Thesis Prospectus The World Cup of 1986 in the Midst of Mexico’s “Lost Decade”

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The historiography of Mexican history fails to acknowledge the importance of the World Cup of 1986 in relation to the “lost decade” of 1980 and the economic transition towards neoliberalism. Further, the historiography of the World Cup of 1986 remains stagnant by only focusing on providing the soccer context for the national teams participating as well as on the results of the games played and analysis of what it means to the soccer world. Therefore, the various historiographies fail to research the World Cup of 1986 as an event that occurred simultaneous to the rest of the processes and changes occurring in Mexico. My thesis therefore will answer this question: What role, if any, did the World Cup of 1986 play in PRI’s legitimacy?

For some context in relation to PRI and their legitimacy, one can see 1968 as the beginning of the weakening in their legitimacy. The student movement of 1968 voiced the opinions many had of the Mexican government controlled by Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI since 1929. The government responded with various attacks on the students and their universities. Yet, the last strike, the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968 gave the student movement an abrupt ending days before the opening of the Olympics of 1968 in Mexico City. The massacre opened a wound as well as caused criticism of PRI. PRI, two years later, tries to close the wound through the hosting of the World Cup of 1970, however, the president during the event’s inauguration speech is met with a roar of reproach from the Mexican people in the stands. PRI continued to hold onto their legitimacy and grasp on the presidency by using social welfare programs that led to overspending. The 1976 devaluation peso crisis caused PRI to scramble to find solutions as the Mexican people continued to become disgruntled and frustrated with a party that promised prosperity. That crisis made it difficult for the government to fund welfare programs. The 1980s, known as the “lost decade” continued to demonstrate failure from
the Mexican government as the 1982 debt crisis and the 1985 Mexico City earthquake shook Mexico in the midst of a transition from an economy with government intervention to a neoliberaleconomy. The presidential election of 1988 further damaged the legitimacy of PRI as many accused it of corruption. Within this context, Mexico hosted the World Cup of 1986.

Video of the inauguration of the World Cup displayed the way Mexico wanted to present itself to the world. It also demonstrated the people’s resentment toward President de la Madrid as they booed him during his speech. I will also watch the speech to transcribe his speech as well as the others who spoke before the event started. Further, this video provides me with evidence that the Mexican people resented the Mexican government and publically expressed during an international event.

To look further into the legitimacy of PRI in relation to the World Cup of 1986, I will use primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will require me to use Spanish, my native language, which I will translate to English for the purposes of this thesis. Primary sources, especially newspapers articles, from El Informador, a newspaper from Guadalajara, Mexico, El Siglo de Torreon, a newspaper from Torreon, Mexico, and The New York Times, a newspaper from New York City, provide me with the mindset and the opinions occurring at that moment. The newspapers will also allow me to see how journalists saw the World Cup of 1986 in its various stages as well as look for op-eds that voiced an opinion on whether Mexico should host the World Cup or not in the middle of a weak national economy and in relation to the Mexican government. Further, the newspapers will also provide information if any people tried to organize and protest against the World Cup or gave the masses reasons not to protest the event. Preliminary examinations of the newspaper articles show that El Estadio Azteca, an iconic stadium in Mexican soccer, almost fails to become a venue for the World Cup of 1986 due to
negotiations between FIFA and owners of seating or stands. Yet, despite these three newspaper sources I want to find newspaper articles from Mexico City, from both left-wing and right-wing point of views.

The annual speeches from President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado during the years 1984-1987 will also allow me to see how he talked about the World Cup as well as how much it mattered to his image as president. In addition, I want to look for documentation of the World Cup from the Mexican federal government to assess its involvement in not only getting Mexico to host the World Cup after Colombia resigned its position as host, but also the involvement in the actual planning and hosting of the event. As of now, I have been limited to online searches through the federal government’s legislative website, but I am hoping to find some other way to access these files. I also want to see if the Mexican federal government documents any exchanges with FIFA, the international soccer organization, to assess the relationship between the two throughout the various stages of the World Cup of 1986. Further, an examination of FIFA’s report on the World Cup of 1986, which can be found online, can provide data on various things such as their view of Mexico as a host nation as well as their relationship with the Mexican government and the Mexican soccer federation.

