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Affective registers of displacement: Eviction and gentrification in post-earthquake Mexico City

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AFFECTIVE REGISTERS OF DISPLACEMENT: EVICTION AND GENTRIFICATION IN POST-EARTHQUAKE MEXICO CITY

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

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2022

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

AFFECTIVE REGISTERS OF DISPLACEMENT: EVICTION AND GENTRIFICATION IN POST-EARTHQUAKE MEXICO CITY

This dissertation contributes to understandings of the affective and emotional register of urban politics by analyzing how affective dynamics influence struggles over displacement in Mexico City amid rapid gentrification and in the wake of the 2017 earthquake. Drawing primarily on feminist and queer/cuir theory and trauma studies, I aim to show the relevance of an often-overlooked dimension of urban political struggles. This dissertation is based on data collected through ethnographic methods over the course of 2018-2021. The primary source of data is long-form semi-structured interviews, supported by participant observation in meetings, protests, and WhatsApp groups. The dissertation studies the following questions: What is the role of affect and emotion in political shifts? How does affect impact (intentionally or not) individuals and the collective agency of the marginalized? What are some emotional and affective tools for resisting or even fighting back against urban injustice like gentrification and displacement?

The first article explains the relationship between affect, trauma, and urban politics in the context of gentrification and natural disaster. In it I argue for the importance of pausing in the wake of disaster as new political imaginaries are forming: this chaotic moment is affectively intense and offers unique possibility for birthing new approaches to ongoing urban struggles. The second article, written in collaboration with Paula Soto from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa, examines eviction as both a gendered and racialized expulsion from the center city. In it, we discuss the effects of forced displacement on the mobility and immobility of racialized women, centering accessibility to the city, feelings of insecurity, and the emotional experiences of expulsion. The third article examines the emotional upheaval of an eviction in the personal life of a tenant as well as the ways it ripples into their social lives. I argue that shame is a disciplining force that isolates women tenants, turning them in on themselves, foreclosing collective action, and bringing about significant material costs as a result of decisions made in the intense and shameful moment of a set-out. I argue that this spatiality of shame can be inverted into a fragile pride, but a longer-lasting transformation occurs through diminishing the power of shame by taking the subject on a roundabout movement in relationships towards parts of the self that already hold personal value and pride.

With this work I hope to show that in the context of gentrification and eviction in Mexico City, the spatiality of the affective register plays a key role in the way that urban politics take form. I hope that this work has political reverberations in housing policy. The proposal in article 60 of the Mexico City constitution to set a distance limitation on evictions began to address the issue of expulsion, but was later stripped from the document. I hope work like this is helpful in the push for a return of that provision. I hope activists benefit from these findings about affective dynamics to strengthen movements, create the conditions for change, and counteract the affective imposition of the current oppressive paradigm of housing.

KEYWORDS: displacement, gentrification, crisis, affect, shame, emotion

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April 13, 2022

Date

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DEDICATION

For Mary, the tiger

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

> "We wanted, we needed to share our fear with another, the same that, we thought, no longer affected us. The fear that we had expelled, demanded to be recuperated in this manner: together, mixing in plural our feelings and affects. On the sidewalks, in the medians and in the parks, then, the people kept trembling, even when the land had left its movement in peace" (Monge, 2017)[1]

This epigraph speaks about the urban social atmosphere in the immediate aftermath of the 2017 Mexico City earthquake, but it could just as well speak to the feelings that follow a forced eviction in a neighborhood poised to gentrify.

This dissertation carves out a space for studying gentrification-based displacement in its affective register: the dimension of experience that is sensorial and embodied, where energy circulates in peculiar and seemingly alchemical ways, coloring other registers of experience like logic and conscious thought. Affect is inseparable from emotion but they are not one and the same. Putting the affective register at the heart, I center what is often swept to the periphery of importance when decisions about the city are being made: feelings of shame, emotional attachments, subtle feelings, intuition, shock responses, place-based longing, affects of surprise, historical feelings, cultural investment in place, and personal and collective trauma.

The purpose is to engage a different register of these processes not only to understand how the affective political landscape plays a role in facilitating dispossession, but also to

[1] My translation from the original Spanish, "Queríamos, necesitábamos compartir con alguien más nuestro temor, ese mismo que, pensábamos, ya no nos afectaba. El miedo que habíamos extraviado, demandaba ser recuperado de este modo: juntos, mezclando en plural nuestros sentires y afectos. En las banquetas, camellones y parques, entonces, la población siguió temblando, aún cuando la tierra había dejado en paz su movimiento."

complicate (or dislodge?) the naturalized and meritocratic framework that presides over thought about rights to space in the city (Bhandar, 2018; Blomley, 2004; Dow, 2015; Gibson-Graham, 2006). The erosion of access to the city through gentrification has primarily been contested through the assertion of the abstract right to the city (Attoh, 2011; Lefebvre, 1968; Mitchell, 2003), which has had its share of criticism (Blomley, 2016; Huse, 2014; Muñoz, 2018). The economic logic of meritocracy is a seductive one; after all, it takes resources to build and maintain buildings, and it would seem only fair that those who pay for urban space should be able to have it.

1.1 Why study displacement through affect and emotion?

Although I have already jumped into affect, I'd like to offer the sketch of a definition for this term. Affect is a nonrepresentational milieu that is not organized or stratified into thought, representation, or politics. It is a "field […] already always operative upon us and within us" (Ruddick, 2010, p. 26). It betrays "the body as a site of struggle" (Ibid., 38) and contains "forces of the future" (Quoting Deleuze, Ibid., 38) because affect encompasses the ways our bodies react to external stimuli (Sedgwick et al., 1995). It shapes how we adopt attachments to people, to objects, and to ideas (Berlant, 2011). Like a tick turning towards the sunlight, affect is the field of cues from our environment that orient us towards, away, outward or inward. It is the connection that entangles our emotions. But it is not a thing. Affect is emergent. It is the presence or absence of engagement or detachment. Affect, as the alchemical field between people and their environments, shapes interaction, capacitating some to catalyze activity and hindering others, flooding an encounter with inertia.

What does this have to do with gentrification, displacement, and dispossession? According to Saskia Sassen, "When we confront today's range of transformations—rising inequality, rising poverty, rising government debt—the usual tools to interpret them are out of date" (Sassen, 2014, p. 7). The right to the city does not resolve the obvious injustice going on around the world as it comes to accessing valued urban spaces. Sassen explains that the idea of rising up against the oppressor is not a simple thing to do when the oppressor is increasingly a decentralized abstract system. Contending that what is going on can no longer be understood according to a gradient of injustice and mere abuse of rights, Sassen's solution is to go back to the ground of issues, describing what is happening in cities with new terminology and through new frameworks. Her findings are that what we are living through abides by a logic of expulsion: a complete disregard for rights and the removal of anything or anyone who inconveniences processes of accumulation (Sassen, 2014). Likewise, and more specific to the case of Mexico City, activists in the Juarez neighborhood have argued that gentrification is too soft of a word to describe what is happening in the city. Etymologically related to gentiles and gentleness, they contend it euphemizes violence. Rather, they prefer *blanqueamiento por despojo*, or "whitening by dispossession" (Gaytán Santiago, 2019) – referring not only to the whitewashing of facades and cleanup of public spaces, but to the racial shift in inhabitants to lighter skin tones. The other side of this coin, they argue, is the expulsion of racialized residents to dirty, abandoned neighborhoods: *anegramiento, oscuramiento, empuercamiento.*[2]

[2] Source: group discussion on the topic of terminology at a meeting of the 06600 Plataforma Vecinal de la Colonia Juarez, August, 2017

What Sassen and Mexico City activists are getting at is that the logics that overarch struggles for space in the city are fraying. I argue that in their fray, they reveal their unacknowledged affective workings and underpinnings, which have rarely been the focus of study. They reveal an affective foundation only delicately pinned in place, and held together through other affective mechanisms running up through the surface armature. To clarify what I mean, consider the idea that a tenant has at her disposal a number of democratic tools to defend herself against eviction: official guidelines about notification, and legal processes to follow if she is notified she will be evicted, including expropriation and *amparos* (a preventative mechanism of protection under Mexican law that keeps a law from being executed against a person before it happens). This notion of having tools and rights rests tenuously on an affective attachment to the idea that democracy and justice govern the 21st century city. The moment that affective attachment toward democratic protections is weakened or breaks, the tools available to the tenant under that premise of democracy disappear as well, and the tenant can view themselves in naked exposure to corrupt seizure of their housing. Ignoring that affective foundation naturalizes the framework built upon it, an oversight that does a disservice to the complexity of social, economic, cultural, and material workings of gentrification and displacement, and to the possibility of imagining and organizing an effective political resistance. Paying attention to the affective register of urban space and the affective economies it operates with (Ahmed, 2004) offers one approach (of many) for shaking loose this violent paradigm, exposing the affective glue that holds the structure together in one (semi)coherent whole.

The present research finds affinity with Sassen and the Juarez neighborhood activists by focusing on the experiences of displacement as it is lived. If the structure that

disorganizes life on the ground is challenged, what different ways of viewing space might arise? What different kinds of ledger boards of deservingness might emerge? What kinds of politics for combatting injustice might be conceivable? What exit strategies might be revealed? How might it force city inhabitants to look sideways at their cities (Pile & Kingsbury, 2014, p. xix; Žižek, 2009)? How might the psyche and the heart be recognized as still overlooked sites of power dynamics (Fanon, 2008; Pile & Kingsbury, 2014, p. 6) in the context of the city?

1.2 Feminist, queer, cuir inspirations

Taking a deep dive into the affective registers of urban subjectivity in the context of displacement to understand how agency is eroded and regained, how collectivities are sustained at the level of the spirit is a feminist, queer, cuir approach to studying the city. I am inspired by research that challenges the assumed agency of urban subjects to have any chance against the forces of "imperialist, white-supremacist, capitalist [heterosexist] patriarchy" (hooks, 1984, p. xv). Work that examines how this hegemonic force operates from within us and between us inspires me. From Bastia, who argues women act politically in unrecognized political registers and who challenges the categories of urban resistance posited by Lefebvre (and in continued use fifty years later) (Bastia, 2017) to Muñoz who contends that the right to the city is a fool's errand unless it begins in the generally overlooked space of the home (Muñoz, 2017), or Jesse Proudfoot who exposes psychoanalytic undercurrents to urban policy (Proudfoot, 2017) in the revanchist city (Smith, 1996) and David Seitz, who studies gentrification through the experience of

children (Seitz, 2019), there is much to learn from what at first brush may seem like 'apolitical' spaces and activities in the city.

The epigraph of this document describes a lingering tremble in the wake of an earthquake. The violence of dispossession is not inert. It brings a wave of feeling that can carry a person into resistance and political activism for transformation or it can crush them, but this is not acknowledged by urban housing policy. To begin in relationality, in the feelings of displacement, holds a grain of hope that we might be able to feel our way outwards from the impasse of the legal mechanisms failing residents. This notion – of conjuring a path in the unknown – is one that is echoed in the writings of Mexican public intellectual Carlos Monsiváis, who observes Mexican citizens' mutual encounter in the unknown, a coming together that grows into unexpectedly powerful democratic civic action in the wake of the 1985 earthquake. As Judith Sierra-Rivera contends, Monsiváis describes a stumbling to find an 'us/we' and feeling the way together toward the otherwise, saying "'we' need to change *las cosas* even while knowing that it is an impossible task" (Sierra-Rivera, 2018, p. 37). These are affect politics par excellence, a proven brilliance of Mexican affective practices in the midst of crisis (Secor & Linz, 2017).

1.3 The project

The research for this project began with a focus on the 2017 earthquake as a "crisis event" that interrupted the "crisis ordinary" – or ongoing crisis – also recognized as slow emergency (B. Anderson et al., 2020), slow violence (Kern, 2015; Nixon, 2011; O'Lear, 2021), but importantly, the erosion of ability to make a life – of gentrification, using the framework of crisis developed in Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (Berlant, 2011). In

Berlant's framework, affect is most operative in moments of *impasse*, when the scripts of daily life unravel and subjects are left wandering in search of how to navigate the uncertain. Spectacular moments of crisis like natural disaster are clear impasses - moments of uncertainty. But Berlant argues that although we assume we know the scripts, every moment of the present is really an impasse – full of unpredictable outcomes. We close it down by following scripts, but Berlant argues that there are more opportunities than we think to step out of our seeming fates, if only we attune ourselves to affective stimuli through proprioception (awareness of the body in space). Examining the crisis ordinary as it was disturbed by a crisis event opened a window into the heightened circulation of affect. This is a crutch. Seeing it first through the spectacle of the earthquake ideally helps to sensitize one to see it amid the ordinary.

1.4 Fieldwork

I had conducted preliminary fieldwork in Mexico City in the summers of 2016 and 2017, laying the groundwork for understanding the landscape of gentrification and resistance in the city. I sought out groups posting about gentrification on Facebook and Twitter, contacted them, attended their events, sat in on conversations when it was okay for me to do so, began to make contacts and observe what activists said about other groups, about public policy, about supportive and antagonistic public officials. I generally did a lot of listening. I saw that many academics come through these groups, and I listened to how people talked about those academics, I observed how they spoke about the issues and about the people involved, and I thought about the ethics of my work. I realized it was very important for my own ethics to spend an extended time there getting a deeper

understanding of what was happening. I saw how easy it could be to come away from brief encounters with this struggle over urban space with misunderstood interpretations. I saw the way that people mistrusted the commitment of academics who come in and leave – how could they trust them to tell these complicated stories? I don't have an answer for that. I also don't know how they could tell these stories with integrity.

However, it takes funding to stay somewhere for extended periods. This is not something that fits well into the structure of the 21st century academy. I was lucky and privileged to get two years and six months of funding to do my research (COVID-19 broke into a year and two months of that). I wish it weren't so difficult to get that kind of support. Even having lived in Mexico a significant amount of time before doing research, I learned so much by being there so long – my initial assumptions were overwritten more than once, especially about the understandings I got in my first contact with activists working on gentrification. I am so lucky to have been able to stay long enough to gain new perspectives to attenuate my initial ones. But meanwhile, I think it is important especially as an R1 university in the global north, to think about how we support students to do work that learns from their own work. How could we structure this better into graduate studies? It takes time and multiple forms of exposure to the dynamics of place to gain deep knowledge of how things work there. Additionally, the work produced has an unbalanced amount of power when published in English about non-English speaking other places. This is reckless. This is colonial. This continues to reinforce uneven geographies of power in knowledge production. How many misguided articles are published in English about other parts of the world?

Everything I learned in 2016 and 2017 was valuable to my understanding of what it meant when the earthquake struck in 2017. I took note of how people displaced by this disaster were imagined differently in the media and public realm: they were victims of disaster. They were the center of media attention and public policy. Funds for building repair, psychological treatment services, donations of food and supplies. This is not how victims of eviction are treated, but some of the experiences they go through resonate very deeply. When this disaster happened, I revised my research proposal to study the earthquake and gentrification-based displacement alongside one another, using trauma studies and affect theory. I returned to Mexico City in August 2018, in time for the first anniversary of the earthquake. That fall, I was in Mexico City from August – October, and again for a little more than a month in December. I attended anniversary events on and around September 19. I attended a long presentation of young people who volunteered in clean-up and rescue efforts, where they spoke about what motivated them to participate (*Generac19n*, n.d.). I attended the memorial at Álvaro Obregón 286, where a building fell and 49 lives were lost. I attended a presentation by the Mexican Psychoanalytic Society, where they spoke about the services they provided to people in the wake of the disaster, what they believed kept people going at that time, and what issues they saw come up for victims as well as how it felt to attend to people in the midst of a disaster you are also living through as a professional. When I interviewed people, I primarily asked them about their experiences of the earthquake. I listened to their stories about the day it happened. I did not know how important they would be until I began interviewing people about eviction, and heard some of the same feelings coming through, but against a different background: one

of abandonment by the city, and the personal shame of failing in a meritocratic and unjust system.

When I returned for fieldwork in September 2019, I brought my focus to eviction. I spent extended periods of time with anti-displacement activists, learning from them about how displacement happens, what the strategies are for preventing it, how they work with tenants to file the complicated paperwork to attempt to stay, how they enlist pro-bono lawyers to help with cases, and shadowed them in their group meetings as well as their meetings with public officials, where they attempted to alert them to the problem and work together toward solutions. There were many meetings that they were invited to by the Secretary of Development and Housing (*Secretaría de desarrollo y la vivienda)* more commonly known as SEDUVI, where it seems they'd gained the ear of a like-minded public official who also had a vision for protected affordable housing in the Centro Histórico. I watched how they used protest, meetings, and working through the system to try honorably to remain in their housing. After a couple of months of spending time with them and getting to know one another, talking about my research when they asked, and participating, I began to ask about interviews. I conducted the majority of the rest of my interviews in November and December of 2019, and February of 2020.

1.5 The articles

What did the collected data show? What reading across the three chapters speaks to is the importance of the affective forces circulating through urban spaces as social, economic, and spatial dramas play out. Feeling the way towards politics may have something to offer a political movement against displacement. In the articles that follow, I examine the

affective shift of the 2017 earthquake, frame eviction in a different logic, and explore one of the mechanisms that produces an affective change within a tenant.

Article one (chapter 2), "Where crises converge: the affective register of displacement in Mexico City's post-earthquake gentrification" examines the convergence of the crisis event with the crisis ordinary in the scene of gentrification after the 2017 Mexico City earthquake. It explores the process of breaking away from the cruel holds of out-of-date paradigms, demonstrating how a move away requires developing a different sensorial orientation. The register of affect is where these sensorial reorientations take place. Drawing on trauma studies and affect theory, I show how in the disaster – in that moment of intensity, the historical linkage to the 1985 earthquake opened a portal to the affective atmospheres of 32 years earlier: a moment in time when Mexicans were reminded of their power as a collective. This portal, I propose, tested the trustworthiness of attachments that structured lives in the pre-earthquake crisis ordinary. As the crisis exposed weaknesses in those scripts of life, I show how cultural objects like songs and video held the uncomfortable crisis open in an affective impasse, preventing quick closure and returns to new scripts of life and politics. I argue that this is an important step in exiting paradigms and forming new ones, because it is where old attachments are mourned and released, and where new affective forces gather momentum. In this crisis in Mexico City, the collective trauma of 1985 plays a role in reorganizing affective attachments in 2017, and this case shows how trauma, as a return of affect, can also bring about positive change: alongside the feelings of devastation were feelings of hope that came from the monumentality that collective organizing after the 1985 disaster channeled. The intrusion of these powerful feelings from 32 years earlier disrupted the affective landscape of 2017 and inspired new

scripts and new relationships between people. Trauma formed an affect portal: the apostrophe, the look outward from the situation is the origin of affective information about how to change the situation, about how to respond/react differently, with a different vibration. The familiar patterns of making-do were thrown out, at least for a time. People looked at each other and saw something different. The point in talking about all this is that although the impasse that emerged through the earthquake in Mexico City disrupted everything in an exaggerated degree, dynamics present in the crisis ordinary can bring about an affective impasse. Impasses of varying extensions can be conjured through practices of attuning to the affectivity of the ongoing impasse of every passing present moment.

The second article (chapter 3), "Dreaming of staying: Experiences of women facing eviction in Mexico City" is the English translation of "Soñar con quedarse: Experiencias de mujeres frente al desalojo en la ciudad de México", which I co-authored with Paula Soto Villagrán of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa. This article began as a chapter I wrote for an edited collection about mobility, care, and gender in Mexico City that Paula was organizing, but we transformed it into an article for the special issue, "The city, housing, and gender from an inclusive and intersectional perspective" ("Ciudad, vivienda y género desde una mirada incluyente e interseccional") of *Revista INVI*. For those unfamiliar, *Revista INVI* is a prominent Latin American journal focused on urban studies and housing, with an international scope. *Revista INVI* publishes articles in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, most commonly in two languages side-by-side. Accordingly, this article will be published in English and Spanish side-by-side.

This manuscript has come to its present state in a collaborative way. I consulted Paula as a mentor in the early stages of the draft and she suggested some of the articles that are included in the final reference list, especially the work on how to theorize the city from and for Latin America. I am very grateful to her for the suggestion that I read Iturra's piece about the bounds of the home, which played an important role in shaping the argument. I developed the argument and empirical sections based on my dissertation research. I first wrote the chapter in English, then translated it, revised it in its chapter form, and then as we began to transform the chapter into an article in fall 2021, Paula and I both revised the structure and sections. Her contributions help it to speak more clearly to the theme of intersectionality for the special issue, rooting the text in important population reports in the early sections and adding analysis in both the early sections as well as the section about banishment, tying the conversation about racism and sexism in eviction more closely to the concept of intersectionality.

Article two (chapter 3) examines the emotional life of eviction, exploring how people – racialized women in particular – face the realities of losing home in the city and embarking on new patterns of mobility in the periphery. Following the words of Juarez activists, it demonstrates the texture of whitening by dispossession. We argue that eviction functions as racialized and gendered banishment using the terms from De Verteuil: *involuntary immobility* (entrapment), *involuntary mobility* (displacement), and *voluntary immobility* (remaining/staying put) to talk about the ways people are forced to stay where they are or are forced to move away, but how difficult it is for them to remain where they choose (De Verteuil, 2011). As the article studies the lived experience of eviction, it also discusses the closure that women face when they wish to remain. We critically engage with

literatures to show how the heavy burdens placed on evicted women's shoulders are a strategic convenience. The collateral damage of gentrification is absorbed as individual burdens by particular people – specifically, racialized women, who not only become invisible in the periphery, but whose contribution to urban spaces they were expelled from goes unrecognized. In this article, we argue for recognition of their contributions and of the burden they carry, and critique the way that heaping burdens on them conveniently erases the social costs of gentrification.

