Protest, emotion and change: an analysis of two women's collectives fighting against machismo in Oaxaca, Mexico

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to present our proposal of analysis that highlights how protest changes people and the role of emotion in this change. Aware of the emotional intensity of experiences of protest, our objective will be to show how emotion gives a new meaning to these experiences. In order to do this, we will analyse the role of emotions in the transformation of consciousness and behaviour, showing how collective emotions can strengthen people and how the protest experience changes emotions towards state and authority. To conclude, we will present the emotion work that women are doing in their process of emancipation. Based on previous empirical research where we have studied the experience of women from Oaxaca (Mexico) who participated in the 2006 insurgency to then create two self-organised women's collectives, we propose an analysis that proves that the emotional dimension is vital to understanding and analysing protest as a path to emancipation. The methodology that we have used throughout our research is based on depth interviews and focus groups.

Keywords: Mexico, emotions, protest, social-cultural change, emotion work, and women

Introduction

> "It was pain and rage that made us challenge everything and everyone 20 years ago. And it is pain and rage that now again makes us lace up our boots, put on our uniforms, strap on our guns, and cover our faces."[1]

The emotional dimension of protest is evident nowadays to those who observe protest. For instance, in Mexico, from where we are writing, thousands of people are still marching to express their grief, anger and indignation against the killing of six people and the disappearance of forty-three students in the state of Guerrero in September 2014. While the parents of the young people and their schoolmates marched, saying "May our grief not be indifferent to you", people all over Mexico answered with "Your pain is ours, your anger is ours".

[1] Press release of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (Mexico). May 8, 2014.

Empathising with people who are struggling, that is, feeling deep in one's heart what others are feeling, is the first step to solidarity and collective action, which "is both generated by and generates emotions" (Bayard de Volo, 2006).

But how can we analyse emotion, and for what purpose? Starting from the idea that emotions, as social, cultural and political constructs, are key factors to understanding every aspect of protest and social movements (i.e. emergence, maintenance, splitting, undermining, dissolution), in this paper we want to highlight the role of emotions in the process of change that people experience by participating in protest.

As claimed by Piven and Cloward (1977), during a protest experience, people experience a transformation of consciousness and behaviour. Although this process of change does not include emotions, since these authors "were writing in a period when scholars denied the emotions" (Jasper, 2014b, p. 210), we defend the idea that this process, like many others, is stimulated by and provokes emotions and emotion work (Hochschild, 1979 and 1983).

Based on literature on emotions and protest, the aim of the paper is to show the role of emotions in the transformation that members of two self-organised Mexican women's collectives are experiencing. The analysis focuses on collective emotions, emotions toward authorities and emotion work because we have observed that these three elements are central to the process of transformation. Regarding emotion work, we have identified two emotions, fear and anger, that have been expressly managed as a political activity of these collectives. In this case, the link between emotion work and social change lies in the capacity to overcome gendered feeling rules and transform cementing, status quo-supporting emotions into subversive mobilising emotions (Flam, 2015).

The inclusion of the emotional dimension to understand collective action also means that we have to consider the collective dimension of emotions. Based on social constructivist approaches that view emotions as social and cultural constructs (Hochschild, 1979, 1983), we focus our attention on how people think about and reprocess their own emotions, individual and collectively. As Zibechi (2014) answered in a radio interview, "First, we should not negate fear, we need to collectivise it, to socialise it (…) [fear] can be overcome collectively. And if we overcome fear we can do things".

What Zibechi proposes is collective emotion work[2] (Hochschild, 1979, 1983) in order to respond to political violence. Emotion work is "the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling" (Hochschild, 1979, p. 561). It is not about controlling or suppressing emotions, but about shaping, creating or trying to shed certain feelings. This process, which has been already put into practice, for instance, by feminist collectives (Taylor, 1996; Taylor and Rupp, 2002), highlights the importance of emotions in personal and political empowerment and social change (Flam, 2005). Moreover, considering that

[2] The term "emotion management" is used by Hochschild synonymously with "emotion work" and "deep acting" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 551). Like Hochschild, we use emotion work and emotion management as synonyms.

emotion work could be the result of a long-term process and extreme events (Gould, 2009), we will show in this article that the deeply emotional protest experience can become a transformative experience in which people start reframing their reality and the emotions and emotional rules that structure this reality.

Starting from these premises, in this paper we want to show the process of change that women, who self-organised in two collectives, experienced as a consequence of participating in the insurgency of Oaxaca (Mexico, 2006) and the role of emotion in that change. The core of our analysis resides in the idea that participating in protest allows people to start a process of transformation in which emotion plays an important role, and in fact is the fuel for action and thought.

This paper will be divided in five sections: to start with, we will describe the Oaxaca context, the collectives analysed, and the method used for the research. We will then present a brief review in which we will show the role of emotions in motivation, introducing the transformation of consciousness and behaviour. The following sections will be dedicated to emotional processes relevant in the transformation of consciousness and behaviour, such as collective emotions, which contribute to building ties among protesters; and emotions towards the state and authorities, which feed the antagonist identity of "us" vs. "them". Finally, we will present two emotional processes that women work on in their activities, highlighting the role of emotion in people's changes, and in particular the role of emotion work in strengthening and empowering people.

Context, case study and methodology

Even though Oaxaca is a territory rich in natural and cultural resources, it is one of the poorest states in Mexico in economic terms (CONEVAL 2012), with marginalisation and social inequality percentages among the highest in the country (CONAPO 2010). The most severely affected segments of the population are indigenous people and/or rural communities or peripheral neighbourhoods of urban areas. Within this array of poverty and marginalisation, women suffer a multiple stigma because they are poor and/or indigenous and because they are women. In this context of inequality (INEGI 2008), women in neoliberal Mexico suffer from discrimination and violence every day since, as Motta, Flesher Fominaya, Eschle and Cox highlight, "poverty has been feminised and violence, both structural and individual, has intensified" (2011, p.1).

