

Cristina Cielo
History Matters Conference
April 23-24, 2004

**PROPERTY AND CITIZENSHIP IN STRUCTURES AND SPACES:
REFORMING PRACTICES IN EARLY MEXICAN PUBLIC SPACES**

Urgent questions of citizenship and violence underwrite much of contemporary urban and globalization studies. How are we to understand competing sovereignties, hierarchical memberships and the structural, symbolic and very real acts of violence produced by shifting geographies of economic and political structures? In this talk, I suggest that we can find methodological and theoretical tools to approach such questions through an examination of territorial and structural changes of the past. In particular, I show how a fine-grained focus on everyday practices can help us better understand competing notions of property and of citizenship that shaped the early capitalist order of 19th century Mexico. I argue that if we are to understand the architecture of emerging macro-structures, we can only do so by methodological attention and theoretical integration of the particular practices that ground these structures.

A quick preview to how I'll approach this topic. In the first three sections, I will describe three general periods of changing structures and spatial practices in 19th century Mexican public spaces. I am especially interested the way that marginalized groups such as vagrants, street vendors and prostitutes used the city's public spaces. Ostensibly accessible to a wide range of people, spaces such as streets and plazas provide a magnified site for examining the tensions of hierarchical structures and daily attempts to reinforce or transform them. In particular, I look at urban practices in the country's principal port of Veracruz, whose spaces and politics were inextricable from the national politics of the period. In the

last of these three sections, I will focus on the relationships between national structural transformations and changing urban practices in Veracruz. My aim will be to show how neither urban theory's structural nor agency approach to marginality can explain important changes in these practices. In the last section of the paper, I will re-examine meanings generated by the street workers' spatial practices to show how incorporating these meanings and practices into our analysis allows us to both move beyond the structure/agency dichotomy and better understand the particular institutional and structural contours of early Mexican capitalism.

Early 19th century Veracruz and Localism

Let's turn, then, to that era. The 19th century in Mexico was a wild and willful time. It was wild in its political complexity and chaos, which can be hinted at in numbers: in its first 55 years following independence, Mexico had 76 different heads of state. And it was willful in its determination to produce a new national order, which it arguably succeeded in accomplishing by the end of the century. Political and social histories of Mexico roughly characterize three general phases in its 19th century: the period of waning colonialism and early independence, the long period of mid-century instability and Liberal triumph, and the period of Order and Progress that followed French occupation and lasted until the 1910 Mexican revolution. The story told is one of the violent transformation of a sacred colonial order into a secular capitalist order, and focuses on the changing institutions of property and citizenship. In such a narrative, the Laws of Reform of 1858 mark a momentous victory in Mexico's grueling passage from colony to nation. These Liberal laws inaugurated a process of social secularization. They nationalized corporate properties and established the authority of a Mexican nation independent of Church authority.

Mexican nationalism had first been forged under the banner of religion. Although Mexico did not gain independence until 1821, Hidalgo's 1810 Grito de Dolores is widely considered the first cry of the embryonic nation. As historians have shown, the national community that Hidalgo imagined when he cried, "Mexicanos! Viva Mexico!" was premised on a vision of a society bound and legitimized by the Church. In the archival documents I examined, documents from the 1790s through the 1820s are almost exclusively signed "May God protect Your Excellency". Besides the Church, the strength of the municipality – especially in terms of authority over local practices – further belied the weakness of the early nation. The centrality of the city in the Spanish colonial project is well-established; despite ample directives from the metropole, the power of local sovereignty is captured in the famous New Spain phrase "I concede, but I do not obey." In addition, colonial administrators charged municipal leaders with codifying their city's "Edict on Regulations and Good Government." In a letter in 1793, Veracruz leaders informed the viceroy of New Spain that they were developing such an edict, since "to articulate and tend to good order, is the particular and exclusive right of City Halls, which represent the whole of the People."

In the practices of the period as well, we can see the importance of local – both municipal as well as community – identification. Between 1794 and 1827, the municipality enforced its authority over the city streets in a variety of ways. It issued licenses for street vendors and public entertainers, established Guards for the Gate of the Quay to enforce municipal taxation of goods entering the port, and ruled the use of areas of public space for specific "community uses." Veracruz inhabitants also accepted the literal authority of their more local districts, with Night Guards organized and paid for by neighborhood.

And in an 1803 letter from street vendors to the city hall, vendors sought to promote their cause by appealing to the local role they fulfilled. They wrote that they have earned the

“reliance, recognition and support of the People” and play an integral role in equipping “the troops and craftsmen with their daily needs [so they can] arrive promptly to work.” The vendors also position themselves as critical to the welfare of the community. We “give a Poor person, and anyone who needs it a quarter of lard and another of beans so he can make himself something to eat; we do the same with a quarter of ham and another of garbanzos for a stew if someone is sick.” Further, it is by the very virtue of their public location that they can help safeguard the “many Poor Women and Girls” on the streets and can display the cleanliness and soundness of their trade. In contrast, private stores with their “dark corners” have neither pity for the poor, safe spaces for women, nor open doors for inspectors.

Based on the discourse and practices in public spaces in this early phase of the 19th century, I typify the spatial subjectivities and modes of practice of marginalized groups with the term “Localism.” That is, practices in public spaces and the meanings generated in concordance with those practices centered around citizenship on a local scale, typified by uses of land determined by community authorities. Supporting this notion of citizenship and its implicit local boundaries were the conceptions of property prevalent in the period. The right to private property – understood as individual ownership – had yet to replace a more communitarian understanding of land that had its root in Spanish organization of the colonial lands.