The third article (chapter 4), "Shame geographies of forced eviction in Mexico City" analyzes the spatialities forged by shame in an eviction: the ways that people turn in upon themselves and away from one another. In doing so, it explores the mechanisms that produce this affective move, and the effect it has on their agentic capacities. I use the definition of shame that comes from Sylvan Tomkins' theories on affect: for Tomkins, shame is a turn inward in the encounter with something that is strange (Sedgwick et al., 1995). Eviction, I posit, is the making strange of something familiar (home). Using this definition not based in morality, I discuss the spatiality of shame, the way that it weighs down material objects when they are sitting on the sidewalk in a set-out, and the way that relationships play a role in returning a person to their agency by helping them escape the magnetic pull of the shame-pride dyad (a polar relationship that can fixate them on the source of shame). Looking to queer theory, teoría cuir and comunitarian Latin American Feminisms, I argue that affirming *alternate* paradigms of worthiness is an effective and affective strategy to countering the decapacitating effects of shame.

Together these articles speak to the goings-on in the affective register, and the ways that affect colors what takes place on material, linguistic, and political planes of experience.

My hope is that these goings on help to reveal how affective dynamics are both exploited as powerful tools to use against marginalized urban residents, but also how they can be picked up as tools of resistance.

CHAPTER 2. WHERE CRISES CONVERGE: THE AFFECTIVE REGISTER OF DISPLACEMENT IN MEXICO CITY'S POST-EARTHQUAKE GENTRIFICATION[3]

2.1 Abstract

Affect theory suggests that imagining different futures for cities begins by feeling the present differently. This article considers the political potential of the affective register in the context of gentrifying Mexico City, where the 2017 earthquake, as a crisis-event, burst onto the ongoing crisis-ordinary of gentrification-based displacement. I argue that this convergence of crises opened an affective impasse, or a time and space lived in excess of predictability. This affective impasse both interrupted business-as-usual gentrification and channeled historical affects across 32 years from the 1985 earthquake, and in turn generated new political energies. Informed by affect theory and trauma studies, I use qualitative data to invite the reader into the impasse and observe its affective dynamics. The empirical sections describe the entry points to the impasse, the affective activities that subjects engage in there, and the role of historical trauma in reshaping the atmospheres that emerge from this space. The resulting research investigates how affective ways of navigating an impasse offer the potential to reshape ongoing struggles against displacement. This builds on recent work in urban geography that uses psychoanalysis and affect theory to understand gentrification's complexities, contradictions, and ambivalences.

Keywords: affect, displacement, earthquake, gentrification, Mexico City, trauma, eviction

[3] Linz, J. (2021). Where crises converge: The affective register of displacement in Mexico City's post-earthquake gentrification. *cultural geographies*, *28*(2), 285–300. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474021993418

2.2 Introduction: A crisis-event in the midst of a crisis-ordinary

The arrival of an earthquake is abrupt, while its stay is elongated. It barges in on routine, upending normal patterns for weeks. When the September 19, 2017 earthquake shook Mexico City, communication networks became patchy or went dark. The electricity went out in many parts of town. Amid halted metro service and delayed buses, people clogged the streets as they attempted to make their way to loved ones. People walked for hours. Food and drink were exchanged without charge, rides offered, materials given away, bikes left unlocked in public spaces. People left their jobs and swarmed to collapse sites, arriving in business attire, bike helmets, tennis shoes, carrying whatever tools they could rummage. Regular demands were abandoned. Many people worked at collapse sites through the night and into the next days and weeks. They took turns sleeping or went without rest for extended periods. After a week, the smell of bodies emanating from the forensics units at collapse sites began to permeate entire rescue camps, drifting throughout the areas where volunteers busily maintained a suspended city. Those who couldn't fit at the rescue sites brought food for volunteers, coordinated logistics from afar, or transferred goods between ad-hoc collection centers (*centros de acopio*) and collapse sites. The usually lively restaurants, small businesses, and bars were closed or functioned for relief efforts. For weeks on end, there was little semblance to business-as-usual.

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This was not the first-time life was interrupted by an earthquake in Mexico City. In 1985 a devastating earthquake shook the capital, damaging thousands of buildings,

collapsing more than 400 completely, and taking the lives of roughly 10,000 people[4]. That earthquake would mark the city: it catalyzed already existing social movements[5] and spurred democratic reforms that led to the end of decades-long one-party rule in Mexico (M. Anderson, 2011). Its force frightened a great number of residents, who abandoned central areas for the more stable land in the suburbs and nearby cities. Thus, while the 1985 earthquake sparked democratic social movements it also led to drastic disinvestment in the central city and set up formerly wealthy neighborhoods for a period of decline, laying the groundwork for the gentrification that is visible today (Davis, 2015).

Mexico City is never free from the threats of natural disaster: its lakebed soil ripples when the four tectonic plates that meet in Mexico settle and buckle. With four tiny earthquakes per day here, the city sinks unevenly at a rate of roughly 30 centimeters annually. Despite this constant movement large earthquakes are infrequent, and against all odds the one in 2017 came on the same date as 1985's disaster: September 19.

I contend that the 2017 earthquake, as a crisis-event, burst onto an ongoing crisis-ordinary[6] of gentrification in Mexico City, unraveling normalized everyday injustices of housing development in central areas. This intrusion threw the city into what Lauren Berlant terms an *impasse,* or the recognition of a stalemate where business-as-usual cannot continue. An impasse is an uncertain moment shaped by affective dynamics and lived in

[4] This figure is disputed, and ranges from 5,000-50,000. 10,000 is a commonly cited number.
[5] For a brilliant explanation of the transition from 'el pueblo' to 'la sociedad civil' in Mexico after the 1985 earthquake, see A. Leal Martínez, 'De pueblo a sociedad civil: el discurso político después del sismo de 1985', *Revista mexicana de sociología* LXXVI (2014), pp. 441–469
[6] Pulling from Berlant's *Cruel Optimism,* I counterpose the crisis-ordinary with the crisis-event: the crisis-ordinary is the slow, erosive effect of living under conditions that harm you. It is a condition under which many people survive, but do not flourish.

excess of predictability: turbulence in perceived order.[7] It is a "stretch of time that is being sensed and shaped" as it happens (Berlant, 2011, p. 199).

The impasse forged by the 2017 earthquake frames the crisis-ordinary of gentrification in affective terms. I understand affect as that which is immanent to the discursive and corporeal, which may well be excessive and escape articulation, yet which plays very real roles in shaping sensation, interest, attention, attachment, and feeling (Ahmed, 2010; Massumi, 2002; Sedgwick et al., 1995). The affective encompasses not only the emotional, but the sensory: the chalky feel of the dust, the wet smell of rubble under the rain, the creaking sound of buildings as they shift and fall, the whirr from above of hovering drones or the beat of a cumbia wafting out from speakers in an improvised kitchen. Affective, sensorial cues like these stick out in a crisis-event but they also shape daily life less obviously during ordinary times. I study the affectivity of this impasse using the language of *attachments*, *orientations*, and *stickiness* from Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant. This lexicon brings the sensorial register of urban politics to the fore, a register that undergirds political action. In the exceptional time following an earthquake, preparation, improvisation, and habit mold the contents of this register.

The impasse of 2017 thus draws attention to the sensorial, but this is not to say that it erases the historical. Rather, I argue that this impasse revives collective traumas from 1985, creating a contact zone between two crisis-events that invites affects originating 32 years earlier into the contemporary moment. These affects animate the emergence of political feelings that break with the assumptions and coping strategies of a pre-earthquake

[7] For more about the related notion of turbulence, see T. Cresswell and C. Martin, 'On Turbulence: Entanglements of Disorder and Order on a Devon Beach, *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* CIII (2012), pp. 516–529

crisis-ordinary. The affective experiences described below, of displacement-by-earthquake and displacement-by-eviction, demonstrate the ways that violent experiences come to inflect one another in temporal and spatial proximity. I view them alongside one another to examine how their coincidence in 2017 Mexico City changes political atmospheres; I observe that they resonate through one another in such a way as to bring into relief the affective registers that generally hum in the background. This resonance presents alternative ways of understanding the crisis-ordinary of gentrification and displacement; it offers ways of detaching from what Berlant calls "cruel attachments:" logics and loyalties that keep people grinding towards unreachable objects against their own best interests (Berlant, 2011).

To present a snapshot of the affective register at this juncture in Mexico City, I draw from ten months of fieldwork, spread over 2017-2020. To study affect, I approach the subject matter from a number of angles including interviews, participant observation, and analysis of cultural objects. I interviewed residents in the Centro and nearby neighborhoods, activists working against displacement, nonprofit representatives, earthquake survivors, and one rescuer. I observed and participated in activist meetings, neighborhood assemblies, public events around the anniversaries of the earthquake, academic panels, social media, and several ongoing WhatsApp group chats. These hours of participant observation, along with literature and film about the earthquake, contextualize the enunciations of speakers in this article. Affect is generally understood to be in excess of language, so speech may seem a strange place to look for it. However, the impossibility of fully communicating feeling is the very driver of much verbal expression, which renews itself in pursuit of what escapes it (Kingsbury & Secor, 2021), making

language a very appropriate place to search for affect. I ask about feelings, sensations, and affects in interviews, coupling analysis of this spoken data with observations of expression and analysis of cultural objects. My goal is to glimpse affect's traces in this exceptional moment to see how it plays a role in gentrification and influences the stylings of urban politics against displacement.

My interest in the affective register of gentrification finds affinity with a small body of literature that uses psychoanalysis and affect theory to tease out gentrification's complexities, contradictions, and ambivalences. In the words of David Seitz, a focus on the psychic and affective registers "supplements rather than supplants" Marxist research on the political economy of gentrification (Seitz, 2019) by producing granular accounts of how abstract processes take shape at the level of the unconscious and the transpersonal. Studies on topics such as the relationships between neighborhood residents and gentrifiers (Butcher & Dickens, 2016), the composition of movements to resist displacement (Lancione, 2017), the psychic structures that underlie urban policy (Proudfoot, 2017), the precarity felt by residents in novel housing initiatives(Harris et al., 2019), the psychic agency of children in a gentrifying neighborhood(Seitz, 2019), and the cruel optimism embedded in discourses of social mix (Addie & Fraser, n.d.) give texture to how gentrification and displacement play out at the level of the subject: how they shape subjects, but also how psychic processes shape gentrification and displacement. Analysis of dynamics in psychic and affective registers – the slippery emotions that quicken the process, the entanglements between people that slow it or complicate it, the irrational basis for policy and its inadvertent outcomes – exposes the excesses and incongruities of gentrification, revealing inconsistencies and the struggle to contain them. In doing so, this

emerging body of work offers hope for thinking new ways out, through, and around the violence of gentrification.[8]

In what follows, I begin by discussing what an affective approach to understanding gentrification and earthquakes could offer to those resisting ongoing displacement. I go on to explain how I see the 2017 earthquake converging with gentrification-based evictions to conjure an impasse that both interrupts business-as-usual gentrification and channels historical affects across 32 years, bringing 1985 face to face with 2017. I follow this with three sections that invite the reader into the feelings and sensations that circulate in this impasse. In the first section, I describe the atmosphere of the earthquake's arrival, aftermath, and the resonance between experiences of living through the earthquake and living through an eviction; in the second section, I linger with three cultural items that return residents to the moment of the 2017 earthquake, bringing it back to life in different ways; and in the third section, I inflect these sentiments with the personal, familial, and cultural memory from the historic 1985 earthquake. I demonstrate how the collection of sensations and orientations mark how subjects caught in an impasse make do, reorganize their attachments, and summon adjacent maneuvers that change the grounds for negotiating

[8] N.B. this work builds on the important contributions to urban geography and urban theory made by feminists and postcolonial thinkers. See L. Bondi and D. Rose, 'Constructing gender, constructing the urban: A review of Anglo-American feminist urban geography', *Gender, Place & Culture* X (2003), pp. 229–245; J. Davidson, L. Bondi and M. Smith (eds.), *Emotional geographies* (London New York, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016); L. Kern, 'Rhythms of gentrification: eventfulness and slow violence in a happening neighbourhood', *cultural geographies* (2015), p. 1474474015591489; L. Kern and H. McLean, 'Undecidability and the Urban: Feminist Pathways Through Urban Political Economy', *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* XVI (2017), pp. 405–426; A. Leal Martínez, 'Peligro, proximidad y diferencia: negociar fronteras en el Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México' (2007), p. 12; A. Roy, 'The 21st-Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory', Regional Studies XLIII (2009), pp. 819–830; K. Brickell, M. Fernández Arrigoitia and A. Vasudevan (eds.), '*Geographies of Forced Eviction: Dispossession, Violence, Resistance'* (London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), pp. 1–23; A. Elliott-Cooper, P. Hubbard and L. Lees, 'Moving beyond Marcuse: Gentrification, displacement and the violence of un-homing', *Progress in Human Geography* (2019), pp. 1–18

space in the city. These sections focus on the affects that are called forth by the earthquake and then linger in the aftermath to inflect the atmosphere of gentrification going forward. I conclude with thoughts on how attending to affect makes room for politics in an impasse: in other words, what political possibility may be present in a seeming dead end.

2.3 Gentrification in Mexico City as crisis-ordinary

In Mexico City, gentrification has slowly churned through the central neighborhoods, attracting investment to areas that the 1985 earthquake ravished and which withered in the wake of the debt crises of the 1980s and 1990s. To address this abandonment and attract both tourists and middle-to-upper-class residents, in 2001 the *Programa de Rescate* (Rescue Program) was established that would facilitate private investment in the *Centro Histórico* (Historic Downtown) (Carrión, 2005; Díaz Parra & Salinas Arreortua, 2016; Leal Martínez, 2016b; Salinas Arreortua, 2014). It was successful: 2000-2010 is notoriously described as the decade in which Carlos Slim bought the Centro for tourists. During the same period, the government attempted a course correction on development with two initiatives: Bando 2 and Norma 26. These initiatives were to foster the construction of social housing in the central city, but their loopholes were many. They led not to the rebalancing of the low-income housing market, but to a surge in middle class and luxury housing in inner neighborhoods (Olivera & Delgadillo, 2014). This brought further speculation to areas that had been damaged and depopulated by the 1985 earthquake, threatening residents who had made homes among the ruins in neighborhoods like Juárez, Centro, and Roma.

In recent years, a creeping style of gentrification has changed the face of these neighborhoods, drawing back the sons and daughters of families that moved away in 1985, Mexicans from other parts of the country, and foreigners from Latin America, the US and Europe. Many are young, educated, artists, queer, hipsters. They come to Mexico City for professional opportunity, for freedom from judgment, community, central locations, and for both elite and bohemian counter-cultural atmospheres. This influx of outsiders has marked the most gentrified neighborhoods in recent years (Condesa, Roma, and Juárez). When the 2017 earthquake hit, housing markets there were becoming saturated, their inflamed rents escalating rates in nearby areas including Centro, Guerrero, San Rafael, Santa Maria la Ribera, and Narvarte.

As the scope of gentrification extended beyond the initial bubble in the lead-up to the 2017 earthquake, neighborhood anti-gentrification organizing was also spreading into new neighborhoods and a web of resistance was beginning to appear, centered on a strategy of identifying predatory speculation, amplifying awareness of the cultural facets of gentrification, and capacitating tenants to organize themselves within their buildings to resist displacement. At this time the uneven landscape of power was apparent. Despite the growing popular mobilization, it seemed there would be little chance of tenants prevailing against real estate interests. Strategic but limited interventions on gentrification's effects looked to be the most promising approach to resisting something so formidable as real estate interests in a global city.

Despite this feeling of closure, it is important to remember that the present moment is *always* something of a situation: an unclear improvisation that could have many outcomes (Berlant, 2011). Reflecting on the time leading up to the earthquake, people

describe the hopelessness of realizing they were playing in a rigged game. The earthquake validated this sentiment: as it laid bare the depths of corruption in the permitting offices and construction industry, so too did it expose the hypocrisy of official pathways for protecting housing rights (Pskowski, 2017). Crisis-events like a natural disaster force a reminder that the situation is open: in 2017 the earthquake threw the background circumstances of gentrification into relief, highlighting the cruel logics circumscribing anti-gentrification activism. Viewing this situation as an impasse offers a lesson: maintaining hope for progress in an entrenched paradigm is a cruel fantasy, and an exit requires introducing something unfamiliar. I turn to affect theory to understand the dynamics of engaging with the unfamiliar in an impasse and for insight on how to conjure an exit into being.

An impasse bursts with affect; it is both a place and a moment that lacks a clear narrative thread – it is filled with such an *excess* of meanings that signification inverts into chaos. When an impasse settles over a scene, the usually taken-for-granted background comes to life. To examine the background requires a sensorial relation to surroundings and encounters: paying attention to affects, feelings, and sensations is necessary for attuning to that which one is accustomed to overlook. In this way the impasse is an affective contact zone where people are touched by what they usually hold at a distance. Here it becomes clear that the usual scripts no longer hold off the openness of a situation unfolding otherwise. In this space, attachments to trusted scripts are strained and break. New scripts swirl around the subjects of an impasse, and with newly freed allegiances they may grasp at some of them. This is a creative but indifferent space, where strange bedfellows introduce themselves, and narratives might take a turn.

Berlant calls an impasse a space of dithering because what is required for making changes is activity that seems to make no advance. Dithering begins to shift the field of objects and signifiers, stirring changes and opening a space out of which a path might plow forward. Fitful movement like this leads to new signification. It is here that the quiet work of political reconfiguration happens, where other fantasies develop and where the search for a new stability takes place. Here is where the ground for politics stirs. However, moving forward hinges on *using what is laying around* in this paradox of everything/nothing. In other words, the excess – affect – is the key for making movement. Experimenting with dubious tools to make openings is the artistry of an impasse (Linz & Secor, 2021a).

2.4 Getting into an impasse: contending with rupturing attachments

It's 10pm on September 19, 2018, anniversary of the 2017 earthquake in Mexico City. The rain-soaked candles take a moment to re-light at the collapsed building site on Álvaro Obregón 286 in the Roma neighborhood, where 45 people perished under rubble one year prior. I'm speaking with a survivor and two rescuers. The rescuers are talking about the rescue camp with the survivor, who is drinking up their stories. "Do you want to know what the rubble pile smelled like?" One of the rescuers asks me. He hands me a face mask and tells me to see if I can sense two smells. I pull the strap over my head and breathe in deeply. I just smell rubber: the soft but pungent kind of odor that reminds me of a new car. But I can't smell anything else. The other rescuer takes the mask and holds it to his face. "I can just smell it a little," he says. It's been a whole year, I think. I ask what smell we're looking for. The first rescuer looks at me seriously and says: "Death" He pauses

before he goes on, “You know, volunteers would show up, all excited to be the hero, wearing their boots, they’ve got their tools… They’d climb the ladder and when they got to the top, they’d catch a whiff, turn around and go right back home. It smells like death up there.”[9]

In the wake of the emergency, the 2017 earthquake lingered as a presence: the public spaces of the city smelled, looked, and felt different, and worked in new ways. The fuzzy, dusty scent of rubble floated in the city air; narrow streets with old buildings became untrustworthy gauntlets; people slept in medians; interior spaces felt claustrophobic even after inspections cleared their safety. Every crack in the wall came under lay suspicion and expert scrutiny. Any waft of gas aroused concern about leaks. Life took place in new spaces. The rain, which comes heavily in the evenings during this time of year, complicated matters: tarps sprouted in the streets over relief activity. Ponchos proliferated. Near collapse sites, structurally safe buildings gave themselves over to rescue efforts: an orthopedic clinic offered private bathrooms for public use; an ice cream parlor became storage for volunteers’ belongings; the carport of a private clinic became a collection center; a nightclub became a sleeping space for rescuers and volunteers, its bathrooms filled with toiletries for people who hadn’t gone home for days.[10] But even after the city returned to some semblance of normal, the earthquake had shaken loose the narratives governing urban life under gentrification. The earthquake was a reminder that these narratives were only ever provisional to begin with.

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[9] Field notes, September 20, 2018.

[10] Information in this section comes from an interview with Eduardo, 28 year old rescuer, December, 2018, and participant observation in anniversary events, September, 2018.

The event of the earthquake was a mass-entrance to an impasse, splicing Mexico City life into a before and after in a communal way, but individual crisis-events had been personally delivering people to a space of impasse in punctuated moments as gentrification swallowed buildings erratically in its slow creep through Mexico City. For many displaced residents in the Centro Histórico, this happens through violent forced evictions. Forced evictions are traumatic personal disasters – "like a tremor inside your house", according to a journalist reporting on illegal evictions here – that resound affectively with *the* disaster: the 2017 earthquake. Reverberation between eviction and earthquakes generates a background hum to ongoing processes of gentrification. In the following vignette I weave aggregated accounts of earthquakes and evictions through one another to accentuate their resonance. The wisps of sensation collect between them and coalesce into an affective base for politics of displacement in the wake of the earthquake.

> Eviction arrives as an abrupt knock on the door as she's getting the family ready for the workday. When she answers, 200 riot police are standing outside. She's being evicted. There was no notice but she has to be out. They ask for Celia but her name is Marta. It doesn't matter, they say – nobody should be there, everyone must leave. The apartment, the building, everyone out.

