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– FEMINISTS VERSUS MONUMENTS? From Protests to Anti-monuments in Mexico City

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Abstract

This article examines the role of heritage spaces and monuments in the Historic Centre of Mexico City during ongoing feminist mobilizations. Feminists have claimed that the Mexican government is more concerned about protecting monuments and urban heritage than acting to prevent gender-based violence and femicide. While feminists have demanded actions and solutions from the authorities, some have also sought to distance themselves from the state, utilizing counter-hegemonic tactics. The research shows how feminist activists have used cultural demonstrations and established alternative memorials to commemorate women who have suffered from violence and crime. These approaches differ from those of other social movements in Mexico. By occupying symbolic historic spaces and, in some cases, damaging monuments, feminists have also established what they call anti-monumentas. Such tactics reflect how politics, memory and public space continuously intertwine during demonstrations.

Introduction

In the afternoon of Friday, 29 November 2019, I witnessed dozens of municipal workers organizing a health, sports and physical activity event at the Alameda Central, a heritage public park in the Historic Centre of Mexico City (downtown). Large tents were temporarily installed in alleys, a small football pitch and large speakers were placed next to the central fountain, street sweepers cleaned the Alameda and police officers patrolled the park as usual. The Alameda seemed to be preparing to host a weekend sports event organized by the city authorities.

However, at around 5.00 p.m. a few women gathered at the Hemiciclo a Benito Juárez (the Benito Juárez hemicycle monument), starting what seemed to be a different event. Some of them carried colourful placards and banners. After only a few minutes this gathering had exceeded a hundred women. They moved from the Hemiciclo to the kiosko [bandstand] some metres away, and more women joined the crowd. A few of them took over the bandstand as a sort of stage, while the rest spread out around it and started singing:

> And the fault was not mine, where I was, or how I dressed … The rapist is you![1]

The gathering at the bandstand was part of a rehearsal for a performance, *Ni Una Menos* [Not One Woman Less], echoing *Un violador en tu camino* [A rapist in your path], a

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1 *El País* (2019) La letra de 'El violador eres tú', el himno feminista que se extiende por el mundo [The lyrics of 'The rapist is you', the feminist anthem that is spreading around the world]. 7 December [WWW document]. URL https://elpais.com/sociedad/2019/12/07/actualidad/1575750878_441385.html (accessed 20 July 2025).

feminist protest that began in Chile and was replicated globally in 2019 (Martin and Shaw, 2021). After rehearsing for about an hour, the feminist activists marched from the Alameda to the Zócalo (the main square), where they performed their song a couple of times in front of the Palacio Nacional, the seat of the national government. Thousands of women of various ages, ethnic backgrounds, social classes and sexual orientations participated in *Ni Una Menos* performances at the Zócalo in front of the Palacio Nacional.[2] A few days earlier, another feminist protest had occurred in the Historic Centre when activists had sprayed graffiti on several historic monuments, including the Hemiciclo a Juárez at the Alameda Central and the Ángel de la Independencia. They wrote messages such as:

> Ni una menos [Not one woman less]
> No estás sola [You are not alone]
> El Estado violador [The rapist state]
> Gobierno feminicida [Femicide government]

The authorities immediately deemed these actions vandalism and urban incivility, as the messages were sprayed on heritage buildings and monuments.[3] Conversely, feminist activists argued that the Mexican authorities were more concerned about protecting monuments than acting to counter and prevent gender-based violence.[4] For example, feminists have justified their actions, damage to historic monuments and demands to the authorities by arguing:

> Urban heritage can be restored, but raped women will never be the same.[5]
> [The Mexican government] protects monuments but not women.[6]

While public spaces in Mexico City accommodate protests on different issues, this article focuses on ongoing feminist mobilizations denouncing the continuing wave of violence against women: 3,920 women were killed in Mexico in 2020, an average of 10.7 per day.[7] Different social movements in Mexico, and more broadly in Latin America, have long employed spatial tactics such as street blockades, sit-ins and marches to express their dissatisfaction with the state. However, feminists have increasingly employed more radical methods, including spraying graffiti on monuments, breaking windows and damaging buildings and infrastructure such as metro stations, to challenge the authorities directly.

My intention in this article is to examine the relationship between politics and public space during protests, particularly feminist demonstrations. I propose the following questions: To what extent have ongoing feminist mobilizations changed in nature compared to other protests in Mexico City? How have feminist activists responded to social and urban policies, including physical restrictions implemented

2 Aida Hernández Castillo (2019) Un violador en tu camino y las masculinidades tóxicas [A rapist in your path and toxic masculinities]. *La Jornada*, 5 December [WWW document]. URL https://www.jornada.com.mx/2019/12/05/opinion/024 (accessed 20 June 2025).

3 *El Sol de México* (2020) Vandalismo a monumentos históricos durante las marchas [Vandalism of historical monuments during the marches]. 21 February [WWW document]. URL https://www.elsoldemexico.com.mx/mexico/vandalismo-monumentos-historticos-marchas-feministas-protestas-pintas-4864499.html (accessed 20 June 2025).

4 Interview with members of three feminist collectives, Antimonumenta, Las Constituyentes MX and Luchadoras (6 December 2021).

5 *El País* (2019) El patrimonio puede ser restaurado, pero las mujeres violadas nunca volverán a ser las mismas [Urban heritage can be restored, but women who have been raped will never be the same again]. 25 August [WWW document]. URL https://verne.elpais.com/verne/2019/08/25/mexico/1566695449_766396.html (accessed 20 June 2025).

6 *El Sol de México*, 21 February 2020.

7 INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía) (2020) Homicidios registrados en México en 2020 [Homicides recorded in Mexico in 2020] [WWW document]. URL https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/boletines/2021/EstSociodemo/Defcioneshomicidio2020.pdf (accessed 20 June 2025).

during their demonstrations? And do historic spaces, heritage sites and monuments in Mexico City significantly shape ongoing feminist mobilizations? If so, how?

The research draws on multiple qualitative methods, including ethnographic research, interviews with activists and participant observation from 2019 to 2023.[8] I recorded my observations on printed maps, later geo-referenced using Q-GIS and other mapping tools (for details about mapping techniques, see Gutiérrez and Törmä, 2020; Törmä and Gutiérrez, 2021; Gutiérrez, 2023; 2025). I also reviewed urban policies, edicts concerning protests and demonstrations, and reports in newspapers and on social media.

The research demonstrates how feminists have sought to: (1) make their dissatisfactions visible by occupying significant streets and monuments; (2) utilize the press and digital media to gain support and publicize their demands; (3) sometimes disrupt or block access to heritage buildings and spaces; (4) in more extreme cases, damage some of the areas occupied during demonstrations; and (5) establish their own memorials, which they call 'anti-monumentas', to commemorate those who have suffered from gender-based violence. All these strategies differentiate feminist movements from other mobilizations in Mexico.

By examining the spatial tactics and symbolic repertoires during feminist mobilizations, I argue that while feminists have demanded actions and solutions from authorities, some have also aimed to distance themselves from the state, utilizing counter-hegemonic tactics to oppose and push back against the government. Others have even sought to differentiate themselves from other feminists. Such strategies shed new light on what Diane Davis calls the 'power of distance' and 'spatiality' involved in the formation of and differences between social movements in Latin America (1999: 601). I also suggest that historic public spaces and monuments have become crucial aspects of and settings for protest and alternative forms of commemoration. Indeed, the symbolic and physical qualities of heritage spaces and monuments also reinforce the demands of feminist groups.