To supplement my primary sources I will use the framework that Alan Tomlinson and Christopher use for their book *National Identity and Global Sports Events* to explore the World Cup of 1986. They borrowed from:

Miller et al. 2001[who have] have argued forcefully that global sport can be adequately understood only if the character of the main political and economic dimensions is recognized. These dimensions are interconnected and serve the interests of what they call the New International Division of Cultural Labor (NIDCL), which operates in the context of ‘five simultaneous, uneven, interconnected processes which characterize the present moment in sport: Globalization, Governmentalization, Americanization, Televisualization, and Commodification (GGATaC).
This framework will allow me to assess the World Cup of 1986 in relation not only to GGATaC, but also to neoliberalism. By using the GGATaC framework, I can see if part of the resentment from the Mexican people was due to wanting to voice their opinions against globalization and Americanization. Secondary sources will allow me to assess the various interpretations of the economic changes in Mexico, due to my limited knowledge of Mexico’s economic history. I will also use secondary sources to provide more context in relation to Mexico and international sports events it hosted in the past: the Olympics of 1968 in Mexico City and the World Cup of the 1970. By providing this context, I know my understanding of the World Cup of 1986 as a sporting event that has importance within the context of the “lost decade” will be more accessible to the reader.

The city of Nezahualcóyotl, also known as Neza, can also serve as a case study to examine how the city, known for its poor economic situation, became a venue for the World Cup of 1986. I want to see how much Neza’s local government participated in the hosting of the World Cup as well as how much did the federal government got involved in getting Neza ready to host an international event. Also, an analysis of the reaction of people who visited Neza during the World Cup can provide information on the visual difference of pre-World Cup Neza and post-World Cup Neza caused by the Mexican government wanting to put up a different Neza in front of the international community. By looking at these various things, I will find out if the residents of Neza voiced their opinions on the changes that occurred in their city, which will help me see if the residents liked the Mexican federal government more or less due to the changes.

My findings will be remarkably significant due to a lack of research on the World Cup of 1986 in relation to the lost decade of 1980s, in which PRI started to lose its hold on the Mexican people’s opinion. Further, my research at the least will provide a narrative different from the
historical one of the World Cup of 1986 by focusing on the relationship between FIFA, the
Mexican soccer federation, and the Mexican government. In addition, scholarship on the World
Cup of 2014 in Brazil in the future might be able to parallel what happened in Mexico of 1986 if
I can prove that Mexicans did not want the World Cup of 1986 to happen.
Bibliography of Primary Sources


Primary sources of three speeches similar to the U.S. State of the Union that Mexican president Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado from 1984-1987.


I have various newspaper articles from *El Informador* that range from announcements of Mexico getting to host the World Cup as well as news reports of it while it occurs.


A report written by FIFA, which should at least provide me with their point of view of Mexico as a host nation.


A YouTube video of the inauguration of the World Cup of 1986. I will use it as evidence of the Mexican’s crowd reaction to the president as well as possible analysis of how Mexico wanted to present itself to the world. I still need to transcribe it.


What I have found for now is that many of the articles provide updates on the process on Mexico as a host nation.


I have found various newspaper articles that speak about the Mexican economy as well as op-eds that voice an opinion on the criticism against Mexico or the World Cup of 1986 from American voices as well as what seems Mexican voices for an American audience.
Bibliography of Secondary Sources


It provides a general history of Mexico as well as part of the larger Mexican historiography that barely mentions the World Cup of 1986.


It provides an analysis of the biographies of the Mexican presidents to explain what PRI wanted from its candidates.


The book provides of narrative of the student protest of 1968 in Mexico by analyzing how gender and class played a part of not only in the oppression of the students, but also within the movement.


Gracida’s article provides a general explanation of the economic thought happening in Mexico from 1970 to 1986.


Ortero’s chapter is another explanation of neoliberalism in Mexico. However, it covers a larger amount of time.


Ariel Rodriguez Kuri’s chapter provides a general history of Mexico within the years 1968 to 2001. Like, other scholarship on Mexican history it rarely mentions the World Cup of 1986.

Walker’s chapter provides an analysis on the aftermath of the earthquake of 1985 in Mexico in relation to mobilization from middle class neighborhoods. Walker, also demonstrates that the Mexican people thought that President de la Madrid cared about the World Cup of 1986 more than the people suffering due to the earthquake.


The introduction to the book provides me with a framework of GGATaC to address the World Cup of 1986. Also, it will allow me to see how other scholars write about sporting events, even though I am taking a different approach.

“3/3 1968 Movimiento Estudiantil.” Uploaded by Historia de Mexico. Uploaded October 11, 2008. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFlne8m118g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFlne8m118g)

The video is part of a video series of the student movement of 1968. The video demonstrates the resentment against President Diaz Ordaz during his inauguration speech of the 1970 World Cup.


Provides an online page for FIFA’s understanding of the World Cup of 1986 without going into depth.