> When the earthquake strikes, he is in bed. At first it feels like a bus rolling by, shaking the street, but when everything continues moving he realizes this is much bigger. How strange – there was a small one last week, and only two hours ago he watched from the window as the rest of the street evacuated for the annual drill. It's the anniversary of the 1985 earthquake: the big one that the state couldn't clean up alone, the one that took 10,000 lives, the one that

powered the social movements of 1988, the one he was too young to remember, but which he heard about time and again from relatives for the last thirty years. The big one.

The riot police flood inside the apartment, breaking the furniture, throwing the TV on the floor. On top of that they toss the water jug, the piece of meat that was on the table, and the dirty dishes too. Marta sees one of them slide something in his jacket, and her family photos and important papers end up covering the floor.

So this is an earthquake. The apartment is a blender. Things crashing down everywhere. He scrambles out of bed as the alarms begins to warble. They were so late! The house creaks. Trying to pull on his shoes, he is thrown about and gives up, tries to run out barefoot, but the earth is jumping. The door sticks in the frame; this isn't like other earthquakes. It feels like the house might give in.

Terrified amid confusing directions from the police, she moves toward the door, tripping over their clunky boots and her own possessions. Her 15-year-old son, who was getting dressed when the knock came, is still pulling up his jeans as an officer punches him in the face and drags him out, pulling off his shirt, yelling "don't move!" Another officer drags a woman by her hair in the hall. The violence is exaggerated, unnecessary. The sound is deafening as they break the toilets, the sinks, every window, making her home entirely uninhabitable. These are minor costs in the grand scheme of things, apparently.

Outside his unstable house the street is a river of people. He sees the neighbors. The conversations all go this way: "Are you okay" "Yes" "And the building? Is it okay?" There is an older woman sitting with a younger woman on the curb, both sipping on tequila "*por el susto*": "for the fright." Everyone is okay, but everyone is not okay.

To finish their work the police take the door off the hinges and weld a metal grate to keep anyone from entering. This is the scene of an eviction. "*Demasiado, demasiado*": "Too

much, too much." They kick everyone out. All their things are thrown out on the street. Her bed looks so strange sitting on the sidewalk. The building is left abandoned. All that can be done is to gather the items up quickly, call a moving truck and a relative to try to store things while you figure out what to do.

There is a before and after to the earthquake and he is now in the after. He'd never questioned the stability of his house. It was once a refuge and a point of pride – a safe investment and a validation of class status. For the first time he feels afraid to go inside. Everything can be destroyed so much more easily than it seems. It – and we – are so vulnerable.

The above vignette gathers sensations expressed by survivors and witnesses in interviews and participant observation to show how in an eviction, home is scattered and exposed to the world, while in an earthquake, it is destabilized from within, imploding under the weight of its own physical structure. Rumbling through the testimonies, the voices describe an abrupt, unannounced, and violent intrusion that unravels a home and self. Feelings deriving from varied sources aggregate into something emergent in the space between. In both situations, boundaries are destabilized, boundaries that worked to keep life together and which now have urgent breaches. With these fractures, subjects are released from their familiar crisis-ordinaries and into an unknown – the unscripted space of an impasse.

These breaches expel subjects from the structures built around them – structures that may or may not have served them, but which provided a semblance of predictability. The crisis-event exposes points of weakness in what may have seemed enduring, but the fractures in the boundary do not necessarily come as a surprise: in gentrifying Mexico City,

the degree of reliability people ascribe to their homes as steadfast tools for navigating life varies widely. For some, a crisis-event like an eviction or earthquake only confirms certain suspicions: of a weak rental contract, of corruption in the judicial system, or of negligent building maintenance. For them a home's dependability was already in question. For others, precarity from a crisis-event like an eviction or an earthquake comes as a surprise: they may have believed their lease was solid, that they could trust the legal proceedings for evictions, or that their house was sturdy enough to face an earthquake. The crisis-event only reveals a false sense of certainty. These variations demonstrate the wide diversity of entrances to an impasse, but regardless of how or when one arrives, an impasse makes clear that attachments for assuring the good life – to objects, notions, and people – will not always deliver on their promise.

Thus, the rupture of boundaries that comes with the entrance to an impasse is a rupture of attachments to that which seemed trustworthy. Whether one enters an impasse abruptly or sees it coming, the narratives that scripted life until that point unravel, revealing their trajectories were towards a dead-end. Without the structures that uphold them, these crisis-ordinary stories hold less power. Subjects of an impasse have an opportunity to detach from narratives which never served them, which only held the impasse at bay with false offerings. Accordingly, the impasse finds its subjects surrounded by the wreckage of once compelling stories. What remains is improvisation. In the impasse, it may not look like much is happening, but this temporary holding space is where people reorganize their attachments. For this reason, I draw attention to the impasse as a locus of political activity: it is a place full of both uncertainty and possibility, where new hopeful (but also inherently cruel) attachments are formed and past attachments are mourned. In the following section

I examine three cultural artifacts created to linger in the impasse of the earthquake. I discuss the ways that subjects are held in the impasse: how it grabs at them through these artifacts and forces a reckoning with where they align their hopes.

2.5 Put it on repeat: Lingering in the impasse

The feeling of vulnerability brought on by the earthquake plays like a soundtrack in the city. It is usually a quiet murmur, but sometimes it rises to a crescendo of anxiety. It can come suddenly, triggered by a car alarm or the passing of a heavy truck shaking the building. "The state of *shock* that crisis-events provoke can include the hysterical shout and the inexhaustible cry, but also the unavoidable, devastating, incredible silence" (Fonseca, 2018, p. 18). It is curious that one of the feature length documentaries about the 2017 earthquake is called *La Voz del Silencio (The Voice of Silence)*[11] and counterposes order and chaos both visually and in its sound design. Using drone footage taken the day of the earthquake, this film looks back at the crisis-event from above, repeatedly lowering the viewer down into the chaos, then retreating to the air for moments of relief. Splices of news reports mingle with the sound of fluttering papers or a bicycle cassette in what amounts to a dance of sound and imagery to narrate the feeling of the earthquake's force and the rupture in city life. These sensory scenes bookend interviews with seven speakers, orchestrating movement between order and disorder, a controlled tour of the crisis-event and the human experience during and afterward.

[11] N.B. This title is also a subtle reference to Elena Poniatowska's famous chronicle of the 1985 earthquake, '*Nada, Nadie: Las voces del temblor*' C. Uruchurtu, *La Voz del Silencio* (Cultura Colectiva, 2018)

At the same time that *La Voz del Silencio* plays on the border between order and chaos, other media lingers on the crisis-event from squarely one or the other category. Broken and chaotic is the cell phone and security camera footage that proliferates on YouTube. There are endless compilations, and each snippet of video has a different sound level: some are silent because they come from security cameras without audio feed while others brim with the sounds of people shouting, buildings creaking and objects clashing to the ground. With millions of views, it is unclear whether these videos are being watched primarily by the same people who experienced the earthquake or by people from around the world. Are they cathartic to watch? Do they inure people to trauma? Do they help survivors or others process what happened in the crisis-event? Or are they an impulsive, addictive spiral that survivors or others fall into by accident?

Opposite these videos is a quiet song – almost a lullaby – called *Alarma Sísmica* by Mexico City musician Andy Mountains. Mountains' homage to the earthquake siren is a cathartic soundscape that takes the warbling "wuauwuauwu"[12] of the alarm and slows it down, quiets it, gives the listener the opportunity to steep in its crevices. When Andy Mountains performs this song live, it evokes a mixture of sadness, relief, and delight in audiences. While the song honors the moment of tragedy, it also prods at the terror people feel towards the strange trill of the alarm, makes it smaller, less startling, more difficult to fear: in the post-earthquake impasse, it defangs the crisis-event, setting the stage for rewriting narratives. The audience laughs in emotional release, singing along by the end.

[12] YouTube comment, Andy Mountains, *Alarma Sísmica* (2018) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGr0RbRCMfo

The song cleanses. The commenters on YouTube confirm its therapeutic qualities (Andy Mountains, 2018).

The site of affective activity is the lived, everyday, embodied encounter. The sensorial snaps people back to chaotic moments in an instant, wrapping them suddenly in feelings difficult to describe. The three mediatic returns to the earthquake that I describe above are three different ways to linger in the unfathomable of the impasse – three of an uncountable number. When trauma is understood to be the recurrence of a moment too saturated in affect to fully comprehend in the first instance (Caruth, 2010), it can be said to manifest affectively, and traumatic returns are first affective encounters: they pull a subject out of the regular scripts of life into a moment overwhelmed by stimuli from another space or time. Trauma harms "our systems of perception and representation"(Quoting Kristeva in Kaplan, 2005, p. 5) meaning that in the aftermath of a crisis-event, work is necessary to secure the excess in narrative. Because a traumatic event is initially non-consciously processed and exceeds the capacity to represent, feel, or comprehend fully (Kaplan, 2005), it returns in flashbacks, reminiscences, and other repeated assaults on the subject (Caruth, 2010, p. 91).

Revisiting is thus an important transitional activity of the impasse. Moving directly from crisis-event to politics without going through the emotion, sensation, and affect of an impasse obstructs alternative possibilities from emerging. Prematurely fastening the excess of affect to objects provokes reactive responses to crisis-events, responses that grasp at ready-made objects without engaging the depths of an impasse's unpredictability. This grasping evades affective encounters, relying instead on sticky "affect objects" that Sara Ahmed describes in *The Promise of Happiness*. Ready-made affect objects suck people

into their narrative orbit with scripted reactions, dictating appropriateness, preventing real encounters, and alienating those who do not conform. Resisting the gravitational pull of these objects and experiencing the discomfort of encounter allows for many sensations to make conflicting impressions, impressions that reflect the complexity of a crisis-event.

While the unpredictability of a crisis-event is obvious, uncertainty is also present in the improvisation of the ongoing present moment, and to confront this is destabilizing. It is tempting to shield oneself from life's uncertainty with structuring narratives that offer familiarity and repetition. But to sit in the unease of an impasse is a crucial step in a feminist, minor-theoretical approach to politics: it zeros in on questions of where and how transformation takes place (Katz, 1996, 2017). These cultural artifacts are tools for staying in the discomfort of the impasse to contend with broken attachments. They are powerful not for their documentary qualities but for the way they facilitate this return. Dithering in the excess of affective dynamics makes way for people experiencing phenomena like displacement to connect with others: resonance between two people who find themselves in relation to political objects produces a certain pleasure. "The discovery that 'I stand in relation to a political object, in the same way that you stand in relation to a political object" is something psychoanalyst Raluca Soreanu refers to as the "pleasure of analogy" (Soreanu, 2018, p. 59). It is a pleasure that begins in interest and develops trust upon which to mobilize political strategy. Affect matters at this stage; it reorients subjects and composes atmospheres of political action.

There is no avoiding it: the crisis-event returns, and survivors return to it. Alongside film, song, and video about the earthquake, a common manner of going back is by retelling

stories. One interviewee related to me that after the 1985 earthquake, he and a neighbor took the bus to school together every day. It wasn't until the spring of 1986 that they were surprised to find themselves talking about something besides the earthquake for a change. It took revisiting the event over and over until it wasn't the only thing on their minds. The stories about 1985 that were told not only to fellow survivors, but to children who had not yet been born – are the stories to which a generation of Mexicans grew up listening. These stories – told over and over – prime reflexes to respond in a moment of chaos. I turn to them in the next section.

2.6 The awaited guest: How historical affects shift attachments in the present

"I've been waiting for the tremor that would mark my life" writes journalist Daniela Rea (Rea, 2018, p. 99). For Rea and many in the generation young enough to not remember 1985 personally, the mythical question of earthquakes is innate to Mexico City life. This generation "grew up listening to stories from uncles, aunts, and cousins about that moment in 1985 when the earth shook, and in a matter of seconds, collapsed lives and buildings" (Rea, 2018, p. 101).

The affective impasse is a haptic interface between two space-times that have folded onto one another. This impasse absorbs affective stimulation from a distant space-time made intimate. With the fluke arrival of the 2017 earthquake on the very anniversary of the 1985 earthquake, sensations, memories, and attachments from 1985 flooded into the present. Those affects don't just pass through though; they stick. In hanging around, they scramble the assignment of affects to objects, disrupting contemporary dynamics and

generating attachments to elements of 1985.[13] Trauma ruptures the fabric of the present, inviting foreign affects into the contemporary space-time and cracking open the situation to different possibilities.

A year after the earthquake in Mexico City, people spoke of a new intensity in the air: an ambient sense that new things are possible. "I think there's a consciousness, more than anything with the earthquake, that our generation could change things," Rafa emphasized to me in an interview.[14] Rafa, a downtown resident-turned-activist in his mid-30's, began to organize against displacement when his landlord served eviction notices to everyone in the building after the earthquake despite no damages. As he sincerely explains this sentiment to me under fluorescent lights, 90's Mexican pop music, and the uncaring gaze of a few other Monday evening bar-goers at a hole-in-the-wall downtown cantina, I believe him.

The feeling that this generation could change things is shared. In the words of Rocio, a woman in her 50's whose Condesa home was severely damaged in the earthquake, young people "were the ones who physically helped the most," "the spirit of solidarity that the young people found was a… for me, this was a passing of the baton of what happened in 85, which we older folks lived, and the young people took it." Millennials who participated describe feeling compelled to help.[15] Rocio struggled through the uncertainty of watching

[13] For more on hauntology, see A. Leal Martínez, '"You Cannot be Here": The Urban Poor and the Specter of the Indian in Neoliberal Mexico City', *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* XXI (2016), pp. 539–559; J. Wylie, 'The spectral geographies of W.G. Sebald', *cultural geographies* XIV (2007), pp. 171–188; E. Cameron, 'cultural geographies essay: Indigenous spectrality and the politics of postcolonial ghost stories', *cultural geographies* XV (2008), pp. 383–393; J. F. Maddern, 'Spectres of migration and the ghosts of Ellis Island', *cultural geographies* XV (2008), pp. 359–381; J. F. Maddern and P. Adey, 'Editorial: spectro-geographies', *cultural geographies* XV (2008), pp. 291–295

[14] Interview, October, 2018.

[15] This is evidenced in the project, "Generación 19S" conducted by researchers at UNAM on the participation of young people in rescue and recovery efforts. See http://www.generacion19s.puec.unam.mx/.

her own son, 20 years old at the time, throw himself into the rescue efforts. As he expressed the values she felt proud to have imparted to him – a "sense of social duty" and "human dignity" – she fought back her fears of him putting his own life in danger: "one never knows what a young man compelled by heroism will do."[16] These kinds of responses show how the earthquake began to unravel the common narrative that millennials are individualistic, narcissistic, apathetic, and lazy. In the impasse they became figures that inspire other orientations, possibly even hope or trust.

During the earthquake rescue efforts, residents of Mexico City used WhatsApp group chats, Twitter, and Facebook to organize people and streamline information[17] but these new forms of communication, which proved essential for post-earthquake organizing, are also affectively charged. When I spoke with people about the use of social media in 2017, they would often end up telling me about communications in 1985, suggesting a connection between the two. They spoke of community radios and liberated public telephones, but also the local word-of-mouth networks that reinforced site-based bonds. These collective memories of how people organized, especially with community radios, are also rekindled each year when the radio airs news anchor Jacobo Zabludovsky's famous chronicle of the 1985 damages, which he broadcast live over his car phone. With those memories in mind, it is understandable that these platforms would be affectively charged. In relation to WhatsApp in particular, people express feelings of both excitement and frustration. WhatsApp served a primary role in the 2017 rescue efforts, and in recent years this platform has shaped how urban struggles stitch together and how residents see sites of political

[16] Interview, December, 2018.

[17] See in particular @Verificado19S on Twitter, where verified information was posted and updated to prevent on-the-ground mixups.

interaction. Speaking with Rafa again, "I think there are a lot of people involved; there are many individual struggles, what's interesting is the social networks and the…" – he smiles as he says it – "chats on WhatsApp." We both laugh. "There's a *ton* of group chats on WhatsApp," he says, still laughing.[18]

As an affectively charged organizing tool, WhatsApp is a channel for feelings of pride, hope, competence, and self-organization that are attached to memories and imaginaries of 1985 communications. This affective attachment helps compensate for WhatsApp's many imperfections. In the midst of crisis, chats were quickly created to communicate urgent information between pertinent interlocutors. After the urgency passed, chats remained, and have shown themselves to be both the grease of politics and the bane of an activist's life. Some of them became streamlined exclusive groups for taking collective action, sometimes sidestepping slow bureaucratic channels when public officials join. In productive groups, members attend to affective spikes and valleys, sending tokens of encouragement or chiding wayward messages. But because of WhatsApp's imperfect notification controls and the sheer magnitude of chat members, chats can be exasperating even in their most perfect manifestation. The wear on members ultimately leads many chats to degenerate into sundry conversation, spam, and the exit notifications of fed-up members. People love to hate chats: they are far from the perfect political tool, but they connect people both practically and affectively, taking connections offline and into city spaces (Tufekci, 2012, p. 4; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). While they orient people towards feelings

[18] Interview, October, 2018.

of solidarity from 1985, they also write new stories of cohesion in present struggles against displacement.

Social media has an ability to create "affect worlds" that cultivate political feelings in digital spaces and mobilize action in novel ways (Papacharissi, 2015). In chats, resonance builds between people, fostering collective action towards change. A recent occurrence in one WhatsApp anti-displacement group chat demonstrates how: a chat member was at home when a small group of people forcibly entered her building and violently attempted to occupy apartments. Another member wrote to the group chat on her behalf and organized a response. In this, the chat spilled from the digital into the real world, introducing members who had not previously met, preventing the one in crisis from losing her housing, and getting public officials and lawyers involved to prevent corrupt management of the property dispute. The first message of distress about intruders provoked an automatic impulse that spurred members to accompany her in this crisis-event by investigating and taking action. In this instance, relationships that transect age and class difference spill from WhatsApp into the city and result in an occupation to resist eviction. The infamous chats that proliferated with the 2017 earthquake may not guarantee changes, but they nonetheless function as sites where people build sensitivity toward other objects, people, and events.

These affect worlds are not limited to private digital spaces. While residents on the ground used social media for pragmatic purposes during the earthquake, people around the world shared expressions of encouragement that shaped a larger public sentiment. Images, memes, and hashtags territorialized feelings in portable internet objects: the hashtag #FuerzaMexico mingled with memes of Frida the rescue dog and photos of rescue efforts,

including women rescuers, people in professional attire covered in dust, people working through the rain, photos of the older members of TOPOS (the first response groups founded after 1985). Individually and as an affective ecosystem, these affect worlds intervene in negative notions of *Mexicanidad (*Mexicanness) and redefine its essence in terms of care for others and solidarity in crisis, a legacy going back at least 32 years (M. Anderson, 2011; Solnit, 2009). Thus attachments borne in another moment of Mexican history work as forces for renewing national pride and revalorizing Mexican identity in public discourse, re-orienting Mexicans towards one another.

Time and space folds in Mexico City to bring September 19, 1985 and September 19, 2017 into intimate relationship, inviting the affects of historical trauma into an impasse at the crux of displacement and gentrification. Attachments to 1985 do affective work in the present, disrupting attachments and stirring city atmospheres. The reflex to sacrifice oneself to a larger project is one way to cope with trauma from a significant disaster.[19] As such, collective action in homage to 1985 writes a different script in the impasse of the crisis-event. I return again to the words of Rea: "I've been waiting for the tremor that would mark my life." Rea's orientation towards life makes the crisis not the event, but the ordinary. It fulfills one of the qualifications for living in Mexico City and writes her into the urban narrative at the same time that it upends other narratives that had more recently dominated the local imaginary – of economic development, progress, meritocracy and the apathetic selfishness of the contemporary capitalist urban condition, against which anti-gentrification organizing had struggled.

[19] Interview with head of Mexican Psychoanalytic Society, December, 2018.

2.7 Conclusion: Affective politics in a dead end

I argue that the affective dynamics of the impasse provoked by the 2017 earthquake generated new energies in the ongoing urban politics against gentrification in Mexico City. In the crisis-ordinary, cruel attachments trap people in familiar patterns of making-do, but the intrusion of a crisis-event opens a situation to the unexpected, and it does so from the affective register. In Mexico City, the earthquake as crisis-event disturbed the crisis-ordinary of ongoing gentrification and corrupt development practices. I draw attention to the heightened visibility of affect in this impasse so as to sensitize scholars and activists to dynamics that are present in the crisis-ordinary albeit hidden in plain sight. My hope is that cultivating sensitivity to this register of experience and politics will help to bring it to the legible surface of political action.

In the doldrums of the crisis-ordinary, struggle against the rigid scripts may feel hopeless, and in the throes of crisis-events, it is tempting to lean on reflexes and familiar screenplays. But the present is always something of a situation, radically un-foreclosed, and at any time, improvisation and proprioception might expose how a situation could be otherwise. It takes giving oneself over to the impasse to be able to see that possibility, and the empirical sections above explore this process in the context of post-earthquake Mexico City gentrification: where are the entry points to an impasse, what affective activities occur there, and how intimate relation to another time shapes the affective register of this space. The end result is an exploration of how to navigate an impasse in affective ways to allow for the urban narrative to break from its expected trajectory and take a turn.

