There is no doubt that the World Cup euphoria gave society the confidence to reclaim the streets, a situation that has been used since then and that is in force in the current feminist vindications demonstrations.

Keywords: Public space, Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico '86 World Cup, Angel of Independence, feminism

RESUMEN

La ocupación masiva del emblemático Paseo de la Reforma, en la Ciudad de México, durante el Mundial de Fútbol 1986, con el país atravesando una fuerte crisis económica, fue un verdadero detonante para la diversificación de las manifestaciones en dicho espacio público. Asimismo, consolidó este escenario como el epicentro nacional de reivindicación de los derechos y demandas sociales de los mexicanos. En pleno siglo XXI, en medio de otra crisis, esta vez de violencia generalizada contra la mujer, el Paseo vuelve a resignificarse, abarcando a sus elementos más emblemáticos y tangibles, como el Ángel de la Independencia. Así, los monumentos se han vuelto los soportes de grafitis que luchan por trascender lo efímero al mantenerse sus reclamos vigentes. Este artículo propone una revisión histórica a los momentos más potentes de apropiación de este espacio público en 1986 y 2019, tomando como principal fuente de consulta al periódico local La Jornada. La metodología planteada ofrece la reconstrucción de una crónica contada en tiempo real, verdadera contribución para entender cómo el estallido de la ocupación de las calles del año mundialista arraigó la apropiación del espacio público en los años subsiguientes. No cabe duda de que las euforias mundialistas ganaron para la sociedad la confianza de retomar las calles, coyuntura aprovechada desde entonces y vigente en las reivindicaciones feministas actuales.

Palabras Clave: Espacio público, Paseo de la Reforma, Mundial México 86, Ángel de la Independencia, feminismo

RESUMO

A ocupação massiva do emblemático Paseo de la Reforma, na Cidade do México, durante a Copa do Mundo de 1986, com o país passando por uma forte crise econômica, foi um verdadeiro gatilho para a diversificação das manifestações neste espaço público. Da mesma forma, consolidou este cenário como o epicentro nacional de reivindicação dos direitos e demandas sociais dos mexicanos. No século XXI, em meio a mais uma crise, desta vez de violência generalizada contra as mulheres, o Paseo volta a se resignificar, englobando seus elementos mais emblemáticos e tangíveis, como o Anjo da Independência. Assim, monumentos tornaram-se suportes de grafites que lutam para transcender o efêmero, mantendo suas reivindicações atuais. Este artigo propõe uma revisão histórica dos momentos mais poderosos de apropriação desse espaço público em 1986 e 2019, tomando como principal fonte de consulta o jornal local La Jornada. A metodologia proposta oferece a reconstrução de uma crônica contada em tempo real, uma verdadeira contribuição para a compreensão de como a eclosão da ocupação das ruas no ano da Copa do Mundo se enraizou na apropriação do espaço público nos anos seguintes. Não há dúvida de que a euforia da Copa do Mundo conquistou para a sociedade a confiança para voltar às ruas, situação que vem sendo explorada desde então e vigente nas atuais demandas feministas.

Palavras Chave: Espaço público, Paseo de la Reforma, Copa do Mundo México 86, Anjo da Independência, feminismo

INTRODUCTION

A SUNDAY IN PASEO DE LA REFORMA

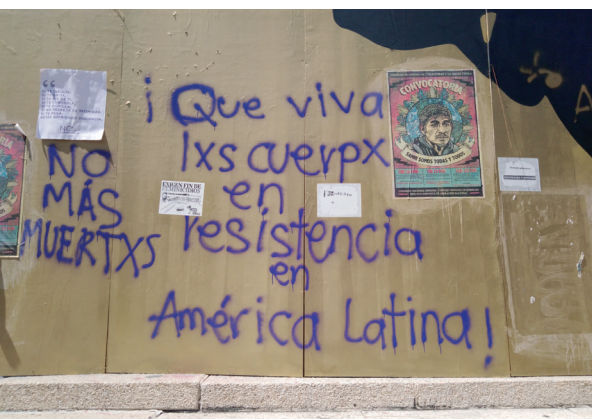
Figure 1

A Sunday in Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City.
Source: Vanessa Nagel Vega, Vanessa Nagel Archive, March 1st 2020.



