

Spaced Out

A personal geography to México City

FRAN ILICH

The space of this city is basically not a rhizome, although it could have been, or it could become. This city is not a network is not a labyrinth is not a monster is not an octopus: this city is the only thing there is. Outside the city there is only life debris, human wastelands, accidental settlements that now call themselves cities, although in fact they could be called anything else. Use your imagination.

At once you have them all walking in the city: the pariahs and outcasts, the lonely writers coming from provinces and towns and small creepy cities which don't exist and which aren't contemplated by time itself. Maybe in their homeland cities which they already left in the past they could tune into the worst happenings of network tv: infomercials, telenovellas, propaganda and snow – there's always snow on tv. There are roaming tourists with guides in their hand, looking closely for things they will never find, following steps and instructions every moment only to find they will be forever a step too far. And bottom models from every miserable part of the country, trying to become top, but always missing that special something they could never become: sure sure sure, there's plastic reconstruction, genetic synthesis, but basically there is never a chance to find what it takes. This is a city that renews itself with every step, and still it's always the same – the only things that ever change are the faces among the masses, but even the masses are always the same. The map is fading and blending, and yet it's still the same. Everyone here is the replacement of a constant in the equation.

And what to say about bored entrepreneurs with the leisure magazine at hand, looking for the strip show of their dreams, the revolutionary tourists searching for a reality which is as much a fake as Big Brother or Real world, and which they might find if they try hard enough – and then they will be able to buy it, consume it: be happy for as long as the pay per view fits in the agenda of their dreams. Will the revolution be available for tourists?

This city is a mess. The mess is the biggest in the world (if this is still the biggest city in the world, which i really doubt). The city goes all the way till it ends. And it never ends. There's no life outside the city, and as far as the natives of the city know there will never be: "outside of México City everything is Cuautitlán". That is, they don't exist, because Cuautitlán is a city only as big as a couple of streets, people, the name of a city, but nothing else. That's it.

When you first arrive here you want to eat it all: the city. It's an attitude problem. Behave. A one-line command. Don't play games. The only one eating here is the city itself. You are only half a byte. And the worst part is you have to feel proud of being a byte here. Is as much as you will get.

Many people have tried the ABC, the XYZ, the subway at night, a night at the pyramids, the Zocalo square, Polanco eurochic. Think Burroughs with a gun in his hand, playing William Tell with his wife soon to be a casualty of life... or Jack Kerouac to unlock the key to Tristessa (that post-aztec prostitute on drugs). But it doesn't have to be that sweet, just look at the downtown streets: that California girl taking a nap on the sidewalk since who know when (completely wet on *orina*) probably dreaming of mexican nights and spanish knights: her wallet disappeared into a slum, the american passport already on sale, crowds walking past trying to take a glimpse of her body. She passed away on the forever street. Like that. Like the aztec guy who didn't find home and never will, and who just insists on coming day after day to cry pray and demand to the virgin what he must have: he's so immersed in this like nothing else mattered as people walk by and the city gets a day older. And still he will always be perceived as an indigenous person by a society as classist as this. And to have native origins here is like a dead end street, we are still giving our gold mines to the foreign conquerors for free. Colonialism really never left these streets.

One of the most important things in my daily life is geography. Geography as in vacuum space, worm holes, cyberspace, the persons mapping my social environment and the social tissue which keeps (virtual or material) communities together or apart. That is, as in choose your own, do it yourself. You get the point, the city is not a to b to c. It's a map where you can choose where exactly to land, and in which also you can set your own preferences. The city gives you a lot of options: so please don't go default. Create your own map.

Thinking D.F. (that is .mx city) as in plain geometry is a no no no, you have to forget maths, kill the facts. Do you connect the dots? One of the first thing you notice here, it's the traffic problems, the cars, the people, the smog, the never-ending streets. Sometimes i wonder if there is a browser to navigate this mess, and for sure there is, let's call it metro for now, even if it is not the only one which exists. But even the metro system, it's a class space, like in a plane, you have tourist and coach. Let's imagine the subway as the fastest speed, but still it will only take you so far, no matter if there are as much as a 175 stations,

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11 lines and almost 300 kilometres of rails. You can almost say the architects of the city are fans of Fritz Lang and his *Metropolis*, because basically the underground of the city belongs to the lower class, student, young professional, meanwhile the highways belong to the people with cars and a neurosis they can afford and nurture in style. This said, that is why the strikes and manifestations always happen on city streets, because the people coming from every possible town to complain know that the least thing to disrupt is city traffic. They know their target. And so they came from their own lands of poverty, to this capital city which was modelled as those capital cities of the past, where all the best had to be a single royal magnificent city, and they find another kind of poverty based less on the absence of material issues. And so they crucify themselves in front of buildings, and get naked in front of cameras; meanwhile the traffic jams, and *chilangos* curse god because of traffic, and taxi drivers say these people should go away because they will never find what they're looking for, they should return to their towns to work... Although the real target commutes on the sky, on helicopter taxis, private owned. They wouldn't care too much to ride streets but their own: the ghettos of fashion, business anorexia, and so on.

I remember George Shirk, editor-in-chief of *Wired News*, saying that maybe e-commerce might prosper here, because traffic was such a thing that people might prefer to stay home and shop online. I mean, even the air has so much traffic that the city airport will be moved to a nearby state. And the city is so big that many other cities from other states are part of the city map, this city wants to eat the country itself. Imagine crossing a street and being in another state... and I do wonder about the edge, what it means to live in the edge. Sometimes when I'm on a plane, about to land on mx, I see the absolute edge, the final street, the last house, the absolute wall of this monstrous cell. In parts of the edge they have a wall, maybe because they are afraid to be in touch with the wilderness, lakes, maybe there's some ancient aztec spell. Maybe it's just a wall saying this is the end: outside there's nothing left: this is the world: one step more and you'll fall all the way down till you see the elephants, and Atlas carrying the world for as long as he can.

And I remember Pit Schultz saying that this city has no centre indeed, there are centres everywhere, like in fractal geometry, where every couple of steps away you will find a centre with its own economy somehow depending on an upper level of the structure, yet independent on its own, even if by illegal means.

This is such a city. The city I choose to live. A place which can be transmuted into a rhizome by means of wormholes, internet, subways and a personal geography based around notions of cyberspace. If you search ok, you will find the link; if you try to swallow it, you'll get burned out. The city is the only thing there is. You don't exist.