

Building the City Through Culture: Puebla's cultural urban assemblage (1987-2017)

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Abstract

This article analyzes the creation of a cultural urban assemblage in Puebla, Mexico between 1987 and 2017. For almost three decades, Puebla city officials have used culture to justify and implement public policies aimed at stimulating economic development and urban revitalization. New museums, parks, bike paths, multimedia projections and web applications have been created to encourage tourism and attract investment. The government has implicitly promoted culture—usually associated with spectacularity—as a commodity and as a way to project the idea of a homogeneous, non-conflictive society. Local actors, from artists whose works have been ignored to citizens whose property was expropriated, have tried to challenge the government's program. We describe the creation of Puebla's cultural urban assemblage through three distinctive episodes, each of which exemplifies the practice of culture both as heritage and as economic resource. Each episode also illustrates the heterogeneity, stabilization and antagonistic aspects of this assemblage.

Keywords

Puebla, cultural urban assemblage, International Museum of the Baroque.

1 Introduction

On February 14th, 2011, the State Legislature of Puebla, México published a new law that downgraded the Secretary for Culture to an advisory State Council for Culture and the Arts (CECAP) and placed this office under the control of the Secretary of Government, the political arm of the cabinet. Puebla had created its Secretary for Culture in 1983 and this action played a key role in UNESCO's decision in 1987 to grant World Heritage status to Puebla's city center. The reason for the downgrade, according to press reports at the time (Rangel, 2011), was a desire to reduce the payroll of the state bureaucracy as well as to create a more flexible structure to receive funds from business people to promote cultural and artistic activities. A number of local legislators, however, criticized the action on the grounds that the new Council had no clear goals or administrative power, which raised concerns that state cultural policies were at risk.

Five years later, on February 4th, 2016, governor Rafael Moreno Valle (2011-2017) inaugurated the International Museum of the Baroque (MIB) in the capital city. Designed by Pritzker Prize winner Toyo Ito, the museum was created as a cultural icon and as a way to project the city internationally (Rangel, 2011). During the ceremony, the governor said "I'm convinced that MIB will become a cultural icon that will show it's possible to imagine and build a different, better Puebla" (Rangel, 2011). The museum will cost more than MX\$ 7,000 million (around USD \$475 million), which makes it the most significant—and controversial—culture-related policy of Moreno Valle's administration (Carrizosa, 2016a).

How did culture shift from being something to preserve to being a resource on which to capitalize? How is Puebla's latest urban organization an economic resource rather than a

complex combination of culture as heritage? Has there been a programmatic, top-down approach to urban transformation through culture? In what follows, we argue that the transformation of the city has been a three-decade process in which culture has played different but related roles. Under the assumption that culture might stimulate economic development, Puebla's governments developed new infrastructure, renovated the urban landscape, expropriated houses and land, altered the historic center of the capital city, and encouraged new technological media for the city.

Methodologically, we rely on diverse sources to answer the above questions. We studied infrastructure (e.g. museums, auditoriums, parks) and large socio-technical systems (e.g. public transportation systems, road networks, bridges and spaces of public entertainment) mainly through observation and participant observation. We interviewed human actors (e.g. artists, curators, journalists, public officials, and academics) between 2016 and 2017. Private sector institutions (hotels, restaurants), civil society (NGOs, collectives, activists), and government (National Institute of Anthropology and history (INAH), UNESCO, Secretary for Culture/CECAP) were studied through official documents, public speeches, news, advertisements and interviews. Finally, we collected and recorded media representations and events (ads, apps, maps, guides, brochures, self-portraits, multimedia shows in public spaces, newspaper and other news carriers) that we critically interpreted individually and as a corpus.

2. STS, City and Culture: Analytical Perspectives

In both science and technology studies (STS) and urban studies, the past decade has seen growing interest in conceptualizing the city as an urban assemblage. The usefulness of this concept lies in not fixing the city to specific, even immutable defining features but rather emphasizing the city's changing, heterogeneously articulated nature. It also gives urban studies a tool to deal symmetrically with material and immaterial elements, both of which can be observed through empirical analysis. Kamalipour and Peimani (2015) have argued that 'being unfinished, cultural/physical, constitutive, socio-material, subjective/objective, and tricky, the urban areas and cities are ideal models for adopting assemblage thinking' (p. 403). For McFarlane (2011), this approach is useful because 'urban space must be first and foremost understood as a relational constitution, i.e. urban space is produced by assemblage—sociomaterial alignments, sometimes stable, sometimes precarious—that make up for the continuities and discontinuities of urban life' (p. 661). This dynamic view of assemblage is also described by Edensor (2011, p. 244) as 'ceaselessly (re)constituted out of the twists and fluxes of interrelation (...) and multiple networked mobilities of capital, persons, objects, signs, and information.' Similarly, Farías (2011, p. 30) argues that 'urban assemblages involve the actualization of certain capacities of producing the city' or, put differently, only assemblages bring about the city as we see, feel, and know it: as a multiple object.