Moreover, in Mexico, violence is extended and accepted, and Mexican women undergo daily social discrimination and institutional or structural sexism (González Arias, 2011).

In this contextual frame, to which we can also add the fact that it has one of the highest rates of women's human rights violations in Mexico, in recent years Oaxaca has seen an increase in violence-related crimes and assassinations

targeting women[3] as a result of the intensification of conflicts and repression as part of the low intensity war strategy implemented by the state.

Bearing all this in mind, when, on 1 August 2006, thousands of women decided to take the streets and protest against governor Ulises Ruiz, an emerging process by part of the citizenry took place. This represents a huge milestone in Oaxacan society in terms of questioning and challenging the repressive dynamics of the dominant powers and the hegemonic patriarchal discourse.

The subjects of this research are women who, after participating in the insurgency of Oaxaca (2006), decided to self-organise in two collectives in order to resist and fight machismo: Mujer Nueva [New Woman] and a self-defence workshop, Lucha Chula [Pretty Fight]. What these women have in common is that they decided to self-organise, after having experienced a similar, highly emotional life event that changed them profoundly.

This case study shows that the transformation process is not linear, but helical. The women's participation in the occupation of radio station 96.9 FM and TV channel Canal 9 of the state radio and television facilities (CORTV) for almost a month in August 2006 (Gravante, 2016; Sierra, Poma and Gravante, 2016a); their participation in barricades that neighbours were building in many Oaxaca neighbourhoods in order to defend themselves from police and organised crime repression during the insurgency; and their participation in the many demonstrations and plantones that were organised during that period produced a transformation of consciousness and behaviour that, in the case of the women's groups analysed, was the first step towards self-organisation when the insurgency ended.

Literature on social movements helps us understand the emotional toll that the end of a struggle brings with it. Gould (2009), for example, shows how the disbanding of ACT UP caused its activists to feel emotions like: depression, bitterness, sadness, and a feeling of loss, emptiness and uncertainty about ending a struggle experience that had filled their lives. This is joined by a feeling of futility and lack of meaning because the movement made people feel socially useful and provides goals that had to be rebuilt when the experience ended.

Adams (2003) who, unlike Gould (2009), analyses a movement that ended up achieving its aim, shows how initial enthusiasm about the end of the Pinochet dictatorship ended in bitterness and disappointment. In this case, the disappointment was due to the expectations of those involved about the new regime, which were not met. As in Gould's (2009) study, Adams (2003) shows that, despite their victory, losing a common enemy and goal created disengagement, a feeling of futility and emptiness. Furthermore, the women who went back to being housewives felt abandoned because they lost the intimacy and fellowship that had been formed during the movement's experience.

[3] See the reports of the Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano del Feminicidio (2010 and 2012) and those of the Consorcio para el Diálogo Parlamentario y la Equidad Oaxaca (2011 and 2013).

The women who we are working with decided that they did not want to lose the friendship, sisterhood, freedom, empowerment, etc. that they built during the insurgency. This is why the two groups were created, with the aim to keep fighting machismo in their everyday lives. The process that we are analysing is how these activists evolved and the role of emotions in that evolution.

The research (2010-2017)[4] was set out methodologically starting with in-depth interviews, drawing upon the technique of episodic interviews (Flick, 2000, 2004). This method, which consists of exploring the processes to be analysed by subjects narrating episodes of their experiences, makes it possible to recognise and analyse "the narrative-episodic knowledge with the use of narrations, while the semantic knowledge becomes accessible by means of concrete deliberate questions" (Flick, 2004, p. 118). In our research, it has proven a helpful tool since it "facilitates the presentation of experiences in a general and comparative manner, and at the same time it ensures those situations and episodes are told in their specificity" (Flick, 2004, p. 119).

This technique allowed us to explore both the change that women experienced by participating the insurgency (past experience), and the changes related to specific present events. Moreover, in-depth interviews makes it possible to explore the emotional dimension of protest experiences because the subject has time to remember and reflect individually on her own experiences and feelings. In our experience, activists do not spend much time reflecting on their own feelings, since they are busy facing everyday problems and activities. The time spent with these women was very pleasant and useful for both of us because it created empathy, which is both a political and methodological tool (Poma and Gravante, 2016a), and also because this time was dedicated to self-reflection. We have also obtained this methodological finding in other research (Poma and Gravante, 2016b), and in the case of these two collectives, we can see that this time was useful because we are still in touch and working with these subjects. As Motta shows for storytelling, our method of research "involves transgressing a practice of knowing as mastery through creating practices of self- (other) knowledge" (Motta, 2014, p. 37).

Moreover, the people's experiences in protests is not limited to a personal and individual dimension; instead, it comprises a broader, collective one. For this reason, in addition to sixteen in-depth interviews, we found it necessary to address reflections on the emancipation process undergone by each person in discussions and collective development by carrying out two focus groups which, as evidenced by della Porta, "allow us to recreate —almost as in an experiment— conditions similar to those considered as belonging to paths of opinion formation, particularly in social movements" (2014, p. 15). The first focus group (ten participants) was carried out with Mujer Nueva [FG_MN], while the second

[4] The cases presented in this article are part of wider research that has encompassed the study of all the alternative media that arose during the insurrection of Oaxaca (Gravante, 2016). In addition, part of the research has been funded by the Bilateral Programme of Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) and by the Mobility Programme of the Ibero-American Association of Postgraduate Universities (AUIP).

(six participants) was carried out with the young women involved in the self-defence workshop Lucha Chula [FG_SD]. In the focus groups we discussed: 1) the change the women who participated in the insurgency of Oaxaca experienced; 2) the emotion work they were doing, focusing on the overcoming of learned helplessness and fear and the expression of anger.

