

Archaeology of Sociovisual Counter-Hegemonic Knowledge in Contemporary Latin American Arquigraphy

Arqueología del saber contrahegemónico sociovisual en la arquigrafía contemporánea latinoamericana

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Abstract

This research explores the sociovisual counter-hegemonic capacity of contemporary arquigraphic objects as a tool for commercial identification in architecture, with an archeological cultural penetration in Latin American countries such as Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador.

The aim of this study is to analyze the semantic effect of anti-capitalist struggle under advertising domination and consumerist identification, in a dispute over the power of visual impact arquigraphy. This involves graphic ruptures imposed by the economic influence of corporate capitalism and consumer culturalism.

The initial method followed a flexible design, allowing discoveries throughout the investigative process, based on a qualitative methodology using description and interpretation of data using a transdisciplinary approach grounded in Anthropology and Communication, with Graphic Design as its referential axis.

Keywords: counter-hegemony sociovisuality, archigraphy, design, culture

Resumen

La presente investigación explora la capacidad contrahegemónica sociovisual en objetos arquigráficos contemporáneos, como instrumento de identificación comercial en la arquitectura con penetración cultural arqueológica en países latinoamericanos como México, Argentina, Colombia y Ecuador.

El objetivo de este estudio es analizar el efecto de sentido de lucha anticapitalista con dominación publicitaria e identificatoriamente consumista, disputándose el poder de impacto visual arquigráficamente expuesto, que trae rupturas gráficas por imposición económica del corporativismo empresarial y el culturalismo de consumo.

El método inicial se orientó en un diseño flexible con hallazgos en el proceso investigativo, a partir de un método cualitativo mediante la descripción y la interpretación de datos con aproximación transdisciplinar, desde la Antropología y la Comunicación, con el Diseño Gráfico como eje referencial.

Palabras clave: contrahegemonía sociovisual, arquigrafía, diseño, cultura

Introduction



Archaeology, as the science that analytically and interpretatively studies past cultures by means of material residues, entails a narrative construction of human, cultural and communicational evolution. During the 20th century, systematic, technological, and multidisciplinary methods were established, allowing for the reconstruction of graphic manifestations of the past, languages, and appropriations, up to the Hypermodern Era. This study draws on the notion of *sociovisual hegemony* that is attributed to Lozano (2008), as a commercial-cultural power struggle in the identificative design in representations, whose intrinsic characteristics are determined by the foreign aesthetics in the public space, was transdisciplinary related to archaeology.

This is how the archeology of *sociovisual counter-hegemonic* knowledge is considered through Pop Art in its artistic manifestation as a denouncing anti-capitalist proximate. This graphically expressive and representative current was a cultural phenomenon of the 1950s, which was born as a response to the consumer society and popular culture, under the traditional idea of art as something elitist and exclusive, with different images and meanings. This artistic current focused on everyday lifestyle and popular culture. Pop artists were inspired by advertising, comics or graphic narrative, commercial products, music and film, among others, as well as common objects of consumer society.

While Pop Art was denouncing, *Dadaism* constituted an artistically represented alternative that showed annoyance towards the war, thus emerging as a *sociovisual counter-hegemonic movement* of rejection to the conditioning and excess of visual communications for consumption. Like the so-called *anti-art*, this could be called anti-design, a manifesto of design or consumerist negation.

Over the years, sociovisual counter-hegemony has had representative manifestations in political resistance, such as feminist groups fighting against gender violence, for social inclusion, among other socio-cultural aspects. For example, we can mention the Red de Conceptualismos del Sur (RedC Sur), created in 2007, as an affective and activist network with a search in street graphic forms with epistemological, artistic and

political disputes, with a critical dimensional incidence in artistic, archival, curatorial practices and in social movements.

In Mexico, we can mention from the student movement of Tlatelolco, to the one related to the disappearance of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa, with activist graphic expressions pronounced in the public and reserved space, such as banners or monumental paintings, transforming the understanding of action and practice.