From an STS perspective, the city has called attention for three reasons. First, the city is seen as a site where science and technology can be studied or materiality can be analyzed (e.g. infrastructure), functioning as a laboratory for many STS theories (Winner, 1980; Aibar and Bijker, 1997; Coutard, 1999; Gieryn, 2002). Second, the city has been understood as a suitable place to observe how some dichotomies of social thought, such as nature/culture, need to be overcome, resulting in interesting conceptual innovations such as cyborg urbanization and metabolism (Swyngedouw, 1996; Kaika 2005). Third, STS has successfully dealt with urban phenomena due to its focus on relational ontology

(Söderström, 1996; Amin and Thrift, 2002; Gabrys, 2014). This strategy has led to assemblage urbanism, for which “it is necessary to recast and reassemble the very object of urban studies: the city” (Farías and Blok, 2017, p. 569) and appreciate it as a multiple object. In this article, we extend this approach and connect assemblage thinking, with its STS-gaze, to culture in order to make sense of the urban transformation that has taken place in Puebla since 1987.

Despite the influence of works that brought to the forefront creativity and innovation in the development of cities (Florida, 2002; Hall, 1998; Sassen, 1991), assemblage thinking about the city has not included culture amongst its focal points. To fill this gap, we introduce the notion of *cultural urban assemblage* to refer to the entanglement of human actors (e.g. decision makers, artists, managers, journalists, etc.) and cultural products (e.g. maps, applications, regulations, brochures, infrastructure, etc.) that shape the city in order to direct different flows (e.g. tourism, information, capital, etc.) toward a specific end: to (re)produce forms of socialization (Ong, 2011; Latour, 2014). Unlike policy-oriented concepts, cultural urban assemblage emphasizes the contingency of culture as an urban phenomenon (Gibson and Stevenson, 2004), not easily planned and always conflictive (Yeoh, 2005; Coutard and Guy, 2007; Pratt, 2011; Wissink, 2013; Vanolo, 2014).

The operational definition of cultural urban assemblage has five observable characteristics. First, it has temporality, which implies that it unfolds over time without any ultimate goal. Second, it has depth. That is, previous states of the assemblage shape future ones, each establishing the possibilities for further development. Third, it is made up of heterogeneous elements, such as individuals, practices, institutions, documents, objects, and values. Fourth, the elements are temporarily stabilized –although stabilization is often fragile and needs ongoing maintenance; only when elements are stable can the emergent features of assemblages become visible and identifiable. Lastly, all cultural urban assemblages contain antagonistic forms of socialization. That is why culture cannot be understood, as it is in public policy scholarship, as a top-down way to reinforce local identities but must be understood instead as a way of multiplying forms of socialization in order to include conflict, dispute, and discontents.

3. Puebla’s cultural urban assemblage, 1987-2017

While assemblage seems to imply a static notion, our focus is the process of assembling, how assemblages come into being. This introduces temporality. Temporality should not be understood as linear, but as a trajectory that (a) can be split into phases or stages, (b) shows connections and disruptions throughout time, (c) allows us to understand any phase as a consequence (fragile, unstable, preliminary) of the previous ones, and (d) makes emergent properties visible. MacFarlane (2011, p. 654) calls this temporality ‘depth’ and defines it as “the crucial role of urban histories in shaping trajectories of urban policy and economy, habits of practice, and ways of going on and to the intensity and excessiveness of the moment, the capacity of events to disrupt patterns, generate new encounters with people and objects, and invent new connections and ways of inhabiting everyday urban life,”

Puebla’s cultural urban assemblage, until the late 1980s, was characterized by culture as heritage to be preserved, the State as the main actor, with antagonism ignored or discounted as consensus became the objective of cultural projects. The declaration of Puebla’s historic center as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage in 1987 is the pinnacle of

this view. Since then, as shown below, the cultural urban assemblage has slowly but continuously been transformed in order to re-conceptualize culture as an economic resource. The following two subsections divide the history of Puebla's current cultural urban assemblage into two phases, each defining emergent properties, namely, cultural heritage in transition and culture as urban economic resource. Some actors and relations are phase-specific (e.g. MIB), while others have been continuously present from the beginning until today (e.g. expropriation).