Social movements: from distance and spatiality to the creation of monuments

Social movements have been crucial drivers of political change in Latin America. To understand how mobilizations have evolved in the region, I borrow Escobar and Alvarez's definition of 'Latin American social movements' as 'organized collective actors who engage in sustained political or cultural contestation through recourse to institutional and extra-institutional forms of actions' (1992: 321). Struggles against social exclusion, inequality, poverty and marginalization have historically shaped movements across the region (Knight, 1990; Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Davis, 1994; 1999). The nature of Latin American social movements has undergone significant changes over the last few decades, including movements against political regimes in the 1970s to 1990s, opposition to newly established democratic institutions in the 1990s and 2000s, and resistance to neoliberal agendas in the 2000s and 2010s (Davis and Davey, 2023).

Different activists in Mexico, and in Latin America more broadly, have chosen to 'distance themselves from the state' (Davis, 1999: 601–2). This separation can be understood in various ways, including institutional, class and cultural forms. In Mexico, for instance, trade unions and syndicates have historically been affiliated with political

8 Demonstrations included *Un violador en tu camino* [A rapist in your path] (25 and 29 November 2019), and International Women's Day demonstrations in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The semi-structured interviews were carried out with leaders of the feminist groups Antimonumenta, Las Constituyentes MX and Luchadoras (15 August and 8 December 2021). It should be acknowledged that some radical feminists were initially reluctant to speak with me as a male researcher. However, other feminists from the same collectives granted me interviews and introduced me to other activists. I also conducted over 20 informal conversations with feminist activists at the Alameda during the Un violador en tu camino demonstrations in 2019. I collected flyers and printed materials during demonstrations. I also conducted three additional interviews with feminist activists while revising this article in July 2025.

institutions and ruling parties, such as the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional—the Institutional Revolutionary Party), the ruling party for 70 years from 1929 to 2000 and again from 2012 to 2018 (Knight, 1990; Davis, 1994). However, some trade unions have separated from the ruling party and have supported the opposition in more recent decades (Davis, 1994). Similarly, street vendors organized and developed strategies to defend their interests, engaging with the ruling political party in public demonstrations seeking to secure their right to use the streets in Mexico City (Gordon, 1997). In the 1980s, for example, political leaders from the PRI began to utilize vendors for pre-emptive actions against demonstrations by opposition forces in Mexico City. Some street traders' unions affiliated with the PRI, sometimes accompanied by squatters or *pepenadores* [garbage pickers], camped out overnight to ensure that no opposition protestors could get close to the events organized by the PRI. This practice was commonly referred to as 'hacer valla' [make a barrier] (Gordon, 1997: 182–3).

Social movements in Mexico have long sought to affiliate with or distance themselves from the state and ruling parties, thereby shaping political decision-making and securing certain benefits (Davis and Davey, 2023). Significant political changes, such as the shifts in ruling parties in 2000 when the PAN [Partido Acción Nacional—the National Action Party] won the presidential election, and later the rise of MORENA [Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional—the National Regeneration Movement] in 2018, have significantly influenced social mobilizations in Mexico (Tamayo and Cruz Guzmán, 2008), with more recent movements increasingly focusing on everyday struggles including racial, class and gender inequalities and violence (Rossi, 2023).

Urban space matters for social movements (Castells, 1983; Harvey, 2003). Space provides the setting for demonstrations to express social dissatisfaction, and 'directly influences the formation, objectives, and strategies of citizens as individuals and collectively in social movements' (Davis, 1999: 601). Activists across Mexico and Latin America have long employed material and spatial tactics to contest struggles and symbolically express their discontent, using these actions to voice grievances and demand concrete remedies from the state (Davis and Davey, 2023). Public spaces, particularly significant streets, squares, plazas and parks, have long been crucial elements in social movements and their tactics, including protests, street blockades, sit-ins and other forms of public demonstration.

The relationship between urban space and social movements has been widely discussed in different regions (Castells, 1983; Harvey, 2003; Nicholls, 2008; Beveridge and Koch, 2019). However, space has received comparatively less attention in Mexican scholarship, which has long examined social movements from political, sociological and anthropological disciplines, although there are some notable exceptions to this (Davis, 1999; Davis and Rosan, 2003; Irazábal, 2008; Tamayo and Cruz Guzmán, 2008).

Social movements, particularly against violence, racism, gender and class inequalities, have also endeavoured to remember those who have suffered from injustices or crimes. Here, collective memory and memorialization have become essential for these movements (Drinot, 2009; Hirsch, 2019; Jelin, 2021). After all, collective memory is profoundly political and spatial (Huyssen, 2000). For instance, ongoing feminist mobilizations and movements searching for missing/disappeared people in Mexico have gone beyond reactionary agendas against the state, utilizing memory-related tactics like establishing grassroots memorials which they have called 'anti-monuments' (Délano Alonso and Nienass, 2023; Stengel Peña, 2023). Using symbolic spaces to remember and commemorate has become essential for these groups. Anti-monuments are typically informal (i.e. erected without official approval), temporary and activist-driven (Stevens *et al*., 2012), and reject traditional forms of monumentality and memorialization (Huyssen, 2000). Other forms of occupying space, such as performances, marches and sit-ins, have typically accompanied the creation of anti-monuments.

Such alternative sites of remembering or opposing what is remembered or forgotten have become crucial for feminist movements in Mexico, which are often associated with direct forms of resistance or protest. While other movements in Mexico, like families searching for missing people, have employed similar alternative memorials, feminists have combined memory tactics with more radical approaches like spraying graffiti on existing monuments or breaking windows, as well as other symbolic strategies, such as collective performances like the *Ni Una Menos* demonstration and public art installations. Hereafter, instead of anti-monument I use the term 'anti-monumenta' when referring to the feminist examples, because feminist activists refer to their memorials using the feminine gender in Spanish (Archivo Antimonumentos, 2020).

Symbolic spaces, such as heritage sites or existing monuments, have become essential for establishing alternative memorials and demanding more effective intervention from the authorities. In other words, more recent changes in feminist mobilizations in Mexico are not only utilizing space in more radical ways during protests, but also using such sites to create their alternative memorials (i.e. anti-monumentas), leaving a mark on the city as a form of remembrance. Both protests and the creation of alternative memorials are deeply ingrained in urban space. I thus concur with Davis's (1999: 601) proposition on 'taking space seriously' while examining social movements and their tactics in Mexico and the Latin American region. Understanding how space is used, sometimes through radical or disruptive tactics and at other times in more symbolic ways, such as establishing alternative sites of commemoration, allows us to identify the changing trajectories of social movements in relation to political and cultural shifts.

De-politicizing public space after urban regeneration?

Social movements in Mexico and Latin America have long utilized urban spaces to express their demands. However, urban scholars argue that regulations in Mexico City undermine the political function of public space, enforcing surveillance, policing and symbolic exclusion (Martínez Ramírez, 2015; Ramírez Kuri, 2017; Rodríguez López, 2018). Urban critics have suggested that conservation policies have obscured the adverse effects of regeneration, including the displacement of low-income populations and attempts to attract upper-class residents, which is often seen as a form of gentrification. Some have claimed that renovations of historic spaces have led to the social exclusion of low-income populations and activists, achieved through 'strict social surveillance and police monitoring' (Rodríguez López, 2018: 245).

