



Photo credit: Carlos Valadez



CULTURAL STREET MARKET EL CHOPO

Researchers: Guillermo Castillo, Julie-Anne Boudreau

Student: Adriana Alejandra Avila Farfán

Partner: Rodrigo Olvera

>In the context of Guerrero district in Mexico City, this case study addresses various “transgressive” practices. The street market is divided in sections of the cultural street market El Chopo—the cultural zone, the zone for selling various objects related to rock music, the concert zone, and the zone reserved for people who exchange music or books without economic transaction. Transgression is performed in a spatially differentiated manner and with multiple purposes and interests. Within the universe of practices that the young people carry out in El Chopo are the purchase and sale of music and clothing linked to different genres of music—rock, punk, heavy metal, etc.—, socialization with their peers, and performance/interpretation and listening to music. The street market carries since its foundation in the 1980s an aura of “transgression” because it visibilizes countercultural practices in the city.

Highlights

How did this countercultural space-time appear in the streets of the city? How did the Choperos manage to take the street? One of the key questions of the project is: What do young people transgress by consuming goods and going to El Chopo? The cases study adopts a historical approach exploring how a transgressive space-time become regulated and stabilized. Throughout its history, the Chopo street market was able to occupy the street by negotiating with the “external”, i.e. with the urban authorities. This negotiation process led internally to the formalization of an organized self-regulation through the formation of a Civil Association and the material organization of the street space occupied every Saturday. With this multiscalar view of the processes of regulation of a practice that is still considered provocation, we illustrate the changing construction of the relationship between “transgressors” and “authorities”.



Photo credit: Manuel Ahumada

Preliminary results

Transgression is conceived as a socially constructed process, not necessarily illegal, historically determined in complex power relations. Transgression refers to the irruption of an order of norms and regulations built by diverse actors and institutions. Particularly, and considering the universe of young people who attend El Chopo, it focuses on how the groups that carry out transgressive practices do them with the purpose of spatial appropriation, expression, and identity. We propose to consider the street as an epistemological posture. Beyond the fact that the street is our object of study, analysing the long process of regulation of how the street was appropriated by the market, our approach so far shows that studying urban regulation from the material perspective of the street can be very revealing. This means describing materialized practices, describing how the organization of the street space and the materiality of the market, produce certain regulatory orders that articulate with institutional orders.



Photo credit: Carlos Valadez



Photo credit: Carlos Valadez

What was done this year

During the first semester of 2018, we took on the task of collecting documentary information related to the history of the cultural market El Chopo. In addition, we make regular visits to the market, of which we have field notes. We conducted a workshop and six semi-structure interviews with different choperos: traders, members of the civil association, regular attendees, and founders, we also interviewed an official from the borough authorities.

Regarding the documentary review related to the Tianguis Cultural del Chopo, we reviewed texts that work on general topics such as the history of rock in Mexico or the counterculture, in which the authors usually dedicate a section to justify that since 1980, the Tianguis Cultural del Chopo has become a fundamental alternative place to share and live the rock culture in Mexico City. We also found documents centered on the cultural market El Chopo, elaborated by people who have contributed to its existence, who from an experiential narrative have systematized different historical moments of the process. And finally, we analyze and review the academic documents in which, mainly undergraduate students, have studied the Tianguis Cultural del Chopo from different analytical perspectives.

We have also carried out a press review, especially of the weekly column "En El Chopo", written by Javier Chelico in the newspaper La Jornada. We currently have 530 systematized editorial notes.

Later we analyzed inductively the ethnographic and documentary information, in that sense we made a first phase of codification; in which the information was grouped and ordered using the Atlas-T 7 software. We have elaborated a series of networks of relationships between emerging codes and the categories we are interested in studying: namely, public space, regulation, transgression, youth.

What is planned next year

We will write an academic article on the history of the Tianguis Cultural del Chopo, emphasizing how the Choperos have appropriated the street, and how the relations of regulation and transgression have been transformed in this countercultural space. For this article we will use the ethnographic and documentary information systematized during the previous semester.

We also hope to collaboratively build an archive (documentary, oral history, photographic images) on the history of the Tianguis Cultural del Chopo to safeguard the memory of the process and promote its visibility internationally and with the new generations of attendees to the market.

To achieve this we will design and conduct oral history workshops with young people interested in rock. The objective is that young people support us in the construction of data for the archive, by conducting interviews with different Choperos about their experiences in these 38 years of existence of the TCC. We also hope that they will support the systematization of existing documentary information. In addition, we will collectively build a collection of significant objects from the TCC to promote the collection in public and community spaces.

Type of products planned for next year



>Multimedia coproduction



> Event



> Scientific publication



> Conference in a meeting



Coordination centrale TRYSPACES
Tryspaces@ucs.inrs.ca
Institut national de la recherche scientifique
Centre - Urbanisation Culture Société
385, rue Sherbrooke Est Montréal (Québec)
H2X 1E3
T 514 499-4058

<https://www.facebook.com/tryspaces/>
<https://twitter.com/tryspaces>
<http://tryspaces.org/>