3.1 Cultural heritage as enclosing (1987-1999)

3.1.1 Heterogeneity

There are elements whose centrality allows us not only to observe the heterogeneity of the assemblage but also to identify some of its defining characteristics. First, UNESCO added the historic center of Puebla to its World Heritage list in 1987. This action framed the government's approach to culture concretely in terms of patrimony and conservation. A few years later, in 1992, the President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) decreed the expropriation of agricultural suburban commons (*ejidos*) from the nearby municipalities of San Pedro and San Andrés Cholula, for the purposes of building a highway and creating a territorial reserve originally called Puebla XXI Solidaridad and ultimately known as Quetzalcóatl-Atlixcáyotl (Diario oficial, 1992a; 1992b). The purpose of the reserve was to control the growth of the city and program social housing development. It was the governor Manuel Bartlett Díaz (1993-1999), a former official in the government of Salinas de Gortari, who, soon after coming into the state office, received from the President the commission not only to expropriate these *ejidos*, but to elaborate the Angelópolis Regional Development Program, also known as the *Angelópolis* megaproject (Aguirre, 1993). This program entails 33 municipalities integrating their urban development into one common vision (Secretaría de Finanzas y Administración, n/d, p. 11).

This umbrella plan, influenced by US architectural and urban consulting firms such as HKS, Sasaki and McKinsey and Company (Jones, 2004, p. 176), outlined a proposal for the transformation of the city, especially its historical center, expanding the metropolitan area into the aforementioned reserve. The plan resulted in two independent but related programs. The first is the Subregional Program for Urban Development for the Municipalities of Cuautlancingo, Puebla, San Andrés Cholula and San Pedro Cholula, which creates the territorial reserve by modifying the land use (Instituto Municipal de Planeación Puebla, n/d). The second is the Partial Program for Urban Development and Conservation of the City of Puebla, which included an urban intervention in the historic center to create the Paseo San Francisco (Orden Jurídico, 2008, p.3), a waterfront promenade similar to the San Antonio Riverwalk in Texas, including hotels, restaurants, shops, cultural facilities, office spaces and a cableway (Vélez Pliego, 2007, pp. 155-156).

The construction of the Paseo San Francisco required not only multimillion-dollar investments from federal funds and private capital, but the expropriation of 27 blocks partially within the area that UNESCO had declared a World Heritage Site in 1987 on the grounds that the area had deteriorated:

. . . the projected intervention would be valid in the sense that it would upgrade an area now partially abandoned and would re-establish the visual and functional links between the eastern and the western parts of the centre, but that the structure and

morphology of the area should be maintained and reinforced, and should form the basis for future plans (Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, 1994, p. 25).

UNESCO thus became a significant element in this process not only by providing the justification for state intervention in the preservation of historical properties (Orden Jurídico, 2008, pp. 3-7) but by actually validating the “urban rehabilitation project” of the Rio San Francisco within the Angelópolis megaproject (World Heritage Committee, 1994, pp. 50-51).

The ensuing expropriations became another actor in the assemblage that articulated the emergence of various groups. Residents from several historical neighborhoods affected by the Paseo de San Francisco’s project organized into two groups, La Asociación Civil por los ideales de la Puebla Tradicional (Civil Association for the Ideals of the Traditional Puebla) and the Union de Barrios A.C. (Union of Neighborhoods) (Jones, 2004). These civil groups, along with some of the remaining craftsmen of the area, a few media outlets (e.g. *Síntesis*) and the support of the city's mayor, Gabriel Hinojosa (1996-1999), became important actors of this first episode by strengthening the presence of civil organizations in the execution of urban development public policies (Personal Interview 4, 16, June, 2016, p. 19; PI 7, 25, May, 2016, p.5; PI 8, 12, May, 2016, p. 10-11) in the subsequent episodes of the cultural urban assemblage.

3.1.2. Stabilization

At this early stage, the cultural urban assemblage is stabilized by delimiting specific areas of the city where culture is perceived as a resource to be exploited, though the process still relies heavily on the notion of heritage. As noted above, this delimitation was achieved through two fundamental operations of the Angelópolis megaproject: the alienation of 27 blocks from the historic center to develop the Paseo de San Francisco (Orden Jurídico, 2008) and the execution of the expropriation decree of the *ejidos* for the Quetzalcóatl-Atlixcáyotl Territorial Reserve (Fideicomiso, 2016), enacted by the federal declaration of public utility in 1992.

