Vietnamese independent groups in the arts

Presented by Tran Thuy

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Keynotes

• The research conducted in Hanoi under TRYSPACES

• Other findings (from literature review and other studies/observations)

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TRYSPACES

• a team of interdisciplinary researchers and students, multimedia artists, youth workers, urban professionals and youth from Mexico City, Montreal, Paris and Hanoi.

• three research objectives: Transgression, Regulation, Intervention

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Introduction

TRYSPACES: Research objectives

- **Transgression:** To compare how adolescents and young adults in Montreal, Paris, Mexico City and Hanoi use and appropriate physical and virtual public spaces; to understand how this contributes to the constitution of their identity, allows them to express their world view and to carve out a place for themselves in an increasingly urban and interconnected world.

- **Regulation:** Understand and explain the consequences of these transgressive practices of spatial appropriation by young people on the regulation of public spaces and urban governance.

- **Intervention:** Stimulate collaborative research between young people, researchers, decision-makers, artists and associative actors.

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Creative spaces

- Art-linked creation/creativity (literature, painting, design, music and performances...)
- Co-working spaces might be present, but the focus is not on sites only dedicated to co-working nor predominantly IT-hubs
- Features such as IT, bar, café... might be present in large spaces

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Creative spaces

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Research areas and context

• Alternative, community-led formations of cultural and artistic spaces across Asia
• A proliferation of creative spaces in Hanoi where young Hanoians meet to socialize and collaborate.
• The spaces face existential challenges

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Research areas and context

Vietnam: Changes in the culture sector – Policy level

• Resolution 33-NQ/TW on culture and human development in the context of sustainable development, 2014

  Culture as
  - values and standards (Arnoldian “high culture”)
  - everyday life (Edward Tyler’s anthropological approach)
  - cultural industries (first time mentioned in a policy document)

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Research areas and context

Vietnam: Changes in the culture sector – Policy level

• Decree 1755/QĐ-TTg (National Strategy for the development of the cultural industries), 2016

→ Economic values of cultural industries
Research areas and context

Vietnam: Changes in the culture sector – Grassroots level

• Mapping by British Council, 2014: 40+ creative hubs across the country

• Research by UNESCO and Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2016: creative hubs struggled financially; not legally recognized; no support policy.

• Mapping and research by British Council, 2018: the situation remains, but the number of hubs increases to 140+

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Research areas and context

Vietnam: The formation of independent groups in the arts

• “The role of creative hubs in the creative economy” – reports by UNESCO, British Council, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism;

• Academic research: youth and changes in urban lifestyles

• Why and how? Other perspectives? – more attention needed

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TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Research objectives

• to understand the patterns of emergence and disappearance of creative spaces in Hanoi, Vietnam which are operated by or attract youth.
• to investigate how such individuals either believe they are or (actually) are transgressing official and cultural norms with regards to their use of/actions in creative spaces and their surrounds.

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TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Youth:
The process of building independence, autonomy and responsibility
A phase in the process of identity building, status positioning, biological changes

Transgression:
Synonymous with survival as much as with resistance
Could be deviance but not necessarily
A difference from the norm
Freedom
A system of norms and rules which get broken
New paradigms
Movement
Relations to the norm
Relational

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Case studies

• Focusing on the now-disbanded ‘Zone 9’ creative space and its tenants + ‘Hanoi Creative City’, supposedly a replacement of Zone 9, and its tenants


• Other creative spaces in the city

70+ interviews conducted in summer 2019

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Zone 9 in 2013

Photos: Vietnamnet
Zone 9 in 2019

Photos: Tran Thuy
TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Research questions

• RQ1: where have tenants/individuals from Zone 9 re-located to, and have they been able to recreate a similar style of ‘creative space’, or not? If not, what have they decided to do instead and why?

• RQ2: what are the motivations and strategies of the individuals creating/organizing/appropriating the Hanoi Creative City creative space in Hanoi (including possible former tenants from Zone 9)?

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TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Research questions

• RQ3: For the three creative spaces, what are the motivations and strategies of the individuals creating, organizing and/or appropriating these different creative spaces in Hanoi?

• RQ4: While the tenants of these creative spaces might not be youth themselves, we are interested to know: how are youth being considered in the creation of these spaces by others (if the creators are older), and how youth interact with these spaces and in what roles?

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Expected benefits

• provide insights into the formation of alternative cultural spaces in Hanoi
• how these alternative spaces depart from the visions of official state policy
• how youth culture is actively being formed and contested in the contemporary Vietnamese city

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TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Initial findings
- Too diverse to be generalized

Motivations:
- To collaborate, to express creative selves and energies, to build communities, to provide entertainment services, to be cool...
- Hubs as the work of individuals, groups or communities?
- The influence of Western models
- Changes over time: self expressions as political and social activism or mere entertainment

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TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Initial findings

Strategies

- Being open and being adaptive
- With or without a space? What kind of spaces?
- Funding strategies and project-based approaches
- Strategies for survival, “business models” and questions of independence and sustainability
- The delicate balance: Being independent and being commercial

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TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Initial findings

Youth

- Youth is always at the center of hubs, but hubs are more than just for youth
- Discrepancies of perceptions between hubs’ founders and users
- Different ways and levels of youth participation

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TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Initial findings

Transgression
- Being different, being interesting and being yourself: expressions from fashion styles, social behaviors to the transformation of spaces and the practices of experimental arts
- The sense of freedom (and individual rebellion among youth against family/community/social norms)
- The relationality of being transgressive: “No, I do not think that we have done anything transgressive”
- Different perceptions among generations
- Transgression and institutionalization

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TRYSPACES: Youth and Transgression

Initial findings

Creative projects as assemblages
- “temporary and provisional connective arrangements”*
- “a mix of horizontally and vertically organized elements”*
- Creativity as an interactive process


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