These critical—and often pessimistic—debates on the erosion of democratic functions in public spaces following urban regeneration have become almost an orthodoxy in urban studies in Mexico. Regeneration and conservation policies, scholars contend, favour neoliberal reforms and partnerships with private investors (Crossa, 2009; Delgadillo, 2016; Ramírez Kuri, 2017). Some have argued that such policies produce fragmented, exclusionary spaces aimed at middle-class consumption and private business (Delgadillo, 2016: 161). Others have claimed that urban policies in the Historic Centre have created places where '"social cleansing" programmes have criminalised certain activities considered inappropriate, such as street vending or social protests' (Martínez Ramírez, 2015: 4). According to critics, these transformations pose a threat to social movements and their political use of space.

The political functions of historic spaces remain evident, not only in large demonstrations but also in the ongoing resistance of marginalized groups like *ambulantes* [street vendors], beggars and homeless people who have continuously occupied such areas (Jones and Varley, 1994; Crossa, 2009; Leal Martínez, 2016). For instance, street vendors often relocate in response to policing, renegotiating the use of space daily in Mexico City (Crossa, 2009: 51). Street artists, homeless people and sex workers have similarly resisted displacement, temporarily relocating and then returning to significant

heritage spaces such as the Alameda Central (Gutiérrez, 2017; 2023; 2025; 2026). These groups have long contested attempts at displacement and gentrification.

In recent scholarship from Mexico City, the idea that the political function of public space is threatened by a specific economic model or urban policy has become common sense, almost a banality. Despite implementing regeneration and heritage conservation policies in Mexico City, some activists, such as feminist groups, have found ways to use space to demand actions from the authorities and make visible a particular social concern, as this article examines.

Permanent surveillance

Many policing strategies in public spaces within the Historic Centre were strengthened following the national recognition of urban heritage in 1980 and the designation of the area as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. Regeneration policies, including the 2011 Comprehensive Management Plan and its subsequent updates in 2017 and 2023, introduced additional surveillance actions.

Such strategies benefited from the creation of the C5 CDMX [Command, Control, Computing, Communications and Citizen Contact Centre of Mexico City] in 2015 and the installation of surveillance technologies since the early 2000s. The creation of the C5 CDMX was also associated with the Ciudad Segura [Safe City] strategy of 2010. It also followed the recommendations made by Rudolph Giuliani (the Mayor of New York City from 1994 to 2001) to Mexico City's authorities in 2002, during the period when Andrés Manuel López Obrador was Jefe de Gobierno del Distrito Federal [Head of Government of the Federal District, Mexico City] from 2000 to 2005 (Davis, 2013).

The Giuliani Report established 146 recommendations criminalizing certain individual behaviours, such as disobeying traffic signals, offering bribes to police officers, drug trafficking, graffiti spraying, street trading, offering sex work and blocking streets and pavements during protests (Davis, 2013: 59, 63–4). It suggested creating anti-graffiti and anti-noise police units and restricting public protests, which must be notified to the authorities (Becker and Müller, 2013). Some of these recommendations reflected long-term concerns of the Mexico City authorities. Therefore, the Giuliani Report did not offer anything particularly new.

Over 700 police officers have been responsible for the Historic Centre on a daily basis since the 2010s (Micheli and Islas, 2015: 32). This number often increases during *operativos* [police actions] in response to activities such as street trading, begging, rough sleeping or unplanned demonstrations.

Taxonomy of protests

Despite stricter policing, public spaces in central areas remain essential for diverse demonstrations. Between 2015 and 2017 over 10,000 protests occurred in Mexico City—an average of 9.44 per day.[9] Similar numbers were recorded in the 1990s; for example, in 1995 there were, on average, seven protests per day, increasing to 10.4 in 1996 (Irazábal, 2008: 15). Protests typically last around 2.5 hours and often take place between 11.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m., using major public spaces in central *alcaldías* (mayoral districts, similar to municipalities).

In Mexico City, the reasons for protesting vary. Public demonstrations often highlight environmental, political or social concerns. Environmental protests are usually organized by activists against ecological damage, including destruction caused by urban projects or environmental regulations. For instance, affected residents demonstrated

9 Iñigo Arredondo (2018) CDMX: 9 marchas al día por 3 años [Mexico City: nine marches per day for three years]. *El Universal*, 7 February [WWW document]. URL https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/periodismo-de-investigacion/cdmx-9-marchasal-dia-por-3-anos/ (accessed 10 June 2020).

against Mexico City's 2000 airport project on the former Texcoco Lake (Davis and Rosan, 2003). Political protests often involve support for or opposition to parties or politicians, including actions opposing alleged electoral abuse. Protests against other social concerns include those opposing government actions, laws or regulations, such as the Zapatista movement (EZLN) marches in the Zócalo in 2001 (Tamayo and Cruz Guzmán, 2008). Demonstrations against violence and crime—especially by civil society groups affected by femicide, enforced disappearance or other violence—have become more frequent (Huffschmid, 2015; De Vecchi Gerli, 2018; Sefchovich, 2020). This wide range of mobilizations has long been a way to express dissatisfaction with the effects of crime and violence or the lack of effective intervention from the state. Individuals and groups have employed varying degrees of collaboration with the authorities and spatial tactics to express their discontent and grief.

Demonstrations range from peaceful and regulated to disruptive or violent. Peaceful protests comply with legal frameworks; disruptive ones obstruct access to spaces without causing damage; violent ones involve actions like spraying graffiti or property damage. These categories often overlap. The city authorities and media retrospectively classify protests as marchas or mítines [marches or political rallies], manifestaciones [demonstrations] or plantones or bloqueos [sit-ins, disruptive occupation of space or street blockades].

Recent years have not seen a decline in protests in Mexico City. From 1 November 2019 to 1 April 2020, the city authorities recorded 1,616 demonstrations, an average of 10.7 per day at the city level.[10] These months included *Ni Una Menos* performances in November 2019, International Women's Day (8 March 2020) and demonstrations against Covid-19 restrictions in late March 2020. The latter suppressed gatherings and protests in public spaces (Gutiérrez, 2023; 2025). The majority of the 1,616 demonstrations occurred in the Cuauhtémoc alcaldía, which contains the Historic Centre, with 849 protests (52.5%), followed by 98 demonstrations (6.1%) in Álvaro Obregón and 92 (5.7%) in Benito Juárez.

Over this period, the authorities recorded 292 protests in the Historic Centre, 29.1% of the 849 marches in the Cuauhtémoc alcaldía. Significant protests in the Cuauhtémoc alcaldía also occurred outside but near the Historic Centre, such as Ángel de la Independencia on Av. Paseo de la Reforma and Glorieta de los Insurgentes on Av. Chapultepec.

Cross-checking information from official data provided by city authorities and information shared via Twitter/X and newspapers, I classified the protests in the Historic Centre according to the categories and subcategories mentioned in the official data.[11] Table 1 summarizes the different sub-categories of demonstrations over the five months in question. For example, various 'civil movements' included protests by groups with a specific social cause (e.g. Líderes Juveniles de México and Federación Mariguana Liberación); 'alternative socio-political movements' encompassed demonstrations by groups affiliated with a particular political party or movement (e.g. Movimiento Antorchista and Colectivo Zapatista); 'residents associations' consisted of collectives representing a place or area (e.g. Barrios Originarios de Culhuacán and others); and 'LGBTQ+ movements' included protests by lesbians, homosexuals and transgender groups.

