QUILTING COMPARISON

Wonder, Translation and Theorization

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Introduction

The chapter that you are about to read is a translocal dialogue on comparative research in and about urban life. It emerges from dissimilar experiences by three women in different cities. Yet, it tells the story of how we developed a common language and space of thought through TRYSPACES. TRYSPACES is a participatory and comparative endeavor that explores youth transgressive practices and their effects on urban transformation. It brings together researchers, students, artists, youth and community, and urban professionals from four cities: Mexico, Paris, Hanoi, and Montreal. From this standpoint, we would like to reflect on vernacular comparison as a mode of scientific inquiry embedded in everyday practices that allows us to engage and question urban experiences.

We begin with some epistemological considerations. Through the metaphor of the quilt, we address the importance of vernacular embodied practices, estrangement, and wonder, as modes of comparative analysis. Second, we present quilting as a way to create and communicate vernacular knowledge through three steps: (1) storytelling, (2) digital translations, and (3) theorization. Based on TRYSPACES case studies that use diverse collaborative techniques, we move from local-physical spaces to digital ones to produce deep senses of a shared translocal urban reality. Doing this, we create a collective subject, identify lines of connection between divergent cases, and create a sense of common urban space. We end by underlining the importance of writing as a polyvocal practice whose purpose is to compose rather than categorize. Theorizing from vernacular comparisons is presented as an iterative and inductive process.

What and Why Compare? Epistemological Points of Departure

In 2010, Colin McFarlane wrote: "What might be the implications for urban studies if we take 'comparison' not just as a method, but as a mode of thought that informs how urban theory is constituted?" (2010: 727) Comparison is indeed "the basic dimension essential to human cognition" (Fox and Gingrich 2002). There is a second layer to this basic comparative mode of thought: because it is "addressing audiences from different

contexts, translation always entails an element of comparison" (cited in Gough 2012: 869). In this chapter, we wish to reflect on how the comparative mode of thought, or vernacular practices of everyday comparison and translations, can be replicated in scientific research.

Postcolonial theorists insist that comparison serves to force colonized peoples to live "in comparison" to the Western standard (Hart 2018). On the other hand, political economists tend to criticize postcolonial "embrace of particularism and polycentrism" (Peck 2015) and call in- stead for universal urban theories (Scott and Storper 2015). They generally work from what Tilly (1984) calls "encompassing comparison," that is, they compare similarities and differences between cases located in a common structure, such as neoliberal capitalism. McMichael (1990: 391) proposes a variant of this strategy, which he calls "incorporated comparison," whereby the "totality" is not a pre-given structure, but is "discovered through analysis of the mutual conditioning of the parts." Building on this in an attempt to reconcile postcolonial and Marxist approaches, Hart (2018: 374) pushes for a strategy of "relational comparison," whereby:

Instead of comparing pre-existing objects, events, places, or identities – or asserting a general process like globalization and comparing its 'impacts' – (…) the focus of relational comparison is on *how* key processes are constituted in relation to one another through power-laden practices in the multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life.

In addition to focusing on processes instead of predetermined places, we wish to emphasize the relational and everydayness dimensions of comparison proposed by Hart. When we think about Hanoi, Mexico City, Paris, or Montreal, some images come to mind and most of them include disorder, chaos, or noise. Making cities navigable is a huge task, but we all do it through a myriad of small gestures deployed in everyday routines. What vernacular operations make it possible to read and navigate the city? In previous work in Los Angeles, Boudreau (2010) identified some of the skills domestic workers develop as they navigate the city: expert, social, and kinesthetic skills enabling them to become "streetwise," negotiate newness, categorize information, make choices, be surprised, and cope with uncertainty or discomfort. In their everyday movements across the city, these women constantly compare logically, normatively, and emotionally. Accordingly, as they ride public buses going from their home neighborhoods to upper-class mansions where they work, they observe contrasts between social classes, frame certain rules as unjust, compare gender norms in their household and where they work, and engage in conversations on buses where such observations are exchanged and mutually influence their perception of the city.