Finally, the analysis presented in this paper is characterised by a focus "from below" (Poma and Gravante, 2015), which involved studying the protest not only at the micro level, but also focused on "non-subjects" (Motta, 2014), such as women, who are made invisible in the analysis of protests in the shadow of activists and leaders of formal organisations, the majority of whom are male.

Indeed, in the Oaxaca insurgency, the majority of the studies are focused on APPO (Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca) or the CNTE's Section 22 (the Oaxacan section of the Mexican teachers' union), where the role of women in the process of social change is practically absent.

This is not a unique case in women's activism, considering that, as Motta and Seppälä show, "what is elided and denied in many analyses is the ways in which racialized subaltern women who simultaneously face multiple oppressions can also create and experiment with new political subjectivities, re-imagine emancipatory politics, and produce and embody multiple grounds of epistemological difference and becoming" (2016, p. 7).

The approach from below suggests paying attention to the people fighting, and in particular to their experiences and feelings, which, as written by Jorge Regalado, "had always been there but we did not have the eyes to see them nor ears to hear them" (2012, p. 170). From this perspective, the focus of the analysis is not on the movement itself as a social actor any longer, but the experience of self-organised women "and their everyday forms of resistance and transformation" (Motta, 2014, p. 23).

Focusing on the subject means recognising the capacity for action-reflection and production of knowledge on the part of the people involved in the struggles and resistances (Freire, 1970, 1976), and the process of reinventing an "other" politics, from below (Motta, 2014). In other words, the protagonists are the authors of their own experience and the interpreters of their own political practice, and the entire social reality is the result of these social subjects producing and acting. As the Zapatistas said, "We cover our faces so you can see our hearts", and this is the aim of the focus from below, to "see beyond visible struggles" (Holloway, 2009, p. 22). The aim is to analyse the emancipatory role of emotions in protest by analysing the role of emotions in the transformation of consciousness and behaviour of the women who participated in the insurgency of Oaxaca and the emotion work that they do in order to empower themselves.

To conclude, focusing our analysis on the micro level of the protest and from below allows us to show protest as an emancipating experience because, while at macro level every event becomes unemotional, at micro level we can feel and observe the emotions that people have felt and we can empathise with them. This is why analysis at the micro level of the protest is so significant: because it

is one important way to comprehend what really happens when people protest, as well as the effects of the protest on people, as we can see in the next two paragraphs dedicated to the role of emotions in the participation.

Emotions and protest: from motivation to change

That emotions are important in protest, as in every moment of human beings' lives, is an idea that has been demonstrated in the literature on social movements in the past twenty years (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2000, 2001 and 2004; Jasper 1997, 1998, 2006, 2011, 2014a, 2014b; Flam and King 2005, della Porta 2008, Gould 2004 and 2009, Bayard de Volo 2006, among others). Thanks to the work of authors who include emotions in the study of protest, it has been proven that emotions, among other things, "help explain not simply the origin and spread of social movements but also their continuation or decline" (Jasper, 1998, pp. 416-417); they have significant effects on movements (Gould, 2004), and, besides the relational, cognitive and emotional consequences of protest, they affect the movements themselves (della Porta, 2008; Jasper, 1997) and are related to the transforming capacity of protest. In other words, emotions are "a key feature of society" (Flam and King, 2005, p. 3).

This literature has also widely demonstrated that emotions motivate people to participate in collective action. In fact, what is easily observable is that when people protest they often have experienced a moral shock (Jasper, 1998, 2006 and 2011), which is the emotional response to information or an event that people do not expect. During the insurgency of Oaxaca, for instance, one of the events that produced moral shock was the eviction and brutal repression of the teachers in the main square in Oaxaca which triggered the protests against the then-governor Ulises Ruiz in May 2006 (Poma and Gravante, 2016a).

Although it sometimes seems that ordinary people react to some events apparently unexpectedly, what analysts do not often recall is that, despite outwardly living their lives quietly, people develop and nurture a "hidden transcript" (Scott, 1990), and when something that emotionally touches them occurs, they react. The "hidden transcript" (Scott, 1990), fed by emotions that people feel in their everyday lives, is a mix of emotions and cognition that interact together with a sense of injustice related to an event, legitimising resistance against the government, as this extract shows:

> I come from a very poor and modest family, so I'm sick of the injustices that people experience. Like me, there are thousands of Oaxacan women living the same situation. At that time I spoke on behalf of all Oaxacan women who are marginalised, battered, neglected… Now I feel no fear. (I.Oa.9a)

What moves people to protest is a mix of feelings, such as grief, injustice, fear or anger, which result from these individuals' life experiences. In order to organise all the feelings that have an effect in protest, Jasper (1998, 2006, 2011)

identifies four types of emotions: reactive or reflex, moods, affective and moral emotions. We will focus on the last two categories, considering that event anger and fear can be moral emotions when they are processed cognitively, and they are not only a direct reaction to some events.

Affective and reciprocal emotions, such as, love, respect, admiration, affection, confidence, trust, gratitude and loyalty, can mobilise (della Porta, 1998), reinforce solidarity (Taylor and Rupp, 2002) and sustain activism and commitment (della Porta, 1995; Goodwin and Pfaff, 2001; Romanos, 2011; Poma and Gravante, 2016b) when felt toward the members of the group. In the same way, cementing emotions, such as, gratitude and loyalty (Flam, 2005), can be felt toward other actors, such as authorities. When citizens do not trust in politicians or other authorities it is because they have experienced some sort of outrage or disappointment so many times. In this case, subversive counter-emotions can emerge, such as hate, contempt, and anger directed toward the opponents (Flam, 2005).

Together with affective bonds, moral emotions (Jasper, 1998, 2006, 2011; Goodwin et al., 2004), such as indignation and outrage, are the fuel of the protest (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2001). As we have already shown in this case study (Poma and Gravante, 2016a), these emotions can mobilise but they can also feed collective identity when they are shared (Poma and Gravante, 2016b).