The analysis showed that 77 of 292 protests (26%) in the Historic Centre were related to trade union demands, followed by 47 demonstrations by various civil movements (16%) and 45 protests by feminist movements (15%). The Alameda, the

10 From a database provided by C5 CDMX in March 2022.

11 Data retrieved from the official Twitter/X account of C5 CDMX (@C5_cdmx), including a file showing protests per day and alcaldía to minimize disruption and traffic jams. Data included planned events recorded by the C5. However, some protests did not always occur as planned.

TABLE 1 Protests in the Historic Centre of Mexico City from 1 November 2019 to 1 April 2020

Categories/sub-categories	In the Historic Centre		In the Alameda	Passed by/through the Alameda to the Zócalo
Environmental	**9%**			
Pro-animals		6%	7%	5%
Climate change		3%	6%	5%
Political	**2%**			
In support of specific politicians		1%	-	-
Against police actions		1%	-	-
Social	**89%**			
Trade unions		26%	12%	15%
Civil movements		16%	20%	17%
Feminist movements		15%	28%	30%
Alternative socio-political movements		12%	13%	13%
Residents' associations		8%	1%	1%
Teachers' unions		8%	7%	7%
LGBTQ+ movements		2%	4%	4%
Religious		1%	1%	1%
%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Total (N Value)	**292**	**292**	**69**	**92**

SOURCE: the author, compiled from official data shared by C5 CDMX via Twitter/X (@C5_cdmx).

Zócalo and its surroundings hosted 69 of 292 protests (24%). Additionally, a further 92 demonstrations (32%) passed through the Alameda towards the Zócalo, of which 28 (30%) involved feminist protests, making this the most common subcategory from Av. Paseo de la Reforma to the Alameda Central and the Zócalo.

Despite attempts to regulate protests, public demonstrations in Mexico City, especially in the Historic Centre, have almost become an everyday occurrence. The persistent presence of protests and demonstrations in Mexico City serves as a reminder that politics is inextricably linked to the city (Castells, 1983; Harvey, 2003; Beveridge and Koch, 2019). However, different movements utilize the space differently and either establish relations with or separate themselves from the state, as well as with or from other activists or others within the same movement, as the following section discusses.

A variety of protests and the use of urban space

Urban space matters in the expression and tactics of different social movements. Activists often benefit from the physical (e.g. location, accessibility or proximity) and symbolic qualities (e.g. heritage and historic value) of public spaces. For instance, many protests in Mexico City start or finish at the Zócalo or Av. Paseo de la Reforma, passing through the Alameda Central (see Figure 1). Therefore, the location of the Alameda favours its use by protestors, unlike other heritage spaces such as the Plaza de Santo Domingo. The Alameda also serves as a meeting point during demonstrations or a gathering place after protests, as occurred during the *Ni Una Menos* performance mentioned above.

Figure 1 shows a map of all the protests in the Historic Centre recorded in Table 1. It is noteworthy that not all sites in the Historic Centre are occupied during public demonstrations; in the main, only a few of the most symbolic places, such as the Zócalo, the Alameda, Av. Paseo de la Reforma and the Monumento a la Revolución

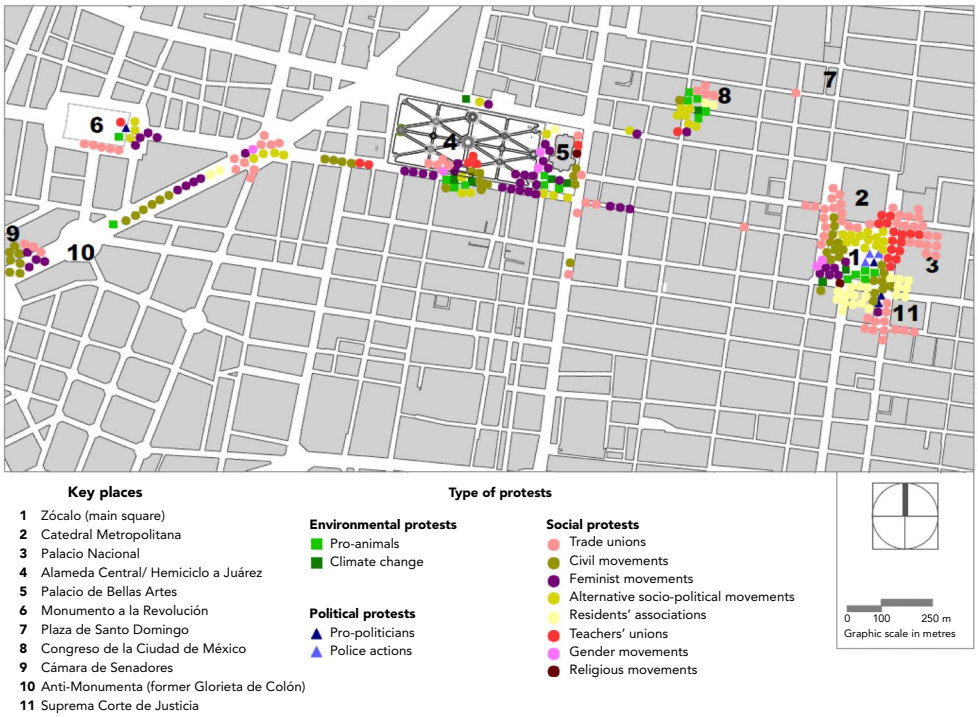

FIGURE 1 Locations of protests in the Historic Centre of Mexico City (*source*: compiled by the author, using official data shared by C5 CDMX via Twitter/X)
NOTE: protests were geo-referenced on a base map of the Historic Centre

are utilized. This may suggest that protests can occur without affecting other areas or functions in the Historic Centre.

Activists have also benefited from the symbolic qualities of the occupied spaces. For instance, many protests in the Alameda have often occurred at the Hemiciclo a Juárez, on the southern edge, probably due to its historical significance. The memorial to President Benito Juárez (in office 1858–1872), the first Mexican president of indigenous origin, sought to commemorate '[Mexican] republicanism, liberty and justice' and was inaugurated in 1910 (Agostoni, 2003: 103). Its semi-circular shape favours small and relatively contained demonstrations, unlike the Zócalo, the Monumento a la Revolución, Av. Paseo de la Reforma or other public spaces.

Some groups gather at the Hemiciclo or the Alameda's bandstand before moving to other areas, such as the Zócalo and the Palacio Nacional (1.2 km east) or the Congreso de la Ciudad (1.1 km northeast), or vice versa. Several trade unions have assembled on various occasions in the Alameda, as shown in Table 1. For example, on 18 January 2020, hourly-paid university lecturers from Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México (UACM) protested at the Hemiciclo in the Alameda. The lecturers were demanding better contracts and working conditions, having held only temporary or hourly-based contracts for several years, which limited their access to long-term benefits such as pensions and health insurance. Teachers' unions have long used public spaces to voice their demands to the authorities. Their use of space is often static or planned, but it is also disruptive.