This second operation was realized through the Subregional Program for Urban Development of the Cuautlancingo, Puebla, San Andrés Cholula and San Pedro Cholula municipalities in 1994, which modified land use regulations (Instituto Municipal de Planeación Puebla, n/d) and made planning more flexible for private investment (Personal Interview 3, 14, April, 2016, pp. 10-11, 20). This resulted in the construction of a mall, residential complexes, privately owned hospitals and the campus of a private university (Universidad Iberoamericana-Puebla). Eventually, the development would include other universities and cultural venues. The delimitation of these areas was fundamental for appreciating culture in economic terms. In the public sector, as the project “Puebla Metropoli de la Cultura”—proposed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Institute at the state university—was carried out, the drive for preservation no longer hid an interest in economic exploitation under the umbrella of the modernization of the city (Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, 1995).

3.1.3. Antagonism

As all stabilizations entail antagonisms, this stage was characterized by the emergence of three conflicts. The first conflict was between residents, organized as civil society, and the state government (Personal Interview 3; PI 4; PI 7; PI 8; Aguirre, 1993; Cabrera, 2014;

Churchill, 1999, 2000; Jones, 2004). The conflict generated inter-neighborhood and inter-class solidarities that could not always be sustained over time (Personal Interview 7, p. 5). These groups, however, halted some expropriations through judicial strategies, i.e., *applications for injunction* (Personal Interview 7, p. 5). As a result, ultimately, only 6 of 27 blocks were confiscated. The second conflict was between the first opposition municipal government of Puebla, led by Gabriel Hinojosa (from Partido Acción Nacional), and the state government of Manuel Bartlett (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) (La Nación, 1997, p. 16-17), which modified the original planning for the Paseo de San Francisco.

The third conflict arose between the urban planning in the Angelópolis regional development program and capital investment that ultimately did not flow either from the Federal government or from private investors, largely because of the economic crisis of 1994 (Cabrera and Tenorio, 2006). By the time these conflicts stabilized, expropriations in the historic center were reduced and the new infrastructure that was built was smaller than originally planned. Specifically, the new construction consisted only of a convention center and a small pedestrian bridge (Cabrera and Tenorio, 2006; Cabrera, 2014). Development in the territorial reserve Quetzalcátl-Atlixcayotl was also modified by pressure from civil organizations who defended the ecological and public value of the area (Personal Interview 3, p. 20; PI 4, p. 22). Ultimately, however, one of the wealthiest residential compounds in the city, La Vista Country Club, came into being in 1999, triggering lasting speculation in the area (Puga, 2007).

3.2. Cultural heritage in transition: protection as economic exploitation (1999-2011)

3.2.1. Heterogeneity

During the years 1999 to 2011, the cultural urban assemblage comprised heterogeneous elements. On June 15, 1999, the region of Puebla suffered a 7.0-magnitude earthquake that severely damaged historical buildings in the city center (Ramírez-Hernández y Lugo-Hubb, 2000). Most of these buildings were within the UNESCO World Heritage district (World Heritage Committee, 2000). Repairing the substantial damage required economic investment from the local, state and federal government in the ensuing years (Personal Interview 8). Work was undertaken to restore 798 buildings (Ayuntamiento de Puebla, 2002). Paradoxically, the reports made to the World Heritage Committee on the state of the buildings, including a request for emergency funding, strengthened UNESCO's support for state intervention in the Paseo de San Francisco area and other historical sites (World Heritage Committee, 2000), which resulted eventually in the construction of parking lots and a commercial mall (Conti, 2002).

Moreover, the expropriation by the State government in 2001 of the 69,600-square-meter lot of a former textile factory, La Constancia Mexicana, in the northwest side of the city (Salamanca y Jimarez, 2005) would eventually become of utmost importance for the development of the city's cultural infrastructure. The confiscation of La Constancia –under the authority of the Secretary for Culture– was to provide institutional and cultural uses compatible with its architecture and history (Aroche, 2006). However, aside from the multimedia exhibition *Plataforma 2006* held in the former factory in 2006, La Constancia remained neglected for more than a decade. A significant actor in the cultural urban assemblage of the period was local businessman Pedro Ocejo Tarno, promoter of *Plataforma* and director for the period 2008-2011 of the Instituto Municipal de Arte y Cultura de Puebla (IMACP). During Ocejo's tenure, an extensive program of festivals,

exhibitions, concerts and grants involving national and international institutions was undertaken (IMACP, 2011) and an ambitious but inconclusive transformation of the local government's cultural policy toward promoting the creative industries was designed (Piedras, 2010)