While emotions are important in order to in mobilise, support or weaken collective action in its different stages – recruitment, solidification, and dismantling – they also influence the change that people experience as a consequence of their participation, which Piven and Cloward (1977) called the transformation of consciousness and behaviour. This process includes delegitimation of the system, assertion of rights that involve demand for change and, finally, a sense of efficacy (Piven and Cloward, 1977, pp. 3-4).

The interviewees identified this transformation in relation to the insurgency of Oaxaca as the process that “opens your eyes” and “wakes you up”. One outcome of the insurgency was, for instance, that people who had never protested before reconsidered their ideas about protest. Our hypothesis is that protest changes people’ minds because of its emotional intensity and the process of reprocessing that emotions trigger, considering that “once a person begins to participate, she is subject to new social processes that help shape her emotions, morals and cognitions” (Jasper, 1997, p. 185).

Moreover, for the women interviewed, the process of transformation only started with the insurgency. In fact, in our case study we were able to observe that participation in the insurgency of Oaxaca (2006) was only the first step of a long journey that is still (2017) ongoing. Participation in the insurgency allowed these women to get to know each other and bond together, to empower themselves individually and collectively and to build affective bonds and spaces that they now do not want to give up. Sharing experiences, emotions and a new collective identity as women capable of fighting against chauvinist violence and

for a better society was what led them, for instance, to react and overcome fear of authority or violence and start a process of emotion work. This process includes, for example, the re-appropriation of anger, that is, another important process that empowers and helps them to fight against their own shame, resentment or sense of guilt (Holmes, 2004).

To conclude, what makes the protest experience a unique experience is that it is highly emotional and cannot be delegated. When people fight against something that is upsetting their life, they are personally experiencing something new. By feeling the emotions in their belly they are experiencing the protest first-hand. In these contexts, as well as indignation, outrage and anger, which are present from the beginning and have motivated people to fight, the emotional dimension of the transformation of consciousness and behaviour comprises both the shared and reciprocal emotions among the people who are fighting and emotions towards the state or the authorities, which, as we will see in the next two paragraphs, sustain the development of new subjectivities.

"This struggle bonded us": the role of collective emotions

During one focus group we did with the Mujer Nueva collective, two women broke down and cried remembering the barricades in Oaxaca, when they distributed food to young people from slums who fought in the barricades and were defending the radio and TV channels occupied by women. At this moment, the women were showing empathy, crying, and thinking about where these young people who had become like their children could be and what they could be doing. Also, as these women told us, "we have become very important to them" (FG.MN).

This event shows that collective emotions (Jasper, 1997 and 2013), that is, emotions towards people who are fighting together and shared among them, are a central element in the protest experience. Bonds and feelings felt during a protest are as intense as the struggle is, and they are emotional baggage[5] that no one can lose, as this Mexican woman states:

> These are the words of a companion who is now dead: "This struggle bonded us". And it is true. We, the women of the collective group, didn't know each other before and that struggle has bonded us and now we want to deepen this relationship. (I.Oa.9a)

In addition, we could observe in our research that the new relationships that

[5] We use this concept as a positive one, although it sometimes acquires a pejorative meaning, considering that the feelings that people experience in their lives can have a negative effect on their behaviour and attitudes (http://www.collinsdictionary.com). In general, emotional baggage is neither positive nor negative, but something that everyone has, and it is up to each person to decide if and how to take advantage of it.

arise from the protest experience allow people, for instance, to know each other, overcome prejudices, rely and discover affinities.

> Sometimes you have these dumb ideas, I don't know what we could call them, about some movements… but when you live through it, you are marked by it. (FG.MN).

Like protest, domestic violence also bonded women together. As a member of Lucha Chula told as, they built a sisterhood by "sharing our violent experiences and creating a circle of friendship" (FG.LC). These ties, which are created during the conflict, are one of the legacies of these experiences, in which these women rediscovered the pleasure and necessity of working and bonding together among women.

The first change these women had experienced as a consequence of their participation in the insurgency was rediscovering connections with other women and the importance of working together, beyond the protest experience. As a member of Mujer Nueva highlights, "after 2006 I realised that I was not the same woman as before, that you can't think about social struggle without women's struggle" (FG.MN). An activist of Lucha Chula, who had previous experience (since before 2006) in anarchist groups, explains that she realised that she was experiencing "schizophrenia" generated by the division between the intimacy sphere among women, at home and with her female friends, and the political sphere that she shared with men. As she said during the focus groups, it was in the self-defence workshop (it means, since 2011) where she "could bring together intimacy and the political sphere without any problem" (FG_LC). In this case the young woman explained that the lack of intimacy is due to a lack of empathy and harmony with her male comrades. As she told us "I can't talk about the same things with a man (…) Here [in the group that organises the self-defence workshop] we understand each other, it's easier" (FG.LC).

The role of collective reciprocal and shared emotions (Jasper, 1997) in this change lies in empathy and sisterhood. What strengthens these women and ties them to each other is sharing emotions and empathising. As a woman in Oaxaca told us, regarding the occupation of the public TV channel Canal 9 during the protest in 2006: "we did not want to leave that space and nobody understood why. We did not want to leave it because it had become our space" (FG.MN). And another woman, when talking about the barricades, said: "this was what hurt us the most, that they [the authorities] had taken from us the spaces that we had built around the fire" (FG.MN).