Vernacular comparison often works from associations of ideas, constantly shifting temporal and spatial scales as the conversation evolves. This is one element we wish to emulate in scientific comparison: comparison as a form of dialogical improvisation through a chain of associative ideas (see also Simone 2018). Yet, this can work only if the team has experiential knowledge of urban everyday life. Such a deep sense of a city comes from vernacular experiences but can also be stimulated by a series of collaborative encounters as we will describe below. Insisting on improvisation, or what McMichael (1990) formulates as "discovering through analysis," does not mean not having a research question or clear objectives. It simply means that comparatively exploring urban contexts is about working with others: observing, listening, and translating.

Far from producing a well-structured and fixed set of concepts, science is a process of dis- covering and exploring (Haraway 1988). Scientific inquiry is practiced through observation, a non-linear thinking process, and the researchers' multiple interactions. Nonetheless, once re- search results are written down, an illusion appears: in their written form, findings are seen as detached from the processes and interactions that shaped them. This is why the process of writing is a crucial step in our comparative experiment. In particular, as we will discuss below, we have thought seriously about translation and storytelling as the basis of writing.

With this feminist epistemological point of departure inspired by Science and Technology Studies (STS), we also include in our methodological reflection how we interact from different positionalities. Positionality, for us, is a fluid and changeable standpoint, always embodied, situated, and linked with others. It is through this process of interactive collective thinking and writing that comparison emerges "joining partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing fine embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions of views from somewhere" (Haraway 1988: 590).

Parting from embodied experiences and the complex of interactions enabling research sub- jects to apprehend their historical and social relationships entails a process of rational and practical thinking oriented by everyday engagement (Boudreau 2017; Lindon 2012). Urban ordinary life is full of surprises. Our 15 case studies inductively revealed a number of such surprises. Our challenge was how to make sense of this very diverse set of data collected autonomously in each case study with various methods. As Caldeira (2017: 5) notes, "to work with the *juxtaposition of dissimilar cases* means to use difference and estrangement as modes of analysis and critique."

The keyword for us in Caldeira's statement is "estrangement," a feeling everyone in TRYSPACES is familiar with. More than simply estrangement, research grounded in everyday life often leads to wonder. For Ahmed, wonder

> is an encounter with an object that one does not recognise; or wonder works to transform the ordinary, which is already recognised, into the extraordinary. As such, wonder expands our field of vision and touch. Wonder is the precondition of the exposure of the subject to the world: we wonder when we are moved by that which we face.
>
> *Ahmed 2004: 179*

One of the challenges in TRYSPACES is to communicate to very diverse team members the subtleties of the complex urban realities we wish to compare. Wonder is an active method of scientific inquiry which provides a moving sense of exposure, which makes us move towards what we had previously passed inadvertently as our perceptive field evolves. In contrast with the figure of the stranger (Simmel 1976), which presupposes distance – i.e. being an outcast or from another place – wonder is something everyone in the research team can practice. Wonder is a way to know, to observe, and be touched, centering the process on our openness to, rather than on our distance with others. It is about extending a hand, reaching out to others, to other places. In the next section, we describe how we actively generate wonder within TRYSPACES.

TRYSPACES brings together a variety of people moved by youth practices in local contexts. Therefore, our research mobilizes a considerable amount of data produced with collaboratively developed methodologies rooted in the specificities of each case study. Thus, when we began discussions about the comparison process, first at the level of each city and then at the level of the four cities, it immediately became important to refocus on the purpose of our comparison. The discussions revealed that experience and daily transformations in doing research have had an impact on team members and into our research design. While it goes without saying that we can choose specific case studies that are easily comparable because of the proximity of the samples or the areas studied, we felt it was important not to limit ourselves to these exercises alone. It is in trying to answer the question: What do we want to compare? That the very essence of the TRYSPACES project is expressed. For us, comparison is an iterative reflection about how to outline and represent urban practices. The process of coming together to compare enables a particular modality of thought. Indeed, TRYSPACES puts at the center of its multiple realities and data the importance of the individual experience and the practice of the city in the production of knowledge. Places known for their sedimentation of transgressive practices, such as a punk-rock street market in Mexico City, "creative hubs" in Hanoi, or a building where crack use and sex work

converge in Montreal, constitute some of our cases. Other cases were selected because they are the concentrated target of stigmatization even if there are no evident transgressive practices (e.g.: youth navigating racialized neighborhoods in Paris and Montreal, migrants in Hanoi or Mexico). Finally, a number of other cases emerged based on specific practices such as marijuana use or sex on the streets of Mexico or nightlife in Montreal. Hence, our cases are not conceptually determined, they are instead associative connections produced in/by the research situations.