Affect theory suggests that imagining different futures for cities begins by feeling the present differently. When appeals for rights through democratic process feel like a dead end in a rigged game, what political possibility lies in the goings-on of affective registers? Perhaps following feelings, sensations, and emotions may already be helping to imagine different forms of contesting gentrification. To make room for those sensations and feelings to emerge requires repeated pausing: to feel, to smell, to listen, to settle in with what arrives across space and time before fashioning responses. This dithering – which allows for sensing the co-presence of many affects, for attachments that are still gelling, for alliances to sit in uncertainty, for hesitation in hanging hopes – makes way for affective shifts to emerge out of a moment not yet scripted with a future. As the stories settle, the feelings in the songs, memes, and other expressions mingle together, possibly even in a WhatsApp chat, and begin to compose new attachments. And yet the quiet can turn eerie: an impasse is a dangerous, unsympathetic space. It affords new opportunities to *everyone* in a political landscape. The chat can go stale or the developer can use the earthquake as an excuse to vacate tenants. Nevertheless, framing the scenario in these terms may shed light on an important pivot-point in making structural political change.

It is easy to believe the Mexico City narrative that Carlos Slim has already bought the Centro, that gentrification is here, that "it's over" for older residents who can't afford market rents. But feeling around in the affective crevices of that narrative may open trap doors to other formations of urban space. The earthquake in 2017, as a crisis-event that interrupted the crisis-ordinary of this gentrification story, framed the loss of home in a new light, and brought the contemporary moment into intimate relation with the 1985 Mexico City earthquake: a space-time in Mexican history that was characterized by

resourcefulness, generosity, heroism, solidarity, and hope. In this article I described the entrances to an impasse in Mexico City, the ways people linger in that affective space, and the way that another space-time folded onto the present to shape the affective atmosphere and disturb other attachments. I did so to demonstrate the openings that this impasse brought upon what seemed like a dead-end for residents of this gentrifying global city. By highlighting the affective dynamics in a moment where they already appeared in an exaggerated state, this research attempts to call attention to the affective register and scratch at the openings of an impasse that can be found there. It pushes towards understanding how the terms of negotiating urban space are opened or foreclosed in the affective register and begs the question of what an "affective" urban politics – as intentional interventions on harmful attachments – might look like.

CHAPTER 3. DREAMING OF STAYING: EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN FACING EVICTION IN MEXICO CITY[20]

3.1 Abstract:

In this article we analyze the differential effects of gender in cases of forced residential eviction and displacement to the periphery of women residents of Mexico City. We consider eviction to be one of the least addressed problems in urban studies, but one that exhibits great strength for discussing the issues of housing and the city from a feminist perspective. We hypothesize that this is an expulsion not only based on gender, but also on race. Gathering ideas from Ananya Roy (2017), Saskia Sassen (2014) among others, and through the accounts of eviction and displacement collected through interviews with women of the *Red de Desalojados* (Eviction Network) in Mexico City, we give texture to the abstract processes of gentrification and eviction. In this context, the findings show how ethnic-racial issues intersect and have specific gendered effects. Likewise, we locate how forced displacement can be understood from the perspective of mobility and immobility, where aspects such as accessibility to the city and insecurity are very sensitive for women and, finally, we address how to understand the experience of eviction from an emotional perspective.

Keywords: gender, housing, displacement, racial banishment, city

[20] This article has been accepted with minor revisions in its original Spanish for *Revista INVI*'s special issue, titled, "Ciudad, vivienda y género desde una mirada incluyente e interseccional". The title in Spanish is "Soñar con quedarse: Experiencias de mujeres frente al desalojo en la Ciudad de México". What I have included in the dissertation is an English translation, which will accompany the Spanish when it is finally published. *Revista INVI* is a prominent Latin American journal focused on urban studies and housing in particular, with an international scope. *Revista INVI* publishes articles in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, most commonly in two languages side-by-side.

3.2 Introduction

On October 15, 2021, hired movers illegally entered a home of 20 indigenous Mazahua families in the Juárez neighborhood of Mexico City, beating its inhabitants and removing them. They arrived with hammers, sticks and other objects, exhibiting an excess of violence, without prior notice and without official papers (Redacción, 2021). They managed to remove the belongings of the inhabitants, filling the street with furniture and personal items before the arrival of the citizen police who arrested them for fighting (Bravo, 2021). In the WhatsApp chat of a group that has organized against evictions in the city, a flurry of messages came in about this recent case, highlighting what has been called "*blanqueamiento por despojo*" or "whitening by dispossession" (Gaytán Santiago, 2019).

In the last 20 years, as Mexico City gentrifies, some 400 thousand families have been expelled to the outskirts of Mexico City (Cruz Flores, 2021). In this context, we seek to analyze experiences lived by women who have faced displacement caused by evictions, since the repercussions of gentrification are rarely revealed through the experiences embodied and lived by women, thus giving texture to processes as abstract as gentrification and processes of immobility and mobility in global cities. **Our hypothesis is that this is an expulsion not only of women, but of racialized women. In terms of gender, we propose to show the role that emotions play in the process of expulsion, where devastation and anguish combine with lived feelings like solidarity, hope, and place attachment intertwine with embodied experiences of living in the city.**

To address the above, we trace an analytical path from the perspective of gender, in which we first locate the problem of the eviction of women, within the framework of a broad concern about housing, accounting for the main problems that have been studied and the foci/issues that sustain them. In the second section, we return to the main theoretical debates around the concepts of eviction, mobility and immobility, "racial banishment" and gentrification. In the third section, we discuss the gendered and racial dimensions of evictions drawing upon the results of qualitative research carried out with women from the *Red de Desalojados* (Eviction Network) of Mexico City. By way of closing, we conclude by presenting the desires of these women for a “voluntary immobility”; the desire to stay put.

3.3 Housing, gender, and the city: Objects, approaches, and scales

Like all problems of inequality, the lack of adequate housing has a greater incidence among the most vulnerable groups; “women face discrimination in many aspects of housing, land and property on the basis of their gender, sometimes compounded by other factors such as poverty, age, social class, sexual orientation or ethnicity” (OHCHR, 2012, p. 40). Indeed, women and children represent a high percentage of people without housing.

In this context, different problems have been documented. From a structural point of view, a major problem has been that in both housing and land planning, women have been omitted from the leadership on urban habitat management (Soto, 2016). Women are doubly excluded, on the one hand, as citizens and, on the other, as subjects of planning. Alejandra Massolo (1995) has documented that despite the leadership of low-income

women within urban-popular movements, this has not necessarily been reflected in their participation in decisions about the design of the city, housing or urban planning. Another problem is the security of tenure, in the case of Mexico the gender gap is clearly expressed, according to INEGI (2015) women are less frequently homeowners than men, with 35% of houses deeded in Mexico on behalf of women. If we look at the differences between vulnerable groups, in the case of indigenous women this difference reaches 10 percentage points in relation to the national percentage: 30.9% of the houses inhabited by indigenous populations have deeds in the name of a woman, while at the national level, 40.8% of homes have a woman as the owner or co-owner of the property (INEGI, 2015). Access to credit also demonstrates inequality, according to Infonavit (2020), only 34% of credits are granted to women.

On a microsocial scale we can mention another range of issues. The question of habitability has contributed to conceiving housing as an environment that is not only physical but emotional and symbolic, where women try to reconcile tasks of social reproduction with productive work by adapting spaces (Esquivel, 2004). The standardized design and production of housing responds to a traditional-nuclear family model, and to the gendering of knowledge (Molina, 2006), which is characterized by the construction of a dichotomous imaginary where public and private, productive and reproductive have marked urban and housing policies without considering the contemporary changes in the forms of family organization and the multiple life situations of all people, which are changing over time.

In this same microsocial order, we can find the political meaning that housing acquires through the concept of home, where beyond the material elements, there will be the immaterial and political aspects of it, such as attachment to place, and the collective history of the struggles that can be determining factors in the creation of a home in the context of poverty (Ossul-Vermehren, 2018). Regarding our object of investigation, a less investigated issue has been the subject of forced evictions, which according to international organizations constitutes a serious violation of human rights (OHCHR, 2012). Evictions increase residential instability for renters in many ways, and in particular can increase the likelihood that those who are evicted end up moving to remote and disadvantaged neighborhoods. From a gender perspective, for women who are in a situation of threat of eviction, one of the main concerns is for their children, losing their access to scholarships, or finding it impossible to enroll in schools (COHRE, 2006). In addition to the above, during forced evictions, women and girls are especially vulnerable to violence, including sexual violence (OHCHR, 2014).

3.4 Conceptual approaches: Critical notes on the concepts of eviction, mobility, "racial banishment" and gentrification

As we have shown in the previous section, there is extensive literature linking housing and the city with gender issues. However, these approaches pose a static conception of housing as a fixed space anchored to territory, and with it much less interest and emphasis has been placed on understanding the extension, the complementarity of these residences with other spaces in the city based on mobility of everyday life (Imilan, Jirón, Iturra, 2005). A category that seems relevant to us to

understand eviction is the continuum of mobility and immobility in the experience of forced exile in Mexico City. On one hand, the politics of mobility as proposed by Cresswell (2010) is expressed in the various ways in which people move and the relationships that people establish with movement, that is, the politics of mobility defines who moves and who doesn't, who has the obligation to move and who doesn't and therefore who chooses, when and how to move. This has clear implications of power, that is, immobility can be conceived, on the one hand, as an instrument of power and social control of bodies and, on the other, as a discourse through which gendered bodies are constructed, for example, the idea of "territorial confinement" (Rose, 1993).

On the other hand, at the intersection of immobility/mobility studies and urban theory on gentrification and displacement (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2019), we return to De Verteuil's perspective on immobility in gentrification areas (De Verteuil, 2011). The concepts that De Verteuil presents about *involuntary immobility* (entrapment) and *involuntary mobility* (displacement) seem to us to be an appropriate framework to understand the issue of evictions. For De Verteuil (2011), *involuntary immobility* has to do with the way in which people are trapped in an affordable rental in an area undergoing gentrification. They cannot expand their space or move to another space in the area because the space they have is the only accessible option. *Involuntary mobility* describes the forced movement on someone, against their will: eviction. When these two phenomena coincide - when someone involuntarily immobile is displaced by eviction from an affordable rental in an area in the process of gentrification - they are forced to move away from the neighborhood due to lack of places within the limitations of their budget.

Now, in this article, we associate the idea of mobility with a particular type of displacement, which goes beyond the movement of bodies from one place to another, and which Ananya Roy (2017) has called "racial banishment", the racialized exile that is expressed in geographies of forced mobility and criminalized presence in the territory. For Roy, the expulsion of racialized people from parts of the city through eviction is in itself a generalized elimination of black residents from urban areas in the process of gentrification, which constitutes not only a legal punishment, but also a racial exile. From our perspective, this concept seems useful to understand this case study in Mexico City under an extended regime of illegal evictions, under various assumptions. First, according to Roy (2017), racial banishment is positioned as a state project, as a concerted effort by governments to block residency, often using police power. Second, racial banishment centralizes the importance of raciality, creating a form of spatial displacement that expels racialized and, in our case, gendered bodies from urban areas. Third, exile, and in our case eviction, not only marks the disappearance of racialized residents from urban centers, but also the loss of the sense of community and of the places and stories they have created by inhabiting that space.

It is important to specify that in the face of the general discourses that describe gentrification outside the Anglo-Saxon world, we recognize that gentrification consists of a different phenomenon when it takes place in Latin America. The relevance of the term gentrification to describe urban transformation has been debated extensively, and despite reluctance to import it from the global north, and to replace other terms like touristification (Hiernaux & González, 2014), segregation and poverty (Ziccardi, 2012),

modernization and place attachment (Tamariz Estrada, 2019), regeneration/renovation (Leal Martínez, 2016a), densification (Flores, 2018), or neoliberal urbanization (Ramírez Zaragoza, 2019), it does make a common appearance in texts in both English and Spanish about many of these issues as they appear in Latin American cities. When we refer to gentrification in this article, we are talking about the current transformations in the production of urban space in the historic neighborhoods of the central area of Mexico City that imply a revaluation of the uses of urban space, highlighting architectural renovation, an emphasis on services, and investment in public space that together produce a feeling of exclusivity (Olivera and Delgadillo, 2014).[21] From our perspective, this concept helps us understand evictions and displacement as strategic mechanisms of gentrification.

Finally, the last dimension that guides our analysis is the centrality of emotions and affectivity, which color the histories/stories and mark their future/becomings/evolution. As they are inseparable, emotions (Davidson et al., 2016) and affects (Ahmed, 2010) mediate the relationship between a tenant and her environment, to the extent that they are

[21] It is nearly impossible to talk about gentrification in Latin America without mentioning Michael Janoschka and his collaborations. Their work occupies the top cited articles on the subject in English, and Spanish, and is cited in most of the rest of the top cited articles that are not written by them. However, Janoschka has been found guilty by the ethics board at the Autonomous University of Madrid for labor exploitation of his graduate student, Jacobo Abellán. Although this board does not have the power to discipline or sanction Janoschka and the victory is seen merely as moral, it has absorbed 8 years of Abellán's life. See Raúl Novoa's article in El Diario. Carrie Mott and Dan Cockayne make an argument for a politics of citation that combats the "white heteromasculinism" (Mott & Cockayne, 2017, p. 2) that they observe to dominate anglophone geography (and it's probably safe to say Latin American geography as well). Mott and Cockayne contend that dominant citation practices lift a small number of voices and marginalize the rest, and that this not only bifurcates careers into two tracks (skyrocketing a select few while others remain precarious) but it also limits the scope of geographic thought: by dismissing and diminishing the contributions of peripheral voices, the knowledge produced draws on a limited range of experiences and ways of knowing, in turn limiting the kinds of questions that can even be asked (ibid.). This is certainly true right now in the geographic conversations about gentrification in Latin America in both Spanish and English: Janoschka and his collaborators are a constant presence. One thing about their work that makes it so unavoidable is their ability to speak clearly back to the Anglophone literature that uses the term gentrification.

the affective interactions between women and their spaces, between the spatiality and temporality of emotions and more specifically, the way in which these emotions are connected around and within certain places, which acquires relevance in the experience of inhabiting a place and losing it through eviction.

3.5 Context of the study and methodological approach

Our research aims to find the gendered dimension of the experiences of forced mobility of women who are part of the Red de Desalojados of Mexico City. This group collectively advocates for affordable housing solutions for its participants and serves as a community of support, a lobbying force and an organized protest for people going through the emotionally draining, legally confusing and bureaucratically tedious experience of resisting eviction, whose actions fall within the framework of the struggles of the *Movimiento Urbano Popular* (The People's Urban Movement). Although this network is a mixed organization, it is women who constitute the majority of active participation.

We followed a feminist ethnographic strategy (Pérez and Gregorio, 2020) that takes urban space as an object of critique, such as has been systematically raised within feminist geographies (Kern, 2010; Soto Villagrán, 2018). Therefore the methodological choices we follow are twofold. We opted for a qualitative method focused on the production of narratives through in-depth interviews with women participating in the Red de Desalojados, conducted between 2019 and 2020, from a broader project on displacement caused by gentrification in Mexico City. Through this instrument, we

reconstructed the discourse of women between the ages of 28 and 75 about eviction and their everyday life in their new housing, the adaptations they make to ensure their safety, and how they depend on access to the central city to support their children. We were able to explore how the possibility of losing one's home and the processes of uprooting can be understood from an emotional point of view.

3.6 Study findings[22]

3.6.1 The desire to remain: dreams of voluntary immobility

The women who participated in the research spoke of the meaning of having roots, memories, of having a space to live. If we understand space through the Massey's perspective (1994) as a product of relationships, it is constituted through interactions that are necessarily implicit in the material practices that must be carried out. The interviewees want to stay where they have developed an affective bond with the place: "attachment is rooted in the daily practice that feeds memories, that generates different emotions and makes the place become something that not only belongs to you but is part of you" (Poma, 2018, p. 6).

This is the case for Gema, a 60-year-old woman who has lived in the same apartment since she was a child. Her family arrived in Mexico City in 1957 from Oaxaca with little more than *petates*[23] (straw sleeping mats) and a folding table. They settled into a two-room apartment, where she still lives with her daughter and two grandchildren. She

[22] Some details, including the names of people and places, have been modified to protect the anonymity of the participating women.
[23] Petate, from the Nahuatl word "petatl" is a kind of woven straw mat

is a seamstress and assists her daughter, a nurse, in caring for her grandchildren. Ownership of the building is uncertain and her efforts along with those of other tenants to expropriate it to manage it themselves have failed in court, but eviction attempts have been successful in several apartments in her building. Gema wants to stay where her roots are: she believes in the rule of law and wants to use the legal tools at her disposal to remain in her housing, but fears that she will eventually be evicted from the Centro Histórico (downtown).

She is not alone in wanting to make things right, but having little success in her attempts. Many tenants in the Red de Desalojados are caught up in lengthy legal processes to stay in or return to their buildings. In another sense most of the interviewees also speak of a desire to return the neighborhood to a previous state before real estate companies became interested in where they live and started raising rents around them.

For some tenants who still live in these areas and pay affordable rents, what keeps many of their realities afloat is a tenuous prior agreement to affordable rent. However, when the neighborhood gentrifies or the landlord dies and the building passes into the hands of new owners with no emotional ties to the old neighborhood or the old tenants, the often irresistible temptation to raise the rent to market rates leaves these tenants with deep roots unable to pay the new rents. In this same sense Saskia Sassen warns that what we are witnessing in cities can no longer be called simply conditions of inequality or even extreme inequality, she argues rather that this is the abandonment of the gradient and the leap towards a logic of expulsion, where rights and protections are not only limited, but frankly denied (Sassen, 2014).

Nevertheless, the women in the Network are emphatic in maintaining that they do not wish to stay through corrupt means or handouts, but through a path in which the space where they have developed their lives for many years is recognized. When the place is in danger or when they are in danger of being forcibly expelled, the bond of rootedness with the place, the bond that unites them with the place, is given greater awareness. We could think that what they are proposing is the right to a *voluntary immobility* or, chosen rootedness, in De Verteuil's terms (2011), which they cannot achieve in the face of a corrupt legal system and unbalanced powers. Instead, what is offered to them as an alternative is eviction: forced relocation to a place not chosen by them.

On the other hand, voluntary immobility, i.e., the choice to be where one is without the threat of being evicted, is a luxury that not all the interviewees can afford. It is both "very simple and very complicated." It is complicated because the city and the real estate companies with their economic calculations are not on the side of the women, but simple at the same time, when it is understood that the affective commitment of these women was what added value to the neighborhood through their taxes and their active participation over the years has contributed to making these neighborhoods attractive places to live. In fact they recognize that their continuous concern has prevented these spaces from being abandoned. Their lives lived in relation with neighbors are what make these neighborhoods into the "authentic" spaces that fetch such high market values under the current paradigm of gentrification (Ji, 2020).

3.6.2 Banishment and the contradictory perception of the neighborhood

"El barrio es casa": “neighborhood is home.” As they come out of her mouth, her words draw a smile. Malena has lived on the same block in a downtown neighborhood for 30 of her 42 years. She has lived there long enough for all the store owners to know her and her siblings by name, and she has seen the family businesses passed on to new generations. But of those families only a few remain. The rest have had to move to the periphery, to the highway exits to Puebla, Chalco or Ecatepec, she said, as we sat on plastic benches in the center of her family's small laundromat on a Saturday afternoon in the fall of 2019.

She is not the only one who feels that housing and neighborhood are intertwined in downtown Mexico City. Several women express stories of attachment to their neighborhoods, that is, not so much to their homes, but to the immediate surroundings, which represent shared emotions and common meanings, supports of practices and institutions of reciprocity, which with the introduction of real estate interests, have been downgraded to mere spaces of competition. In effect, familiarity with the store owners and neighbors who occupy the public spaces of the neighborhood and to feel that one has a community in such a large city "implies a feeling of security associated with their proximity and contact, and a loss of this figure produces fear and anguish" (Hidalgo, 1988, p. 53).

The home is not only the four walls that delimit the dwelling in which one lives. Rather, the experience of living extends to the neighborhood and the city, because the processes of living in the home must be understood as a set of practices and

representations that allow the subject to be located within a spatial-temporal order, at the same time that they participate in recognizing and establishing it (Giglia, 2012). A traditional view of residential habitat has focused its attention on the housing-neighborhood relationship as the container of experiences, which has implied that it is understood as a set of localized practices identified with housing under a static conception of a fixed space, generating very little interest in the subject. In this same vein, separating what is home from what is not home with those walls introduces a false division into something continuous (Iturra Muñoz, 2014).

Monica, a university student who attends night classes, used to walk home alone from the subway at night with confidence when she lived in the Centro Histórico. However, when she and her family were evicted, they moved about 40 minutes by subway to the south, near Metro San Isidro a year and a half ago, where she describes the feeling of uncertainty of returning home from the subway at night.

> Monica: If I was late there it didn't matter, because my neighbors knew me and I was safe. There was no problem if I was late there. Even if you don't know your neighbors well, they recognize you. If something happens to you, they are there they can find you?
>
> Jess: They recognize you?
>
> Monica: (affirms with a nod of the head) and not here, because we don't know anyone. So I think that the security is what sticks to me a little more. [...] if something happens to you, nobody will be there to help you. For example, walking from the subway, so what we do is that when I arrive I send a message and someone comes to walk with me. We still do that. This is not an unsafe place, but you take a risk, you're walking and there's nobody around. And all of a sudden someone might come out.

Monica contrasts her feelings of comfort walking at night in the Centro with her feelings of uncertainty in San Isidro. Her familiarity with downtown vendors and

neighbors meant that in the face of the uncertainty of what can happen in cities at night she felt comfortable and accompanied. On the contrary, her concern about walking at night near San Isidro is that, in the face of the same urban uncertainty, there will be no one to accompany her if something strange happens. In other words, familiarity with neighbors does not eliminate the uncertainty inherent in urban life, but it does change the tools she has to deal with an unexpected event: "it's that you don't know anyone," she says. "So if something happens to you no one is going to be there to help you." What she describes is the difference between feeling completely unprepared and feeling like you can handle anything that comes your way: significantly different feelings of agency, a horizon of experiences, valuations and meanings in which the sense of fear and insecurity somehow devalues that sense of community and easily undoes the belonging to the new neighborhood.