Some of the exhibited action samples articulate, interweave, make visible and activate the graphic repertoire with the effect of a historical sense of interwoven counter-hegemonic struggle. Dimensionally, a spectrum is generated, collective at times, with multiplicity of forms, colors and dialogues, particularly manifested in photographs, signs, advertisements, archigraphy contained in architecture and cultural artifacts (Becker, 2015) as referents of social memory. That is, the counter-hegemony sociovisuality publicly discusses with communicational, advertising and popular culture tools, which establish a dialogue between experiences and knowledge, echoes of the past and impulses of the imagined future.

Currently, sociovisual hegemonic knowledge in contemporary archigraphy is exposed as part of the urban image with aesthetic characteristics that derive from myths, customs and social habits, transformed, accumulated and communicatively represented. However, *sociovisual counter-hegemonic* power constitutes the driving phenomenological recognition of the reversal of the existing forces of the capitalist model in the market. Commercial advertising accumulation is constructed on the basis of ideas of the ruling classes, i.e., ideas resulting from the system of production and reproduction of existing material conditions and elements, as well as cultural dimensions.

Thus, the sociovisual counter-hegemony constitutes the capitalist mechanical contradiction of the elements of force accentuated by means of *morphology, color, typography*, which together propitiate the visual weakening. This, with the objective of neoliberal ideological anti-capitalist strategic struggle, of material and spiritual misery, with advertising domination and identifiably consumerist. In a counter-hegemonic way to imperialism, the dispute of power for visual impact constitutes the contradictory set of graphic ruptures that dispute the economic imposition of corporatism (as a rejection of the idea of pluralism in design) and the culturalism of consumption.

The sociovisual counter-hegemonic alliance is interwoven by means of commercially exposed advertising and identifying graphics with displacement of struggle on public roads, for distraction, blockage, rupture and tension of the capitalist impact in some Latin American cities. The alteration of material, social and cultural elements has historically constituted the consumerist protagonism (Sarlo, 2019) with a yearning for progress and the imaginary potentiating economic development.

Commercial concentration, not only on public roads, but also in internal circuits in commercially adapted spaces (*shopping malls*) for spectatorial and consumerist attention, postmodern life and videoculture, are fertile ground for sociovisual hegemony. These places are full of brands displayed with advertisements, commercial signs, or identifying graphics, among other hegemonic communications indicative of consumption.

It is precisely in this context when the counter-hegemony sociovisuality appropriates the contradictory discourse, discussing and making it part of its clear objective, by means of another evidently critical, reflexive and popular one. An example of this is the technopopular design (Naranjo Huera and Lozano Castro, 2023), which discusses the commercial labels in Ecuador and Mexico with the commercially different, traditionally and hegemonically imperialist exposed discourse. The coexistence in each present of diverse temporalities or multiple histories raises the existence of syntagms of the past, that is, units of meaning coming from diverse historical horizons, loaded with unresolved conflicts, what is called internal colonialism (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018), understood as a product of a persistent and reproducible colonial social structure.

Some sociovisually counter-hegemonic forms are part of the corporatism induced in traditional local micro-enterprises with rooted settlements of folklore, which are part of the consumer culture represented in abstractions of identities of modern national culture (Raymond Williams quoted by Hall, 1993). Modernity as a struggle against modern, counter-modern attitudes, as an act of theorizing the present, where resistance makes the libertarian, practical and productive possibility of transformation and struggle, over what is imposed, normalized, naturalized, with modes of visual, identity-related and circulatory variation. The becoming of political, economic and socio-cultural conjectural intervention is precisely where cultural roots are manifested, represented in an abstract way as indicators with cultural accumulations (Gramsci, 1967) and communicational between the sociovisual hegemonic struggle.