Figure 2

A Sunday in Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City.
Source: Vanessa Nagel Vega, Vanessa Nagel Archive, March 1st 2020.



1 On July 24th 2020, the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City approved reforms to the Criminal Code that define "conversion therapies" as a crime, for going against the free development of personality and sexual and gender identity of the city's people. This ruling represents a recent victory in the fight of the LGBTQI+ community.

A week away from International Women's Day, Mexico City is experiencing a strange calm. With the national women's strike coming, on March 9th, and with 5 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Mexico, at eight o'clock in the morning on the dot, like every Sunday, the central lanes of the emblematic Paseo de la Reforma are closed. From this early hour until two in the afternoon, hundreds of cyclists, skaters, runners and walkers, alone or accompanied, transform the urban space of one of the main arteries of this megacity and its 20 million inhabitants [Figure 1]. We as Mexicans, used to stoically facing the onslaught from generalized violence, social inequality and an uncertain professional future, do not know whether, one day or the next, we will face reality on not being able to handle a sanitary emergency that still feels unreal.

For a few moments, it would seem that the city is taking a breath. The historic avenue is transformed by circulation on two wheels, sweat and endorphins. The flowering Jacarandas, a tree with violet flowers, introduced into Mexico from Brazil by a Japanese gardener a century ago, is the final ingredient of a typical block in early spring in the capital city, dressing it for the party. However, the paint on the hoardings "protecting" the iconic Angel of Independence are also purple, demanding "No more deaths" or "Long live those fighting in Latin America!" [Figure 2]. Of course, conspiracy theories abound, one of them, the "state of emergency" that shut down the city, halting the protests of March 8th and hindering the feminist protests. Thus, a hypothetical lethargy, that puts the brake on the relationship formed between citizens and their public space through protesting, would circumvent dialog between the political powers and society.

What is proposed here is to review how the citizenry has redefined and transformed its relationship with public spaces. For this analysis, some of the background behind the appropriation of this space in Mexico City is reviewed, especially Paseo de la Reforma, from its first expressions at the start of the 20th century, and especially intense ones in 1968. The period of study focuses on the Mexico 86 World Cup, which saw a true taking over of the streets, amid a serious domestic economic crisis and, in recent times, in 2019 and up to the present day, characterized by a strong impact of the international feminist movement in Mexico.

It starts from a setting that is the city, where complex social groups come together. In this way, the current sense of public refers to the social life outside the private domain and a great diversity of people who form a heterogeneous urban population. It is in the public spaces of the city where the most visible and controversial practices of the citizenry take place, namely the grievances about their political, social, cultural and urban rights (Ramírez, 2015). The goal of these is transforming the current legal framework. It is a slow process, but there have been some triumphs.¹

The public space of Paseo de la Reforma right around the Angel of Independence is considered here, more than a meeting place, a space for identification and the fight for social rights, the same ones, as decades have gone by, that have diversified until reaching the recent feminist demands. These demands, on reaching public opinion, have been constantly recorded in the daily press. For this reason, this research is based on the rigorous review of print media, made in the National Newspaper Library, at the Autonomous National University of Mexico. The reconstruction of the protests in the public space of Mexico City, let us approach one of the capital's main arteries from the perspective of the most powerful social demands of recent years.

FROM THE IMPERIAL DREAM TO TAKING OVER THE STREETS (1913-1968)

Figure 3

Protest on August 27th 1968. Historic Archive of UNAM.
Author: Manuel Gutiérrez Paredes.
Source: IISUE/AHUNAM/Fondo Manuel Gutiérrez Paredes/ Sección Mexico 68/ Series 52 Student Riot, Juarez Square – 27 August 1968/ MGP2442_141



2 The Second Mexican Empire, led by Maximilian of Hapsburg and Charlotte of Belgium was installed after the French intervention in 1863. It would end with Maximilian executed by firing squad in 1867, on the orders of the President of the Republic, Benito Juárez.

