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Call for Papers

Localizing Knowledge(s) in Mexico: Popular Culture(s) from Literature to the World Wide Web

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Knowledge, specifically scientific knowledge has been in high demand during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic: From Chief Medical Advisor to the President of the U.S., Anthony Fauci, to German virologists Christian Drosten and Sandra Ciesek, who were awarded “University Teacher of the Year” for their Coronavirus Podcast and Hugo López-Gatell Ramírez, Deputy Secretary of Prevention and Health Promotion of Mexico, we have seen the rise and fall of a new dynamic between media systems and a plethora of spokesman and woman of science, be it from actual academia or the twilights of the recently founded and so called „YouTube Universities“. We have always been influenced by scientific development, but it occurred seldom in the form of mediatized actors from within academia, and rather as technological products (patents, machines, vaccines, medicines etc.) that diffused into our daily lives.

While science still proves to be successful, testified by an unprecedented fast development of vaccinations in the face of the Covid pandemic, it has struggled outside the laboratories within the socio-political and mediatised environment to correlate with the multiplicity of social and political realities observed in the different responses to and narratives about the pandemic, declared as infodemic by the WHO.

These narratives showcase an interesting dynamic from other domains of knowledge focused on a self-interest in power and monetary gain via disinformation campaigning within the ecosystem of media and web platforms. An example would be the change of perception of social media in the Mexican political landscape: from “benditas redes sociales”, as the current Mexican president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, lauded social media in his victory speech after his successful election campaign in November 2018, to “malditas redes sociales”, that need to be regulated as proposed by the Morena Senate member of his party, Ricardo Monreal Ávila, in his initiative to regulate social platforms in Mexico first articulated in February 2021.

The popular, in this sense, is still discursively linked to the primitive in contrast to the higher culture of academia vs. the outcast professionals and laymen on social media and their followers. However, this is not true in the sense that both do not offer perspectives in the same domain of knowledge. As stated before, misinformation is not a counterpart to academic knowledge, but rather disguises itself as knowledge and, for that, uses similar practices and forms e.g. citations and publications. It does not produce knowledge within a specific field, following established rules and criteria, but uses other forms of knowledge for ulterior gains: money, power, acknowledgement etc.

However, it is not disinformation and propaganda, as counterpart to hard evidence-based science, but propaganda and disinformation can be observed in popular strategies to gain political power or other benefits. As science is placed in the mediatic center of politics and decision making, it is also discursively related to power and therefore not only disputed by a scientific community but by society. Science also becomes a public discourse that entails inevitable battles that scientific methods and models never had to answer. The science of the popular could therefore help to understand, bridge and supplement these discursive gaps in society as the popular can be found in the quotidian in distinct forms and (trans)cultural objects, practices and places, but it is far from being an „essence“ or „personality“ of its practitioners. It can be transgressive, but also transformative, as it shapes and creates new spaces and interfaces for people to interact and participate, as well as to criticize and destabilize.

As such, popular cultures need to be localized and contextualized as well as analyzed to escape the all-encompassing structural frameworks – be it globalization, capitalism or the „higher forms of culture“ – which also offer and force people to create their own spaces within.

The goal of this issue is to look at the popular from another perspective, not as the rest that remains as irreconcilable Other in „subcultures“, but something valuable (but also frightening), determined by its qualities as popular, which ultimately allows for its incorporation in the aforementioned frameworks, but also resists and perdures.

The objective, on the one hand, is to feature knowledges within established practices of popular culture. This, on the other hand, is necessary to reconcile laymen and academics in those shared spaces of knowledge, potentially establishing perspectives and reciprocal exchanges, as there cannot be knowledge within the popular without knowledge about the popular. Furthermore, it might help to establish a transcultural perspective, rethinking and deconstructing cultural relations and their national representations within mediatic and socio-cultural systems: from the so-called “mañaneras” and TikTok performances of the IMSS and politicians in Mexico, to the *Rituales del caos* and other popular cultures explored by Carlos Monsiváis.

The popular might not develop a vaccine or other technical milestone of humankind, but it could establish productive spaces and interfaces for scientific exchange and communication and serve as object of investigation and knowledge outside of academia. Therefore, all scholars within the vast field of Humanities are invited to contribute, that are interested in the domain of popular cultures with relation to “Mexican” representations and the hidden knowledges within their spaces, objects, actors and practices.

Topics and Themes

- Popular culture and transcultural processes: transcultural objects and practices within different cultures and their transformations; or from Mexico to the world and back.
- Forms of knowledge within popular cultures: discourses, communities, practices and spaces; What kind of knowledges lie within forms and practices of popular culture?
- Theoretical discussions of the popular and concepts of culture: What is the popular? How can we situate those different cultural dimensions within processes of identity and Otherness?
- Popular cultures from a diachronic and synchronic perspectives: Comparisons between practices and different definitions of the popular
- Intersections and conflicts regarding the popular: The concept of popular as disguise for populism, misinformation etc.
- Localizing the popular: domains of cultures, groups of interest and other forms of delimitations and representations

Formal criteria

- Length 15-20 pages or its equivalent. Approximately 5000 to 7000 words.
- Abstract of up to 200 words, bio-bibliographic information (profession, main areas of research and recent publications) not exceeding 10 lines.
- 5 key words to identify the content of the article that are not repeated in the title of the text.

For more details on submission please consult our website:

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Articles and reviews can be sent to the e-mail address of the editor of this dossier Hans Bouchard (Universität Siegen; Hans.Bouchard@uni-siegen.de) until **April 15, 2022** in Microsoft Word format. Reviews of the received articles should be given by **June 17, 2022**.