Thus, sociovisual counter-hegemonic archigraphy constitutes a denouncing object, with a claiming the right of national or local identity. These are discursive objects that guide, determine, and stimulate social action toward *counter-consumption*, *counter-consumption*, *counter-ordination*, *counter-ritualization*, *counter-symbolism*, *an absent spatial testimony* (*absent testimonial*), as recognition of the past and the present. Indeed, sociovisual hegemony is a generator of social conviction from modern, foreign ideas, such as advertising *marketing* (Ricoeur, 2017) with pragmatic and cognitive use and abuse, over traditional ones. Precisely, the resistance of the indicative archigraphic design (commercial, distinctive, advertising, etc.) as a struggle of symbolic charge of freedom, expression, or techniques applied by hand in the face of standardization processes (technology, language, corporatism) is known as sociovisual counter-hegemonic power.

❖ The counter-hegemonic social identity

Identity, as configuration and signification of meaning, is shaped by events, influences, colonialisms, myths, among other social, cultural, political and religious aspects. *Counter-hegemonic sociovisual identity* starts as a protest against the global imaginary of modernization and progress through symbolic products that belong to contextual ideas aligned with symbolic order of the time (Valdés Castillo, 2019). Thus, their creations derive from an awareness of consumption, with ruptures and continuities through forms, representational images, conditions of reception and social interaction, contained in a plurality of counter-hegemonic elements and meanings. Counter-hegemonic objects mutate, hybridize and globalize, as an identity struggle based on production, circulation and historically significant recognition (García Canclini, 2001, 2010).

The counter-hegemonic identity discourse is built upon a semiotic relational communication system exposed in the archigraphy of public roads, which obeys commercial, cultural or sociopolitical factors presented in historical, geographic or demographic processes, to mention a few. Thus, the counter-hegemonic sociovisual identity is presented in the archigraphy exposed between popular culture, dominant and subaltern society, in spaces of struggle or dispute between opposing forces of commercial, economic, or hierarchical social power.

It is clear that graphic communication has been adapted to different cultures by means of strategies according to the values of each country, for example, in the case of advertisements that were shown with greater rigidity for those of low context and greater dynamism for those of high context (Hall, 1973). There is a possibility for a dialectical renewal of the past in the present, which combines ancestral heritage with the political modernity of the collective image.

Archigraphy has transited from technological democratization to global symbolic structuring. Cultural expressions with counter-hegemonic features (López Flores, 2020) are socioculturally characterized by colors, shapes, rhythms and linguistic expressiveness, preserving transformative features of their historical identity and performative aesthetics, such as idiosyncrasy, morphology and lifestyle, as well as their image and urban landscape. Occasionally, the compromised symbolic value (archigraphy, advertising, icons and meanings) is denounced through visual features linked to those social aspects. In other words, once the plot of modernity appeared with cultural discontinuities, memories and imaginaries, social recognition, urban deformations, and mass phenomena emerged (Barbero, 2010), so that later resistances in receptions or manifest counter-hegemonic archigraphic manifest uses were presented.

Precisely, the market represented archigraphically in the public thoroughfare remains as unifier, selector and producer of illusions; however, counter-hegemonically (Bridón, 2021), the sociocially engaged graphic design of popular culture acts as an autonomous squire of (Modonesi, 2010) visual identity. That is to say, the counter-hegemonic identity

discourse functions as a dual register: *representational and sign of protest*, by means of color, typography, format, indicator elements, as well as image and design in its composition.

Methodology

This research was based on a flexible design with findings in the research process. It followed a qualitative method, focused on the description and interpretation of data with a transdisciplinary approach from Anthropology and Communication, with Graphic Design as the referential axis.

The method of Thomas Kuhn (2024) is a reference for this study from a descriptive aspect in conjunction with the *theory of hegemony and socialist strategy* of Laclau and Mouffe (2004), *employing a social ontological approach and a hegemonic political analysis to then turning to the counter-hegemonic*. According to Laclau's post-foundational thought, the modes of constructing the social order, organized as a political register, give clarity to the differentiation between the political over the social or the social over the political, with the impossibility of a totalitarian social as a founding identity. Here, visual identification becomes crucial, as well as the plurality of subject positions and antagonistic differentials in the archigraphic designs; in the same way that, in the sociocultural theory of Vygotski (2012), leads to resistance or protest through counter-hegemonic symbolic graphic language based on social and cultural interaction with the environment.