3 In February 1913, there was a coup d'état against the legitimate democratically elected Government of President Francisco I. Madero, the initial leader of the revolution that would bring down the long regime of Porfirio Díaz in 1911. General Victoriano Huerta, the usurper, would remain in power for just 18 months, which would be followed by several years of struggles between the different sides.

4 On February 5th 1917, working rights were regulated in the new Constitution, article 123. This would last until 1923 when Labor Day was made official and an obligatory rest was decreed.

5 Another emblematic march of the students' movement in 1968 in Mexico was that of "silence", on September 13th.

6 The remembrance march for October 2nd 1968 still takes place and is held in Mexico City every year on that date, in recognition of the freedom won that year and the price paid, with the blood of hundreds of people, from the repressive regime of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz.

The ephemeral Imperial dream of the Hapsburgs in Mexico² reached one of the most emblematic avenues of the country's capital. First known as Paseo de la Emperatriz, where by decree of the Emperor, only carriages of the Emperors and their entourage could ride along the street. It was then called Paseo Degollado, in honor of the stalwart General Benito Juárez, who would reestablish the Republic in 1867, and from the 20th century, as Paseo de la Reforma. The neuralgic hub for protests, mass gatherings, parades and civic activities, the street is recognized by its iconic monument, a winged victory, popularly known as the Angel of Independence, erected on this column in 1910 to celebrate the first centenary of Independence.

The second decade of the 20th century in Mexico, after more than thirty years of dictatorship with Porfirio Díaz, was an especially tumultuous period. From armed movements generalized in almost the entire country, betrayals between revolutionary factions, coups de état, and negotiations, in 1913³, Labor Day would be held for the first time in the country ("Hoy celebrarán", 1913). That year, the support of workers was sought to legitimize the coup's regime and, it was hoped that at least social peace would be restored. The claim for better working conditions, salary increases, eight-hour shifts and accident insurance⁴ in a country without any democratic life of interest, brought together twenty-five thousand workers around the Benito Juárez Hemicycle on the Central Boulevard. The unprecedented appropriation of the space: "was truly impressive with the immense throng piled up around the monument. Rarely had such an amount of people congregated in a public space" ("Ni odio por razas", 1913).

The postrevolutionary decades would be of consolidation for the institutionalized government, focused on driving the economy, the industrialization of the country, the literacy of rural areas and the higher education of the urban middle class. The Governments, in reality the same party reelected over and over again, impeding a true democratic transition and forming, in one way or another, a new dictatorship, also set up numerous social programs.

In several decades of sustained economic growth, especially in the period called the "Mexican miracle" (1946-1970), social demands were always present, but they had been easily broken up as:

The demands that the postrevolutionary governments had faced, had always arisen from social struggles and from unions of a given sector: farmers, miners, railroad workers, teachers, doctors, whom the State had always been able to isolate and suppress, without the political cost of these actions questioning their exercise of power (Garavito, p. 52).

The decisive moment in the use of public space in Mexico City took place in the summer of 1968. Weeks before the massacre in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas de Tlatelolco, on October 2nd, the students' movement, that had led the capital's main universities on an indefinite strike. It was a party. For the first time in history, the citizen's demand for freedom was being expressed. The demands were universal, not sectorial or union-based. Due to their generalized inclusion, the March on August 27th 1968, called to take the streets, which 400,000 people did, marching peacefully, one could even say festively, along Paseo de la Reforma [Figure 3]. It was one of the most powerful of all the protests of that short summer.⁵

Just days from the opening of the XIX Olympic Games in Mexico, on the symbolic date of October 12th, not only was there no public dialog, but one of the bloodiest crackdowns in the country's recent history had taken place. On the afternoon of October 2nd, at the Tlatelolco rally, "10,000 people were in the square; dozens, maybe hundreds died; a thousand were detained; hundreds remained in jail for over 2 years. [Thus] the Government finished off the movement, but at the same time made it unforgettable" (Pérez, 2009, p. 33).⁶

FOOTBALL PASSIONS (1986)

Although the streets were not left deserted after October 2nd, and while the suppression had not ended either,⁷ after 1968 and 1971 there was a kind of “forced” retreat of the civilian population. The sustained economic growth of Mexico the previous decades had characterized began to experience violent crises, devaluations, foreign debt, inflation, recession, especially in 1976, 1982 and 1986.