3.2.2. Stabilization

The connection of these elements provided a temporary stabilization in the urban cultural assemblage. The notion of “cultural heritage” remained on the agenda due to the urgency of restoring and preserving the infrastructure damaged by the earthquake. Given its status as a UNESCO World Heritage site, Puebla's city center was to be rescued and protected. At the same time, however, the expropriation of the former factory La Constancia meant a resort to culture to reshape the city according to national and international trends in new media art and education. Negotiations were announced to host a branch of the Centro Nacional de las Artes' (an extension of an impressive hub of artistic performance and research located in Mexico City) (Domínguez, 2002). Opening this branch would have made Puebla a nationally prominent center of arts education. However, this vision was never realized. Instead, a festival of electronic arts was staged at La Constancia to proclaim Puebla as “a stronghold of art and culture's new technologies of the 21st century” (MacMasters, 2006). Although promoter Ocejo stated that *Plataforma* needed to be a recurring event in order to succeed, (MacMasters, 2006), there was no subsequent festival. La Constancia remained dilapidated for almost a decade. However, the inauguration in 2005 of IMACP meant a period of stability and an attempt to bring a cultural industries approach to cultural policy in Puebla during Ocejo's tenure. However, a change in local and state political leadership after the elections in 2011 brought an end to this initiative.

3.2.3. Antagonism

Political disruptions have frequently unbalanced the cultural urban assemblage. This was the case with Manuel Bartlett's administration. The Museo Poblano de Arte Virreinal (MUPAVI) was inaugurated while still unfinished in 1999. Located in a refurbished 16th century building in the city center, it was meant to be “a first class museum” according to then director Eduardo Merlo (Mellado May, 1999). However, it had a very short life. MUPAVI was shut down, reorganized and renamed in 2002. As noted by Art Historian Iván Escamilla, MUPAVI was the result of “an authoritarian whim” and so it consequently lacked the support of the following administrations (Carrizosa, 2017). Opposition and antagonism do not always come from outside actors. In cases such as that of the MUPAVI, they resulted from internal quarrels and political disaffections. A different process of antagonism was the opposition to the state government's Ezquerria and Associates plan to “rescue the historic center and the archeological site” of San Andrés and San Pedro Cholula, less than 15 kilometers from Puebla's city center. This archeological site applied to be recognized as a World Heritage site at the same time as did Puebla's city center in 1987, but it was not granted that status. However, the archeological site of Cholula had been protected by Mexican federal law since 1993. The Ezquerria plan was made public in 2002 and was meant to be a major intervention in the area, including the construction of parks, new roads and ponds. This plan provoked complaints and mobilizations of the civil organization Pro Cholula and of society at large. The plan received media attention but Pro Cholula did not seem to have the capacity to stop it. Suddenly, and with no further explanation, the plan was dropped (Ashwell, 2014). However, the most notorious case of civil unrest and

opposition to the government during this period had apparently nothing to do with the cultural urban assemblage. It was instead the unlawful arrest by direct orders of governor Mario Marín of journalist Lydia Cacho in 2005, who had denounced a businessman related to the governor for participation in a child abuse network. This had a huge media impact on Marín's reputation. Demonstrations were held and people presented formal requests for his resignation. The social and media opposition blocked many of Marín's initiatives and undermined his tenure during the period 2006-2011.

3.3. Culture as urban economic resource (2011-2017)

3.3.1 Heterogeneity

In 2011, there was a considerable increase and diversification of elements articulating Puebla's cultural urban assemblage. First was the change of government at the state level under the administration of Rafael Moreno Valle. Moreno Valle became a central figure by formulating and implementing urban and cultural policies through a top-down model without any socialization of the processes (Personal Interview 2, 3, May, 2016, pp. 13, 24; PI 3, p. 12-14; PI 4, p. 2). One of his first actions was to downgrade the office of the Secretary for Culture of the State of Puebla –the first such office in the country– to an advisory council for arts and culture under the office of the Secretary of Government, with the specific mandate to work closely with the Secretary of Finance and Economic Development (Martell, 2011; Rangel, 2011; García, 2011), to encourage industrial and entrepreneurial models for the sector. The advisory council became an instrument of implementation and sanctioning but not a significant actor in the design, negotiation or development of cultural policies.

Another relevant element was the fostering of a 'creative' discursive environment through documents, either from the public sector or by adopting literature about cultural economies from international organizations. UNESCO reappears in the assemblage, not for the conservation of patrimony, but to encourage the economic activation of culture through the Creative Cities Network (UNESCO, 2015; Hernández, 2017). Aligned with this discursive element was a diversity of actions such as expropriation, re-urbanization and development of new infrastructure, which manifested in an explosive surge of museums, parks, venues and entertainment-oriented urban attractions, as detailed below. Finally, the projection of Puebla as a global city through technological media became another key component. There was a significant increase in the use of media, ITs, video-mapping and visual spectacularization tactics that reorganized how the city was to be experienced (Aroche y Cantón, 2014).

