

Announcement

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Nadia Ruiz is a philosopher of science, social science, and economics at CELLS. She focuses particularly on the model-building process in economics, aiming to understand both economic models' epistemic virtues and their appropriate role in policymaking.



Femicidios in the US-Mexican Border: Should Institutions Be Blamed?

I explore and assess whether blaming institutions is conceivable (and if so, why and how). Note that it is not my intention to give a feminist Marxist argument to condemn trivial facts such as capitalism in Mexico, or Mexico's macho culture, which might be related to the violence and anger found in the victims' bodies, or Mexico's corruption, which might answer the level of impunity femicidios face, or blame individual actors such as individual men, predators, managers, investors, or others. Instead, my purpose is to make an argument using the concept of fair competition found in business ethics to unfold the limitations and/or advantages of economic policies, such as NAFTA and PRONAF, and answer whether such institutions can be blamed for the collapse of a city, such as in the case of femicidios in Ciudad Juárez.

ROOM 1930.A001 (Otto-Brenner-Str. 1)

Femicidios in the US-Mexican Border: Should Institutions Be Blamed?

Nadia Ruiz, PhD

Abstract

Ciudad Juárez has undergone a crisis of brutal murder against women and young girls. The situation reached national awareness when, in January 1993, Angélica Luna Villabos's (16 years) and Alma Chavira Farel's (13 years) bodies were found on the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez. Unfortunately, this was just one of the first cases registered. "Las Muertas de Juárez," which is how the cases came to be called, showed a pattern. One, the bodies presented signs of rape and mutilation. Two, the bodies were abandoned, in most cases, their naked bodies were left out in the open in cotton fields and on the outskirts of the city. These crimes, ultimately, were assigned as cases of femicidios, which refers to the systematic pattern of gender-based violence in the form of disappearance and murder, by men, of girls and young women (Russell & Harmes, 2001). "Las Muertas de Juárez" also reached global concern. In 1999, the United Nations (UN) sent a Special Rapporteur, Asma Jahangir, to visit Ciudad Juárez and assess the ongoing killings of women. During her visit, Jahangir concluded, one, that most of the victims "were young women who had recently moved to Ciudad Juárez to work in one of the many assembly plants close to the border with the United States of America" (Jahangir, 1999); two, that "the event in Ciudad Juárez thus constitute a typical case of gender-based crimes which thrive on impunity"; and three, that many of the crimes seemed deliberately uninvestigated for the sole reason "that the victims were only young girls with no particular social status and who therefore were regarded as expendable" (Jahangir, 1999).

As highlighted in the UN's Special Rapporteur, and as some academics have highlighted also, there seems to be a link between the surge of femicidios in Ciudad Juárez and "maquiladoras" (manufacturing factories), which were a consequence of economic policies such as the Programa Nacional Fronterizo (PRONAF) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Some scholars, for example, have argued that the killings of women in Ciudad Juárez are an extreme manifestation of the systematic pattern of abuse against women who work in maquiladoras (Arriola, 2007; Monárrez, 2019, 2002). Others have gone further and argue that maquiladoras are not the only ones to blame, but also implied that institutions such as the Mexican government (CIDH, 2009) and NAFTA (Arriola, 2007; Quintero-Ramírez, 2002; Payan, 2014; Krásna & Deva, 2019) are responsible for such atrocities.