As Ahmed (2004: 180) suggests, "the surprise of wonder is crucial to how it moves bodies." That brings us to another key element of our comparative experiment: displacement. Decades ago, Homi Bhabha (1994) suggested that the feeling of being displaced provides a unique stand- point to produce knowledge. Within TRYSPACES, through digital activities and storytelling, we seek to formalize these urban and vernacular practices of displacement. Provoking situations of wonder through exchange is a way to shed light on biases and differences. This is why we speak of *wondering* around (instead of wandering like a flâneur).

In short, what we compare depends on why we wish to compare. Deville and his colleagues (2016) note that comparison reveals absences. Something present in one site can trigger attention to its absence in another site. In other words, comparison enriches our analysis of each case by revealing what we had not thought about. Comparison also reveals power relations and biases. "Who, or rather, what, is the comparator?," write Deville et al. (2016: 100), "And, how does the comparator affect a researcher's relationship with the objects being compared?"'

From an STS perspective, Deville et al. bring our attention to *who* compares, and this is fundamental for TRYSPACES given the diversity of positionalities assembled in our team, and given the collaborative and participatory methodologies we aim to implement. The process of constructing a collective subject who will produce comparison requires attention as much as the techniques and methods through which comparison will emerge.

We find the metaphor of "quilting" useful to synthesize our comparative process. Originally developed from the storytelling practices of African American women (Carzola Torrado 2021), the quilting metaphor has since been mobilized by feminist and decolonial theorists as a method for theory building based on a more horizontal and dialogical form of knowledge production (Flannery 2001). As Saukko explains:

> The metaphor of a quilt draws our attention to the acute specificity of each local perspective and experience. Yet, it also allows us to explore the resonances and disjunctures between each specific angle (…) If we are to confront these social issues theoretically and politically, we need to not only acknowledge contradictions but also to open ourselves up and learn to live with other points of view that unsettle or even threaten our cherished identities and social positions.

> *Saukko 2000: 313*

By putting pieces together into a common space, quilters create a common language. The "common" is not a common reference. It emerges from being open to what each fragment con- tributes. Like a rhizome, each patch informs us on the reality it represents, but also on the other structures to which it is strung through its contrasts and its similarities. The links or threads that weave these individual stories into the collective space then compose a story.

How We Compare: Methodological Experiments

Figure 1 synthesizes the comparative process. Steps 1 and 2 refer to our collaborative posture. Collaborative or participatory research is usually undertaken locally, based in copresence and the sharing of a common context. The particularity of TRYSPACES is that we are transposing collaborative methods at the translocal scale. The challenge, therefore, is not only to compare collaboratively constructed cases locally but also between cities. This collaborative posture is also bi-directional, in the sense that researchers are part of the data produced. It is for this reason that researchers' positionality, as well as their urban trajectories, have also been the subject of discussion. In what follows, we detail steps 3 to 5: storytelling, digital translations and dialogue, and theorizing. What is important to understand from this process is its inductive and iterative nature. Once theory emerges from comparison (step 5), it circulates back both within TRYSPACES and in the broader academic circles of each of the cities involved (step 6). This process has transformative effects, both individually for each team member, and collectively (step 7). This is why, after a first full-circle, the comparative team undergoes a process of "tuning" and readjustment (step 8), as Deville et al. (2016) describe well, before building on the first loop to pursue the process of comparative knowledge production (steps 9–14). The number of loops depends on the duration of each project, but the end result is what we like to call a comparative quilt (step 15).
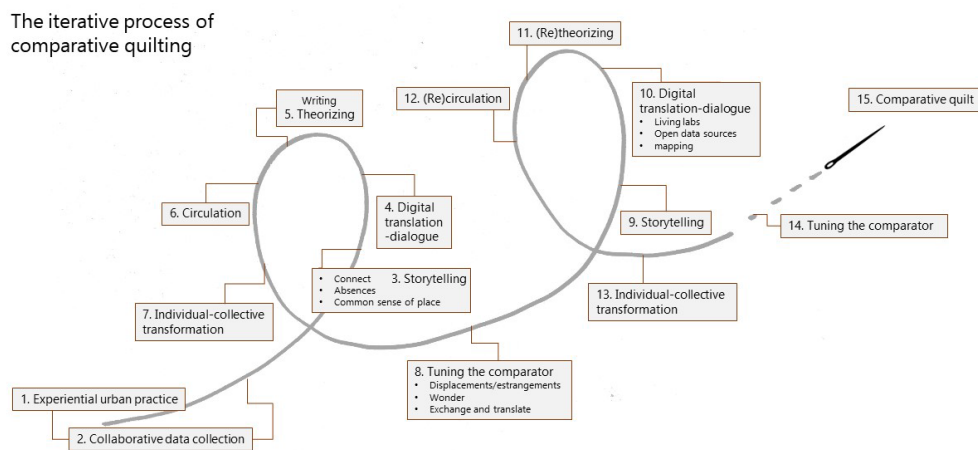