Similarly, on 19 November 2019, some pro-family and religious groups assembled at the Alameda Central before moving to the Congreso de la Ciudad de México. They were demonstrating against the rights of teenagers under 18 years old to change their

names and gender. In April 2019, the authorities had enacted legislation recognizing transgender teenagers and allowing them to choose their names and genders with parental or guardian consent. Protesters from pro-family groups argued that teenagers lacked the mental capacity to exercise these rights fully, and that they did so through those with parental authority over them.

However, protesters at the Hemiciclo have encountered challenges since the 2020s, ever since workers from the Secretaría de Seguridad Ciudadana [Secretariat of Citizen Security] erected a temporary metal wall, like a construction hoarding, around the monument after feminists painted graffiti on it during protests in November and December 2019. Several years later, it now appears that the metal hoardings have become a permanent fixture (see Figure 2). Before 2019, one or two police officers were permanently stationed at the monument, while other officers circulated through the Alameda and its surroundings. Despite the erection of the metal hoarding and protection by police officers, however, activists still use the Hemiciclo monument to voice their concerns. Different protestors have sprayed graffiti on the metal hoardings, writing slogans about ecological issues, racism or messages in memory of missing persons. The authorities have responded to these events by repainting the metal walls several times and condemning these incidents as forms of vandalism, incivility and antisocial behaviour.

Figure 2 shows the sequence of physical restrictions implemented at the Hemiciclo from April to October 2020. First, the authorities placed metal fencing (top image); then, they installed a metal hoarding, which activists sprayed with graffiti (middle image); and later, the city authorities repainted it with a mural displaying flowers (bottom image).

It is worth acknowledging the wide range of social movements and ongoing mobilizations in Mexico City. I do not intend to suggest that only feminist activists, groups searching for missing people, teachers' unions or particular political movements are taking to the streets in Mexico City. Nevertheless, each movement has employed different spatial tactics, demonstrating the changing trajectories of activism (Davis, 1999), and feminist mobilizations have been particularly disruptive, performative and symbolic, as the following sections explain.

Feminist movements, protests and urban space

As we have seen, despite the state's implementation of social surveillance strategies and physical restrictions such as metal hoardings, public spaces in the Historic Centre have continued to serve as protest sites. However, feminist demonstrations have become a particular concern for Mexican national and city authorities, as participants have utilized historic public spaces in especially disruptive and violent ways. Unlike other mobilizations, the authorities have intensified policing strategies and physical protections for heritage buildings and monuments in preparation for feminist demonstrations (see Figure 2). Feminists continuously claim that the authorities seem more concerned about protecting urban heritage and monuments than countering gender violence and femicide.[12] Some activists have therefore opted for radical forms of protest such as spraying graffiti on monuments, breaking windows in heritage buildings or damaging metro stations and bus shelters, successfully capturing the attention of the authorities, the media and the public.

Some clashes and alliances have also emerged between feminist activists and other groups who have long resisted displacement. For example, some female street vendors from indigenous backgrounds sell feminist memorabilia in the Alameda, while feminists have demonstrated against the displacement of indigenous street vendors

12 Interview with a leader of the feminist collective Antimonumenta (6 December 2021).

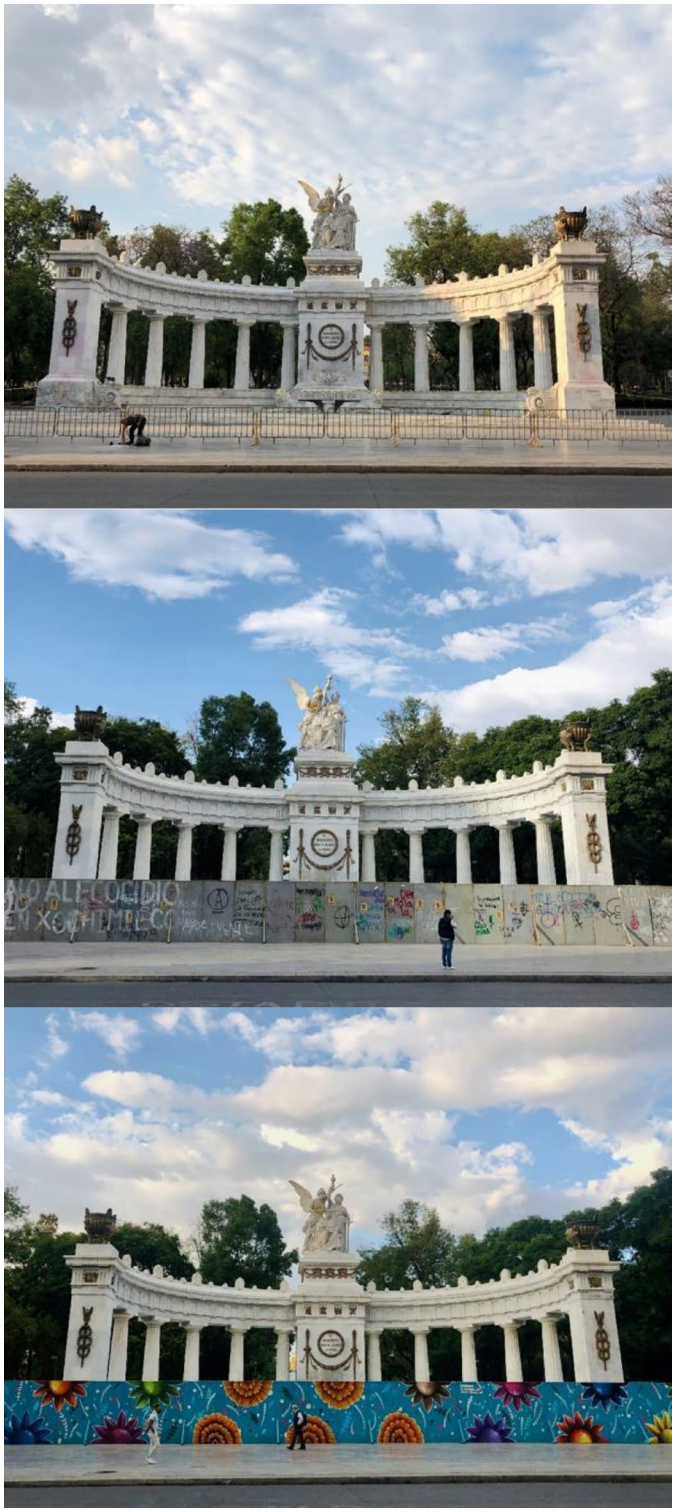

FIGURE 2 Metal fencing and hoardings around the Hemiciclo (*source*: photos by the author, April and October 2020)

selling handicrafts, supporting their movement. However, there have also been conflicts between street vendors and feminist activists when some street traders harassed and physically assaulted feminists protesting at the Alameda. The street vendors argued that the activists did not pay for a 'derecho de piso' [the informal right to use certain spaces without being displaced], which often involves bribery of police officers and authorities, as street traders usually do.

– Conserving monuments, erasing memories: the Wall of 8 March 2021

The Wall of 8 March 2021 (International Women's Day) shows how feminist groups used the three-metre-high metal hoarding that the authorities erected around the Palacio Nacional in March 2021.[13] The national and city governments enclosed 34 monuments and buildings in the Historic Centre in preparation for the 2021 march, employing similar barricades to those around the Hemiciclo a Juárez in the Alameda (see Figure 2). Some monuments, including the Hemiciclo and the Palacio de Bellas Artes, had been painted with graffiti during feminist demonstrations in 2019 and 2020. The authorities anticipated massive protests for International Women's Day 2021, although they hoped that the Covid-19 pandemic would mean that fewer activists would participate in the demonstration.