3.3.2 Stabilization

How was Puebla's cultural urban assemblage stabilized? At this moment, three forms of stabilization can be identified. The first is *framing*, something achieved not only by public officials through speeches and political initiatives but, more comprehensively, by documents published by inter-governmental and national organizations. The second form is *enacting infrastructure*, including the creation, redevelopment, and expropriation of urban areas or buildings. Finally, the third form of stabilization is *projecting* in which media representation as well as the digital tools are created or used by actors. The result of stabilization is that Puebla's cultural urban assemblage is now an entanglement oriented toward forms of socialization that lead to the commodification of culture, though conflict remains crucial to understanding the assemblage's unfolding.

3.3.2.1) *Framing*. Framing results from a series of documents in which culture is meant to trigger economic development. These are “La economía naranja. Una oportunidad infinita”, by Buitrago and Luque (2013), “Cultural Industries in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and Opportunities”, by Quartesan et al. (2007), and “Mapa de Ruta. Puebla Capital de Innovación y Diseño”, published by ProMexico (2015), a Mexican NGO devoted to economic and social analysis. According to the first two documents, published by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), cultural industries are synthesized as the production of goods and services benefitted by vanguard cultural and economic policies.

Inspired by the IDB’s Orange Economy concept, ProMéxico¹ launched the “Puebla, Capital of Innovation and Design” initiative (PueblaCID). The purpose of the plan was described as promoting culture and innovative thinking to spark economic growth by consolidating creative economies. To reinforce its impact, the city applied for admission into the Creative Cities Network (CCN) of UNESCO and as a *Smart City* of ISO/ICT (ProMéxico, 2015). These international recognitions, successfully obtained in 2015 and 2016, were described as crucial for connecting the city with strategic nodes of the global economy and gaining cultural visibility internationally (Juárez, 2015; Páez, 2015; ProMéxico, 2015).

3.3.2.2) *Enacting*. Enacting infrastructure was a fundamental priority of the Moreno Valle administration. In the now deleted webpage Plan PueblaCID, visitors were first presented with a review of 24 cultural centers, 37 museums, 14 former convents, 13 theaters, 9,777 hotel rooms, 29 auditoriums and venues, and the archeological site of the nearby town of Cholula that the metropolitan area encompasses. All these resources were brought together to define the profile and validate a city with great potential for creativity and innovation. Despite the fact that the website highlighted culture, there was no explicit plan for its development in Moreno Valle’s administration:

There is not a written cultural policy, defined with goals or guidelines... there’s no formula for working on cultural issues. Too much is said about culture’s economic impact and this is the kind of discourse today in Puebla. Transforming the city into a pole for economic, social and touristic attraction. However, this administration does actually understand well economic growth. You should check the numbers on tourism. They doubled in a few years! (Personal Interview 2, p. 8).

Despite having no master plan for cultural policy, major cultural infrastructure projects were undertaken (e.g. MIB), as expropriation (e.g. Cholula’s archaeological sites), and redevelopment (e.g. La Constancia Mexicana and the Loreto and Guadalupe Forts) continued. MIB is a new 18,000-square-meter museum, meant to revive the reputation the city once enjoyed as a cultural capital in the western world throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The MIB was inaugurated after much controversy; issues of contention included its design by a foreign architect who was not vetted or subject to a transparent selection process, its monumental size, its extremely high cost in a state with widespread poverty, its lack of an art collection, and its unknown form of management. The museum, in spite of its celebratory marketing campaigns, continues to be a contentious topic for the local artistic community (Martell, 2015). Moreover, the museum is located in the Quetzalcóatl-Atlixcáyotl reserve, a site of urban expansion since the early

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ProMéxico is an office of the Federal Government responsible for the coordination of commerce strategies and the reinforcement of Mexico’s participation in the international economy.

1990s, which has led to controversial modifications to the reserve's protected status through partial expropriations and rezoning for commercial and residential uses.

The former textile factory La Constancia Mexicana has, after a decade of neglect, become a cultural complex. It houses a group of museums, including The House of Viennese Music, a children's museum, a puppet and marionette museum, a Mexican music museum, and a car museum, as well as a café and souvenir shops. It also serves as the headquarters for a youth orchestra program created by one of the major private broadcasting corporations in the country, Grupo Salinas, in a public-private alliance that is as much economic as it is political and symbolic (Carrizosa, 2011; 2016b). This complex is not, however, an island of art and culture in the middle of an old industrial area at the edge of the city. A series of bike paths, a road system, and a park containing dozens of miniature models of world architectural landmarks have been built for touristic purposes. The area also hosts a brand new shopping mall, inaugurated in 2014.