It is not particular to Mexico City to feel the extremes of home and alienation in the urban landscape. Sometimes the city tells you implicitly and sometimes it tells you explicitly that you don't belong. Secor describes a similar phenomenon for Kurdish women in Istanbul (Secor, 2004). Certain parts of the city demand particular ways of dressing and acting, and women cannot always conform to the demands of a particular neighborhood. In Mexico City this is expressed by feeling at home primarily in your own neighborhood. Duhau and Gigilia explain that not only is the city segregated physically with walls and inward facing residential constructions, but it is increasingly segregating classes away from one another, "on a much larger scale than that corresponding to the barrios or neighborhoods" of other decades (Duhau & Giglia, 2008, p. 93).

3.6.3 Life is complicated on the periphery

Displacement not only brings to the surface the fear of insecurity, but also the fear of the new and complicated necessities of mobility involved in living far from daily destinations. Being forced to commute configures a web of arrangements, practices, decisions to move between home and work, school and other destinations, but also a series of emotions such as frustration, grief, anger and worry. According to some authors, Mexico City residents have long shown patterns of living close to where they work (Suárez-Lastra & Delgado-Campos, 2010). Thus, in a city like Mexico City, where crossing from one end to the other can take more than three hours, perhaps this explains why people want so much to stay where they are.

Eva has lived much of her life in a central neighborhood renowned for commerce and crime, but with the recent boom in urbanization and speculation, buying or renting a home in this area was beyond the reach of her tight budget. As we spoke we sat at the folding table in the center of the main room of the community center she runs, still filled with leftover materials from a piñata workshop she had just finished, and the floor still covered with papier-mâché paste. Eva said that in La Victoria, the streets are deserted at 7 pm. Restaurants close and street traffic, which is high during the day, evaporates. The community center plans evening activities there or in the plaza for young people in the neighborhood. Some of these have included rap battles, music and dance, visual arts classes and permaculture workshops. Eva loves this place. This is where her childhood took place, where she went to elementary and high school, where she spent her young adult years, and where she would love to buy a house to raise her children and continue to support the community center. But she knows that won't be possible. Because the area is

so expensive, Eva and her family moved to the periphery, which represents a moment of rupture for her, and her narrative is constructed in temporal terms as a before and after. The house that was advertised as 20 minutes from the last station of the metro line, in practice, was more like 60 minutes from the station, which usually implies still another 30 minutes on the train to the Victoria stop. As the periphery begins, the city's integrated public transport ends and combis (large minivans), cabs and other concessionary transport systems form a "deficient" and "disjointed" informal transport network (Paxton-Martin Ruiz de Azcárate, 2017, p. 39). For Eva's family, it became a better option to use their own private vehicle from the metro to their home to avoid the ordeal of the last leg of the journey. However, this was too much, and finally after six months, the family left the periphery and moved to another part of the city, but they are still not back in La Victoria.

Long and complicated commutes are not the only obstacle to living in the periphery of the city. The urban development patterns of the last decades provoke an atomization, a rupture, a distancing understood through the idea of segregation or fragmentation (Caprón and González, 2006): "a disjointed set of separate, segregated places, supplied often with aggressive closing devices, where the passerby cannot pass" (Duhau and Giglia, 2008: 394). However, as Imilán (2020) affirms in the context of a Chilean informal settlement, peripheral spaces are not completely isolated from the city. Rather, they are poorly connected to the city and, in order to make ends meet, their inhabitants face the daily challenge of navigating complex trajectories that are not at all designed with daily mobility in mind.

In addition, learning the ways in which space is divided in a new part of the city and finding ways to negotiate them has not been easy for the women interviewed. Returning to Monica's narrative, her new commute to school requires an additional subway line and walking near a fast, desolate avenue that not only carries high-speed traffic and subway through the city, but divides two neighborhoods and discourages foot traffic. The solution her family came up with was for someone to take the dog for an evening walk to meet her at the subway and return home together each evening. The way the city is separated in this more suburban area produces the solitude that makes Monica feel unsafe walking at night.

3.6.4 Feelings of exile beyond racial banishment

Banishment is defined as “the punishment of being sent away from a country or other place” (Stevenson & Lindberg, 2010). Ananya Roy uses “banishment” to describe the mass of evictions taking place against Black residents in Chicago (Roy, 2017), and the equivalent term, destierro, has also been used in Colombia to describe forced internal migration of racialized Afro-Colombians (Moreno Hurtado & Mornan, 2015). This usage is particular, because for those of African descent, banishment arouses the historical trauma of being trafficked from Africa in the slave trade (ibid.). Through their work, Moreno Hurtado and Mornan’s use of destierro, and Roy’s use of banishment ties the project of racialization to expulsion via eviction. But the usefulness of banishment to describe racialized violence does not apply exclusively to blackness. According to Sznajder and Roniger, "banishment as punishment for crime or control, has a tradition in Latin America dating back to the beginnings of the colony" (Sznajder & Roniger, 2009, p. 42). This is relevant for our case study because indigenous people have suffered

deprivation of resources, economic migration and criminalization, and involuntary mobility also has historical links to racialized trauma. In Mexico City, this racialized dispossession dates back to colonization (Gruzinski, 2012, p. 307). In our case analysis, many of the people facing eviction identify as indigenous or darker-skinned. Ariana, who is indigenous Mazahua, expresses the reality currently experienced in downtown Mexico City:

> Ariana: We, as indigenous people, are very mistreated by the government. We want to sell products to make a living, but they take them away from us. We just want to work, earn money and buy our building. We moved here from the State of Mexico in search of opportunities, so that our children can have a better life. My daughter is going to UNAM this year to study engineering. We want to buy our building. There was no way we could make it in the state of Mexico and that's where they want to send us back to.

She states that being an indigenous vendor in the city is an obstacle, not because of the lack of sales but because of the antagonism of the authorities to the act of selling. Her work has been full of risks to her physical integrity and the freedom of close members of her family, episodes of mistreatment, fines, jail, negotiations to free imprisoned colleagues, invisibility and discrimination are part of working and living in the public space[24]. This antagonism comes from living and selling not only *in the city* but in *this part of the city*, where neighborhoods are being gentrified, and where neighbors have expressed that gentrification is a project of "blanqueamiento por despojo" or "whitening by dispossession"[25] (Gaytán, 2019).

[24] For more information about the hostility toward street vendors, see Crossa, 2009

[25] Activists and neighbors in Colonia Juarez have been decrying gentrification to be a racial project for several years. They insist that it be called "whitening by dispossession" and not gentrification, which they refer to as a dignifying term, given its etymological relationship with "gentle".

As Ariana makes clear, her family's future depends on the possibility of staying in the city, even if staying in the city means suffering racism and hostility for being indigenous. During the interview, she expressed again and again that her goal was to buy the building in common with other indigenous families living there, emphasizing her honesty, her hard work, the investment, her family, and how all of this is invisible to the logic of the housing market and the authorities. The building Ariana and her neighbors are interested in buying is an old building that is classified as medium risk of collapse. As a part of their earthquake emergency preparedness strategy, the government classifies buildings as high, medium and low risk based on the severity of damage. However, as a result of the 2017 earthquake, buildings whose damage originated before the earthquake could not receive public support for reconstruction[26]. In addition, when the ownership of a damaged building is uncertain, this funding is not accessible. Due to this problem, Ariana's building remains in legal limbo, especially because when the inhabitants are not sure whether they have the right to stay in a building whose ownership is unclear, they do not dare to leave the property even temporarily, even if it is structurally unsafe.

Ariana is not the only one still inhabiting a medium-risk building. The indigenous Otomi people who had been formally occupying the damaged but historic Spanish embassy for two decades were among the first relocated from their building under the risk of collapse, but were then violently evicted from the space on September 19, 2018, on the first anniversary of the 2017 earthquake (Gilet, 2019). Tenants of these dangerous buildings know that, if they lose their precarious housing, they have no options for

[26] Ley para la reconstruccion integral de la ciudad de México, 2018 (Law for the comprehensive reconstruction of Mexico City, 2018.)

another place nearby. If evicted, they will leave for the periphery, but every day is a gamble for their physical safety under compromised structures.

According to the above, we can consider Ariana's struggle to remain in her building as a struggle against banishment with racial and gender dimensions, as intersectional oppressions. Thus, Ariana faces eviction from the housing her family has occupied and, on the other hand, if they were evicted their fate would almost certainly be the periphery. But she already knows, because she comes from the periphery, that the margins of the city have very little to offer them. Moreover, banishment to the periphery from a gendered point of view is not only a punishment through exile but a punishment on her future, separating her from the promises of the city, especially with regard to the destiny of her children. Her daughter is in her second year of engineering at UNAM and her younger children get good grades. In the city, she maintains the hope that her family will find some economic stability, although she affirms that being indigenous determines the activities she can carry out, the criminalization of these activities and her social class. In this line of argument, we believe that in this case the systems of classism, racism and sexism cannot be understood in separation from one another (Viveros, 2016). Ariana's case expresses in this sense how the vital spheres of life have been artificially separated. In this we follow Molina, who takes up the Lefebvrian proposal and states "despite the fragmentations of urban life, everyday life follows a spatiotemporal continuum of action, thought and feeling" (Molina, 2013, p. 223).

The emotional register of Ariana's experience is located between pain, anxiety, and fear provoked by uncertainty and, as she describes it, she finds herself in a catch-22. Her

family's future prospects are compromised in the periphery due to economic factors, but they are also compromised in the center of the city: the building in which she lives could collapse, and when she tries to earn a living, she is in danger of being criminalized, fined, booked and imprisoned. Both the center and the periphery are hostile to her well-being and to the life she seeks to build for her sons and daughters. But, in addition, it should also be noted that Ariana has already been banished twice. First, her family left their home to come to Mexico City to seek a future, voluntarily exiled to the city, but as she tries to put down new roots where the future can be promising, she faces a second eviction that could take her and her family back to where they came from. The right to control one's mobility is thus determined not only by class and gender, but also by an ethno-racial system.

3.7 Conclusions

The concepts of voluntary immobility, daily mobility and racial exile have served to deepen understanding of the ways in which the neighborhood as an extension of the home plays an important role in a person's perception of their free movement. It also shows that expelling these tenants from the city center has both logistical and emotional complications. Likewise, the article exposes how the widespread eviction of these racialized women who do not have access to viable housing alternatives in close proximity to their original homes amounts to "racial banishment", the punishment of expelling someone from a particular place (Moreno Hurtado and Mornan, 2015; Roy, 2017), which, crossed with the intersectional categories of gender, shows that by formulating specific questions about how categories of domination are presented in

women's lives, the idea of racial and gendered banishment may be pertinent to understanding eviction through a critical feminist lens.

Attention is rarely paid to these textures of the violence of displacement caused by gentrification, especially because it is a violence that escapes sight. Instead, it is a symbolic, naturalized violence that disappears with the person who is expelled from a neighborhood where he or she is no longer valued. By contrast, we have focused on the interviewees' desires to stay put, and fear of eviction through the lens of their feelings of attachment to home and security in the city, which we have termed as desires for voluntary immobility (De Verteuil, 2011) or chosen rootedness. By organizing and defending their right to stay, they are also defending their identity, their habitation and their security, all elements that are threatened along with housing. We also delved into the logistics faced by residents who must move away from the city center to the periphery, articulating the adaptations they must make to daily commutes to carry out the usual activities of life.

These stories of racialized women show that eviction is accompanied by an emotional intensity that ranges from fear, dignity, sadness, pain from the threat of losing their housing and with it their networks, affective attachment to the place, work, etc. We intend to draw attention to a group especially vulnerable to this form of urban violence, women, because it is they who bear the cost of gentrification that is overlooked in public debate and academic literature. By inviting readers to feel the fears, anguish, anxiety as embodied emotions, to position themselves at the crossroads and accompany women in the dead ends they face, we have given materiality to abstract urban processes such as

gentrification and displacement by eviction, making visible the hidden burdens these women carry when they are banished and invisibilized on the periphery.

CHAPTER 4. SHAME GEOGRAPHIES OF FORCED EVICTION IN MEXICO CITY

4.1 Abstract:

Shame has been described by Eve Sedgwick as the shape of the space in which the self develops/ Elspeth Probyn adds that it informs us of what is important. Although there are different approaches to theorizing shame, most agree that shame is a turn inward upon the self. Drawing on qualitative field work conducted between 2018-2021, this article examines the spatiality of shame in the context of forced eviction in Mexico City, where tenants are evicted without notice from their homes, thrown out with their belongings onto the sidewalk. Beginning with Sylvan Tomkins' account of shame from affect theory, I write a spatial account of shame informed by queer theory, Latin American feminisms, and *teoría cuir* (Latin American decolonial queer theory) to describe how women going through an eviction experience shame and move through its pain to other feelings, of hope, solidarity, agency, and resistance. I argue first, that in an eviction, shame comes to find you, and as it does, it takes the form of an encounter with something strange: a home rearranged and relocated to the public space of the neighborhood. This is a twisting and inverting of a person's lifeworld. Second, I argue that the material cost of an eviction, borne by the tenant in these contemporary neoliberal conditions, is ever more burdensome as the objects that facilitate making a life are infused with an abjection that repels the shamed subject, and sentimental objects that preserve self are chosen to come along to the next home. Third, I argue that restoring the relationship to the agentic self does not come from an inversion

into pride, but rather takes a roundabout track through intimate relationships with others and into the parts of themselves not directly shamed by the encounter. Affirmation of the still-valuable pieces of the self, in other words, is key to repair.

Keywords: shame, eviction, gentrification, affect, queer, cuir, feminism

4.2 Introduction

This article demonstrates how the spatiality of shame can provide insight into the affective dynamics playing invisible political roles in forced eviction in Mexico City. Bringing together affect, queer, and anarchist theory, I show how illegal practices of forced eviction take advantage of the way that shame turns the tenant against herself to dispossess people of their homes. The chain reaction of this shaming results not only in costly material consequences, but also a high emotional cost for the tenant and their intimate relationships. Understanding the "political agency of affect" (Taylor, 2021, p. 62) in the housing market is urgent; as a tool that preys on the desperation of someone whose shelter is in question, wielding affect offers a high payoff for "low emotional costs" (Ibid.). This is not only the case when a tenant hopes to remain, but also when a landlord aims to evict, as Garboden and Rosen demonstrate in their study of the affective tools that landlords use to push tenants out without incurring the expenses of going to court (Garboden & Rosen, 2019).

An illegal eviction is a spectacle. In Mexico City, illegal forced evictions capitalize on the surprise and shame that emerge in a sudden expulsion. In central neighborhoods, this is just the undertow of a much more visible wave of gentrification. According to a journalist who reports on evictions, the illegality of these evictions is generally that of a procedural kind: little or no notice is given to tenants, improper papers are filed, incorrect

names of tenants are registered in the court filing, off-limits times of execution are not honored, or more apartments are vacated on the day of the set-out than are included in the judicial file. The most common grievance is improper temporal notice. Many times, tenants don't know that they are being evicted until the day it happens. Even tenants familiar with the eviction process and who expect an eviction might be coming have been surprised to hear a knock at the door one morning and find an *actuario* (official who executes an eviction) accompanied by masses of police assembled in the street to remove them from their homes and deposit their belongings on the sidewalk.

This paper takes Samuel Strong's "Towards a geographical account of shame" (2021) as an invitation to expand geographical thinking about shame, and approaches the topic from a different origin point: one rooted in affect rather than morality. Strong pairs a psychological definition of shame as a feeling that emerges from the recognition of wrongdoing (Lewis, 1995) with Sara Ahmed's understanding of shame as "a double-play of concealment and exposure" (Strong, 2021, p. 74): "exposing some wounds, at the same time as it conceals others" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 102) to discuss how shame circulates in a British foodbank. What is most interesting about Strong's article is the way that he links the sociological and psychological research on shame to its political mobilization as a tool of affective governmentality for consent and control. Strong focuses on defensive techniques that foodbank users and volunteers use to deflate shame. In this article, I augment this framework for understanding how to not only punch back at shame, but to dissolve its power in enduring ways. I begin with Tomkins' definition of shame as a feeling not necessarily related to any form of wrongdoing.

Silvan Tomkins' work on shame is the foundation of much queer theory on affect (including that of Sara Ahmed). In Tomkins' framing, shame is "the affect that most defines the space wherein a sense of self will develop" (Sedgwick et al., 1995, p. 6). In other words, it forms the shape of the boundary for the self that will become what both separates the subject into an individual, but also connects them to the world: in Sedgwick's terms, this is both "individuation" and "filiation" (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 98). What makes Tomkins' approach to understanding affect interesting is that it is focused "on *the strange* rather than the prohibited or disapproved" (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 97 (emphasis in original)); it is based on observations of infant interaction with the world before the age in which morality could play a role in their expressiveness. Rather than referring to 'wrongdoing', for Tomkins, shame is an interruption in an established connection of interest. I prefer this definition of shame to a moral one, not only because it holds open more possibilities about what to do with shame than a moral framework does, but because in the context of an eviction, where something familiar (home) is made strange, I find Tomkins' definition to be more appropriate than that of Lewis. Queer theorists also praise this "different place to begin" (Ibid. 2003, p. 99) as one not tangled in oedipal or repressive heterosexual psychic dramas.

In examining shame at the site of an eviction, this research contributes to understanding of how shame is processed by surprise, and in an intimate space (home) made strange by an intrusion. While geographers have examined how people cope with shame in myriad settings, it has rarely been taken as a central focus, or been studied as a more or less spontaneous arrival on people's doorsteps. Strong's account, for instance, examines it in a stigmatized place: a foodbank (2021), while Vanolo's work studies the

strategies of keeping shame at bay in the city through concealment, displacement, and grouping shameful activities for collective consumption (2020). Derek Ruez' account of sexual racism does stand out in its discussion of the hinge of shock and shame in a setting generally ascribed with positive affects (dating) (Ruez, 2016). Likewise, shame comes up in research about how hegemonic orders can shame those who do not 'fit' – namely studies on austerity and neoliberal political economy impose shame upon those who have done nothing to merit it (Muñoz, 2017; Taylor, 2021; Weiss, 2018). More research is needed to understand the spatiality of shame.

This research draws on qualitative data conducted in Mexico City between 2018 and 2021. It is part of a bigger project about the affective register of both disaster-based and gentrification-based displacement from the central neighborhoods towards the periphery. I interviewed people about their lived experiences of eviction, whether they were preparing to resist an eviction, they had been evicted, or whether they had successfully resisted it and remained. I draw on interviews with individual women and household interviews, which lasted anywhere from one to three hours. Long interviews usually located in peoples' homes allowed for participants and me to make a safer space to talk about sensitive topics like emotions, trauma, shame, and pain. While the larger research project studies experiences of eviction among both men and women, this article draws solely from interviews with women. These interviews are contextualized with hundreds of hours of participant observation, conducted in the activities of the Red de Desalojados (Eviction Network), other activist groups, and government meetings.

In what unfolds, I first explore shame's origin point in queer theory: a framework of shame as an affect. I then discuss postcolonial queer and decolonial feminist and cuir[27] perspectives on shame, before I present empirical material in three sections. The empirical sections analyze the spatiality of shame in an eviction, the transformative effect of shame on the material life of tenants' belongings, and the relational transformation of shame that restores a shamed subject's agency. I argue that through this different approach to shame, one that emphasizes the undeservedness of shame and the overlooked value of shamed subjects, the repressive and depressive forces of hegemonic structures can be more effectively resisted, leaving subjects feeling less alone, drained, and passive. Rather, through a circuitous approach to resolving the shame, they might be reminded of their community, their energy, and their agency. The aim of this different approach is to find ways to make life in the margins of hegemony such that the primacy of its power is weakened and its omnipotence is lessened (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Finally, I conclude by speaking to the ways this research is reflected in eviction lore (in the form of urban legends and cinema) in Latin America and close with a brief conclusion.

4.3 A queer place to begin: an affect theory of shame

Beginning from this different place, shame works through a vocabulary of interest and attachments: in the moment of abjection, shame turns the subject inward, as the connection did not pan out as expected. Shame emerges through the preservation of an external attachment and the questioning of the self. In the moral accounts of shame, it highlights "a discrepancy between the ideal and the actual self" (Strong, referencing

[27] Cuir is a critical and decolonial take on queerness, coming from the spelling of queer in Spanish

Broucek, 2021, p. 75). I agree with the idea shared among shame theorists that the turn of shame splits the subject into both subject *and* object to be worked on. But by going back to Tomkins to understand the way the split forces a choice between attachments, I hope to restore some openness to the outcome of the moment of shaming: compared to addressing the (inevitable) gap between the ideal and actual self, restoring attachments shifts the focus away from seeking perfection and towards a hopeful acceptance of an imperfect self that sometimes disappoints. This action not only holds a hope for returning the self to wholeness with disregard for achieving ideal qualities, but also moves the bar for self acceptance to a more reasonable place! Finally, this framing also allows for an element of spontaneity, surprise, and unconscious activity that accompany a moment of shame that sneaks up on you rather than one you prepare to confront. For these reasons, I favor this affect theory of shame. The sudden forced choice between conflicting attachments does not mean that a subject doesn't have ambivalent feelings when given the time to consider them. When shame casts a shadow over a situation, it imposes a hierarchy on something that was otherwise arrayed. As Strong mentions, shame locates the subject in a position of inferiority in relation to others and to social ideals: a position of abjection that did not necessarily exist prior to the moment of shaming. Coping with shame involves coming to a new arrangement after this hierarchy was imposed from outside.