To make the crisis in the mid-80s worse, on September 19th ⁸ an earthquake of 8.1 on the Richter scale, devastated Mexico City, hundreds of buildings collapsed, and even though the final death count was never known, even though thousands are spoken about, it left the city, for years, in a state of emergency and with countless affected who lost their homes or could not return due to the structural damage and the implicit risk of collapse. Amid this crisis, the Mexico 86 World Cup was about to start.⁹ Even with the city in ruins, the event continued, leading to the most incredible reappropriation of public space, unprecedented in the country's history.

Mexico in 1986 was not just a country with its capital devastated by the September 85 earthquake, but also a country battered by economic crisis, generated especially by the fall in international oil prices, by external debt, the devaluation of the Peso against the Dollar, an increasing inflation rate, increased unemployment. That year was memorable for the closure of the Monterrey Foundry, which left thousands of workers in that industrial city in the country's northeast out of work. Even so, on May 31st, the President, Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado opened the thirteenth Football World Cup at Estadio Azteca. The leader would be received with hostility by the thousands of fans. The media of the time described it as a “visceral and spontaneous response on facing the personification of the difficulties the immense majority of Mexicans were experiencing” (“Dos mil millones”, 1986). The morning editorial confirmed the “signs of an anti-authority inarticulate reaction”. Society, it was said, was “seeking channels to express their concerns and grievances” (“Los límites del desahogo”, 1986).

The same day as the opening ceremony, thousands of people from the capital spontaneously took over Paseo de la Reforma for hours around the Angel of Independence. The reporters of the period called it “a roar as if it has been contained for eons. Mexico, Mexico!” (Velázquez, 1986, p.5). At around 11 pm, more than 10,000 people had taken over the Independence monument. Among those waving flags and those who had decided to climb on the shoulders of Miguel Hidalgo's statue, one of the country's heroes, there was anger and pain.

The social phenomenon has not gone unnoticed for the analysts. In the press, they immediately began to venture hypotheses about football as the new identity of Mexicans (Peralta, 1986, p. 19). And, as in every fair world cup campaign, Mexican football was pushed up “to Olympian heights, as a triumphant manifestation responding to the obligatory statements of alienating publicity” (Cheix, 1986, p.V). The statistics were not in the national team's favor. Back in 86, in the 24 world cup games up until then, they had only won three times, with four draws and seventeen defeats. The experts, who did not encourage false illusions, only expected a good game.

Mexico's 2-1 victory against Belgium's Red Devils was a shock (“México venció”, 1986). Not only did joy pour out onto the streets, but chaos and vandalism would invade the city (Avilés & Velázquez, 1986, p. 24). The popular reaction, understood as an escape valve for the economic crisis, as a temporary measure that would last a month, or less, until the elimination of the national team, was perfectly foreseeable. Soon, the obsession contrary to all reason, the violence, the taking of the streets, would have nothing to do with the world cup, but it was “as if the honor and destiny of Mexico was

7 The episode now known as “El Halconazo” or Corpus Christi Massacre is also memorable. It took place on June 10th 1971, a Thursday of Corpus Christi, where a student protest was suppressed by a paramilitary group working for the State. The deaths were not explained and those responsible were never brought to justice.

8 Coincidentally, a new earthquake, with equally desolating consequences for the country's capital, also took place on September 19th, but in 2017..