Figure 1: The iterative process of comparative quilting.

Storytelling Workshops

On March 5, 2020, a group of ten youths working with us in Mexico City met for a workshop. Our objective was to collectively reflect on what connects the five case studies of the TRYMexico team: marijuana use in the street market El Salado on the periphery of the city, male sex work in the middle-class central neighborhood of the Zona Rosa, Central-American migrant experience as they transit to the U.S. border, the punk-rock informal street market Chopo, and the experience of concessioned bus drivers as they undergo the formalization of the public transit system. What bring these cases together is the street. Each city had a specific rationale to select its cases depending on its context. In Mexico City, the intensity of street life, where transgression and regulation become very visible, was the basis for case selection. During the workshop, we began by drawing urban scenes from our case studies. Based on these images, we then improvised the story of a young man traveling on a

microbus from the Eastern periphery to the center of the city, passing through all these sites. It goes as follows (a change of paragraph indicates a change of storyteller):

> I always walk on the side of the shadow. I smoke a few puffs and enjoy the beat. I may be singing, perhaps moving my head. … I think about the things you run into on the bus: groping hands all over your body. And they stare at me because I smell of marijuana. …

> I hop on the microbus, and a candy man comes up, and says: "Hey, look people, I'm selling some candy here, because I come from somewhere else." But people realize that he is not a migrant, and that he is not from anywhere, that he is from Neza (a peripheral town). So, people start to get scared.

> (…)

> We arrive at Metro Insurgentes, and walk towards the Zona Rosa. We dive in: the lights, the music. … Entering a bar, we don't have much money so we decide to buy a drink from a stall on the sidewalk and then enter the bar again. It is extremely strange. People are not really dancing, they are sitting down. They are already grown men. So, I approach one of them to ask where I could connect with some girl. And then a man in a dark corner, sitting alone, tells me that he's going to take me somewhere to connect. And we go out. I didn't say anything to my friends. We pass through the back door, and I think this may be dangerous. But I had much fun in the end. …

> Saturday at noon, after a night partying. Why not go to the Chopo? Entering the street market, a man comes and says: "Hey brother! What are you looking for?" I browse through magazines, try to exchange a vinyl a friend gave me for a T-shirt. Then I remember I made an appointment on Facebook with the girl I met in Zona Rosa. While I'm looking for my Facebook date, I walk to the end of the street, at the back where the stage is. I listen to the bands. They have all the typical rock bands instruments, but also a violin. And the music goes on …. And I woke up. Was it just a dream?

This storytelling illustrates two elements of our research. First, TRYSPACES triggers participatory encounters to enhance new ways of communicating among people engaged in the project. Even if they have specific purposes, these activities are significant dialogues that link different ways of experiencing and learning about the city and the findings of each case study. Second, the collective act of constructing a narrative emulates vernacular comparisons in the sense that everyday urban life is full of surprises, anticipations, and micro-decisions made in a series of situations. What we decide to do next is based on our more or less conscious analysis of these situations. Gauging these everyday situations often occurs through vernacular comparison: this is more dangerous than that, this is less ethical than that, if I do this, I will be late to work, etc.