Shame is also a site of affect politics. According to anarchist theorists bergman, Montgomery, and Alluri, "Empire's hold is affective. It propagates feelings of shame, impotence, fear and dependence" (bergman, Montgomery and Alluri 2017: 36). As Ahmed has shown, feelings like shame individualize (Ahmed, 2014), fracturing social bonds that constitute forces of resistance, revolution, and transformation. But "to shame people for

being *in touch* with feelings of despair, rage, hatred, [also] individualizes suffering" (Ibid., p. 62 emphasis mine) from something whose attachment on us is by nature cruel (Berlant, 2011). In Strong's study, foodbank users, workers and volunteers all use strategies of care, laughter, and confession to mitigate the effects of shame. Strong argues that *disrupting* shame is a strategy for reducing its negative effects on the people who use a foodbank in the context of austerity Britain, effectively "deforming shame" (Strong, 2021, p. 79) to restore the subject's agency and dignity. I think Strong recognizes in his example of laughter that using defensive humor can, indeed, be effective, but it requires a delicate hand: in his article he explains that one foodbank user disrupted shame about coming to the foodbank with a joke about walking a long way to get there. In the process, this joke poked fun at his wife's weight, which effectively re-shamed her even as he displaced his own shame. This effective "punch down" (O'Neil, 2022) is a counter-revolutionary deflection. To combat the invidualization of shame and the cruel attachments that contemporary imperial structures like neoliberal racial capitalism have on people, a different affective political approach is necessary.

In this article, I suggest a more roundabout management of shame as a part of liberatory politics. In Tomkins' framework, shame emerges from a relationship of interest. According to Probyn, "only something or someone that has interested you can produce a flush of shame" (Probyn, 2005, pp. ix–x). Probyn continues, "interest is always hedged by the conditional *if*." and "that *if* contains the seeds for shame" (Ibid.: xi). It is dashed reciprocity that puts shame into motion, and the cruel attachments that Berlant critiques are continually establishing these relationships of interest only to leave them to wither.

An affective politics of resistance would thus seem to propose an attack not on imperial neoliberal racial capitalism itself, but on *the relation of interest* that conveniently ropes us into its orbit. Therefore, the strategy of punching back at shame may only take a liberatory affective politics so far. Queer theory, as an approach to surviving in the margins of hegemonic heterosexuality, certainly contributes important wisdom for developing resistance to this kind of power. However, post-stonewall queer theory's stereotype of *Pride*, maintains the powerful dyad, "pride-shame" (Johnston, 2019) that still upholds the relationship of interest. A management and transformation of shame to distance oneself from the persistent tentacles of hegemonic structures seems more enduring. Sedgwick argues that before pride, a subject is restored to herself through a ritual for "reclaiming what has been debased", through a process of "shame creativity" (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 63). This "queer healing process" transforms the negativity of shame "by embracing rather than refusing it" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 88), finding community to cope with the pain when an attachment doesn't love you back and facing the possibility that it may never love you back. This approach is more complex than reductions of western queer culture to pride parades give credit, however, it could also take notes from how people cope with shame outside of the Anglophone north. In the next section, I analyze the contributions of queer thinking from elsewhere, cuir theory, and Latin American feminisms to thinking about shame.

4.4 Many more places to begin: cuiring queer shame outside of the Anglophone north

Is queer theory really an appropriate lens for viewing this issue of eviction among women in Mexico City? As Vanolo points out, the geographical studies that put shame at

the center are culturally situated within 'the west', where European conceptualizations of shame dominate, but studies from outside this space have framed shame in different manners. With the necessary precautions of entering the "desiring impasse of translation"(Pierce, 2020) and taking Valencia's critique of how first world discourses applied to Latin America not only ignores valuable insight from situated perspectives but also misses out on the general application of wisdom from the majority world (Valencia, 2010), this section consults theory about shame from queer postcolonial Lebanon, Latin American feminisms, and teoría cuir to observe what resonates in the anxious impasse between discourses (Pierce, 2020, p. 29), to see what options this opens for how shame can be transformed.

In her account of Arab queerness, Georgis posits that the conceptual move away from shame is not toward pride, but toward *hope*, in a "queer Arab becoming [that] is *postcolonial*: mixed, complexly hybrid, and unfinished" (Georgis, 2013, p. 234 emphasis mine). As opposed to the Anglo-American emphasis on pride, the queer Lebanese community in question "is inventing itself *through* and not *against* shame" (ibid., 234). Georgis' study of shame explains the unease of different powers holding queer lives in tension. Not reducible to either the category of Western pride culture or to Arab tradition, her subjects exceed the boundaries of both, and must create a new field of queer Arabness in the archive they build with their stories. But Georgis argues that this is a painful process of finding peace in incongruence, one that she argues "post-Stonewall pride culture" (p. 233) does not make space for. Focusing on the pain of shame is important for Georgis, because it "gives access to what is most important and […] a resource for imagining change" (mentioning Probyn and Sedgwick, p. 233). Through this approach,

she finds reparative responses to the pain of being between categories. Ambivalent feelings are not resolved in this account, but joined in nonconformist identities that refuse to drop important attachments, and in the process begin to "articulat[e] what is yet to have a name or a theory but has an emotional shape" (p. 248). This incommensurable account defies even the dictates of how to cope with shame, and leaves its subjects in the space of hope.

The proposal to wrestle with what hurts and move through it makes me think about what Anzaldúa (whose early contributions to queer theory could be more widely recognized[28]) has said about Chicanxs negotiating language identities in the borderlands of USA-Mexico. As the world has become more immediate, more places have begun to feel like borderlands in the way that hegemonic and imperial forces feel closer to home everywhere. When Anzaldúa speaks of shame, she talks about being vulnerable to the world, and closing in on the self, "I locked the door, kept the world out; I vegetated, hibernated, remained in stasis, idled. No telephone, no television, no radio. Alone with the presence in the room" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 44). But in an eviction, recovery space is taken away and people confront a variety of new settings to attempt to hibernate – often unfamiliar or uncomfortable ones that can further push a person inside herself. "Here we are weaponless with open arms, with only our magic" (ibid., 88), Anzaldúa writes. "I am possessed by a vision [...] It's a validation vision" (ibid., 87). With these words, Anzaldúa

[28] See: "Gloria Anzaldúa's Queer Mestizaje" by Ian Barnard (Barnard, 1997), Anzaldúa's interview with Ellie Hernández (Hernández & Anzaldúa, 1995), and Sayak Valencia's chapter on the translation from queer to cuir in *Queer & Cuir* (Lanuza et al., 2015).

conjures something into being that defies the categories offered to her. It is a wish infused with magic.

Anzaldúa's wish takes form in a particular social space: it is entangled with pride and community. Also writing about women negotiating English and Spanish in the borderlands, Relaño Pastor explains that women feel a desire to socialize their children in Spanish, and this ties to a pride in their traditions that counterposes the shame they come to feel about their ability to navigate life in the English language. In this setting, women resist shame not with a constructed pride about their English, but in a pride that emerges naturally from using their Spanish and leaning into their right to use both languages in public space. In this research, pride and shame are attached to different qualities and the shift away from feelings of shame towards feelings of pride is achieved by turning way from failures in English and focusing on the value of Spanish in their personal and collective lives (Relaño Pastor, 2014). This strategic change of focus from one language to the other arrives at pride of self through a roundabout theoretical (and spatial) move – celebrating a part of the self not recognized in the shameful encounter and taking space for the self once again (Relaño Pastor, 2014).

As a geographer interested in affect, I find this roundabout movement to be the crucial quality. It takes the emphasis off of the part of the self that causes pain, and takes interest in another part that *already* feels good. In Tomkins' framework, it breathes space into an area that became too full of interest – too intense. Concentrating on another aspect of the self encourages feelings to pass, reducing the interest in that area. This is an affective spatial reorganization, a refocusing that frees up the subject to emphasize the

importance of a part of herself that gives her pride and meaning but which is invisible to the hegemonic power that harms her, and turning her attention away from the unrelated aspect of herself that causes her shame. Reducing the interest in that piece holds a bit of hope for reducing the power it has to splinter the subject in shame: the teaching of this is that moving past the negativity of shame into another feeling (pride, hope, etc) might not require a rejection of another part, it might just not matter that something failed, because that failing thing is not very interesting. No interest, no shame. No need for shamelessness expressed as pride.

To confront the topic of shame and subjectivity in Mexico requires tangling with its colonial history, the framework of which is laid out in Octavio Paz's 1950 *Labyrinth of Solitude*. Paz frames Mexican colonial national identity as a binary option based on the story of Spanish colonization by Cortez through the assistance of Marina, an indigenous translator. The options for national subjectivity (and apologies ahead of time for the language) are presented in terms of the verb *chingar*, translated as *to fuck*: to be the one who fucks (Cortez) or to be the one who is passively opened to be fucked (Marina). The verb is chosen for its aggression – Paz's framing of this is not a consensual act (Paz, 1996) (Cervantes-Gómez, 2020). This dyad leaves people with the choice between a masculinized, aggressive, active national subjectivity that adopts the position of the conquerer, or a shameful passive national subjectivity from the indigenous translator who takes the position of shame, for Marina is the mother of the mestizo and Mexico is the "país de los chingados", the country born of the raped mother. This colonial legacy colors accounts of shame, but cuir analysis has worked to revindicate the agency of the bottom and offer hope. This research makes visible the *choice* to open, not be forced open.

Reading Paz against the grain, Cervantes-Gomez argues that this is a "radical passivity": a "willingness of either subject to become undone by their imprisonment to the other" (Cervantes-Gómez, 2020, p. 339) that at the same time "is an embrace of the unintelligibility and messiness of sex" (ibid). In other words, a bottom has the agency to fuck back. For Paz, there is shame in the bottom's passivity, but what Cervantes-Gomez shows is that this shame obscures the bottom's participation in the act and not only the comfort but the pride one can find in a role that has formerly been so denigrated. I can't claim to understand Paz in all of his depths, but the final words in *Laberinto de la soledad* seem to express Paz's frustration with a certain fixation on redeeming Mexico's original sin, and his closing line recommends Mexicans stop looking so deeply into the past, full of torture, as they dream, but return to dreaming with closed eyes (Paz, 1996, p. 89). I read this as a possible recommendation to release the hold on the interesting object, the object of shame, and to look around to what works and already inspires feelings of belonging and pride.

What each of these queer and feminist analyses points to is that liberation from shame comes from exiting the charged dyad of pride-shame, and finding a less intense field of interest that emerges from the complexity of identities that do not fit into the categories hegemonic power aims to squeeze them into. With this framework in mind, I turn now to the scene of an eviction.

4.5 Spatialities of shame on a sidewalk in Mexico City

While some spaces carry a stigma of shame (Sisson, 2021; Strong, 2021), in an eviction, there is no approaching shame: shame *comes to find you*.

The intrusion of the state into your home to extract you and your belongings turns something familiar into something strange. It is a shocking event that reorganizes the intimate pieces of the self when a space of safety becomes unsafe and unfamiliar. When people are evicted in Mexico City, it can be a very disorienting moment because they may or may not be shown eviction papers. Sometimes they are given a paper and it is the first time they have seen anything from their judicial file. Other times they are shown a paper, which they take photos of but are not permitted to keep. Sometimes the paper they are shown has nothing to do with eviction, and sometimes they are shown nothing but forced out all the same. But they are not just ushered out; they are ejected from their space by a powerful show of force. The numbers of police cited by my research participants and by local news stories is regularly in the hundreds for the eviction of one to several apartments in a building. On the sidewalk, tenants find themselves in new relationship to the intimate objects of their lives, in an unusual place, and juxtaposed in new ways.

This is indeed, strange. The self and home are undone by an external force, and the resistance to accept this reality for the tenant means a reluctance to detach from a relationship of interest. Interest insinuates a hope for reciprocity, and when this is denied, we turn inward to reckon with the unreliability of our attachments. In this circumstance, home and a place of security in the city is denied to the evicted tenant, who then must make sense of that radical disruption and the failure of their investment in the home providing that security. The structure of the objects that the tenant had built to support life could not hold itself together and on the sidewalk, as a tenant looks around at what should be their familiar items, instead they are “suddenly looked at by one who is strange” (Sedgwick et al., 1995, p. 135). The misrecognition turns the subject inward to understand what has

happened. It brings about a split in the self: the attachment (a relationship of interest for Tomkins) to the structured home is not possible, and has to be reconsidered.

Sometimes when we feel the blush of shame, it catches us off guard, revealing our own interest, unacknowledged. Tenants described feelings of confusion and loss to confront this upheaval that track with Tomkins' descriptions of shame as something unfathomable. It is "not unlike mourning, in which I become exquisitely aware of the self just because I will not surrender the love object which must be surrendered" (Sedgwick et al., 1995, p. 138). But the attachment is hard to let go of, and in this encounter with the strange, "because the self is not altogether willing to renounce the object, excitement may break through and displace shame at any moment" (ibid., p. 137), meaning that herein lies an opportunity: the subject is ready to undo the damage at the first opportunity.

However, all of this happening before an audience, which also produces a shame borne from offending the one who looks (Johnston, 2019, p. 219). When tenants' lives are exposed, it is in front of the casual neighborhood acquaintances who made a street feel like home. For a spectacle like an eviction to take place in front of that audience inspires confusion about losing yourself in space, finding yourself in an unfamiliar relationship to your world. This is accompanied by rejection and shame. As an eviction is taking place, residents describe "the embarrassment of "*how are your things going to be <u>outside</u>?*" In other words, the things will be in the wrong place. These feelings mean that people want to get out of the spotlight as soon as they can. For Gaby (38, school secretary) and Jazmín (29, student), who lived together on a bustling downtown street with their comadres, Paula and Gloria (their mother and grandmother, respectively) and two dogs, watching the hired

movers (cargadores) carry their family's possessions out onto the cordoned off sidewalk was humilliating:

> Jazmín: You know, something that flooded me at that time: people will see that you are there. So it was, like, "take everything before anyone sees us…"
>
> Gaby: Aha…
>
> Jazmín: (animatedly) "Come on, let's get out of here!"
>
> Gaby: Aha…
>
> Jazmín: Aha.
>
> Gaby: (making a gesture of covering) "Nothing to see here!"

Seeing their belongings outside their house on the sidewalk gave rise to an urgency to gather everything and run. Gaby and Jazmín's usual comportment outside of their house was an easy, comfortable one of belonging and ownership. They felt safe and embedded in that place and among its people. To have their lives exposed and drawn attention to so suddenly broke with the neighborhood identities that they inhabited. They knew there would be a social cost to their neighbors seeing this.

The feeling of being out of place is also linked to painful feelings of shame and embarrassment (Boonzaier & Mhkize, 2018; Hübinette, 2007; Johnston, 2019). As I have argued elsewhere, women's sense of belonging in the city hinges on the comfort and meaning they feel in the space immediately outside their home (Linz and Soto, forthcoming). This is a space of community and familiarity, where women enjoy an embedded role in community, including relationships of responsibility, often in the form of comadrazgo (Gudeman, 1971). These are formal relationships of responsibility for children, that tie women together in networks and influence how they act in community.

Suddenly becoming the object of interest was not in keeping with their fitting into the scene: sticking out brought on feelings of shame that made them want to cover and disappear. This turn against the self is to salvage the relationship to the neighbors in the interest of preserving a social bond. For Rodriguez, the grief geographies of something so personal as the destruction of home play an important role in the emotional landscape of moments like these (Rodríguez Aguilera, 2021). The feeling of shock comes from the reluctance to detach from the pieces of the self that are represented in the environment and objects that surround a person in their daily life, and which have been dismantled, harming along with it the vital energy shared between a person and their immediate environment.

The extraction of a person-plus-home from their immediate neighborhood community in an eviction echoes the violence of extractive industries to what communitarian Latin American feminists refer to as the *cuerpo-territorio* (body-territory) (Cabnal, 2012; Naylor et al., 2018; Rodríguez Aguilera, 2021). Cuerpo-territorio describes the vital relationship between a woman's body and her immediate surroundings and the ways they sustain life. It is used to draw connection to the emotional and personal damage that extractive industries do to the people whose land these industries exploit. Although I have not found it used in reference to the body afflicted by neoliberal urbanization, I don't see why it shouldn't be, for the undoing of the home in a forced eviction is entangled with the undoing of the self, and the undone self is also a loss for the collective and for the neighborhood. In the scattered expulsion of a person's personal belongings into the public space, shame is produced through space and produces new spatialities of the self and of the collective (Johnston, 2019, p. 219). The effect of this undoing and exposure is to

individualize the tenant, shrink them into themselves, and fracture social and place-based bonds.

4.6 Eviction's materialities of shame: The unbearable weight of abject objects

The shame-driven urge to get out of the public eye also has a material cost, for the event of suddenly relocating a family's material possessions requires a significant mobilization of resources. Even a modest dwelling can conceal a significant collection of materials, and the most cumbersome ones are often the most useful for maintaining essential activities of everyday life. In an instant, decisions must be made about what to save and how to save it. In this moment, utility in the medium term is up against replaceability and logistics: the most difficult items to transport and store, but which are replaceable, like beds, stoves, and refrigerators (appliances do not generally come with rental property in Mexico City) are frequently the items that people leave behind, but their loss causes immediate complications that last into the medium-term. Hearing again from Gaby, Jazmín, and Jazmín's grandmother, Paula:

> Gaby: My thinking was we are going to collect everything that can be collected, and we are going to throw away the furniture. That is…
>
> Jazmín: That… we actually did that.
>
> Gaby: (Laughing) We actually threw all the furniture away.
>
> Gloria: We left the entire refrigerator, stove, in the garbage.
>
> Jazmín: Beds, bedframes.
>
> Paula: (Emphasizing) *All all all* of it.

What to collect and what to throw away? The urge to toss "all all all of it" has a flavor of fatalism, fueled by a wish for escaping or "being done with it." At least throwing

all of it away provides some relief, perhaps, from feeling so overwhelmed by the sudden awareness of the materiality of your life; you can detach from the least important objects of your suffering. In another eviction, the neighbors who were evicted expressed a desire to leave this ordeal behind them at whatever cost. Speaking to Irma (nurse, 63):

> Irma: So, we asked many neighbors 'Are you going to come back?' And 'no, no,' they said 'I don't want anything from here anymore. No, not anymore, I don't want or need to fight for any of my things, I'm leaving.'

These evicted neighbors left a mass of belongings on the sidewalk and accumulations of perishables and odds and ends in each apartment. Like in Gaby's case, they wanted to leave their furniture on the street, and they didn't want any money for it. When the *pepenedores* (scavengers) came by to inquire about items, the evicted residents respond: "*Llévatelo, o sea, llévate si te sirve*" "Take it, you know, take it if it serves you."

To stand on the sidewalk surrounded by your belongings generates a heavy feeling, not only because of their material weight. You can't carry everything on your back. You need people. You need vehicles. You need money. And you need a destination. And shame lays another layer onto this logistical question. Irma explains, "when they evict you, you feel humiliated, trampled on, like you feel something like, very small." In relation to their mountain of belongings, tenants feel dwarfed by shame. Why is this? The deconstructed home sits in the form of piles on the sidewalk, no longer serving any function but dead weight. The objects are now abjected: they symbolize failed hopes. To orchestrate a material relocation of this proportion is complicated to begin with, but to do it for abjected objects is even harder. When it is on the sidewalk, the absurdity of something like a refrigerator is unspeakable. A refusal to engage with the scorned objects is the self turned inward: pride is absent, shame infuses the objects. How silly to invest hope in them, one

might think. To overcome the shame, hold onto the attachment, and organize those resources on the spot, on a weekday morning at 7am is a steep challenge:

> Jazmín: We just brought down the mattresses and literally I believe that for two months we slept on just mattresses. Because we didn't have bedframes because we left them on the side of the street because it was VERY heavy to carry them. It was heavy wood. I mean, it was very difficult. I mean yes (nodding and seeming to grant a point) my brothers, my mother's partner, the girlfriends, and all that were with us, but it was not so easy for my brother's girlfriend and I to carry a bed, a (heavy wood) bedframe.
>
> Gaby: And that we didn't know where we were going to go.
>
> Gloria: (Chiming in) And where are we going!

Even with caring family members to help you out, the lack of a clear destination can make the logistics of collecting belongings too much to fathom in the moment of a set out. And yet, it bears a cost not to conjure some mental agility to think quickly about how and where to mobilize the large and useful household items.

> Gaby: What hurt us a lot was the fridge. It wasn't new but it wasn't old either. Here we arrived without a fridge, we waited almost 3 months. We had to make inventions (unintelligible), yeah? That is, cold water…
>
> Gloria: From the plants, (unintelligible) so that the food would not spoil… well, where we kept it.
>
> Jazmín: And well, at the beginning we had to buy food on the street because there was no gas here for example… it takes time to get the phone number for the truck that comes to install the gas tank for cooking... etc. So then you ate the tacos… We got to know everything being sold here….hahaha (they all laugh) like, I'm hungry and well, let's find out what there is, so we went for a walk and see what was sold, here they sell tortillas, etc. (gestures here and there)

Under the uncertainty of not knowing where to store a refrigerator, Gaby and her family ended up leaving it and going without refrigeration for three months, at considerable cost. The money lost on the fridge, the money lost on buying a new one, and the money

spent on take-out during those three months adds up. But standing on the sidewalk, it was too much to imagine securing storage and transportation for such a large and heavy appliance.