Sharing protest experiences with other women, and feeling at ease with women more than men, changed the group's agenda and practice. Moreover, as literature on social movements has already demonstrated, affective bonds between members can develop and strengthen the sense of collective identity (Taylor, 1989; Bayard de Volo, 2006) and help people to overcome loneliness

and helplessness, two feelings common in women who have suffered violence. As this extract shows:

> I hadn't known my neighbours well and in the barricades I got to know them better (…). That's how we created a community and other sorts of relationships, and I think that's the best thing ever, the ways of relating to each other and being together. (I.Oa.7)

The new sisterhood that arose from the protest allowed women to overcome emotions such as powerlessness and shame, and to keep self-organising when the protest finished, as one member of Mujer Nueva explains:

> When we went back to our old lives we realised that we were able to conquer our space, but not a gender stance within the social movement (…) After 2006 I realised that I could not be the same woman as before, that there is no social fight without women's fight. This change was very important for me. (FG.MN)

Similarly, one member of Lucha Chula explained that her change was discovering that there was a chance to keep fighting in a more confortable space where: "you are no longer the only crazy one shouting out against the patriarchy, and you can see many people supporting you" (FG.LC).

Women activists who had participated in social movements since before 2006, and women who experienced protest for the first time in 2006, discovered that all of them shared loneliness. This mood, among other things, limited these women's potential for emancipation from their previous lives and fed into learned helplessness, that is, the feeling that leads people to think it is useless to fight against something that cannot be changed. Overcoming social loneliness and shame is important because the mere fact that people feel supported and part of a new "us" influences moods and provides energy to the protagonists of these experiences. As a member of Mujer Nueva told us: "I feel happy in the group because we succeeded in breaking that [learned helplessness]". (FC.MN).

Receiving support, comfort and solidarity, as well as knowing that there are other people with whom to share ideas, concerns and purpose, avoids one of the main objectives of every domination systems: isolating and dividing people. Protests bond people and feed their identity, as a woman in Oaxaca said: "the best reward the movement gave me was meeting my compañeras " (FG.MN).

Sharing spaces such as barricades or the TV channel bonded these women together, and when these experiences ended they started building new spaces, which in this case are the two experiences analysed, Mujer Nueva and the self-defence collective. All the women interviewed felt that they did not have a place in institutional politics, broader social movements and the social context, and for this reason they decided to build new spaces where they could keep sharing experiences and emotions and from where they could keep empowering

themselves. For the first time, and thanks to their participation in the insurgency, these women, who had felt that they had no space in their society before, felt that they were able to build their own spaces, and this was a crucial moment in their lives because it was at that moment – when such spaces became real – that they started making their own paths toward emancipation, as this extract shows:

> [during the insurgency] We built a new space together, in order to go and talk about family and personal problems, without any interests. These experiences leave a mark. [Thanks to this space] We all succeeded in overcoming our fears, we could show ourselves as we actually were, and what we wanted to do. (FG.MN).

Free or self-organised spaces are important because, as Chatterton (2008) highlights, social change is linked to the need to create spaces for emotional connections; similarly, Brown and Pickerill (2009) showed the importance for activists to build "fear-free" and "shame-free" spaces for sharing experiences, supporting themselves and developing new projects based on empathy, happiness and solidarity, which is, quoting a Lucha Chula activist, their "best weapon" (FG.LC).

This explains why the spaces that these women built on their own, both during the protest and after it, are so important. "Free spaces", as Reger affirms, "are cognitively and emotionally important contexts within social movements" (2004, p. 206). What we were able to observe in the two experiences analysed is that it is in these spaces where emotional reflexivity (Hochschild, 1979, 1983; King, 2005) takes place, creating the conditions for a process of transformation of consciousness and behaviour (Piven and Cloward, 1977) and emotion management, as we will see in the third paragraph.

To conclude, what we want to highlight is that the insurgency of Oaxaca provided the opportunity to build an environment consisting of women who enjoyed their sisterhood as well as working together, which not only makes it possible to achieve the objective of the struggle but also ensures that the experience is more bearable. The experience changed these women lives, as this extract shows:

> After all this we will never be the same women as before, because we got closer to each other, we are more aware. We are now aware [of the importance] of supporting women, and even as a society we [the women] are more connected. It was a very hard experience, very painful, but also beautiful. (FG.MN)

All these new bonds strengthen, on the one hand, solidarity between women who have lived through the same experience or have recognised themselves as having the same values and ideas (Taylor and Rupp, 2002) and, on the other hand, they feed the polarisation of society and disappointment and discredit

against "others", which furthers the antagonist identity (us vs. them). The "them" here are those against whom these women have fought during the insurgency, such as the state, the government and the police. This leads us to the next section, in which we will present the role of emotions directed towards authorities.

The role of emotions directed towards authorities

Another change that these women experienced as a consequence of their participation in the insurgency of Oaxaca was a redefinition of their relationship with the authorities, that is, politicians and police forces.

During an interview with one of the women in Mujer Nueva, she told us that Governor Ulises Ruíz, against whom Oaxaca's people fought unsuccessfully in 2006, was not only considered guilty for repressing the people[6], but also represented for her and her companions the father or authoritarian husband who had beaten them or the man who had raped them, their daughters, or other women. During the protest, the public and private spheres merge together, and the feelings that people have felt in their ordinary lives become part of their political action, as the personal postpartum experience is turned into the postpartum self-help movement (Taylor, 1996). As Krauss wrote, "experience is not merely a personal, individualistic concept. It is social. People's experiences reflect where they fit in the social hierarchy" (1993, p. 249). The everyday experience of people, full of emotions, develops their "hidden transcript" (Scott, 1990) and their worldviews, and this link between the private and public spheres can explain the lack of trust and confidence that millions of people feel towards governments and authorities, and how deep this gap is.

The violent repression during the insurgency in Oaxaca in 2006 led many people not to trust in their government anymore and to distance themselves from the state as a consequence of their own experiences. Sometimes people keep voting in order to exercise their right, even though "it will not take us anywhere" (I.Oa.9b), and at other times anger and grief are so extreme that people refuse to vote. As happened in Italy and Germany, where radical militants developed a "counterculture of an image of a 'violent' and 'unfair' state" (della Porta, 1995) as a consequence of police brutality and a routine employment of violence, the emotional intensity of the protest experience changes the view of the state that people had.