Constructing a narrative is like stringing a series of everyday situations. Constructing a coherent narrative collectively implies anticipating where the previous storyteller will bring the story, comparing different possible paths. Through the association of ideas, we connect our cases and create a sense of commonality, a sense of a TRYSPACES urban space. In the example pro- vided above, the story ends when the main character wakes up: it was all just a dream. As every workshop participant added a scene to the story, they were teasing out the connections between the cases from their own estrangement to them. For instance, the nightlife scene depicted in the Zona Rosa was imagined by a young man who is involved in the marijuana users' case study. From his personal urban experience and what he had learned about the male sex worker case study, he improvised this scene out of what surprised him most: "It is extremely strange. People are not really dancing, they are sitting down. They are already grown men." Storytelling enables us to collectively identify

these estrangements and wonders, preconceived ideas, and discomforts. This reveals lines of connections and disconnections between our cases.

Although the improvised city tour "was just a dream" (a narrative fiction), this vernacular comparative process has three functions for research practice: (1) assembling what Deville and colleagues call a "comparator," a comparative subject that emerges from the euphoric feeling of having collectively constructed a coherent narrative. This contributes to generating involvement in the analysis, collaboratively contributing to the emergent subject; (2) identifying lines of connection and comparison between divergent cases; and (3) create a sense of a common urban space we share as people involved in TRYSPACES, a specific map of the city formed by these five case studies (Figure 2). Using artistic language such as drawing, improvisation, and collective storytelling, this work- shop enabled us to juxtapose and connect our various cases. This entails using estrangement as a mode of analysis, something familiar to the artistic avant-garde of the early 20th as Caldeira (2017) reminds us. At the core of this story is indeed the *wondering* around of the central character as s/he moves around the city. The collective story developed during the workshop was a moment full of emotions, where each participant organically contributed based on three types of common knowledge: (1) our practical and vernacular experience of the city (we all knew why it is important to walk on the shadow side of the sidewalk); (2) a negotiated-shared conceptual vocabulary which had developed since the beginning of the project in 2017 (referring to concepts such as transgression or regulation) and which provided a bank of words to focus the story and to represent the urban practices; and (3) images and knowledge about the research findings of each case we had exchanged over the course of our meetings. The story consists of a city tour of these cases, told as a first-person singular narrative, although it evokes individual and collective interactions.
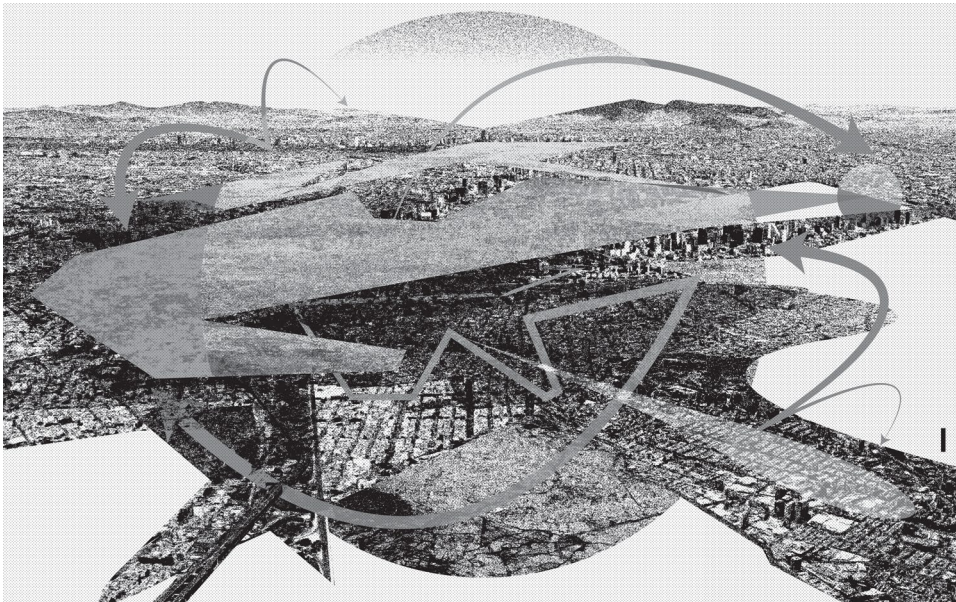

Figure 2: Relations between the five case studies in Mexico City, TRYCosmos platform.. Source: Culturans, 2021.