Regarding these actions, Former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (in office 2018–2024) appealed to feminist groups:

> I ask feminist protestors, with all due respect, not to paint our doors, our walls. We [the authorities] are working to prevent further femicides. We are not pretending. Do not expect us to act as repressors.[14]

Feminists and the media criticized the president and the federal government for their perceived chauvinism, downplaying high crime rates against women and even covering up cases in which police officers or politicians were accused of violence against women.[15] Similar incidents have led some feminists to claim that the state is a 'patriarchal structure' complicit in perpetuating gender-based violence.[16] Before the protests on 5 and 6 March 2021, feminist activists from Antimonumenta, a feminist collective, began inscribing the names of missing or murdered women on the black metal hoardings surrounding the Palacio Nacional. Around 1,500 names were written on the metal walls (Díaz Álvarez *et al*., 2021). The metal hoardings, intended to protect monuments, were transformed into temporary memorials rich with symbolic meaning, resembling a pilgrimage. Activists, visitors and passersby who wrote women's names on the walls also left flowers in memory of the missing or murdered women, and the walls were further decorated with pink crosses, ribbons and messages such as:

> For those [women] who hugged their mother without knowing it would be their last hug (Díaz Álvarez *et al*., 2021: 21).

Around 20,000 people, predominantly women, participated in the demonstration on 8 March 2021, according to official data from the Secretariat of Civil Security. The city

13 *El Universal* (2021) Resguardan monumentos del Centro Histórico por marcha del Día de la Mujer [Monuments in the Historic Centre are being protected ahead of the Women's Day march]. 4 March [WWW document]. URL https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/metropoli/video-resguardan-monumentos-del-centro-historico-por-marcha-del-dia-de-la-mujer (accessed 20 July 2025).

14 *Milenio* (2020) AMLO pide a feministas que 'no nos pinten las puertas ni las paredes' [AMLO asks feminists 'please do not paint our doors or walls']. 17 February [WWW document]. URL https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY0TJsYKN_k (accessed 20 July 2025).

15 The protest 'No me cuidan, me violan' [They (police officers) don't take care of me, they rape me] started when police officers were accused of raping a woman. Activists also accused former President López Obrador of protecting a politician accused of harassment and sexual abuse.

16 Interview with a feminist activist and student of Gender Studies (19 July 2025).

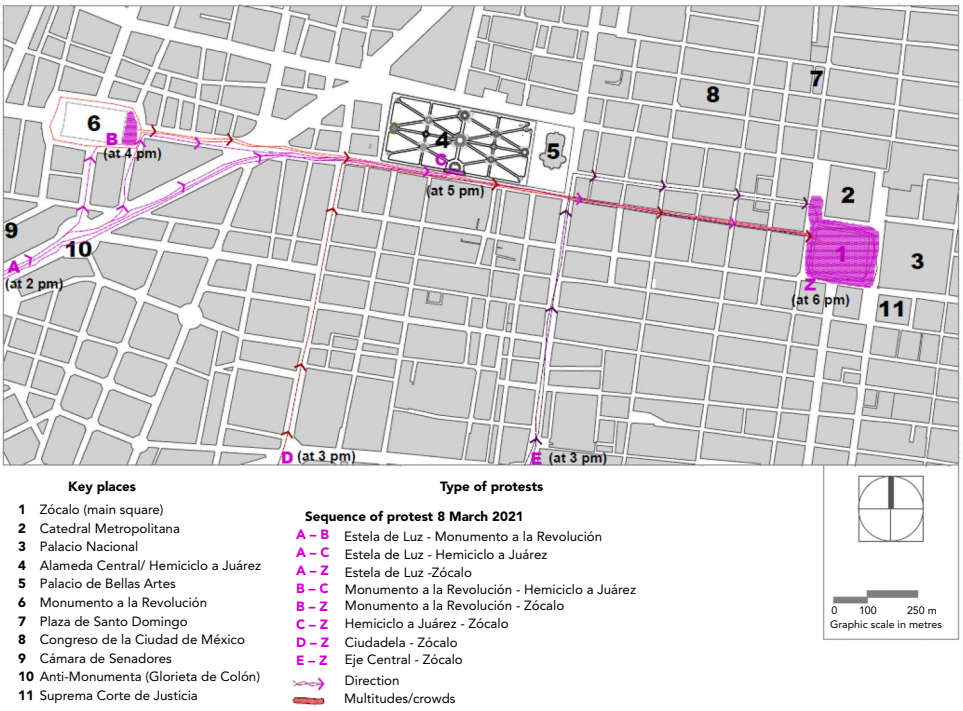

FIGURE 3 The routes of the protest marches on International Women's Day 2021 (*source*: compiled by the author, using official data shared by C5 CDMX via Twitter/X and the social media accounts of the feminist collectives Antimonumenta, Las Constituyentes MX and Luchadoras)

authorities deployed 2,300 police officers, the majority of whom were also women, during the protest. Feminist collectives planned to gather in various locations near the Historic Centre. Most marches began either on Av. Paseo de la Reforma (see Figure 3, location A) or at the Monumento a la Revolución (location B), before following the route shown. The protest passed through and paused at the Hemiciclo (location C) and was joined by other activists marching from La Ciudadela square (location D) or Av. Eje Central (location E). All demonstrations finished at the Zócalo (location Z) around 6.00 p.m. The use of space and well-planned sequences of marches has become well established during important feminist demonstrations.[17]

Multiple protests and cultural demonstrations have occurred in the Alameda and the Zócalo. For example, the Instituto de Bellas Artes [Institute of Fine Arts] organized a public exhibition on feminism in the Alameda in December 2019.[18] Similar cultural demonstrations and tactics have also helped spread feminist messages. During the 2021 International Women's Day protests, for instance, feminists read messages directed at the president and the media, chanting and shouting slogans and songs such as *Canción Sin Miedo* [A Fearless Song], which was released on 8 March 2021 and rapidly became one of the anthems of the feminist movement in Mexico and Latin America:

17 Interview with a feminist activist (19 July 2025).
18 See social media profiles on Twitter/X, Instagram and Facebook (@produccionesymilagros).

Every minute of every week
They [perpetrators] steal our friends, they kill our sisters
They destroy their bodies; they make them disappear
Don't forget their names, please, Mr. President
We sing without fear; we demand justice
We shout for every missing woman
Let it resound loudly: we [women] want to stay alive!
Let the feminicida [the perpetrator] fall with force!
I burn everything; I break everything
If one day, some guy puts out your eyes
Nothing silences me anymore; everything is enough
If they touch one [woman], we all respond.[19]

Canción Sin Miedo effectively depicted the fight against gender violence, including some radical actions like damaging monuments. It sent a direct message to the president, responding to the authorities' accusations of vandalism and explaining feminists' public mourning. Such expressions evoke how 'art can be a gesture of resistance and interference' during feminist mobilizations (Hirsch, 2019: 15). Some feminists have also utilized artistic performances, such as *Ni Una Menos*, in which symbolic forms of commemoration and remembrance have become essential. These strategies have also differentiated ongoing feminist mobilizations from others.