Paradoxically, greater depth is presented in relation to the influence of sociocultural factors on design and the abstract recognition of social lifestyle through differentially interrelated intertwining (Kuhn, 2024). This research approach was divided into two stages: a) the first, exploratory, by means of the mechanical model with qualitative studies based on ethnographic observation and recording; b) the second, by means of a comparative qualitative model using categories, according to case studies and the data constructed. Within this framework, data were collected with time delimited by routes, according to recovered objects that were found exposed in public places.

The units of analysis were composed in a corpus of 40 international archigraphic objects, through a photographic record delimited to a sample of 22 objects for in-depth analysis; addressing discursive aspects of social reality in four Latin American countries: Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador. These objects were inductively collected by primary sources with the observation and identification of archigraphy with counter-hegemonic design and communication based on the way of seeing (Berger, 2016; Calabrese, 1997).

The hegemonic and counter-hegemonic design objects were qualitatively analyzed from a categorical, characteristic and structurally

relational comparative analysis. The semi-empirical evidence recovered maintained a theoretical and procedural grounding, since, according to Cassirer's theory (2024), culture is related to symbolic expression that conceives stylistic elements that represent processes of cultural symbolic abstractionism, and are subsequently included as mythological and linguistic tendencies.

Secondary sources were related to specialized bibliography of the object of study of *sociovisual counter-hegemony*, approached through cultural objects of archigraphic design.

Key informants, such as the master in Anthropology and Cultural Studies, Gustavo Bravo, and the master in Art Studies with historical-visual discourses, Brenda Reyes, were considered for their knowledge in art, cultural hegemony, graphic memory and counter-visuals. These individuals constituted a relevant source of information on thematic axes related to hegemonic and counter-hegemonic sociovisual discourse discussed in the archigraphic objects to be analyzed.

The discussions were semi-structured around thematic axes involving the intersection between art, propaganda and cultural hegemony, critical reflection and the consideration of common sense; as well as how these archigraphic ideas influence aesthetic understanding, political legitimization and the construction of sociovisual counter-hegemony in social subjects. Precisely, archigraphic design was discussed as commercial art, being an occasionally hegemonic or counter-hegemonic cultural device.

Subsequently, observation and inference with cross-referencing of information enriched the study with coincidental findings that derived individual conclusions on the subject. This document is presented as a transdisciplinary constitutive link, where coinciding particularities were observed in areas of development that link social construction and unified perception.

Discussion

Tracing and understanding counter-hegemonic archigraphic flows and networks in contemporary contexts are shaped by ideas and cultural fusions, as well as aesthetic and symbolic manifestations that are discussed within the field of Graphic Design, but also preserved and transmitted through generational knowledge and socio-cultural perceptions. Counter-hegemonic archigraphic designs are the result of expressive means that reflect emotions and aesthetic values of each culture, either as a celebration or critique (counter-hegemonic) for reinterpretation of new perspectives and processual dialogues. In this dynamic, processes of intertextuality converge, including aspects of resignification, allusion, citation or appropriation of cultural elements or objects for new proposals.

Counter-hegemonic aesthetic and symbolic manifestations are made visible through content related to beliefs and traditions that are expressed, shared, and understood both within and beyond their original cultures. Which meant that Latin American culture is sociovisually expressed and made visible through these graphic manifestations which incorporate languages, customs, myths, rituals and socio-cultural practices, among others. Thus, contextually, there is a logical connection between culture and design, each link being culturally diverse with its own characteristics and ideological interconnections, containing specific meanings in its constituent parts and a unique interaction that enriches cultural symbolic narrative expressiveness.

In Ecuador, counter-hegemony is seen in graphics known as *tecnopopulares* (Naranjo Huera and Lozano Castro, 2023), which are the result of social identity tied to traditional gastronomic commerce in popular neighborhoods and markets (see Figures 1 and 2). That is, they are developed from local identity construction processes and their technological and socio-cultural relationships, shared in projects discursively developed from that premise.