Indeed, quilting has both an individual and collective purpose: it serves as a vehicle for the unique story of each quilter, and it is part of a collective dynamic of storytelling. The collective narrative that forms the final quilt produces a common space where particularities are not erased in favor of a general story (Flannery 2001; Peterson 2003). Indeed, in the story improvised during this workshop, each case study represents a "patch" of

the quilt, a scene in the narrative. Al- though connected to the other cases, it remains a "whole in itself" (Koelsch 2012: 823). Koelsch adds that: "similar to a rhizome, a patchwork quilt has multiple entryways for analysis, no necessary center, and the ability to grow in multiple directions" (p. 823). In our case, the story was subsequently analyzed as we analyze an interview transcript: searching for themes, connections, and intensities that enable us to theorize about transgression and regulation in Mexico City.

Digital Displacements and Translations

If the quilting has been able to be transmitted between different generations of women, it is be- cause it is inscribed in their cultural universe. Sewing a quilt is not a practice culturally familiar to our team members. Following Koelsch's (2012) experiment, we, therefore, decided to con- struct a virtual quilt. The storytelling example described above occurred at the level of a single city in a rather conventional participatory workshop involving paper, markers, and the copresence of a small group of people. The second step of our comparative strategy was thus to share and translate these local maps and stories across our four cities.

Translating entails crossing cultural and disciplinary boundaries. It means, as Clifford and Marcus (1986) would put it, introducing polyvocality and intertextuality in the process of theorizing. This entails letting go of the need to remain truthful to the original text or to some putative objective reality "out there," waiting to be explained objectively. The process of translation is a creative and comparative process which deserves to be fully acknowledged because translating means transforming knowledge.

In TRYSPACES, translation occurs at various levels: (1) literally, of course, as we navigate four working languages: French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and English; but also (2) disciplinary, as we come from various academic and non-academic disciplines where our core concepts do not mean the same thing; (3) culturally, as certain concepts or ideas do not translate, or are distorted as they circulate from one city to the other; and (4) experientially, as we work from very diverse experiences and positionalities. These multiple translations are constant, thus making it impossible to depart from "universal" concepts and theories. Our process is much more inductive and grounded: even if we began with a series of concepts such as transgression and regulation, theory emerges from the comparative process, not the other way around as is the case for encompassing comparisons. We will come back to this in a moment.

Concretely, translation in TRYSPACES largely takes place digitally through a variety of cross-city activities. That is to say, the participatory workshop setting described above is trans- posed digitally at the cross-city scale. Through digital labs including both live videoconferencing events with simultaneous translation and asynchronous activities such as collaborative digital mapping or scrapbooking, we push local comparative processes at the translocal scale. Storytelling, presentation of results, exchanges, and brainstorming is thus transposed digitally at another scale, with the same objectives: (1) assembling a comparator, a comparative collective subject; (2) identifying lines of connection and comparison (transversal themes); and (3) create a sense of a common urban space across the four cities, an emergent object of analysis.

This is where mapping and visualizations become important in the comparative process. Working online, across four time zones, considerably limits the time we can actually be together "live." This is where our artist team members play a crucial role by producing a variety of multimedia renderings of our research results: documentaries, illustrations, maps, Instagram stories, and so on. Audiovisual language enables the sharing of urban experiences much more easily than academic texts or conference presentations.

