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**Protests, Publicity and Change –  
from fighting feminicides to fighting discrimination**

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**Abstract [en]:**

‚Feminist‘ protests are currently moving Mexico, turning against sexism and femicides. But they are indeed a new form of ‚feminism‘, a public face of a struggle against intersectional discrimination in a society that perpetuates violence. It is about questions of representation, reporting and perception, so as not to hide the breadth of concerns behind a limited concept of ‚feminism‘.

**Abstract [de]:**

‚Feministische‘ Proteste bewegen derzeit Mexiko, sie wenden sich gegen Sexismus und Femizide. Doch sind sie tatsächlich eine neue Form des ‚Feminismus‘, das öffentliche Gesicht eines Kampfes gegen intersektionelle Diskriminierungen in einer Gesellschaft, welche Gewalt perpetuiert. Es geht dabei um Fragen der Darstellung, des Berichtens und der Wahrnehmung, um die Breite der Anliegen nicht hinter einem begrenzten Konzept ‚Feminismus‘ zu verbergen.

**Abstract [es]:**

Protestas ‚feministas‘ se mueven México ahora, protestas contra sexismo y feminicidios. Pero detrás y además son protestas de un ‚feminismo‘ nuevo, lo visible público de una lucha contra la discriminación interseccional en una sociedad donde violencia se perpetua. Son preguntas como se presentan las protestas, como se perciben, que deciden si el ancho de las demandas es visible o ocultado detrás de un concepto de ‚feminismo‘ muy limitado.

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Since weeks women\*<sup>1</sup> are on the streets in Mexico. They are protesting against the very high rate of femicides and of violence against women\* in Mexico, but this is only the tag used and spread by media. Since the cause for the new major protests was the abuse of a 17 year old female\* by a police patrol in the North of the capital this tag developed. After the case became public other similar cases were reported, always with young victims and several police officers being the offenders (see Salinas Maldonado 2019). From this occasion onwards protests started, blaming violence against women\* and femicide, but in the end injustice against women\* on the whole (see Corona & Lafuente 2019). From this it is only a minor step to set the spotlight on general discriminations in Mexico.

But first of all the new protests are labeled as “feminist protests”, marking them as protests by women\*, in self-defense against injustice in a male\* dominated system. The construction is again one of women\* against men\* domination. In this construction the new protests are in a long line of protests, e.g. following the protests of 2016 after #MiPrimerAcoso, which showed how many women\* are and were victims of .... And there are links shown and made with other female\* labelled protests, especially the protests of *marea verde* in other countries of Latin America for the right of abortion (see Corona & Lafuente 2019). This movement exists in Mexico, too, linked with the general ‘feminist’ protests, but not interchangeable with them (see Marea Verde México). But even in the general reporting one specificity of Mexico is stressed – the general level of violence without adequate state reaction – a level not reached in many other places around the world. Here numbers are brought forward, as about 100 persons killed every day, of which at least 3 are feminicides (see Corona & Lafuente 2019). Others even report number as high as 10 feminicides per day in Mexico, making Mexico the most dangerous country for women in North America, in Latin America the second after Brazil (see Gómez Romero & Macarena Iribarne González 2019). This shows, how many persons are victims of violence and other form of discrimination in Mexico, but protesting are not all Mexicans or a majority. No – the protests are identified as female\* and labelled because of this as ‘feminist’. Nevertheless, the aim is to tackle the general injustice and the lack of governmental reaction, which is still lacking and more seen in keeping the protest at bay.

Looking at the government action, since 2019 under the rule of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, often seen as progressive who promised a transformation of Mexico away from discrimination and violence, the opposite of what was promised happened. Police reforms to protect women and minorities were taken back and the funding of women’s shelters was announced to be stopped. The later was taken back only after major protests. Also, the Mexican childcare system was changed, officially to allow for private choice how to organize childcare. In the end this strengthened gender stereotypes and bound women\* to childcare and domestic work as major civil society organizations blamed. Women\* working, even before at a low rate compared to other countries, are now even less common. And an EU and UN program to act against violence against women\* in three Mexican states (see European Commission 2019) was only signed after the protests arose – before López Obrador hesitated, explaining gender not being priority for the government (see for all this Gómez Romero & Macarena Iribarne González 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> Women\* stands here for persons identifying themselves as women or being identified by media as women, independently if the gender system is thought binary or not. Here the term women\* is used marking the construction behind and the construction of binarism at the same time in a heteronormative system.

In the end a ruling patriarchist system in Mexico is described, that became even stronger under the new rule, manifesting itself not only in violence and murder, but also in communication. The major label and narration here is Mexico as a machoistic country, stabilizing binary gender roles and suppressing women\* at the same time. A line is drawn here from hate speech and other verbal violence to physical violence (see Mellmann 2019). Here some words of caution are necessary, because the main victim group of this machoistic country are persons officially identified as male\*, not female\*; showing that this masochistic country generates a general web of violence and intolerance. But this broader picture is fought by some media and the government itself. Even the governmental organization against discrimination, the CONAPRED (*Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación*) explains on its homepage still why not everything is machoistic (*pro qué no todos es machismo*). In this article the CONAPRED stresses that not everything done under the label "feminist" should be excused by the label or seen as just action. Plus, it is stated that women\* acting "masculine" wouldn't act "feminist" but do the same wrongs as men\* did. This connects to women\* helping the patriarchate and machoistic society to live on by education and upbringing, but also by stabilizing roles. But even though some points of this position might be discussed, as the last mentioned or as the use of the label 'feminist', in the end the article shows two problematic things: 1. It stabilizes gender stereotypes in a binary system. There are women\* and men\*, and women\* are those who can act 'feminist'. Even more problematic, it stabilizes binary gender stereotypes along traditional lines – women\* should act 'womanly\*' and not act like men\*. From this follows the second aspect: 2. The article stabilizes the Mexican patriarchist system – not all labelled "macho" is machoistic and not all labelled accordingly should be problematized is what the article stresses. The official statement, by the official organization working against discrimination is: Yes, we have some problems and some discrimination, but not a systemic problem (see CONAPRED 2018).