Figure 1. Example of tecnopopular in Ecuador.
Source: Naranjo Huera y Lozano Castro, 2023.



Figure 2. Another example of tecnopopular in Ecuador.
Source: Naranjo Huera y Lozano Castro, 2023.

In Colombia, on the other hand, studies such that of Albao Delgadillo (2023) explore the visual discourse present in signage along a circuit in Bogotá. Meanwhile, in Argentina, from the perspective of *other design* (related to social responsibility and impact), popular culture has been deeply studied, based on media productions and communicational graphics. This shows that some designs present hegemonic absence (such as the *fileteado porteño* from Argentine popular culture, shown in Figure 3) and implicit *glocalized* globalization (as in Figures 4 and 5), which expose, representatively and discursively, their place of origin and counter-globalizing beliefs. The same occurs with the Argentine thesis *Gráficas identificativas en fachadas de microempresas en Tampico*, by Lozano (2018), which identifies graphics with historically significant memory that have endured through re-signification and graphic appropriation (see Figure 6).



Figure 3. Image of Buenos Aires, Argentina, captured on February 15, 2017.

Source: Compiled by author.



Figure 4. Image of Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia, captured on June 26, 2024.

Source: Compiled by author.



Figure 5. Image of Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia, captured on July 5, 2024.

Source: Compiled by author.



Figure 6. Image of the Capital Federal city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, captured on October 10, 2017.

Source: Compiled by author.

In Mexico, counter-hegemonic graphics are discussed through their diverse characteristics, from production and implementation to their circulation and recognition. These include, for example, the utilitarian use or counter-use of materials, language, color, space, and the use or counter-use of artisanal production or digital technological printing, among others (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Image from Puebla, Puebla, Mexico, capture on July 15, 2022.

Source: Compiled by author.

Some of the cultural objects of archigraphic design (hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, as shown in Table 1) were discussed and analyzed based on the categorization and characterization of *hegemonic vs. counter-hegemonic sociovisual* manifestations in a shared categorical analysis table (see Table 2). Some of them were considered from the macro-differentiation between *hegemony* and *counter-hegemony* and, after that, micro-categories related to their symbolic, imaginary and contextual discourse were also taken into account. Each of these categories presents defined characteristics, such as: Symbology (harmony and discord); Imaginary (technology, language and corporatism), and Contextual discourse (tension, rupture and continuity).

Table 1. Sociovisual categories: hegemonic vs. counter-hegemonic manifestations

Sociovisual categories	
Hegemonic	Counter-hegemonic
<p>A romantic conception in which it is difficult to distinguish what comes from a historical perception, becoming an immediate necessity as part of the mediation endorsed by the modern State. This is presented as an identity denial of that which is not constituted by what is traditional or popular, but by what is absent as part of the external culture.</p>	<p>The popular as a space of creativity, activity and production; as a narrative of authenticity beyond official or hegemonic culture. This arises from an aesthetic rebellion involving the separation or communion with official and classist art, as a spontaneous experiential revaluation of space.</p>

Source: Compiled by author.

Table 2. Categorical and characteristic analysis of hegemonic vs. counter-hegemonic sociovisual archigraphic manifestations

Archigraphy			
Categories	Characteristics	Sociovisual hegemonic	sociovisual counter-hegemonic
Symbology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony • Discord • Spatial saturation 	 	 
Imaginary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology • Language • Corporatism 	  	 
Contextual discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural tension • Rupture • Continuity 		

Source: Compiled by author.

According to sociocultural theory, counter-hegemonic symbolism results from social and cultural interaction as a contextual behavioral determinant that may express resistance (Vygotski, 2012). In this sense, we critically reflected on the data obtained in context, that is, correlational objects from different parts of Latin America (Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador) were analyzed to obtain precise data regarding the differential contrast of counter-hegemonic archigraphy, with similarities and differences (see Table 3).