In particular, we are developing two online platforms that are fully contributing to the comparative process (that is to say, they serve for generating wonder and a sense of displacement and thus provoke comparative thought). The first

platform is developed by our Mexican-based partner Culturans. TRYCity is an interactive platform visualizing connections between our concepts, their translation and evolution as they circulate, our cases, the feel and sense of each of the four cities represented through 360 virtual reality images and sounds, and the people composing our comparator (our team). Navigating the platform, one can sense how the comparative process produces the common sense of a TRYSPACES urban space (Figure 3). It is this particular sense of place which we are theorizing. The second platform is constructed with the open-source software AtlasCine, which enables or thematically codify and spatialize our very diverse datasets. Based on an interactive,
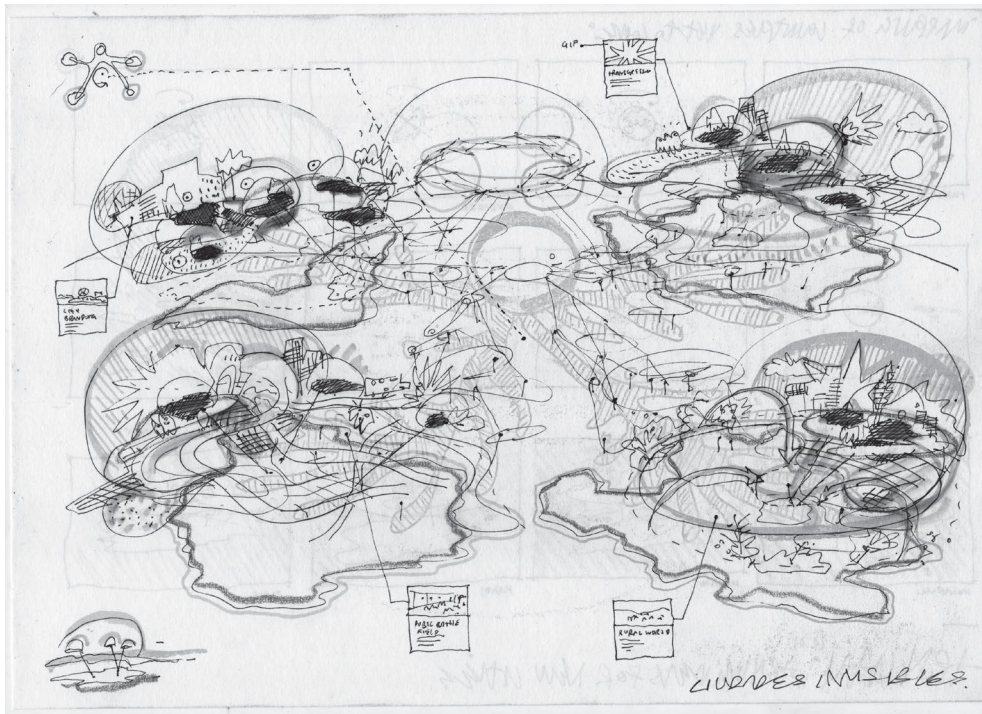

Figure 3: Sketch of the TRYCosmos platform. It comprises navigable maps of each city, connections, and transversal logics created in TRYSPACES. Source Culturans, 2021.
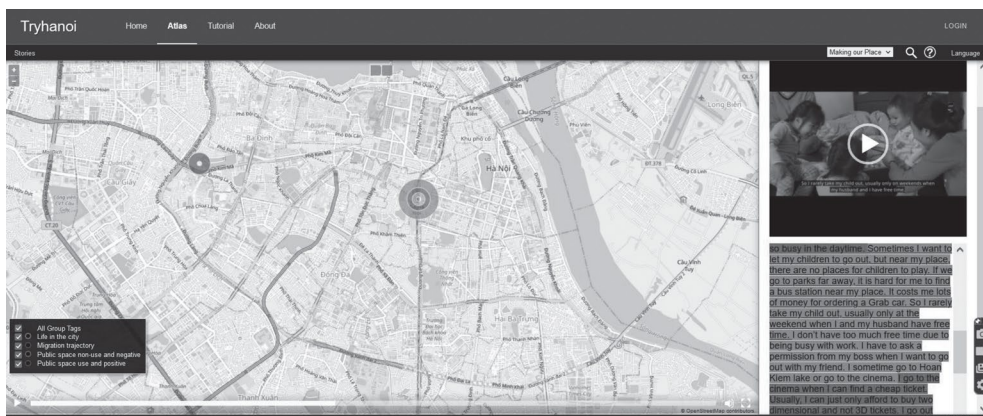

Figure 4: Mapping the story of a Hanoi city dweller, AtlasCine platform. Source: AtlasCiné, 2021.

multimedia web mapping framework, the software enables us to present audiovisual material as well as texts on a map. These stories can be navigated by themes, people, or places. This is useful to visualize connections between cases (Figure 4).