The complications do not stop there. These material costs are also accompanied by the frustration of not having basic tools for everyday life, or basic knowledge about your new environment. During the chaos, many of the small items essential to everyday life wander off: things like the can opener, mop, phone charger, make-up bag, mixing bowl, kitchen knife or cutting board are tools that frustrate daily life until they are replaced. What to do with a dustbin but no broom? With a bucket but no mop? A can of vegetables you can't open? In the post-eviction cleanup, you have to replace these tiny items that make your life easier. And you have to do it in a new part of the city where you don't always know where to go.

So what did they save if it wasn't the bulky essentials or the small tools of daily life? Besides items that are very difficult to replace like important documents, they focused on belongings that have a sentimental value. Jazmín saved her diploma and, despite its size, Gloria insisted on saving the dining room table. To make food and share it with people around this table brings her great joy. During our interview we sat around this table, and Gloria's pride shone as she extended her arms over its surface and talked about its meaning. These are symbols of identity, and in the conversation, it became clear that they could manage the emotional pain of the eviction through these reminders of who they are. Jazmín stayed busy with work and school to get through it. Gloria suffered for months until she finally began to unpack her personal items and set them out on display. This was the turning point for her: when she saw herself reflected back in their new space.

Whereas “shame is the affect of indignity, of defeat, of transgression, and of alienation” (Tomkins 133), sentimental objects remind a person of who they are, what they value, and why they are dignified. Relegated to a new space in a new neighborhood – all strange and constant reminders of their unintelligibility as home, tenants cope with estrangement and shame, and bring themselves back to life by reminding themselves of the pieces of themselves that they value. But the material burden of eviction falls on the tenant, alone as they are in their shame, and anarchists bergman et al., would argue, they are transformed into sad subjects, bogged down by the materialities of life – hard pressed to resist and organize (bergman et al., 2017). If this is intentional, it is a brilliant tactic: as people are evicted they exit in small numbers, a small trickle out of the city, mirroring a colonial capitalist racist process of dispossession across Latin America that many refer to as “slow death” (Rodríguez Aguilera, 2021). And when it is the law shaming you, it is an “affective imposition” (bergman et al., 2017) of unjust structures upon you, that further devalue you and splinter the possibility of resilience and collective action. In the next section, I discuss how relationships are the key to getting past the burdensome feelings of shame and restoring oneself to agency.

4.7 Restoring the relationship to self through relationships with others in the uphill battle to stay put

When we try to understand how the community buoys shame at the margins of colonial structures, it is informative to study the strong relationships between women of responsibility, knowledge sharing, and defense of autonomous activity like comadrazgo, social ties that are shared across Latin America. One study demonstrates how women’s

relationships woven through midwifery bolster comfort and vulnerability that lead to pride and community cohesion among Afro-Colombian women whose life saving knowledge and traditions are shamed by a dominant order (Lozano Lerma, 2016). In Lozano's account, these communal ties that link women in care relationships play a very important role in finding ways to celebrate life at the margin, finding happiness in a bleak scenario. "Se trata de la sanación mutua en acompañamiento" (It's about mutual healing through accompaniment) (Lozano Lerma, 2016, p. 19). In other words, the healing of wounds by the violence of living at the margin is done through close ties.

For Gaby, feeling out of place by being on the sidewalk was not the only feeling of shame that she experienced that day. On behalf of her family, Gaby had been working to prevent a possible eviction through the anti-displacement group called the Red de Desalojados. She had been filing paperwork to understand the legal status of their building and the danger of an eviction, and put protection in place in case the day came that the landlord would try to kick them out. The morning they were set out, she was already at work when the police arrived. She received the call from her family that it was happening, and she describes how that race back to the house went, and the wave of shame that crashed over her:

> Gaby: Keep in mind, my worry was my mom and my godmother (she begins to cry), because I felt like I'd let them down. But when I saw them downstairs so… composed… or like, I saw my whole family looking put together, so that lifted my spirits. Because no. I felt like they were going to tell me "I told you so" but no! Everyone was in good spirits and doing their best.
>
> So when I saw my niece upstairs, my sister was sick and couldn't come, my sister's partner arrived, mi nieces, the girlfriends, talking. So that helped us a lot. It helped me a lot because I thought I was going to find them here going crazy, my mom and godmother are going to be crazy, but

> when I saw them composed, it was like, super, well let's do this! (laughs a little through fading tears), or like, even with all the things strewn about and everything, I thought, "they are good"… in that moment it was "what am I going to do"? Right?
>
> So on my way to the house I was making calls, I told my teacher coworkers because I work at a school. My shame disappeared. (very matter-of-factly). And I asked for help. "Please help me" and I called other friends: "bring bags please, because my things are thrown out, literally" so I got in touch with a teacher that had a moving truck and he said I'll be right there. And another friend called another moving truck. And my thought was "we're going to pick up everything we can and we're going to throw out the furniture"

In contrast to guilt, which centers on a wrongness of an action, shame focuses on a wrongness in the self. In this reshaping of the relationship to the self, there is also a reshaping of the relationship to the world and to our intimate relations. Gaby's initial shame about the eviction taking place was an attachment to her efforts to prevent the eviction through a legal process to remain, and the realization that this had failed and let her family down activated a shame response rather than a guilt response. When Gaby's family members affirm her instead of saying "I told you so", thereby allowing Gaby to separate from her failed attempt to prevent the eviction, Gaby is able to restore the connection to the other and to herself once again and move on from the feeling of shame and into other modes of relating: connection, trust, and pragmatic agency. For Gaby, the effect was instant. "My shame disappeared", she said. It sounds almost magical.

Shame is a unique affect because it is so relational and yet so individual. It is about the self, but it is about also the relation to others, inherently. It is interest in the other that provokes the self to turn inward. It was the acceptance of her family that repaired the damage she inflicted on herself as she turned inward with her shame. According to Cvetkovich and Sedgwick, "deshaming" attachments to structures that harm us is part of

the work of "reclaiming what has been debased" with "shame creativity" (Cvetkovich 2003: 88). In other words, it is reasonable that Gaby would use the avenues at her disposal to try to save the apartment. It is also understandable that they would fail her. Like it is explained in Anzaldua and Relaño Pastor, the transition from shame to disinterest is achieved through a distraction from the shameful object within the self and a refocusing on parts of the self that have deeper meaning and sociality: the relationship with family members and Gaby's capacities to make things happen. Here there is a mirror: shame derived from unsuccessful navigation of discriminatory systems is less interesting than reinforcing communal ties when those efforts fail. This shift is not done through a punching up or a deformation of shame. Rather it is a deflation of shame through de-prioritization. It is brilliant, humble, complex, restrained, and mature.

This restoration to the self and to others doesn't always happen so quickly. In the next example I discuss the case of Irma, who was not evicted, but whose neighbors in her building were. Irma describes how the eviction of people in her building changed the relationships between the residents who remained and other neighbors on the street, characterized by a sudden coldness and suspicion.

> Irma: Imagine this: the day after the eviction, we feel that people look at us as if to say "don't hang out with them. If they came to evict them, it is for something they did. 'They must have skeletons in their closets,'" as they say here. 29 "Some criminal act. And that's why they brought so many police. And we didn't know, we thought they were good people. But if they brought so many, it must be for something." That's what we felt people thought. And yes, many turned their backs and did not speak to us.

[29] Idiom translated by author from "cola que le pisen"

For the residents who remained, apprehensive looks from neighbors conjured an imaginary of judgement and feelings of rejection. What were neutral or casually trusting relationships with their neighbors were cast in doubt as a result of the spectacle of the eviction. As generally law-abiding citizens, the eviction event inferred there were two sides to the controversial issue, and a decision should be made to identify with *either* the state *or* the evicted neighbors. For neighbors unfamiliar with the injustice of the eviction practices in the city, this initially bred suspicion of the neighbors rather than distrust for the state. This fracturing of the urban poor through suspicion lends itself to neoliberal urban processes that prey upon a disorganized populace. As Leal Martínez has argued, stigmatization of individuals is a key component of splintering communal power (Leal Martínez, 2016b). The individualization achieved through shame that goes along with this is all too convenient.

After a time of continued proximity, however, the neighbors' distrust shifted to solidarity. Returning to Irma's comment about how the neighbors looked at them with suspicion, I ask her if this was still going on, and she responded "No, not now. They cheer me up, they tell me, '*Go on, fight! we are with you.*'" In other words, this event initially caused friction between neighbors, but through continued relation and after the work of time, turned them toward one another and away from the state. As García-Lamarca also argues in the context of the Spanish housing crisis, coping with guilt and shame to not only find your political voice but also to trust it, is a process that requires time (García-Lamarca, 2017).

4.8 The political use of shame in eviction lore

The time it took for neighbors to come to terms with the injustice involved in Irma's building's eviction are crucial to a politics that combats shame. The surprise element of these illegal evictions is key to taking advantage of tenants and shaming them into atomized victims. Without notice, people do not have the chance to align themselves ideologically with their social and material attachments or to prepare to fight back shamelessly. A journalist who writes about evictions told me an anecdote that circulates widely in central Mexico City among residents who fear eviction:

> If they are notified, people prepare because I mean ... you are fighting, as I said, it is not like you are fighting something that is gone the next day, like well, it was a bad dream. No, you are fighting for your *house*, your *heritage*, so there, there were many moments here in which they came to try to execute an eviction and people resisted. There is a story of a woman, Guadalupe, where she says that they wanted to evict her and all the *granaderos* (riot police) came and actuarios and she stood at the door, grabbed a gas tank and opened it and lit a lighter and told them if they take one more step, we all blow up. But it's because she was already prepared and she knew they were going to come, that gives you the opportunity to defend yourself, to, (collecting himself) "All right, let's do this."

This may or may not be urban legend, but it is echoed in two Latin American movies about eviction – one about Mexico City and another about Bogotá – that deal with the theme of residential evictions. The first and older film is called *La Estrategia del Caracol* (The Snail's Strategy) from 1993. In this movie, a group of tenants in Bogotá, Colombia, are served an eviction notice, and they decide that instead of leaving, they will deconstruct the entire building piece by piece (except the façade) and rebuild it elsewhere. They buy time with various legal and extralegal strategies, postponing the eviction date until they have completed their elaborate work, which involves hoisting pieces of the

building up over the roof and into a neighboring building from where they transport the materials to a vacant lot on a hill overlooking the city. In this new hillside site, they will later rebuild a home for everyone. *La Estrategia del Caracol* explores themes of the importance of time and preparation, as well as the shameless corruption in the justice system, Marxist class politics, and the importance of hope, generosity, and community.

Similarly, *Antes del Olvido* (Before Oblivion) from 2018, accompanies tenants in a *vecindad* (low-income tenement building) in downtown Mexico City as they resist eviction. As in *La Estrategia del Caracol* and in the urban legend about Guadalupe, the tenants defend their building. They first buy time to prepare to defend themselves against their eviction, and in the process they overcome apathy and self-absorption to work together in resisting the violent eviction by riot police. This film draws from the largely forgotten history of the tenants' movement in 1920's Mexico City retold in Paco Ignacio Taibo's brief 1983 essay (Taibo II, 1983).

These stories form an imaginary in which tenants can successfully fight corrupt court systems and unjust eviction with creativity and solidarity. They show that by banding together despite difference and taking advantage of diverse community members' abilities and positionalities, tenants can overcome a system that individualizes, exploits, and takes advantage of the poor through not only structural advantage but through corruption and duplicity. They teach that if given time to prepare, people can overcome their differences and help one another not only save their homes but preserve a way of life that is threatened through dispersal by eviction. In these moments the people who didn't know one another come together and make community against a common threat. They cast shame on the exploitative system, but they do so by blowing it off with the warmth of community.

4.9 Conclusion

Queer theory has shown that shame is the mirror image of pride (Johnston, 2019). But decolonial feminisms and cuir theory makes clear that there is a distance between pride and shame in the mere thickness of the mirror. Extending outward from that gap is cuerpo-territorio, attachment, and a spatial deflection that brings the focus of attention to the aspects of the self that conjure pride. Shame may be the mirror image of pride, but the direct connection between them is rigid and fragile. As Anzaldúa, Relaño Pastor, and Lozano Lerma make clear, a more sustainable exit from shame is not a direct shot through the mirror into pride, but a more roundabout path traveling through relationships that gives room for cultivating disinterest in the object of shame. This knowledge about managing and transforming shame contributes important advances to thinking about "shame-creativity." It may not revindicate that which has been debased but it might actually free it from the trap of shame/pride. This research demonstrates how de/postcolonial cuiring the shame-pride dyad can help to dismantle its magnetism, to make relational spaces of agency at the margins of hegemonic violence of many stylings. The roundabout pathway brings about a more sustainable change than the proposals from Strong to deflect. Those may work as defensive mechanisms, but a more thorough solution comes from what I've discussed here. And speaking back to queer theory and the emphasis on pride, I think there's some stuff that's still unresolved here. I think at the individual level, what Anzaldúa and others propose is something that helps keep the hegemonic order at bay. It might be that a combination of strategies is most successful, because ducking away from it begins to shift the focus elsewhere, but if the hegemon is a growing balloon in an enclosed room, sucking in all the extra air, the more you pay attention to it, the faster it grows. The more

you look away, it stops growing. But it also needs some stabs. It takes multiple strategies. As O'Neil says, "shame colonizes our lives" if we're not careful (26). Running away from it can be just as fueling for shame as punching right back. It really does have to be deflated. The magnet must be deactivated. But this takes looking away AND punching up at it. Doing one or the other continues to give it power still, doesn't it?

Outside of the movies, sudden eviction arrests tenants in shame, denying them the opportunity to defend themselves, whether collectively or alone with a gas tank. But shame is not just about feelings. Feelings lead to actions and actions reshape space and reshape feelings. This chain of feelings and action is cyclical, and collective action emerges from affirming relations that exist alongside the dismissed shamed aspects of the self. What this research shows is that affective politics against the incapacitating shaming forces of hegemonic structures necessarily involves the pieces of the self that are dismissed by the hegemonic – relational recognition of these is the key to regaining agency as individual subjects; facilitating a first step toward collective action.

The hidden affective violence of eviction is something that this research aims to expose. The hit to a subject's agency is undemocratic. Denial of these goings on in the register of affect should be better recognized. This issue in Mexico City keeps going as the government turns a blind eye. It is a problem. This is the continued dispossession of the poor and marginalized, and it is already illegal. It is agreed that people need a heads up, and there are reasons for this. This article provides evidence of the damage eviction does to people, their dignity, their capacity to resist its power. When something cannot be effectively contested, then the people's rights are being trampled on.

When Irma says, “when they evict you, […] you feel something like, very small”, she is talking about the way that the process shames the affected tenant. Not only is this a difficult logistical moment, as Jazmín and Gaby’s case makes clear; the heavy bedframes and suddenly enormous refrigerator… But that small feeling makes them even larger. Perhaps it is a question of relationality. Back again to Irma, whose neighbors told her, “I don’t want anything from here anymore. No, not anymore, I don’t want or need to fight for any of my things, I’m leaving” shows how even good, useful objects become abjected in the moment of the set-out. Items like a refrigerator, which people suffer to replace, free on the sidewalk, become so existentially large and weighted as to feel completely outside the scope of what is possible to handle. Irma’s voice fell as she told me they said, “Take it, you know, take it if it serves you” – speaking to strangers on the street. For a tenant who wants only to disappear (“Nothing to see here!”), the belongings become an extension of the self – the shamed one who must hide. This is dire. And it is unjust. And it is infuriating that the poor enforcement of housing law does not take this violence into account. Yet these interviews also offer hope. What Gaby tells us about her worries, that she would let her family down, is that this low feeling can be turned on its head very quickly – instantaneously in her instance, “My shame disappeared. And I asked for help. ‘Please help me’ and I called other friends: ‘bring bags, please, because my things are thrown out, literally’”. Her composure comes through in these words. She is even cordial as she describes her request for help. Gaby is not channeling pride in those requests – this is not anger at the system or indignation about what has been done to her and her family. This is pragmatism that shines through. This is Gaby’s personality: she is *herself* in that exchange. This did not destroy Gaby’s fight. In fact, in the wake of their eviction she has become

more active than ever in her activism. But she is doing it from a strong foundation. This is what the turn through relationality teaches. So, tenants. Take a page from Irma's neighbors, who came around after a while: "*Go on, fight! We are with you.*"

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This dissertation is an ethnographic account of the affective workings of displacement originating from natural disaster and gentrification in Mexico City in the wake of the 2017 earthquake. It follows many calls in urban geography to decolonize urban theory by studying the city from other sites and through new approaches. Much of mainstream urban theory originates in the anglophone north and uses similar approaches to understanding the city through political and economic instruments of measurement. Despite the narrow approach, and the parochial context, this abstract theory is used around the world. By studying global processes like neoliberal urbanization as they manifest in places outside the anglophone north, and through unconventional epistemological approaches, this work is a contribution to that larger effort to broaden understandings of the city in these disciplines, and conjointly, expand the possible approaches for solving the most pressing urban problems.

This work contributes to affective, emotional, psychoanalytic and feminist approaches to studying power and the city from overlooked and micropolitical spaces (Bondi & Rose, 2003; Brickell, 2014; Brickell et al., 2017; Davidson et al., 2016; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2019; Harris et al., 2019; Ji, 2020; Kern, 2015, 2020; Kern & McLean, 2017; Lancione, 2017; Leal Martínez, 2007, 2016b; Muñoz, 2018; Peake, 2021; Peake & Rieker, 2013; Proudfoot, 2017). I gathered data on affect through interviews and participant observation. This research is situated in the central neighborhoods in Mexico City, which, through historical and locational specificities inflect the affective workings of gentrification and displacement in that place, but my hope is that this research also points to a register that exists everywhere and offers insight about how that register operates on

struggles over urban space around the world. The workings of the affective landscape have implications for thinking about trauma, shame, politics, eviction, and combatting hegemonic structures as they weaponize affect against people (for example, through shame). The most exciting contributions of this research are to the understanding of how affect works as a mechanism of power and for thinking about how to break out from cruel attachments to harmful paradigms in the context of displacement and gentrification.

By illuminating aspects of gentrification that are invisible (one could also say conveniently hidden), this research contributes to understanding gentrification's violence. I provide a detailed account of how displacement is experienced and lived, exposing gentrification's collateral damage and costs in their various expressions, which are hidden through the very displacements of the people who bear them (chapter 3). This builds on work in urban geography and sociology on gentrification and eviction that has been exploring the "*how"* of eviction and gentrification (Baker, 2021; Desmond, 2016; Garboden & Rosen, 2019). This focus on "*how*" is a trend away from the "*why"* which was studied in earlier research on the issue (Harvey, 1989; Ley, 1986; Smith, 1979, 1987). By drawing attention to the sleight of hand of neoliberal urban development practices: displacing the costs of gentrification to marginalized populations whose voices are regularly silenced, and who are physically removed from the center city to the periphery, I draw attention to the mechanisms that erase the social costs of gentrification, pushing back at the commonly held idea that gentrification is net-positive: that it may have some downsides but it is generally good for the public. Rather, I argue that the many heavy burdens are regularly erased from view, erroneously shifting gentrification into a more positive light than it merits.

Analyzing one important aspect of the burden displaced residents bear is a further contribution made by this research: as I demonstrate in chapter four, illegal evictions heap an extra *affective* burden on people through shame, a burden that dissolves their agency and splinters their collective power. The negative affect of shame makes objects heavier and compels people to shrink into themselves and abnegate their agency. This angle mobilizes some of my previous work with Anna Secor on affect politics (Hardesty et al., 2019; Linz & Secor, 2021a; Secor & Linz, 2017) and contributes to minor political theory, which has seen a resurgence at roughly the 20 year anniversary of Cindi Katz' first article on the topic (Katz, 1996, 2017). This aspect of the work highlights the expression of affect as a weapon of hegemony. Turning people into themselves and away from each other has the effect of individualizing them and fracturing political resistance to systematic injustice, and the heaviness it instills in the objects of their lives impairs their sense of agency. Counterposing the example of the earthquake with the example of evictions that take place building by building or apartment by apartment, demonstrates how the piecemeal nature of unjust evictions saddles people with heaviness that is not present in the same way as in a natural disaster that so clearly affects people as a collective. This raises questions about how to shift the political conversation about evictions away from meritocracy and into another genre disinterested in shame, where collective power can be recognized and adopted. Understanding the affective dynamics of the process of eviction is important to intervening on the ways that it defuses collective resistance before it can even coalesce. Taking insight from Georgis, Anzaldúa, Relaño Pastor, Lozano Lerma, Gudeman, and Cervantes-Gómez, I show that the affective burden keeps people from seeing their worth outside of the category the hegemonic order imposes on them. They are valuable people

for qualities that are invisible to others in the midst of an eviction. Reminders of these, through apostrophe, help to steady a person: affirmations from loved ones, sentimental objects, tools for building community like a big dining room table. The objects people chose to save, and how they talk about their role in helping them through the aftermath of an eviction, demonstrate how they play a role in shifting away from isolation and shame, and into another affective register of worth, gratitude, and connection that all reinforce feelings of pride.