Other feminists, however, opted for more violent actions and direct confrontations with the state. They attempted to breach the metal barriers protecting the Palacio Nacional, leading to clashes with police officers. Although the national and city authorities reported that the 2021 International Women's Day protest was peaceful, other reports indicated that at least 62 police officers and 19 activists were injured.[20] The national government accused some feminist activists of vandalism and denied that police officers used weapons, stating:

> Police officers behaved in a professional manner and did not fall for the provocation of some [feminist] groups that carried out acts of vandalism. [Feminists] threw firecrackers and Molotov cocktails against the policewomen who resisted in an exemplary manner, despite acts of violence against them, in which [activists] used objects such as hammers and burning gasoline.[21]

Media outlets, activists and members of the Brigada Humanitaria de Paz Marabunta, a non-governmental organization that supports activists during demonstrations in Mexico City, reported that police officers initially used different weapons against feminists attempting to breach the metal hoarding around the Palacio Nacional. The city and national authorities had established a protocol before the protest agreeing that these weapons would not be used, and later denied that they had been deployed.

Feminist activists, media representatives and supporters of feminist movements criticized the authorities' reactions, including the erection of barricades around historic monuments, which they viewed as hostile interventions (see Figure 2). Such official actions exacerbated dissatisfaction among some radical feminists, who see the state as a masculine entity responsible for high femicide rates.[22] Social media was flooded with

19 Lyrics from *Canción Sin Miedo* by Vivir Quintana, reproduced from Spotify (2020) [WWW document]. URL https://open.spotify.com/track/5w3AsUEGoaCuBhDp14umuy?si=2f4618759d80491c (accessed 20 July 2025).
20 Presidencia de la República (2021) Concluyó la marcha por el 8M en el Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México [The march for International Women's Day (8M) concluded in the Historic Centre of Mexico City] [WWW document]. URL https://www.gob.mx/presidencia/prensa/concluyo-la-marcha-por-el-8m-en-el-centro-historico-de-la-ciudad-de-mexico?idiom=es (accessed: 20 June 2022).
21 Presidencia de la República (2021) Concluyó la marcha por el 8M.
22 Interview with a feminist activist and student of Gender Studies (19 July 2025).

FIGURE 4 The 2021 International Women's Day march at the Zócalo (*source*: photo taken by the author, March 2021)

public comments and debates about gender violence *versus* protection of monuments, such as:

> [The authorities] clean monuments, but can we [women] return home safe? We must stop crying for the walls and monuments and turn to see the real problem: the murders and disappearances of women.[23]

The authorities argued, however, that the metal hoardings around historic monuments and heritage buildings were a form of defence against vandalism; an official note on the 2021 International Women's Day protest reads:

> Without the metal walls erected a few days ago in front of the Palacio Nacional and other historic buildings, individuals [feminists] who were just looking to carry out acts of violence would have thrown themselves on the building [the Palacio]. This was the plan of the groups that organized acts of violence on street furniture, enforcement officers and civilians.[24]

The federal authorities referred to the metal hoarding as the 'Wall of Peace' before the 2021 march. Feminist activists called it the 'Wall of memory' after they wrote the names of missing women on it (see Figure 4). Some feminist activists, artists and academics wanted to conserve the hoardings, on which visitors wrote the names of more missing women, as a temporary memorial.[25] They intended to request sections of the wall from the authorities to commemorate the march as a new memorial against gender violence. However, a few days later the authorities painted over the names with

23 *El País* (2019) El patrimonio puede ser restaurado.
24 Presidencia de la República (2021) Concluyó la marcha por el 8M.
25 Interview with members of three feminist collectives, Antimonumenta, Las Constituyentes MX and Luchadoras (6 December 2021).

a mural of flowers, similar to the one shown in Figure 2. Feminist collectives saw this action as erasing their memories, and as demonstrating a lack of sensitivity to their demands.[26]

However, other feminists oppose violence and confrontation with the authorities. They were able to choose not to visit certain points along the route (see Figure 3), as an interviewee told me:

> Everyone can find their place during the demonstrations. If someone prefers to avoid confrontations with the police or others, they can choose to stay at the Ángel de la Independencia or the Alameda and leave the march before reaching the Zócalo.[27]

The notion of distance, whether institutional, physical or symbolic, and the use of space, as Davis (1999) describes, highlight differences between feminist and other movements, as well as within the feminist movement itself. Some activists also chose to distance themselves from other feminists despite sharing the same goal: fighting gender-based violence and femicide. Thus, both distance and space become significant in understanding feminist mobilization.

– Anti-monumenta and the Glorieta de las mujeres que luchan

The creation of alternative sites of memory as a way to make visible gender-based violence and femicide has become a crucial aspect of feminist mobilizations in Mexico City. While feminist activists oppose the authorities' strategy to protect historical monuments and heritage, they seek to establish their anti-monumentas in memory of missing women in order to demand justice.

On 25 September 2021, feminist activists placed the *Vivas nos queremos* [We (women) want ourselves to be alive] anti-monumenta statue on Av. Paseo de la Reforma. The idea of a feminist anti-monumenta and its motto echoed the Anti-monumento +43, a memorial for 43 students who went missing from Ayotzinapa in Guerrero, Mexico, in 2014, which was installed in Mexico City in 2015, where Av. Paseo de la Reforma intersects with Av. Juárez (De Vecchi Gerli, 2018). However, one of the earliest references to anti-monuments in Mexico comes from Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, where memorials to missing women were erected in the early 2000s to remember and demand justice for femicide cases reported since the 1990s. The mothers and families of the victims placed altars and large pink crosses in the fields and places where the bodies of the victims were discovered in Ciudad Juárez (Huffschmid, 2015).

Different movements have placed eleven anti-monuments in Mexico City since 2015, particularly along Av. Paseo de la Reforma and in the Historic Centre (Archivo Antimonumentos, 2020). The anti-monuments have included: the anti-monumento +43 in memory of the students who disappeared in Ayotzinapa in 2014; the anti-monumento +72, which remembers the massacre of 72 immigrants in San Fernando, Tamaulipas in 2010; the anti-monumento 49ABC, in memory of 49 children who died in the ABC nursery in Hermosillo, Sonora in 2009; and the anti-monumento +65, in memory of the mine disaster in Pasta de Conchos, Coahuila in 2006 where approximately 65 miners died (Archivo Antimonumentos, 2020). There have also been two feminist anti-monumentas, one located in Av. Juárez in front of the Alameda Central and the Palacio de Bellas Artes, erected in 2019, and another on Av. Paseo de la Reforma, built in 2021. These anti-monumentas were installed without permission from the authorities and have required protesters to monitor and fight for their permanence.

26 Interview with a Gender Studies academic (7 December 2021).
27 Interview with a feminist activist and student of Gender Studies (19 July 2025).

In the case of the feminist anti-monumenta on Av. Paseo de la Reforma, feminists located it on a glorieta [roundabout] where a statue of Cristóbal Colón [Christopher Columbus] used to stand, just a few blocks from the Historic Centre. They proposed renaming the roundabout the 'Glorieta de las Mujeres que Luchan' [Roundabout of the Women who Fight]. The anti-monumenta was a statue designed by an anonymous artist/activist from Mexico City, depicting the silhouette of a girl with her fist raised, 1.9 m tall and painted purple. It was supported by a sign reading 'justicia' (Stengel Peña, 2023).