9 FIFA's decision to give Mexico the cup, took place in May 1983. At the end of 1982, Colombia the country who had won rights to the event, withdrew, as it would not manage to meet infrastructure requirements. Mexico, in principle, had enough stadiums and experience in organizing international events (XIX Olympiad in 1968 and the 1970 World Cup).

in play" ("Violencia y futbol", 1986). The excesses would reach the national monuments, since:

As results of the party ending, the priest Miguel Hidalgo, in the monument to the Independence, saw its marble fingers mutilated and the tip of his flag was broken off, the sword of Vicente Guerrero was stolen and the book of distinguished guests disappeared; the lamp of the Altar of the Homeland was broken; the entrance to the monument was broken and someone unsuccessfully tried to open the urns where the ashes of the heroes of Independence lay" ("250 lesionados", 1986).

The social outpouring was justified. Apart from the news related to the World Cup, the front pages during June 1986 were filled with the feared moratorium, namely, the suspension of payments to the International Monetary Fund for Mexican foreign debt (Jacob, 1986, p. 1; Galaz, 1986, p. 1; Ureña, 1986, p. 1). The writer Guadalupe Loaeza, giving a voice to the Angel, would say that the thousands of fans who jumped upon and mutilated the monument, were "not celebrating any triumph, but rather were unconsciously preparing themselves for an extremely serious defeat that had nothing to do with football" (Loaeza, 1986, p. 24).

On June 7th, in their second game, Mexico would draw 1-1 with Paraguay. The Department of the Federal District, today Mexico City, having seen the excesses of the previous game, would organize celebrations in given points of the capital, with bandstands, music and sales of flags and the world cup mascot, "Pique", in all its forms. The day before, prohibition had been declared, without this deterring the uncontrolled consumption of alcohol in the streets. With the draw, Mexico was at the threshold of qualifying for the quarter finals.

It is noticeable that the press talked about this civil act, although it went too far, of taking over the street as a true revolution. "We hadn't been out since '68, so, head to the streets to be together", the architect and urbanist Manuel Larrosa said (1986, p. 7). On June 11th 1986, in Estadio Azteca, Mexico beat Iraq 1-0, qualifying for the last sixteen. That day, on the front page of *La Jornada*, it said that Mexico was negotiating to adjust payments of its foreign debt and that there was no immediate prospect of overcoming the crisis in this six-year term ("Negocia México", 1986). The news was far from being solely of national interest, the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, outlined the danger that Mexico had suspended debt payments ("Mexico, en peligro", 1986). In this context.

The special parties and rejoicing seen in the public streets and squares for the football, show that in Mexico City we needed opportunities for human relations, and public places to naturally meet up. (...) The people need them. (...) The World Cup has allowed expressing this deep social need" (Paoli, 1986, p. 5).

The immediacy of the triumph was not what mattered. Criticism of this fake national identity came, but did not permeate, could not permeate the spirit of the population beseeching not just suitable spaces to vent, but rather the necessary excuses for collective amnesia. Football, as Heberto Castillo, Representative and Leader of the Mexican Workers Party, would say, was "a very expensive drug that lasted barely a month", as, just as tends to happen in these cases, the information about "the billions that have been spent on the national team" (Peralta, 1986, p. 21), had not yet come to light.

Figure 4

The overflowing streets, more than a million celebrate Mexico's victory. Source: Mexico National Newspaper Archive, National Autonomous University of Mexico. La Jornada Newspaper, June 16th 1986.



The millions of pesos spent on the Tri, as the Mexican team is popularly known, would be profitable at least until the last sixteen, with Mexico's 2-0 victory over Bulgaria. If there had been tens of thousands of fans who had poured out onto the streets in the group stages, victory in the last sixteen led to more than a million spilling out into the public spaces, in an unbelievable urban conquest [figure 4]. Just around the Angel of Independence, 150,000 people gathered, 50% more than the capacity of the Coloso de Santa Ursula, the name of Estadio Azteca. The festivities continued into the early hours of the following day (Meneses & Salanueva, 1986, p. 1).