The distrust against the authorities and disaffection with the system that resulted from the Oaxaca insurgency explain the self-organised projects that these women started during and after the conflicts. In addition to the pleasure of staying together to do something useful for the community or group that

[6] Ulises Ruíz's government has often been accused of being authoritarian and disrespectful of human rights, and peasant and indigenous movements have been violently repressed. During the insurgency of Oaxaca, 27 protestors were killed, and more than 500 detainees disappeared or were tortured or persecuted.

people feel as a consequence of participating in the protest, subversive counter-emotions toward authorities (Flam, 2005), such as the contempt these women hold against politicians and their distrust in institutions, lead them to self-organise in order to build something new.

After 2006 Mujer Nueva and Lucha Chula started working in the slums and indigenous communities in order to help other women to empower themselves, avoiding gender institutions, with which they share neither discourse nor practice. Their activities aim to collectivise domestic, structural and political violence experiences among women in order to give support, hope and strength by generating solidarity, empathy and sisterhood. They also support women who leave their violent partners, and in one case a woman killed her husband in self-defence.

In their activities, these women fight against the cultural sexism that generates learned helplessness, shame and passiveness in women who suffer from domestic violence, and the institutional sexism that causes that the vast majority of the rapes to be unpunished but allows a woman who has an abortion to be sent to jail (González Arias, 2011), as this extract shows:

> Together, united, organised, we can do many things for other women. Especially for those who are suffering from violence. All kinds of violence, both domestic and by the state. I always say that violence is everywhere, there is violence in the union [CNTE], there is violence at work, there is violence at home, there is violence in the very same family. So, it is as if we had dared to raise our voices, to leave that life that we had because we were subjugated. (I.Oa.9)

The experiences and emotions that these women shared during the insurgency, when they experienced political violence, together with emotions they felt about how the state unfairly treated women who suffered from male violence, such as injustice, indignation, anger, sadness, powerlessness, despair, frustration etc., led them not to trust the authorities, and instead to find other ways to build new projects in which they could stay together and continue the process of emancipation that began during the protest. In these cases, the politicians, institutions and social movement organisations' leaders no longer speak for them but become part of the problem. For these women, fighting against machismo is a daily resistance that they face together, creating and spreading new ideas, values, emotions and practices through self-education and emotion work, beyond institutions and organisations, whether governmental or otherwise.

Their projects are based on the idea of autonomy from the state that in Mexico is being put into practice by the Zapatistas and other indigenous communities who have overcome the "state paradigm", that is, the idea that radical change is only possible by taking state power (Holloway, 2002). In these experiences, where ordinary people self-organise and which Zibechi (2007) called "societies in movement", the state is not the spokesperson anymore, but a subject, often

threatening and dangerous, despite which people continue to empower themselves and build their own projects and society.

As we have observed in other self-organised groups in Mexico (Poma and Gravante, 2016b), the subversive counter-emotions felt toward opponents have not only led them to identify with the Zapatistas, but they have also had an influence on the strategic decisions about their self-organised and self-managed struggles, about working at local level and, even at this scale, about choosing who to work with. These women's groups are inserted into the Mexican autonomy and community tradition (Regalado, 2013b) which is growing in both urban and indigenous settings and is characterised by favouring their own local agendas and projects that aim to shape autonomous subjectivities and communities (Regalado and Gravante, 2016).

To conclude, despite the fact that fear of repression and violence (both domestic and political), a sense of powerlessness and learned helplessness often discourage people from reacting to injustice, shared and reciprocal emotions ensure that these women have found the courage to go forward and keep resisting and developing their projects. The protest experience deeply changes people, insomuch as women who fought in the Oaxaca insurgency agree that they will never be the same as before, not only because it changes people's ideas and their way of seeing the world but also because it bonds people who share the same experiences and emotions and restores hope.

Women's change is not something that ended in 2006, but something that started with participation in collective action to create new political subjects, who face the situation with different spirits and values, as the existence of Mujer Nueva and Lucha Chula demonstrates. As the name of the collective Mujer Nueva indicates, they are New Women whose main purpose is to keep empowering themselves and other women. In order to do this, both groups periodically organise workshops and activities with professional women such as psychologists and other social scientists, MDs, artists, boxers and martial arts experts. One of the outcomes of their activities that we want to highlight in this paper is the emotion management that they keep doing, which includes, among other things, personal and collective work on anger and fear. In the next section we intend to highlight two instances of emotion works related to women's change that we were able to observe in the cases studied: overcoming fear and the re-appropriation of anger.

"Let's get rid of fear and bring out anger": emotion work as a path to emancipation

In the first two paragraphs we have shown the change women experienced as a consequence of their participation in the insurgency of Oaxaca, an experience that led them to create new spaces from where they are now fighting machismo and the effects of domestic and political violence. In these spaces, one of the goals is to challenge some feeling rules that society imposes (Hochschild, 1979, 1983), which at the same time generates new changes in women who participate

in the groups' activities.

"Emotion work" involves the subjects' ability to reflect on feelings and try to handle them by channelling, suppressing or evoking emotions. Emotion work is needed in everyday life "when our feeling does not fit the situation, and when we sense this is a problem" (Hochschild, 1983, p.43). In social movements, it becomes a strategy for challenging hegemonic and engendered feeling rules.

The main applications of this concept to the study of social movements include research that has dealt with the handling of fear (Goodwin and Pfaff, 2001; Flam, 1998; Johnston, 2014), the transformation of fear into anger (Jasper, 1997), of shame into pride (Gould, 2009; Groves, 1997), of pain into anger and of anger into pain (Summers Effler, 2010). Focusing on the emotion work done by social movement organisations, Reger (2004) has analysed the channelling of anger into empowerment and collective action, while Flam (2005) has analysed the processes of sowing mistrust, re-appropriating anger, working against fear, and overcoming shame.