Feminist collectives took advantage of the empty roundabout on Av. Paseo de la Reforma to place this anti-monumenta. In late October 2020 the city authorities, under the administration of Claudia Sheinbaum (Mexico City's Head of Government 2018–2023 and President of Mexico since 2024) and with the support of the national government, removed the statue of Colón because it required extensive restoration. The authorities planned to replace the statue with a sculpture named Tlali, which means Tierra [Earth] in Náhuatl. The proposed installation depicted the head of an indigenous woman, designed by the Mexican artist Pedro Reyes and inspired by the monumental male heads of the Olmec culture. Feminist activists and academics immediately criticized this proposal, arguing that Olmecs spoke Mixe-Zoque, not Náhuatl, and using a Náhuatl name for a piece inspired by Olmec culture misrepresented indigenous heritage (Rozental, 2023). They also raised concerns that the authorities had commissioned a mestizo man to design a monument depicting an indigenous woman. Consequently, the authorities decided not to proceed with the project.

The city authorities argued that one anti-monumenta sculpture was already on Av. Juárez in front of the Alameda. Feminist groups had installed this anti-monumenta without official permission during the 2019 International Women's Day protests. The message on this anti-monumenta translates as:

> We demand a national gender alert. No more femicides.

However, the location of the anti-monumenta on Av. Juárez is not as prominent as the roundabout on Av. Paseo de la Reforma. The former was placed where a tree had previously been planted. The city authorities did not accept the installation of the second anti-monumenta on Av. Paseo de la Reforma (Rozental, 2023; Stengel Peña, 2023). However, they did announce that a special committee would be formed to decide the best solution for the empty glorieta.

The authorities removed the anti-monumenta from Av. Paseo de la Reforma multiple times, but activists kept reinstalling it despite barriers and metal fencing around the roundabout. Later the authorities suggested replacing the anti-monumenta with a replica of the Joven de Amajac, a pre-Hispanic statue of a young woman discovered by archaeologists in January 2021. This proposal was criticized by heritage experts who questioned the suitability of reproducing an archaeological artefact, sparking a wider debate on heritage authenticity (Rozental, 2023). Feminist collectives also opposed the proposal, arguing that the authorities were prioritizing heritage and monument concerns over urgent issues such as femicide and gender-based violence. The Amajac project did not proceed in the glorieta. Instead, the authorities placed a replica of the Amajac statue on its own pedestal on an adjacent traffic island on Av. Paseo de la Reforma, next to the anti-monumenta. The nearest metrobus [BRT—bus rapid transit] station was renamed Amajac, replacing its former name, Glorieta de Colón.

Rather than accepting official proposals, feminist activists have continued to reclaim the glorieta, which has undergone a gradual transformation over time. The site has featured various interventions, including the anti-monumenta, the *Jardín Somos Memoria* [Garden, we are Memory], an installation with mosaics naming missing women and victims of femicide, and the *Tendedero de Denuncias* [Clothesline of Denunciations], a temporary display inviting people to share accounts of gender-based

FIGURE 5 The anti-monumenta and the glorieta on Av. Paseo de la Reforma (credit: photo courtesy of Jesús Medina, October 2024)

violence anonymously. Together, the anti-monumenta and the glorieta have evolved into a dynamic counter-memorial, rich in symbolism and layered meanings, as shown in Figure 5. The glorieta has become a site where feminist activists continuously gather, organize performances and start significant marches.

Although the long-term presence of the anti-monumenta and the glorieta remains uncertain, it is noteworthy to recognize that their permanence would not signify a definitive victory over gender-based violence in Mexico. Moreover, the tactics implemented by feminists have inspired other movements. For example, in 2022, collectives searching for missing people created the 'Glorieta de las y los Desaparecidos' [Roundabout of the Disappeared Ones]. They placed this anti-monument on an empty roundabout, also on Av. Paseo de la Reforma, where an emblematic palm tree stood until early 2022. Groups searching for missing people and feminist activists have formed various collaborations, supporting one another during demonstrations or simply drawing inspiration from each other.

The tactics and repertoires used by feminist collectives also highlight a relative failure of López Obrador's and Sheinbaum's responses to feminist claims. The authorities called for respect towards Mexican history and heritage, as symbolized by the historic monuments. These official responses have not differed significantly from the approach adopted by politicians from other parties, such as the PRI or PAN. These reactions prompted feminists to express their dissatisfaction with female politicians from newer and alternative parties, such as MORENA.[28] Some feminists chose both to deface memorials and heritage sites and to establish and self-identify as anti-monumentas.

The process of installing and removing the anti-monumenta Vivas nos Queremos in the glorieta on Av. Paseo de la Reforma evokes the idea that what we term (anti-) monumentality in this case is also a 'cultural and political use of public monuments' (Drinot, 2009: 19). As Huyssen (2000: 37) puts it, 'memory, after all, can be no substitute for justice, and justice itself will inevitably be entangled in the unreliability of memory'. However, creating new anti-monumentas to remember femicides is also an act of social catharsis, which provides relief from feelings of anger, rage, loss and hope.[29]

Conclusion

By tracing the spatial and symbolic tactics of feminist mobilizations, I have argued that urban space is essential for social movements. The location of the Zócalo, the Alameda Central, including the Hemiciclo and Av. Paseo de la Reforma has favoured multiple protests. Feminist collectives have also leveraged the symbolic significance of these sites, employing diverse tactics including disruptive protests, marches, cultural demonstrations (e.g. *Ni Una Menos* performances, the *Tendedero de Denuncias*) and alternative memorials (e.g. anti-monumentas, the *Somos Memoria* garden). All these tactics have direct spatial and material implications for the city and resonate with Latin American scholarship on social movements and the role of space and distance during mobilizations (Davis, 1999). *Protests* take *place*—and *space* shapes *protest*.

Despite the authorities' efforts to mitigate what they label as vandalism and urban incivility, feminists have adapted and used protective barriers (e.g. metal fencing and hoardings) to spread their message. This article has shown that historic public spaces in Mexico City remain vital sites for protest, despite regeneration policies, surveillance and policing actions. These findings may challenge some claims that urban regulations have eroded the political function of public spaces in Mexico City (Martínez Ramírez, 2015; Rodríguez López, 2018). While surveillance and urban policy can certainly curtail protest, activists continue to subvert and contest these effects, prompting reflection on what constitutes the *political* in *urban space*, as various scholars have suggested (Castells, 1983; Davis, 1999; Harvey, 2003; Beveridge and Koch, 2019; Davis and Davey, 2023).

Feminists increasingly commemorate victims of gender violence by installing anti-monumentas. These tactics function as acts of remembrance and social catharsis.

28 Interview with a feminist activist and student of Gender Studies (19 July 2025).
29 Interview with a leader of the feminist collective Antimonumenta (6 December 2021).

Their efforts to deface existing monuments or erect anti-monuments provoke debates on the concept of monumentality (Huyssen, 2000). The rise of alternative sites of memory illustrates the evolving relationship between feminism, memory and politics (Hirsch, 2019; Jelin, 2021). In Mexico City, official discourses and policies on the Historic Centre and urban heritage have long focused on conserving buildings, monuments and sites from the past. However, heritage policies have left no room for creating grassroots monuments or alternative forms of remembrance, such as the anti-monumentas. These acts of remembering or monument creation can also contribute to redefining what *urban heritage* entails, moving beyond simplistic recognitions of official memorials and tangible and intangible heritage.

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