Table 3. Counter-hegemonic contrastive analysis of Latin American archigraphic sociovisuals

Nacionalidad	Arquigrafía contrahegemónica sociovisual	Similitudes	Diferencias
Mexicana		<p>Discordia visual figura-fondo</p> <p>Tecnología popular aplicada</p> <p>Lenguaje nacional</p> <p>Ruptura contextual</p> <p>Continuidad cultural</p> <p>Alteridad histórica y social</p>	<p>Armonía visual</p> <p>Corporativismo</p> <p>Tensión social</p> <p>Emancipación colonizadora</p>
Colombiana	 		
Argentina			
Ecuatoriana	 		

Source: Compiled by author.

The images presented allow us to read, compare and analyze culturally localized aspects. It is about tensions and sociocultural intersections manifested in aesthetic considerations that significantly influence media practice. We can also observe the consumption of sweets, popsicles and ice cream, wafers, coffee, juices or water, among other desserts or culinary dishes typical of the Mexican, Colombian, Argentine and Ecuadorian regions.

Thus, certain transcultural processes open new scenarios that are crossed by historical and contemporary artistic practices, which commercially embedded themselves in the urban design through archigraphy. Therefore, counter-hegemonic evolution leads to a sociovisual graphic proposal that establishes itself as a resistance to globalizing hegemony, through the use of traditional materials, practices, language, symbolisms and identity colors representative of each place.

Conclusions

Counter-hegemonic sociovisual archaeology is understood as an anti-capitalist denunciatory artistic manifestation and a form of resistance to capitalism, globalization, and socio-cultural hegemony. This response arises from the consumption of popular culture under the idea of traditional *costumbrista* conservatism, significantly shaped by beliefs, traditions, myths, and history, which are massively discussed in order to commercialize goods and services through visualities and value-laden meanings. The above allowed the archaeological reading and discussion in this study, from visual antecedents and contemporary elements dispersed across different parts of Latin America for a global comparative analysis.

The findings respond to and discursively engage with the understanding of *counter-hegemonic archigraphy* as an enabling space for consensus and traditional, identity and popular cohesion, which is deployed in the media through forms, color, symbols, language, etc. Therefore, it is important to give continuity to critical reflections that emerge from design and for design, and at the same time articulate archeologically, in order to offer conciliation, democratization and permanence to projects with autonomy, identity and socio-cultural memory.

The stimulation of the *counter-consumerist*, *counter-dominant*, *counter-ritualizing*, or *counter-symbolic* social action discursively presented characteristic macro and micro-social aspects that impacted as lifestyles and meaning effects. The characterized and contrasted reading converged in configurations that jointly influence potential trajectories in narratives with symbolically representative counter-hegemonic stories, giving rise to systemic analyses that enable the organization of manifest trajectories in the information of the archigraphic objects. In other words, it shows the structural context that influenced the production of sociovisual counter-hegemonic archigraphy, the differences and

similarities, related to the twist, quality and technology, among other aspects linked to technological changes and capitalist platforms.

The communication exposed through archigraphy was an accumulation of hegemonic information in constant movement, serving as raw material of the potentiating economy in textual communications, but also counter-hegemonically rooted with traditions, practices, language, symbolisms, colors and represented identity.

The archigraphic production in comparison with international archigraphic objects is extreme, with a mechanistic sense effect in its strategic reproduction for economically driven political actions. It clearly promotes the reproduction of a consumerist lifestyle in urban centers, establishing orientation markers toward a controlled subaltern expansion of communication, as well as segmentation between economically advantaged and disadvantaged sectors.

It is concluded that the characterization of Latin American archigraphies, in comparative terms, constitutes the reading of deficiencies and reproductive possibilities with disruptive potential for positive anti-capitalist counter-hegemonic outcomes. The Latin American archigraphic designs presented are the result of inequality and processes of economic and political polarization, of transnational companies vs. traditional companies, in the face of an accelerated future and the commercialization gaps in the global market. 📍

📍 Bibliography

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