The party came to an end in Monterrey, Nuevo León, on Saturday June 21st 1986. Mexico would lose the quarter final to Germany, 4-1 on penalties. In spite of rain falling in the capital, hundreds gathered in the main square ("El 4-1, 1986). The true cold shower was not the persistent rain that afternoon, but rather the front-page news of June 23rd: "Mexico is in its deepest crisis of the last 50 years" (Galaz, 1986, p. 11). On June 29th 1986, with Diego Armando Maradona, the undeniable hero of the World Cup, Argentina snatched victory over Germany in Estadio Azteca. June 30th, would wake up to the crude reality, on awakening with no World Cup expectations or a reason to continue the party.

FEMINIST GRIEVANCES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

There is no doubt that the occupation of the streets during Mexico 86 was a lasting conquest. In the second decade of the 21st century, the number of protests in the capital reached unheard of numbers. During 2017, there were at least, 2,436 marches and 58 sit-ins. Paseo de la Reforma "was the only road that remained occupied by protestors over the 12 months. 706 marches and sit-ins were recorded there" (Hernández, 2018). This was now daily life, far from representing isolated cases of occupying the street. As such, one of the most emblematic roads in the city, literally has doubled its role to attend countless demands that, day by day, are expressed in its public space. Without counting, of course, the Sporting events or commemorative parades that likewise fit in the multipurpose container that is Paseo de la Reforma.

In 2019, in the political sphere in Mexico, it would seem that gender



Figure 5
Protest of International Women's Day entering the Main Square of Mexico City.
Source: Vanessa Nagel Vega, Vanessa Nagel Archive, March 8th 2019.

equality has almost been reached vis-a-vis legislators in the Senate and House of Representatives. This leaves the country as one of the states with the highest percentage of female legislators in the world. There has never been as many women in politics in Mexico, in public roles. However, as the experts say, women's rights are on paper, but not in daily reality, which continues to be marked by the same-old gender inequality ("Derechos", 2019). The social malaise regarding inequality in the work sphere is exponentially growing as a result of gender violence and the unstoppable wave of femicides razing the country. Protests demanding universal rights like legal and safe abortions and stopping disappearances are also recent. One of the most powerful marches in this sense was recorded with the call of the first National Protest against Chauvinist Violence, with actions in at least 25 Mexican cities and widespread participation, more than 10,000 women, according to organizers, in Mexico City on April 24th 2016 (Juárez, 2016, p. 15).

Within the backdrop of International Women's Day, women in Mexico and around the world, claimed historic demands ("En reclamo", 2019) [Figure 5]. In our country, the two main feminist demands were the rejection of violence towards women, characterized by purple colored clothing, and the right to decide about their bodies, which has gone around the world with the image of green scarves (Xantomilla, 2019, p. 3).

If, as was expressed at the beginning of this analysis, the relations established between citizens and the public space by protesting, promote dialog between the political powers and society, it is worth asking whether, in the immediate future, the constant protests that clamor for an end to violence in a country that can no longer hide statistics, will have a positive result. On average, 10 women are killed every day because of their gender. Just like in 1986 when Mexican society temporarily vented within the context of the World Cup, within the onslaught of the economic crisis, in 2019, being fed up with a legal system that blames victims of sexual violence, and with unprecedented figures of harassment, rape and murder, a peaceful protest was transformed into anger (Bravo, 2019, p. 20). A frenetic mob, as it came through, would vandalize public transportation infrastructure and monuments, heading towards the iconic Angel, expressing there the

Figure 6

Graffiti on the Angel of Independence after the protest of August 16th 2019. Source: Andrea Murcia, courtesy of the author, August 2019.



paintings that appeared on the front pages of newspapers and became trends on social media [Figure 6]. The current policy is to avoid suppression, as such the use of public force to stop vandalism was avoided. While aggression towards journalists and the damage of urban infrastructure and monuments was condemned, the legitimate feminist complaints were also recognized. The images of frenzied fury are also those of anger about the raping and murder of women, along with the non-existent prosecution and impunity for assailants. The banners are symptomatic of the mood of female Mexicans: "If I don't come home someday, don't light candles, light barricades" or "If they kill me, rape me, make me disappear, destroy it all!" ("Indignación", 2019).

