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Call for Papers

La Ciudad de México, Palimpsest

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August the 13th, 2021 will mark the 500 anniversary of the fall of Tenochtitlan. It bears remembering that the city had been founded in 1325. Therefore at the time of Cortés's victory, the city had gone in two-hundred years from a neglected small island in the Lake of Texcoco to one of the most populated urban centers of the world.

To this, one must add, that when the Nahua tribes arrived in the Central Plateau, the basin had been densely populated for many centuries, as the ruins of Cuicuilco show. This city had to be abandoned 2000 years ago, after the Xitle volcano erupted, the settlements in Tlatilco might predate Cuicuilco, and the mammoth-traps recently discovered in the vicinity of the new Santa Lucía airport, reveal the presence of a highly-organized prehistoric society.

That same accumulation may be observed at a later date. The Franciscan chronicler, Agustín de Vetancurt wrote at the end of the 17th century:

Hernán Cortés [...] prevented the adoration of the heathen Gods of these kingdoms, destroyed their temples, and built churches to the true God, and in them he placed the Holy Cross, the image of the Virgin Mary, and the Saints. He won the city by fire and sword but after that in the year of 1521 he rebuilt it, improving its trace, in the same site where it was the capital of the Mexican Empire, in order to substitute the source of local error, with a fountain of Catholic truth.

The passage shows both the impulse to raze and the impulse to rebuild. It must be remembered that, as a rule, Spaniards did not found their cities in previous sites of pre-Columbian devotion or military outposts. The exception bears witness to the strong symbolic attraction that Tenochtitlan generated.

That is why the stones of the Templo Mayor (the main pyramid of ancient Tenochtitlan) found their way to the Cathedral, the church that frames the Zócalo (the main plaza), that during

the 17th century remained flooded for five years starting 1629. But even after that, the city that had moved to the mainland in Coyoacán, returned to its historic center, and there remained. The Zócalo was used as a marketplace, then it became a garden and today it is a large concrete plank where shows and political manifestations take place, and, during the winter a popular ice-skating rink is set up.

Another example is Tlatelolco. Where the great tianguis (market) used to stand that enthralled both Cortés and Bernal. Shortly after the Conquest, the Colegio de Santa Cruz was opened there, where an intellectual elite schooled a group of young nahuas able to write in Spanish, Latin and transliterate their own language using European characters. But also there, one of the utopian projects of the mid-20th century, was built. The largest housing project in Latin America, providing modern apartments for lower-middle class families. But some years after its inauguration, the 1968 student-movement is brutally squashed there. In the 1985 earthquake, Nuevo León, one of the buildings of the Tlatelolco project, collapses. Today, the former Ministry of the Exterior building houses the Museum of the Student Movement and a National University research center.

In sum, the best description of Mexico City in the way we want to explore it in this *iMex* dossier is as palimpsest –following the definition put forward by María Moreno Carranco: the city as a text where place is reconfigured not only through the built environment but through ever-changing spatial practices. As a city where underneath the flat coordinates of a map, historical strata patiently wait to enact their return. What seemed left behind return: floods, plagues and earthquakes. But also beauty, solidarity, ingenuity.

We welcome papers on urbanism, literature, anthropology and the visual arts (including film and television) and other disciplines as long as they privilege the historical density of the city, and how it can become manifest overtly (through changes in uses, meanings and material conditions) or covertly wait for centuries –like the Coyolxauqui monolith– its moment of revelation.

Manuscripts should be roughly 5000-6000 word long (including notes and bibliography). They should be accompanied by a 200-word abstract, as well as by bibliographic information (academic position, main research areas, recent publications) of about 10 lines and 5 keywords to identify the content of the article –in Spanish and English. Regarding the publishing rules refer to: <https://www.imex-revista.com/ediciones/publicar-en-imex/#2>

Until 30th September 2021, articles and reviews can be forwarded as Microsoft Word documents to **Prof. Dr. José Ramón Ruisánchez** (jrruisanchez@uh.edu) and **Prof. Dr. Yasmin Temelli** (yasmin.temelli@uni-siegen.de).