Fort Guadalupe and Fort Loreto are two military buildings on top of the Acueyame-tepec hill. Originally chapels, they were rebuilt at the beginning of the 19th century as fortifications that were crucial during the second French intervention in Mexico (1862-1867). In 2011, the government decided to invest USD \$20 million to restore the area and the forts, as well as to develop a new park (Castillo, 2011). Although the National Institute of Anthropology and History's (INAH for its Spanish acronym) employees complained about the works (Hernández, 2012), the new museum located at Fort Guadalupe was inaugurated in 2012, at which time governor Moreno Valle stated: "After decades of abandonment, we were able to rescue this space and turn it into a museum at the height of the date we are celebrating" (Periódico Central, 2012). The Civic Park May 5th, designed by the well-known architect Enrique Norten, surrounds the fortified area and has become an attraction for local and foreign tourists. Restaurants, hotels, coffee houses, and movie theatres as well as a polemical 700-meter-long cableway that connects the convention center with the Museum Zaragoza are located in the area.

3.3.2.3) *Projecting*. This new cultural infrastructure and the entertainment-oriented urban interventions are connected by a network of digital media that project the city and inform how it is experienced. There are three technological strategies in the remaking of Puebla's cultural urban assemblage.

(a) First, there has been a strategy to transform the city scale by expanding it beyond its strictly spatial urban area. This can be noted in the abundance in urban space of digital representations of the city itself and their circulation in mass media. This includes various actions, such as TV and online ads promoting Puebla as a tourist center, the use of digital apps to make the city 'your destination' or locate just certain touristic venues (<https://www.pueblatravelapp.com/>), or present the MIB on the cover page of National Geographic Traveler (Aldasoro, 2016). In each of these cases, the cultural urban assemblage is not just the result of infrastructure, but also the product of electronic and mass media intermediations.

(b) A second strategy has been the use of ephemeral multimedia digital projections. Two types of digital urban interventions have taken place. Mosaicos poblanos (Poblano Mosaics) was a 3D video mapping performed over the front of Puebla's cathedral in 2013 that presented key images of the city's landscape (e.g. its surrounding volcanoes), cultural productions (such as local pottery) and moments of its history (e.g. the revolution of 1910).

Among these images were included recent and controversial pieces of urban infrastructure such as bridges and public administration buildings.

Noches de Leyenda (Legend Nights), a 20-minute multimedia show in the Lago de la Concordia artificial pond, has been shown on a regular basis since 2013. Noches de Leyenda is a digital narrative that recounts local history projected onto a cloud of mist. In these three cases, the city works as a screen onto which history is recounted for entertainment purposes to transform selected areas of the urban geography into places of amusement so as to epitomize the city experience.

(c) Finally, there has been a new local imagery related to the modernization of the city through urban infrastructure, exemplified in new museums, bridges, and bike paths. This imaginary is designed to lure both local residents and international tourists into experiencing the city as a place for entertainment and consumption. A mass media campaign promotes Puebla as a cultural city. A pervasive new logo of the city trademark name is placed at the entrance of every relevant cultural venue, publicized in the media, and widely advertised across platforms, such as buses, billboards or social media. In this strategy, culture makes the city appear as a 'place of consensus', presented as pleasant, entertaining and uplifting.

3.3.3. Antagonism

During the 2011-2017 period, notable manifestations of discontent and antagonism have taken place. In 2012 the State government demolished La Casa del Torno, a historic landmark from the 17th century located within the UNESCO World Heritage perimeter in Puebla's city center, in order to build a stop for a brand new cableway. The Comité Defensor del Patrimonio Cultural y Ambiental de Puebla and Fundación Manuel Toussaint sued the government and managed to have the work stopped, based on the concern expressed by UNESCO that "The original proposal for the construction of a cable car entailed significant impacts on the visual qualities of the property...", (UNESCO, "State of conservation"). La Casa del Torno, however, was by then totally destroyed. The media coverage and the debate made Moreno Valle's initiative for the cableway notoriously unpopular and it was subsequently reduced to a line of just two stops of less than 700 meters length, inaugurated in 2016.

In 2013, plans were unveiled for the construction of an 80-meter high Ferris wheel in the historic landmark of Paseo Bravo, also within the UNESCO World Heritage perimeter. The original plan included an "executive project" by architect Enrique Norten for redeveloping the area, apparently including a parking lot and a museum (Personal Interview 4). Again, media pressure due to complaints forced the state government to change its mind: they proposed a new location for the wheel next to a secondary school that was also abandoned. Finally, the wheel was installed away from the city center in the Angelópolis area and a network of bridges and bike paths was devised to embrace it (Personal Interview 4). Again, in 2015, further disquiet followed when an auditorium near the Ferris wheel, designed by the well known architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, was totally refurbished in order to integrate it in the Ferris wheel network against the will of the architect's heirs (Hernández, 2015).