Theorizing

Through these two quilting techniques (storytelling and digital displacements and translations), we produce comparative theorizations. This is done primarily through writing traditional academic texts but also through various writing experiments emerging from our storytelling and digital mapping workshops. In their critical work on "writing culture," Clifford and Marcus (1986) break from the ethnographic tradition of the Chicago School that aimed to represent lived experience "as it really is." Instead, they see ethnography as a writing practice involving polyvocality, dialogue, and intertextuality. The ethnographer, they argue, creates affective fictions of the world they describe. Indeed, we find it useful not to shy away from unconventional writing forms for scientific research and ask: "How does an analysis go 'from there to there' and fold these different cities into each other, yet take cognizance of, and experience, the textures of their different histories and characters? How can one write about these lines? How, to paraphrase Fulvia Carnevale, can a strange language be found in the predominant language of urbanization?" (Simone and Boudreau 2009: 989–990) This "strange language of urbanization" is the "general" quilted theory we are searching for in TRYSPACES. Our quilting is nourished by a common archive, short films, documentaries, ethnographies, photographs, and many more types of communicative products. These are pieces that we integrate in a diverse patchwork full of deep knowledges and notions about urban practices. The very creation of this space of communication across various languages, bringing together these various observations, is what enables us to theorize.

Conclusion: Transversal Logics of Urban Transformation

In closing, we wish to return to the postcolonial/Marxist debate about the possibility of general urban theorizing through comparison. TRYSPACES seeks to understand how youth generate urban transformation in the context of a globally shared set of historical conditions marked by the hegemony of urban ways of life. Not only are the four cities we study very different but given that our data is generated from a wide variety of urban practices and positionalities, an encompassing comparative strategy attempting to locate these practices in relation to this shared structure would hardly work. Variety is too great.

Juxtaposing such dissimilar and varied practices involves finding lines of relations more than contrasting and categorizing. We find Caldeira's (2017) concept of "transversal logics" useful, as it refers to logics of engagement with processes of urbanization that are characterized by their location in everyday life and constitute consequently a "sideway" (rather than direct and confrontational) challenge to the norms. We cannot elaborate on the theory emerging from our comparison here. We will mention only two examples of transversal logics of transgression and urban transformation.

First, youth transgressive practice can generate either social change or stigmatization. Where there is an intention to transgress, there is generally also an intention to transform the status quo. However, in some cases, transgression is not intentional, yet it provokes the emergence of new ethics challenging stigmatization and producing social change. For example, male sex workers in Mexico City do not intend to transform morality, but the effect of their presence in a specific district has implied moral and legal changes at the city level. A similar analysis could be made of the presence and visibility of racialized youth in Montreal and their impact on the current institutional debate about systematic racism.

Second, the concentration of transgressive practices in certain places has to do with their his- tory. Transgression develops in interstitial spaces where it is allowed to exist. The differentiated flexibility of spaces vis-à-vis norms is distributed between the center and the peripheries. A sense of belonging develops with certain alternative places over time, while what is considered transgressive will evolve but remain in these same places. With time, these alternative or transgressive places impulse social change and urban transformation.

These are some of the questions that frame our forthcoming work and that emerged from our collective conceptualization. In the meantime, we leave you with Latour's (2004) suggestion that in order to uncover new sites of potential critical intervention, we ought to stop breaking reality into neat, manageable boxes. Assembling ideas, voices, and facts should be the task of the researcher. This is the only way to reproduce or render the messiness of urbanity. Grounded in such complex- ity, we seek to develop research methods that will enable us to understand urban transformation in all its complexity. In other words, to compare is to, above all else, compose and re-compose.

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