In the case of Mujer Nueva and Lucha Chula, we want to discuss the emotion work they do by facing fear and trying to bring out anger, as a strategy to face violence and machismo in their everyday lives. We have chosen these two emotions as an example because the slogan of the self-defence workshop that the younger women organise is "Let's get rid of fear and bring out anger". Moreover, what we are observing in Mexico is that, since solidarity and collective action has begun, what it is needed to resist and respond to state violence is "to spread the anger" (Gaitán, 2014) and overcome fear collectively (Zibechi, 2014).

Re-appropriating anger and facing the fear they feel every day, both of which limit their freedom, are crucial steps for liberation and emancipation, since "the personal side of social change requires an emotional reflexivity" which is "the ability to identify and understand the impact of particular emotions on thinking" (King, 2005, pp. 160-161).

In order to understand the emotional dimension of violence against Mexican women, it is also important to understand that these Mexican women's fight against machismo is not only a question of dignity but also a question of life, because what is at stake is their very life and freedom, since domestic and sexual violence in Oaxaca kills more than 150 women a year[7]. Our analysis shows that the breakdown of daily life routines due to the intolerable level of violence faced by Mexican women in Oaxaca generates many emotions that need to be managed collectively in order not to remain passive when someone experiences violence, as this extract shows:

> It is that suddenly the fear paralyses you. You suffer all kinds of violence and you

[7] 173 women were killed between December 2011 and November 2012 in the state of Oaxaca; more than a half of all women are victims of violence. Source: www.consorciooaxaca.org.mx/violencia-feminicida/

> keep feeling helpless, and you want to do something but you cannot and at this point you feel frustrated. Suddenly you feel that you are useless, your self-esteem falls and everything. It seems like nothing, but after 2006 all the abilities that were hidden within me came out (…). Now I really can defend myself with words, I will not keep my arms crossed anymore. (FG.MN)

Moreover, as emerged in the interviews and focus groups, the fear that women in Oaxaca face every day is not only about the possibility of disappearing and being raped, beaten and assassinated, with impunity for their attackers, but is also about the men's violent response when women react against and publicly denounce when a man touches them in public and private places or when they make personal comments. In addition to this, there is fear related to domestic violence related to the fear to being beaten or even assassinated and the fear of the economic consequences or outcome for their family if they refuse to accept such violence. In fact, many women who do not have a job cannot live without the income of their husbands, and their reaction against violence can lead them to lose their children or not to have a place to live. To sum up, in this context, fear concerns both life opportunities and physical freedom and life itself, and that means that many women decide not to oppose to their condition, which generates powerless and frustration among the women who participated in the groups analysed:

> I remember the work we did with a lady who was being beaten by her husband. When I see these cases, I say "Why didn't they react? Why are they accustomed to it? (…). (FG.MN)

As the member of the two collectives told us, in order to create the conditions for women to be able to confront their situation and react to violence, the first step to "get rid of fear" consists of facing the fear of fear, since: "A woman coexists with fear from when she was born. (…) we [women] are very passive and we need to lose the fear of fear. And this fear has been imposed with violence". (FG.LC).

One way to face the fear of fear is by sharing experiences, not feeling alone, and doing collective activities such as theatre or self-defence workshops, which are ways to start accepting that the fear that everyone feels can be confronted. Collective emotions and affective bonds created during the insurgency helped women to face and overcome their fears. As Johnston (2014) shows in his study about authoritarian regimes, fear can be managed collectively. The mechanism called "fear abatement" is a subprocess that is highly relevant to initial mobilisation and seems to be common to different kinds of mobilisations.

Collective activities make women feel more self-confident and help them to reframe their experiences and change feeling rules, which are "the guidelines for the assessment of fits and misfits between feeling and situations" (Hochschild, 1979, p. 566). As a member of the self-defence workshop asserts: "I was scared

to go out at night, but now I know that if someone attacks me I can defend myself and I am not defenceless anymore" (FG.LC). Moreover, members of Mujer Nueva highlight that "many people who participated in 2006 [in the insurgency] are not helpless anymore, but the majority still are, and it makes me feel powerless and I ask myself why?" (FG.MN).

The participation in collective action generates affective bonds and a new collective identity that make people more confident, a process that women who experience violence alone do not have. As members of Lucha Chula explained to us, when a woman participates at the self-defence workshop for the first time, they try to instil confidence in herself "we do it by speaking, sharing experiences, and after that there is the physical technique, which helps strengthen confidence" (FG.LC).

Our point is that collective action, thanks to its emotional intensity, creates the conditions for a process of reflexive self-construction from which participants become new political subjects who – by collectively reframing their reality and feelings – are emancipating themselves. As studies on Participatory Approaches Research (PAR) have demonstrated, "empowerment and transformation happen when the body and embodied emotional knowledge are involved" (Van Wijnendaele, 2014, p. 278), which highlights "the power of emotions to shape social life" (2014, p. 278).

The emotion work aimed at counteracting fear also consists of accepting that fear is natural, and that "ideally it is necessary to feel some fear in order to be on alert" (FG.MN), without feeling paranoia. Finally, counteracting fear means feel safe and accepting that "sometimes we can be more vulnerable, but we can bring out our strength, which comes from fear turned into rage" (FG.LC).

To sum up, the emotion work aimed to counteract fear is linked to the strategy of bringing out anger, because anger is a reaction to not be scared:

> Society has culturally instilled fear in women forever. Primarily fear of [suffering from violence in] the street and [instilling the idea] that women have to be in a private space. Bringing out anger means that we are able to react, because society teaches us that we do not have to react if we are attacked, [that we have] to be quiet and not do anything. Bringing out anger is reacting. (FG.LC)

The re-appropriation of anger is important because, as Flam affirms, anger "is a key antidote to the fear of repression" (2005, p. 27). As we have shown before, emotions are the result of life experience, and the anger these women feel is related to the injustices and violence they face every day in their houses, workplaces, neighbourhoods and cities.