However, the greatest source of antagonism was the planned construction of a park, ponds, cafes and football and athletic fields in the archeological site of Cholula, which was leaked by the press in May 2014. As mentioned above, in 2002 there was an initiative to

“rescue” the historical site by the Ezquerro and Associates’ plan. It is worth noting that the Secretary of Finance at the time was Moreno Valle, who was governor in 2014 and seemed to be putting that plan into motion again (Ashwell, 2014). Earlier, in February 2014, a construction of a 175 meters long automotive bridge began despite opposition from citizens and different organizations under the umbrella name of Pueblo Mágico Sin Tráfico (Montes, 2014). Even the normally pro-government Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia asked the governor “to reconsider” the construction of the bridge in a protected area (Hernández, 2014). The bridge was not yet inaugurated when the plan for the so-called Parque de las 7 culturas was partially unveiled. Demonstrations, critical national news coverage, and complaints from academics and civil organizations followed the announcement of the intervention in the archeological site protected by national federal law since 1993.

The most outspoken local organization was Cholula Viva y Digna. As antagonism mounted, the government responded by expropriating and fencing nearby farming lots and sending riot police to the area. Conflict reached its peak on the night of October 7th, 2014 when demonstrators took the main square in San Andrés Cholula. Four leaders were arrested and imprisoned and ten others were accused of rioting by the state authorities (Hernández, 2014). By June 2015 a judge ruled that at least one of the expropriations was “incongruous and contradictory” (Yaven, 2015). Amid further protest, in January 2017 the park was only half built, because many plots of land were not expropriated and many of its features, such as ponds, were not constructed. At the same time, a Museum devoted to the regional culture and history and a touristic train linking Puebla's city center and the archeological site in Cholula were inaugurated.

These interventions have led to further complaints: against bike paths (Personal Interview 4), the cutting of trees in the city for new infrastructure (Castillo, 2016), the reform of the historical site of Los Fuertes (Hernández, 2012), the investment in MIB (Cantorán, 2016), and against the Programa de Artistas Urbanos (Urban Artists Program) that sought to regulate the use of public space in the city center by artists such as singers and clowns (Carrizosa, 2017b).

Conclusion

The UNESCO classification of Puebla’s historic center as a World Heritage site in 1987, and the city as a whole as a Creative City in 2015 and by ISO/ICT as a Smart City in 2016, signaled a shift in thinking about culture, a shift from from culture as a heritage to be protected to a resource to be capitalized. The classifications also form part of a three-decade long process that has dramatically transformed the city, visibly in its landscape through infrastructure intervention and technological mediations, but also through the reorganization of social relations and the way the city is experienced. We have shown the temporal and spatial assemblage of diverse elements, which include international organizations, private corporations, public servants, social actors, web applications and marketing campaigns, and how their alignments produce the city in its sociality, the forms capacity to imagine life in it as well as the form of that imagining. The shift in public policy from culture as heritage to culture as economic resource is in practice a process of assembling with continuity and depth characterized by urban transformation.

Whereas urban public policy looks at urban development projects individually, it does not deal with processes that have heterogeneous, emergent, and antagonistic qualities. Puebla's cultural urban assemblage shows that there has not been a programmatic approach to urban development. Instead, a set of opportunistic responses to urban problems and initiatives characterizes the period 1987-1999. In this regard, the cultural urban assemblage undermines a coherent decision-making process in favor of those based on expediency and emergent relations.

Analysis of Puebla's cultural urban assemblage refines assemblage thinking by showing that culture is an emerging feature and not an element that can be taken for granted. While typical cultural policy analyses focus on issues such as museum attendance, scholarships and fellowships for artists and cultural producers, regulations for promoting creative industries, and the role of educational institutions for training experts, we rely on a different body of literature. Urban assemblage is a powerful theoretical tool because it highlights how the city is composed of heterogeneous elements that are strong enough to maintain defining properties while being sufficiently flexible to connect and reorganize themselves in order to enact (or challenge) assemblages. This is a performative approach to the city, focusing attention on the process through which urban space is formed, transformed, and contested. We thus introduce the notion of cultural urban assemblage to highlight the role of culture as legitimizing public policies and urban interventions, as well as the actions (and reactions) of other actors. So too does it bring to the foreground the process through which urban life is (trans)formed, as culture is imbedded into global trajectories. Puebla as a city is entangled in global trends and temporal interdependencies that have reorganized it over the last several decades through a powerful expedient: culture.

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