

The construction of symbolic city

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“If the city reflects a body, graffiti tells where does it hurts.” Chaz Bojórquez

The growth of the city, and the morphological, political and social changes that faces, has also transformed public spaces, and how they are constructed physically and symbolically.

This constant change, the population density, and development of new urban settlements in the city and their outskirts, have caused a loss of identity with symbols which have constructed the architectural urban city, new symbols have appeared transgressing the built city.

Urban practices such as graffiti, contribute to this deconstruction and to the new re significance of places.

Through an analysis of this practice, it seeks to register the city that they built, its shape and significance. The juxtaposition of the graffiti city over the morphologic city will discover the morphological trace, based on graffiti writers intervention, belonging to the higher territory of graffiti incidence: Iztapalapa municipality (based on information from the Ministry of Public Security SSP). Allowing us to map their city, and the way that they transform public and private spaces, recording their social networks.

Iztapalapa is a municipality with very little supply of public space for its inhabitants, its architectural urban trace responds to the self-construction of houses and commercial or industrial buildings within the municipality.

Each element that composes this fraction of the city behaves as a signifier of a message on a larger scale. The graffiti subverts these spaces and modifies the meanings of these elements.

This mapping is done through the concepts that the urbanist and writer Kevin Lynch manages to read the city, with the support of a cartographic registration and participant observation in the intervened spaces.

Grffiti is an urban practice whose visible product is ephemeral. Therefore, the map explores the memory that graffiti writers have been created at the places where it has intervened, and the imagery they created of an overprint city, like a palimpsest.

The analysis is divided into three parts:

The first is the mapping of interventions two graffiti artists in Iztapalapa, the second is the record of the memories that were created in these places at the time of the intervention, and the third is the analysis of the symbols that have been created, destroyed or transformed through the intervention and memory from an external vision of the practice.

Grffiti writers involved in this analysis are Flako and Sinko, two graffiti writers who act differently in the city. Flako underground way and Sinko in mural scale.

It is an analysis of the symbols that make up a city when an external element (graffiti) is in an urban landscape that every day regenerates.

Iztapalapa is a space in the city that was outside the urban plan, which grows organically without planning on a larger scale, but rather with a solution of specific short-term problems.

It is a space that is being redefined by its inhabitants, where intervention in the public space (street) through urban practices is more active than anywhere else in the city. This analysis is recognition of the necessary reevaluation of these practices in urban space.

Beyond trying to eradicate a practice that has been called visual contamination, seeks to rescue the possibilities of place identity developed by graffiti writers when they intervene the city. The appreciation of the morphological city that graffiti writers have developed when they explore at times when others are in the private space and the possibilities of intervention in the private space created by opening new landscapes and landmarks in the city.

This analysis seeks to explore the city built by the citizens, the city of urban practices, and make visible the city that usually omitted in our eyes and in our daily lives. What value are these practices in areas underserved by the government? What is the role of memory in the creation of the city?

In a city that is built by a variety of inhabitants, symbols become stronger and are imposed on a struggle for mastery of public spaces. The significance of these urban spaces isn't always the one that is planned through architectural elements, the urban practices that emerge in these spaces reinforce or contradict its meaning.

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