Although, as Hochschild stated, the feminist movement in the US brought with it "a new set of rules for framing the life of men and women… [and] a woman can now as legitimately (as a man) become angry (rather than simply upset or disappointed) over abuses" (Hochschild, 1979, p. 567), in many cultures, anger

is still a male privilege and women who display anger easily become the target of negative sanctions (Flam, 2005, p. 22). In fact, the young women of the self-defence collective are disparagingly labelled as "feminazis".

Most women in Mexico are still brought up to remain silent and not express their opinions in public or private spaces. That is why the spaces that the women we interviewed built during and after the protest are so important to them: because in those places they can be themselves, they can learn to bring out their emotions and ideas with the purpose of no longer being submissive, and afterwards they are able to do so outside their spaces, in society.

Sharing anger is the first step of the emotion work. Anger mobilises, but it can also be emancipatory because it helps fight against guilt, resentment and shame. People who live in rural areas, indigenous people, women who have been victims of violence and people who belong to slums often share a feeling of shame. The protest experience and the new spaces that Mujer Nueva and Lucha Chula created after the protest help women to lose their shame and rebuild a sense of pride. Sharing anger and considering it something that is a part of them, something which is related to their experience that it is important to express, is a process that strengthens people. As Holmes states:

> if anger is taken up as a necessary part of conflicts, not as a chance for personalised slighting, then it can help emotionally and politically move people towards respectful relations with others that are key to establishing social justice. This involves seeing anger as productive of relations with others rather than as a reaction to an enemy 'other'. (2004, p. 130)

To conclude, overcoming fear and the re-appropriation of anger are two emotional processes that strengthen these women. Without going into the psychological dynamics of emotion work, what we want to highlight is that the experiences that we have analysed confirm that: "it is through our management of feeling that feeling is social" (Hochschild, 2008, p. 80).

Conclusions

We have presented an analysis of two Oaxaca women's collectives in order to show the role of emotions in the transformation that collective action generates. In this case study, the first breaking point was the insurgency of Oaxaca, which provided an opportunity for women to get to know each other and build a sisterhood. The end of the social movement was the beginning for these women's new collective experience, created so as not to lose the affective bonds and sisterhood built in the struggle, and to fight against political and domestic violence and machismo. Moreover, this process has led these women to create their own political practice, characterised by solidarity, sisterhood and being women-centred rather than state or male centred. This politics of the "other" not only includes different ways and strategies for resisting and fighting

machismo in everyday life, but also practices of self- (other) knowledge and a different way to feel, express and share their feelings with other women.

Our analysis reveals that emotions are important in collective action because they are so intimate and personal that they cannot be delegated. It also confirms that, as Krauss wrote

> shifting the analysis (…) to the subjective experience of ordinary women makes visible a complex relationship between everyday life and the larger structures of public power. It reveals the potential for human agency, which is often hidden in a more traditional sociological approach. (Krauss, 1993, p. 250).

Emotions, in addition to motivating and mobilising people, strengthen and empower them, bringing these women who share ideas, experience and emotions together and accentuating the antagonist identity between "us" and "them". In fact, empathy, a sense of sameness, and sharing experiences and emotions are what bonded these women. On the other hand, a lack of empathy is also what divides people, feeding their hidden discourses and the antagonist identity of an "us" and a "them". Together with other emotions such as hate, anger, contempt and distrust, the lack of empathy shows who is in and who is out, putting "everyone in their place" (I.Oa.9a).

Our research shows that the change that women experienced as a consequence of their participation in the insurgency in 2006 did not end with the protest, but is a process of transformation that these women continue by promoting local political projects and emotion work. In this process of transformation, shared and reciprocal emotions can help people to overcome powerlessness, loneliness and helplessness, that is, a sense of inevitability. Moreover, overcoming fear and expressing anger without shame is an emotion strategy that the two groups are adopting to empower themselves and other women.

The women interviewed, who are setting up new self-organised collectives to fight machismo, are creating a new world in the shell of the old one, because they are working both individually and collectively, confirming that "individual transformation is only the vital first stage: empowerment must develop into a collective form of struggle" (Kesby, 2005, p. 2051). As the research highlights, emotion work is a path to emancipation since it represents a way to break with the male chauvinist culture, which includes gendered framing and feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979), in which the women interviewed live.

Although many framing and feeling rules have already changed thanks to the feminist movement in the last four decades, even in Mexico and other countries where violence against women is a serious social problem, such as Italy or Spain, there is still much to do, and that is exactly what Mujer Nueva and the self-defence collective in Oaxaca are doing, in a self-organised way. The analysis of these collectives shows how relevant it is to focus the analysis of collective action from below and on "unsubjects", such as women, often made invisible by male comrades or leaders. These experiences show that women carry on

organising themselves and creating alternatives in a way that does not neglect their worldview, needs and sensitivities, aspects that are often scorned and repressed in social movements and political contexts.

In conclusion, emotions are important in protest because they mobilise and strengthen people, and also because they play an important role in emancipation, since through emotion work it is possible to challenge and change existing power relations and rules (Hochschild, 1979 and 1983). Finally, this analysis confirms that emotions are "fundamental to developing a more holistic approach to personal empowerment and social transformation" (Van Wijnendaele 2014, p. 269) not only in PAR, as the author shows, but also in the study of collective action.

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Table 1. List of quoted interviews

Label	Experience	Date of interview/Focus Group
FG.MN	Mujer Nueva Collective	April 2013
FG.SD	Lucha Chula Self-Defence Collective	April 2013
I.Oa.7	Mujer Nueva Collective	December 2010
I.Oa.9a I.Oa.9b	Mujer Nueva Collective Mujer Nueva Collective	December 2010 April 2013

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