Going back to Tomkins and exploring the workings of shame in an eviction, this research also advances thinking about shame and subjectivity. I begin with the dyad of pride/shame coming out of queer theory (Cvetkovich, 2003; Johnston, 2019; Sedgwick, 2003), but I push open the polar relationship between pride and shame, informed by queer and cuir theory, and Latin American communitarian feminisms, and building on other postcolonial queer work that brings the feeling of hope into the equation (Georgis, 2013), and expands understandings of the role of relationality in shame, as well as rich dynamics at play in the margin of hegemonic structures (Anzaldúa, 1987; Lozano Lerma, 2016; Relaño Pastor, 2014). The present research shows that asserting pride directly out of shame could be a shortcut that does not de-power the dyad of pride-shame, because it does not expand the self into more dimensions. Research in postcolonial queer theory, cuir theory, and Latin American communitarian feminisms demonstrates that through a roundabout spatial and relational process, the dyad might be more fully disrupted – the polarity de-emphasized. Doing this indirect work functions to manage and transform shame, and I propose that it can destabilize the close, fragile, and rigid relationship between the two poles. In the framework of Tomkins, the relational pole between pride and shame simply

becomes less interesting and thus less powerful over the multidimensional and complex self, which is bolstered by schemas of worth not tethered to the hegemonic value system. The present research brings these often-separate literatures into communication on the topic of shame to better understand its spatial dynamics and its effect on subjectivity, as well as the moves a subject can make to reshape themselves and transform shame.

Taken together this research demonstrates how affect facilitates mechanisms of power in the unjust paradigm of neoliberal urbanization expressed as gentrification and displacement. Seen in affective terms, these modes of city-making should be understood in their habitual violence: they recruit people to participate only to shame them into silence and powerlessness as they discard them. By studying the affective register of eviction's workings, I contribute to thinking about how to survive and contest displacement: I show that resistance and transformation can emerge from affective shifts, which take place in impasses. While impasses can arrive suddenly like an earthquake, they can also be *made*. In article one (chapter 2) I offer some tools for recognizing an impasse and holding it open to take some time and feel the way towards the otherwise. The contribution of this work is thus not only to locating sites for making change through affect politics, but also to informing how people engage in affect politics – the shaping of affective political landscapes. In doing so, this dissertation contributes something quite Mexican to urban theory: it shows how in the midst of the crisis ordinary there is something to learn and be inspired from in modern Mexican tradition: learning from this data as well as from the extensive literature of Monsiváis about the cultural practice of feeling your way toward answers together in the face of uncertainty, turning a tragic loss into the discovery of a gift (Sierra-Rivera, 2018, p. 24). Gago also discusses the wisdom in practicing this "collective

intelligence": "it is only the situation of not knowing what to do that opens up the space for a common thought" (Gago, 2020, p. 150) that leads to political decision-making, she says. For Soreanu, this is the "magmatic" emergence of "new kinds of socialities and new forms of power" (Soreanu, 2018, p. 6).

These affective practices are important to pay attention to because they are techniques for restoring agency when it is robbed (intentionally or not) by hegemonic processes of neoliberal urbanization. These moves help people reconnect to the parts of the self that have the capacity to shape outcomes and which become hidden by the fanfare of shame. The emphasis on shame highlights weakness and incapacity, duping a person into thinking less of themselves and acting accordingly. This move toward worth, then, sometimes means a distraction from the spectacle of the self's failure in the face of the existing structures. Chapter four shows that distracting can come in the form of letting go the cruel attachment that led to the failure, and this might be easier to do, and more permanent than rejecting it through pride, which meets spectacle with more spectacle. The move requires finding self-worth outside of that cruel attachment, and through different relations – an act of reminding and affirming that is also an act of creation. This resonates with the idea Octavia Butler repeats throughout Parable of the Sower: "All that you touch, you Change. All that you Change, Changes you" (Butler, 2012). The apostrophe – the call to the otherwise, is always available as a tool for finding agency in the self and through relationality. I suspect that this is the key to identifying where to invest attachments and how to take action, restoring agency and becoming a channel towards another paradigm.

Imaginaries and the otherwise have recently become popular topics of interest in geography, but there is a gap between critique of violent structures and description of the

new worlds that are not yet here. I hope this work contributes a small piece to filling in that gap. In my future research I hope to continue to study the goings-on in this gap through affective approaches.

5.1 Future research

In the future I hope to deepen my investigation of both the individual and the collective experience of how forced eviction is lived, and how displaced women think and feel about gentrification. My interest is in deepening an understanding of how affect politics coalesce into collective action. I have already discussed a possible next project with some of my research participants: Titled ***This Was Her Home: Memorias de las Desalojadas***, this project will examine the lived experiences of marginalized residents who are made invisible when they are removed from gentrifying areas of central Mexico City. Bringing together older women from the *Red de Desalojados (Mexico City Eviction Network)*, with young women graffiti artists from the group, *Paste Up Morras*, who live in the periphery where the older women are often displaced, this is a collaborative multi-media oral histories project that makes present the individual and collective lives that have been erased by gentrification.

While my work to date has explored experiences of displacement through individual and household interviews, this project explores the issue at deeply personal as well as the social levels. Approaching the topic in these two registers recognizes the political importance of *testimonio/*testimony at the same time that it explores intersubjective spatialities of eviction-based displacement: the ways that feelings follow displaced women and how they become shifting atmospheres in relation to other displaced women

and to the artists from the periphery. Through writing workshops and street art, we hope the stories will take form, and feminist media organization *Sandia Digital* will document the process to create a podcast and web video series for social media circulation that reaches public officials and the gentrifiers who have replaced the women. The book that is produced in this project will be co-published with some of the displaced women who have been involved in the brainstorming of this project from the start.

APPENDIX. METHODOLOGY

5.2 Urban theory at an impasse: epistemology and knowledge production

Much academic literature on gentrification examines its political and economic causes. However, it has long been understood that this only tells part of the story. Feminist and postcolonial geographers and urban theorists argue that this is to the detriment of our understanding of the city (Cassián-Yde, n.d.; McLean, 2018; Oswin, 2018; Peake & Rieker, 2013; Pérez Sanz & Gregorio Gil, 2020; Truelove & Ruszczyk, 2022). Alternative approaches they argue, expand our imaginaries about what the city can be, and make room for resolving complex urban issues like gentrification in new ways. By approaching the micropolitical, the emotional and affective, the everyday sides of gentrification, through ethnographic methodologies, I contribute to the growing body of work responding to those calls, which is together expanding the approaches to urban theory.

A growing number of voices also critique mainstream urban theory for its narrow emphasis on New York, London and a small number of other US and British cities to develop universal urban theories (Faria & Mollett, n.d.; Garmany & Richmond, 2019; Kern & McLean, 2017; McElroy & Werth, 2019; Oswin, 2018, 2019; Peake, 2021; Roy, 2009). The direction of this published knowledge is from north to south of course, a colonial imposition of the "modern" upon the "developing" (Peake & Rieker, 2013), making use of data extracted from the global south but ignoring knowledge produced there. Taking abstract theory for granted not only exaggerates the importance of contributions to urban theory from a small parochial set of places in the global north and diminishes scholarship

from elsewhere, but it reinforces colonial paradigms of knowledge production (Mott & Cockayne, 2017).

Latin America has much to teach the world (Valencia, 2010). A more internationalist urban theory is necessary, one that is relational (McCann et al., 2013) and which esteems crucial insight from theorists in the global south (Abourahme, 2018) rather than imposing "abstraction" upon "naturalism" (Gago, 2020), but I take to heart the dangers that Cusicanqui warns of: the reimposition of colonial hierarchies within academic conversations happening across the political equator that elevate a select group of scholars and further sideline other voices (Cusicanqui, 2012). Although I don't escape from the tentacles of colonial knowledge structures – I am still relying heavily on anglophone canons of cultural studies and queer theory – I hope that the present study contributes to efforts to change the destructive paradigm by tugging at the edge of anglophone urban geography and mingling voices such that they resonate through other spaces and around the world. What is needed is decentering of the anglophone academy – not to be deposed by a new center, but toward the uplifting of many corners of the fabric of knowledge production into a variegated and multilingual landscape of thought (Müller, 2021). Part of my academic agenda is to write in Spanish, write for journals like *Revista INVI* that publish work in multiple languages, and to push against the centralization of citation politics. I was moved by Carrie Mott and Dan Cockayne's 2017 article about citation politics as a way of cultivating a critical conscientiousness about the political and ethical responsibility of which voices we highlight in geographic scholarship (Mott & Cockayne, 2017). By exploring the emotional and affective lives of gentrification and displacement, and by doing it from Mexico City, where the global north and south fold over one another to create

intimate inequalities and power dynamics, I hope to engage a minor politics at the edge of urban geography. I draw on theory from both sides of the political equator as a small contribution to the project of transforming the major into something otherwise (Katz, 1996, 2017).

5.3 Methodological notes about studying affect and trauma

To study affect, and to do it ethically requires different approaches and careful considerations. As it is interpersonal and non-linguistic, it has to be spotted by looking sideways. But it also requires to researcher to be listening not only to the person's words but also to that which they don't say. I tried to listen a lot. I tried to pay attention to that register, to the vibes, the feelings, the atmosphere that emerged in the conversation. I calmed myself before interviews to quiet my thoughts, I tried to let the disposition of the person guide where our conversation went. I let them get their words out. After they finished we often got to interesting places.

I conducted interviews with multiple family members if possible, because affect, as an inter-personal phenomenon, emerges between people. This way in interviews they would have people whose responses amplify affects: in the articles included in this manuscript, this is visible in the affirmative replies: mhm, aha, etc. I paid attention when people affirmed one another in this way. It was an indication that they felt something together. I spent a lot of time doing participant observation to attune myself to the affective atmospheres generated in different settings, and in different groups of people. I also asked people directly about their experiences in interviews, giving them a chance to talk about the feelings they processed. I asked people to sit down with me in long interviews rather

than suggesting multiple short interviews. This allowed for us to slowly get into feelings that are quite sensitive, as well as to come back from them to handle returning to the practical demands of the day. I told people upfront that the interviews could get emotional and we would talk about topics that might bring up painful memories and emotions. I asked interviewees to pick the site for the interview, and suggested they pick a place that was comfortable for them. It is a small thing, but I kept tissues with me. To be able to offer a tissue to someone who is beginning to cry I hope showed I was attendant to how they were feeling and had something small to offer them as we sat together. I recognize that my positionality as a white woman from the USA in her 30s played a role in my being welcomed into the groups I learned from in Mexico City, and people's comfort to sit down for an interview with me. It played a role as well, in the hopefulness I felt about getting interviews with developers and officials. Yet this is a double-edged sword. I am also a quiet and observant researcher, and I believe the combination sometimes made it hard for men to take me seriously. I assume that the difficulty I had getting one official to sit down with me could be partially contributed to my gender and personality. I think the same qualities, though, got me the easy trust of a developer, who seemed to have no qualms about an interview and spoke very openly with me about his work. I enjoyed the time I spent with women tenant activists. I felt affinity and *afecto* for them, and I know they felt similar feelings about me. I hope the housing activists in Mexico City write about all the academics who have come through. They certainly have enough data.

Recognizing that trauma is the return of a moment too full of affect to be resolved, I studied the ethics of how to take care as a researcher not to re-traumatize people. I was particularly influenced by two books that take care with this: *Hiroshima Traces* by

Yoneyama and *Karaoke Fascism* by Skidmore (Skidmore, 2004; Yoneyama, 1999). I learned from these accounts to take silences as refusals, know that incommunicability of something traumatic can be disheartening for the subject, to understand that speaking or not speaking about trauma does not say one way or another if a person experienced it, to recognize ways that people worked to contain memories, but also that storytelling is an important tool for processing, making it easier not to forget the trauma but to "make you not mind remembering" (Quoting Logan's Run, in Yoneyama, 1999, p. 43). I listened when participants spoke about the experience of talking about the earthquake or the eviction. In multiple instances, interviewees mentioned that they 'should be talking about this' or that it 'felt good' to share in a space where it was okay to be emotional.

In interviews, I paid attention to expression of emotions and what affects contribute to the emotions expressed. Disaster research is often studied in a top-down manner, and my work responds to the calls to include voices of regular people (Perry & Quarantelli, 2005). I follow Poniatowska (1995), Miranda July (2012) and others in this methodology. Semi-structured interviews allow research participants to diverge from the program of my questions to tell the stories that they find important. I paid attention to these seeming tangents to discover what issues I am blind to. I analyzed these data using discourse analysis. I coded for moments of breathlessness, speechlessness, change in tone or speed, mannerisms, gestures, un-thought automatic responses, unspoken communication, and the instances in which people articulate themselves through sounds that cannot be typed. These small "screams" (Ruddick, 2010) indicate the intrusion of affect.

In meetings, protests, and other public events, I paid attention to the non-verbal communication between people: the body language, the gestures, the silences, the bursts

of energy, their tones, etc. Finally, I paid attention to the way people communicated in digital spaces: WhatsApp chats more than anything. I noticed how people used memes, stickers, emojis, bold, all-caps, etc. - "affective parcels" (Hardesty et al., 2019) – to transmit feelings. These *ways* of speaking channel affect back and forth. The ubiquity of digital communication (Duggan, 2017) makes social media and other digital spaces important sites of affective, social, and political activity that slips easily back and forth between virtual and material spaces.

In analyzing this data, I followed Deborah Gould in her exploration of affect in the news archives about the ACT UP movement. She used her own affective response to material to select materials: she says, "I began to catalog the material that brought me to tears" (Gould, 2009, p. 7). Documenting the "emotional habitus" (Ibid., 10) of the movement, she used these affective archives to understand how people came to terms with the battle they were fighting. I do the same with the social media traces after the earthquake. Through all of this work I am interested in the way social media posts and communications compose archives of affect, and what this means for openings and closures of political horizons.

5.4 Research participants

I identified my research subjects through contacts in activist networks gained at public events. Below is a list of the people I talked to, with their gender, their age range, and any aspects of their identity relevant to the study. In my writing I identify people by pseudonyms to protect their identities.

1. Woman, 40s, tenant fighting for expropriation

2. Woman, 60s, tenant who successfully resisted eviction once, fighting for expropriation
3. Woman, 40s, tenant who was evicted, activist
4. Woman, 70s, tenant who was evicted, family member
5. Woman, 60s, tenant who was evicted, family member
6. Woman, 20s, tenant who was evicted, family member and student
7. Woman, 50s, tenant who was evicted, activist
8. Man, 40s, tenant who was evicted violently
9. Man, 30s, tenant who was evicted, fighting to overturn eviction and return home
10. Woman, 30s, tenant who was evicted violently, activist, fighting for expropriation
11. Woman, 50s, tenant who was evicted
12. Man, 30s, tenant who was evicted, journalist, activist
13. Man, head of Psychoanalytic society of Mexico
14. Man, 60s, survivor of 1985 earthquake
15. Woman, 50s, survivor of 1985 and 2017 earthquakes, participant in 1985 recovery, displaced by 2017 earthquake, mother
16. Man, 30s, journalist
17. Man, 30s, victim of 2017 earthquake, housing organizer for earthquake reconstruction
18. Woman, 30s, architect, housing organizer for earthquake reconstruction
19. Woman, 20s, survivor and rescuer/volunteer in 2017 earthquake
20. Man, 30s, survivor and rescuer in 2017 earthquake
21. Man, 40s, survivor of 2017 earthquake, eviction and gentrification activist, artist

22. Woman, 40s, architect, earthquake reconstruction
23. Woman, 30s, 1985 earthquake survivor, citizen opposed to gentrification
24. Man, 30s, 2017 earthquake survivor, gentrification researcher
25. Man, 50s, housing lawyer
26. Man, 40s, housing lawyer
27. Woman, 40s, housing lawyer
28. Man, 60s, housing activist
29. Man, 30s, head of community organization
30. Man, 40s, head of community organization
31. Woman, 40s, head of community organization
32. Man, 60s, public official
33. Man, 30s, developer
34. Woman, 20s, developer
35. Man, 40s, developer
36. Woman, 40s, developer

5.5 COVID-19 Impacts

As March 2020 began, I was looking forward to a productive 2-3 of months of fieldwork ahead. I was beginning to make contacts with developers and landlords, and I was hoping to interview some of them in the coming months, as well as follow up on a growing list of interviewees from the tenants organizing group. On Thursday, March 12, 2020, I was in a developer's home as the news came in about COVID-19 in New York. This husband-and-wife developer and property manager had just had the German

ambassador over, they told me. In the background of the interview recording, I can hear her mention that the kids' field trip the following week would be canceled as a precaution. In Mexico, the novel coronavirus seemed poised to enter the country through the internationally connected elites, so their active social contact with people like the German ambassador suddenly felt ominous. This mysterious illness suddenly felt at our necks. I didn't touch my wine glass – I didn't want to show them any sign I was dropping any professional boundaries, but they thoroughly enjoyed our interview, and were inviting me to attend their regular dinners with neighbors before the night was up, and I thought I had an in with this group. I was hoping to learn about the emotional landscape that they experience, on the other side of eviction and development. That plan would have to wait.

I spent the next days (or weeks?) trying to figure out how to stay in the country. I had an apartment and friends in Mexico City. I knew how my healthcare worked there, and I had nowhere to go in the US. My landing pad would be with my mom and immunocompromised stepdad in Cincinnati, with no job and no healthcare. The idea of taking an international flight during that early pandemic panic to crash land with them was unthinkable. And in that moment, the US seemed to be on fire, while Mexico had barely registered any cases. I had to make my case to remain not only to University of Kentucky, but because as a Fulbright fellow, I was technically an employee of the state department, I also had to justify my request to the American Ambassador to Mexico. I was granted what I asked for, and I was grateful to hold onto my University of Kentucky healthcare during that time. Fulbright rescinded their healthcare. Monitoring my email and official channels during the first couple of weeks, whose minutes seemed to expand, holding the content of hours and days, I saw the US contract, pulling everyone back from places abroad where

the virus had not even arrived yet. It seemed foolish, xenophobic, and absurd. I stayed put. That seemed to be the wisest move at the time.

In March, I halted interviews for a few reasons: 1) many of my research participants are older so in-person interviews was out of the question once it began, 2) I was concerned about adding to screen fatigue for everyone involved by requesting interviews on video calls, since many of the activists I interviewed were continuing to meet weekly via video conference, 3) because even if we did do video calls, I was concerned the data on emotion and affect would not transfer in their complexity over the phone or on video calls. Retroactively, I think it is important to add that early in the pandemic was an exceptionally emotional time. Asking people about the emotional experience of an eviction in the midst of the pandemic would be asking about another emotional experience. The pandemic, as a worldwide crisis that demonstrated the importance of sufficient housing for preventing the spread of infection, brings up its own host of emotions that this dissertation was not studying. COVID-19 and housing is an incredibly important issue, and one that should be studied in its emotional register, and this dissertation is not about that.

Professional plans were also cancelled because of COVID-19. Before the pandemic, I was fortunate to participate in the Segundo Encuentro Internacional de Mujeres que Luchan (Second International Summit of Women who Struggle) in Zapatista territory of Chiapas, the Fulbright mid-year summit in Cuernavaca, Morelos, and, with Barnhart/Withington funding from the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky, a decolonial theory workshop in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas. After the pandemic began, plans for other gatherings were cancelled: In May 2020, a Radical Housing Workshop sponsored by the Radical Housing Journal, was to be held in San

Cristobal de las Casas. I was invited and planned to attend with Silvia Pineda of the Red de Desalojos. This would have been a small but international summit of academics and activists to discuss housing, and a chance to dig into the crevices between activism and academics to speak better across that gap. This event went online, but surely has no comparison to a live gathering. My memories of it, despite excitement, are minimal. I think I was still shocked by the pandemic. I felt my way through, though. I took what data I had collected and began to write. Over the spring of 2020, I finished the revisions to my first article and shared it with two research participants before submitting. In the summer I spent time writing for other independent projects (Linz & Secor, 2021b; Linz & Smyth, 2021; Linz, 2021). Throughout the rest of my time in Mexico City, I continued to write, attend meetings with activists over the open-source meeting platform, Jitsi, and to relay my writing back to participants. I shared earlier versions of article two (chapter 3) with seven participants whose stories appeared in that writing. We talked about how it reflected their lives and what the work does. Through these conversations, I developed my next research proposal.

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Education

Graduate certificate, Social Theory, University of Kentucky, 2018

Master of Arts, Geography, University of Kentucky, 2016

Bachelor of Science, Architecture, University of Cincinnati, 2008

Peer Reviewed Publications

Linz, J. (2021) Where crises converge: The affective register of gentrification and displacement in post-earthquake Mexico City. *cultural geographies*, 28(2), 285-300. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474021993418

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Other Academic Publications

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Awards and Honors

P.E.O. Fellowship (2020)

Fulbright-Garcia Robles Fellowship (2019)

Urban Geography Specialty Group Graduate Student Paper Award (2017)

Presidential Fellowship, University of Kentucky (2022)

College of Arts and Sciences Fellowship, University of Kentucky (2017, 2018)

Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies Travel Grant, University of Kentucky (2018, 2020)

Bursary, Participant, Spring Academy of the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space, Berlin, Germany (2018, 2019)

Bursary, Critical Legal Conference, Warwick University Law School and Social Theory Centre (2017)

Bursary, 9th National Congress on Urban Cycling, Guadalajara, Mexico (2016)

Withington Human/Cultural Geography Award, Department of Geography, University of Kentucky (2015)

Professional Positions

Research Assistant, Committee on Social Theory, University of Kentucky (2017-2018)

Instructor, Mexico: Environment, Politics, and Society, University of Kentucky (2019, 2022)

Instructor, Lands and People of the Non-Western World, asynchronous online course, University of Kentucky (2021)

Teaching Assistant, U.S. Cities, University of Kentucky (2016, 2017)

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