Interestingly the CONAPRED was founded to fight all forms of discrimination, to establish policies against all forms of discrimination and control all other policies to be in line with the aim of general anti-discrimination. This includes fighting against sexist language, sensitizing the public and working in education (see CONAPRED 2019). Taking this official aim, there is an awareness that discrimination in Mexico is more than the discrimination of women\*. This is made clear in laws, too. Since 2011 Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution has changed. Now all discrimination is prohibited, listing as prohibited reasons discrimination because of ethnical or national origin, gender, age, disabilities, the social condition, health conditions, religion, opinion, sexual preferences (not sexual identity!) or civilian state and all else against human dignity (see Poder Ejecutivo 2011). And yes, official institutions take this broader perspective, too, but in varying degrees. The National Institute of Women (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres), a governmental organization, stresses women\* and their identified needs, but nevertheless explains the fight for women\* rights and against violence as a fight of all Mexicans and against all forms of gender violence (see Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres 2019). The entanglement of challenges is stressed even more by civil society organizations as the *Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir* (ILSB), that stresses special challenges for afro-mexican women\*, indigenous women\*, but also questions of sexual rights. Self-identified it is a 'feminist' organization fighting for a more democratic and just society by taking a gender- and intercultural-perspective. Here a broader concept of 'feminist' can be seen even though it is not fully developed (see. ILSB 2019).

But this is not what is reported. Mostly, media stresses feminicides as a specific Mexican problem, marking a major gender-based crime, but stopping there (see infobae 2019). And yes, this is a major challenge in Mexico with a long history, especially in some places and regions; notoriously known for feminicides is Ciudad Juárez (see Soto Espinosa 2016). But most of the time all new and newer protests are limited to this picture of 'feminism', a fight of women\* for their rights, for equality and justice. The picture of women\* against men\* is often overcome, but still the fight against discrimination is a female\* labelled fight, taking women\* as group (see Ordoñez 2019), and seldom breaking this monolithic picture, showing different challenges e.g. for indigenous or afro-mexican women (see ILSB 2019). But Mexico has not only a very high rate of feminicides, it ranks among the highest rates in other forms of discrimination and hate crimes, too. Only as an example, looking at the murder of trans-persons, reported murder is only higher in Brazil in absolute numbers (but many regions of the world are not covered, are lacking such reporting). In relative number Mexico is still among the highest, but topped not only by Brazil, but also countries like Honduras, Belize, the Dominican Republic or Venezuela. But these relative numbers have to be taken with caution, e.g. in Belize they result from one murder in eight years. Anyhow these numbers are interpreted, Mexico has a major problem with the murder of trans-person, even though laws and policies for their protection are existing (see Trans Murder Monitoring 2019).

Taking this into account, too, the actual protests in Mexico are for sure 'feminist', but not in the sense of only women\* fighting injustice. These protests generate publicity and allow to put the spotlights of attention on general injustice and discrimination in Mexico. The system in Mexico has to change, and yes, the Mexican society is cruelly machoistic still. But this is not only a challenge and a danger for all women\*, but at least for all not clearly cis-Mexican-males fitting in the macho-patriarchic understanding of being a man, and even for many of them. Discrimination in Mexico can be seen in different occasions and instances. Murderer is something like the tip of a mountain here, the most cruel and most obvious form of discrimination, but general violence and more and different forms of discrimination have to be taken into account to see the full picture, from hate speech to neglecting existing problems – see the CONPRED article as an example. There is a new 'feminist' movement in Mexico going to the streets, and in some parts and by some, it is seen, that it stands for intersectional forms of discrimination and not only the fight of women\*. But not only major media, but also the government try to limit the focus, to mark all protests as a question of women's\* rights. This won't and cannot be the last word in this fight – true change cannot be reached by some laws, but only by changing the public, by making justice a question for civil society, and not only a part of it. This makes the protests in Mexico transnational and broad at the same time. By taking this perspective and breaking down the limits of perception of the protests true changes become possible. And it is becoming clearer and clearer, that collective and individual civil society actors and transnational links are key for successes, because official and governmental institutes are reluctant to allow for a broadening of the perspective. In the end today's 'feminism' is a fight against discrimination and injustice in a broad sense, and not only a constructed women's\* movement. This doesn't mean women\* discrimination isn't a major challenge, but the existing intersectional discrimination in Mexico shows, no movement and protest can or should stop there. Today's 'feminism' is and should be broader, not by using a new label, but by broadening the actions and challenging the perception of the label.

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