On the morning of Saturday, August 17th, the emblematic Angel unfurled its wings with the emotional burden of feminist demands, while an army of Mexico City workers were sent to erase the paint. An enormous wall surrounded the column. The city's Secretary of Culture immediately announced that a ruling would be passed about damage to heritage to start restoration works ("Un día después", 2019). If initially recovering the original state of the property was originally planned (González, 2019, p. 27), the importance of keeping the graffiti as a reminder of violence in the country, was very soon left clear, while guaranteeing the preservation of the historic memory of an expression that goes far beyond simple urban art, as the independent group, Restorers with Glitter expressed ("Restauradoras", 2019). For the first time, the expressions of the marches transcended the ephemeral.

It is undeniable that the paintings on the Angel, from their visual impact and their immediate circulation on social media and in the traditional press, shook more than a lethargic conscience. They also dusted off the allocated and unexercised budget, from the Natural Disaster Fund (Fonden) to cover the damages that the column of the Angel of Independence suffered during the September 2017 earthquake (Mateos-Vega, 2019, p. 8). The Secretary of Culture for Mexico City would announce that the estimate for the cost of restoration had not been made yet, but, paradoxically, the unexercised budget came to light. He said, that work would continue to make a photographic record of the paintings, as an action to guarantee the right to remembrance in Mexico City. What is certain is that the speed the monument was walled and covered with enormous scaffolding, under the excuse of structural assessment, two years after the earthquake and just a couple of weeks after the feminist protest (Vargas, 2009, p. 6) seems to apply more to a sidestep to make the monument invisible [Figure 7].

If in Mexico, in many senses, the *modus operandi* has been to make violence, the disappeared, extreme poverty and now, even monuments invisible, the feminist movement has not fizzled out. On the contrary, it seems to grow stronger every day. On November 25th, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, multiple actions and marches were held around the world to make people aware and to fight the atrocious hostility ranging from job discrimination to rape and harassment to femicide ("No a la violencia", 2019). Our country was no exception. A new march from the Angel to the Main Square was expected, full of life and energy, to change an unbearable reality (Gómez, 2019, p. 34).

Figure 7

Making the main monument of Paseo de la Reforma invisible.
 Source: Vanessa Nagel, Vanessa Nagel Archive, March 1st 2020.



FINAL REFLECTIONS

International Women's Day on March 8th 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic in Mexico just around the corner, 80,000 women took to the capital's streets. The demands are the same, rejection for all kinds of chauvinist violence, equal opportunities and decriminalization of abortion throughout the country, the spirit keeps a festive, necessary vindication ("Las mujeres toman", 2020; "Las mujeres mexicanas", 2020). In an unprecedented act, the Mexican Government ruled in favor of the marches called for March 8th and 9th.¹⁰ The Secretaries of State, led by Olga Sánchez Cordero, Secretary of the Interior and the first lady to hold this position in Mexico, recognized the demands as legitimate.

In this way, the country's capital is acknowledged as a space of citizenry construction, a social approach platform that has contributed to the extension of Mexico's political, civil, social and cultural rights (Ramírez, 2014). Paseo de la Reforma is characterized on being a strategic space to start transcendental changes for society, like those led by feminist groups, brought to the table of public opinion for debate.

In Mexico City, the battle for the right to protest on the streets has been long and hard. The diversification of demands, first focused on social and union struggles, later universal freedoms, passing through the euphoria of World Cup victories while the country was submerged in a profound economic crisis, to reaching those of the fight for gender equality, the public space remains the lead in the daily newspapers. For some days, at least. The inevitable Covid-19 health crisis in Mexico augurs several weeks of seclusion. It may be so, until we once again head out to the street to win back the spaces earned with the constant efforts of previous generations.

¹⁰ On Monday, March 9th, also in an unprecedented act, a national women's strike was called through social media that sought to make clear the widespread absence of 40% of the country's workforce (Beauregard, 2020).

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