Although many Spanish colonists were granted *solares*, lots near the main plaza of New Spain’s cities, the majority of urban and nearby lands were held as public property. Among these commons were the *ejido*, an area for residents to grow food, and the *dehesa* for grazing livestock. *Propios*, the term for city lands leased to generate municipal income reflects not only ownership but a sense of propriety, of that which is proper. Feudal notions of

property understood property as that which was appropriate to the person.¹ That is, property was neither tradable nor interchangeable, but one's use of property was associated with one's role in the social and political hierarchy. In theory, the King owned all property, but it was trusted to the use of the nobility, who in turn allowed other tenants to use it. The use-value of the land took precedent over its exchange-value, which as we will see becomes critical to the later understanding of private property as ownership. The structural hierarchical relationship implicit in this feudal understanding of property is that every person except the King and the last subject were lord and tenant simultaneously.²

The Church's understanding of property took this chain one step further, with the King as a tenant, holder of property that "belonged" to God.³ But the Church in early Mexico was also the direct owner of much of the country's land, and is estimated to have owned about a third of the productive wealth of the new nation. Further, the conception which underlay Church lands was similar to feudal conception described above. It is best characterized by the idea of mortmain, from the French for "dead hands." Legally, lands held in mortmain are inalienably held by ecclesiastic or other corporations. Statutes forbidding alienation in mortmain date as early as the 13th century in England. Figuratively, the "dead hands" have referred to both the lack of productivity of such lands as well as the posthumous control of the testator over later uses of land.

Mid 19th Century Veracruz and Struggling Sovereignities

The Liberal party wanted to further stifle these dead hands, in an attempt to both make the lands more productive – claiming that ecclesiastic and communal landholding obstructed progress – as well as wrest power away from the Church. As early as the 1820s,

¹ cf Rose and others??

² UMa, p 10

the Liberal party argued for disamortization, which would forbid the Church or any other corporation “of perpetual or indefinite duration” to own real property. Disamortization was nationally decreed in the Lerdo Law of 1856, named after its Liberal author from Veracruz Miguel Lerdo de Tejada. This law ordered all real property owned by civil or ecclesiastic corporations to sell those lands to tenants currently renting the properties. Properties not sold to tenants were to be auctioned to the highest bidder. As Brian Hasserman* notes, the objectives of the Lerdo Law were twofold: “to release hitherto inalienable property onto the market, thereby encouraging development, and to raise revenue through government taxation of this process” (162). Moreover, the Liberals hoped that such a commodification of land would create a middle class of small property owners while replacing local loyalties with a sense of national citizenship. Other parts of the Laws of Reform sought to further weaken Church influence in daily and national life. One of these laws, for example, decreased the number of religious holidays and increased the number of national secular holidays.

The Laws of Reform articulate some of the major tensions of the second phase of the Mexican 19th century. While fiercely competing national factions battled to determine the ideological structure that might provide a compass for the emerging nation, the struggle for authority over the Mexican identity was played out, literally, on the ground, in everyday public space practices. One of the Reform Laws, for example, forbade religious celebrations outside ecclesiastic buildings and prohibited clerical dress in public. Public ceremonies were a point of contention, not only between the national government and the church, but between the national and local government as well. Throughout the history of Mexican cities, public ceremonies had consistently privileged local politicians. However, in 1844, the

³ references...

state government passed a law that required that pride of place in public ceremonies be ceded to the military, who represented the nation. The Veracruz municipal response to the law was vitriolic:

The People, whose immediate organ is this corporation, believes itself humiliated by those who formulated the cited laws and Regulations... Civilization and public opinion has been replaced by obscurantism and abjection... If this Municipality, which for good reason is treated as and titled Most Excellent, allows its privileges and honors to be diminished little by little, in the end its importance and significance will diminish. It will become little more... than a flayed skeleton (1844).

State and municipal discussion over vagrants also became contentious in the mid-19th century. The state government – politically aligned with federal authorities – was eager for vagrants to be identified and conscripted to the faltering military (1840 doc). Yet despite repeated the state’s pronouncements of concern over vagrants (1822, 1836, 1840), city leaders only addressed the problem after the declaration of a new State law regarding vagrants (date?). Further, city leaders later communicated the “material impossibility of the Municipality to carry out the orders regarding... vagrants” (1867). Veracruz leaders felt that the State placed a too high burden on the municipal forces; their refusal to follow State orders in this letter is best understood in the context of conflicts over authority of the newly created police force. In stark contrast to the Night Guards organized by neighborhoods in 1807, the local police force created in 1852 was defined through a controversial collaboration between city and state governments. Municipal and state leaders battled over which government was to have authority over the direction of the *Cuerpo de Policia* – literally translated as “regulations embodied.” The five documents written back and forth on this issue end abruptly, without resolution.

Another telling contrast is the 1803 vendors’ letter, described above, with an 1843 letter, again from vendors, similarly addressed to city leaders. In particular, compare the

earlier coherent argument based on “Localism” to the incongruities of the later letter, written during the mid-century turmoil of social and political change. In the 1843 letter, vendors move up and down territorial scales, playing several rhetorical cards. They begin the letter by locating themselves as residents of the city, and several times describe themselves as part of the Veracruz community. More abstractly, they place themselves within the sphere of law-abiding citizens, as they remind readers of the national and municipal fees they pay and the ordinances they scrupulously follow. Five times they recall their positions as heads of households, describing the ruin that will fall upon their “poor and disgraceful families” if they cannot continue to sell as they presently do. They then go on to claim rightful citizenship within the new Mexican nation, which “grants every Mexican the free use and benefit of their industry.” Finally, they jump to the international scale of modernization, insisting that selling fruits and foods on the street “should not be prohibited, as it is common and legally permitted in the cultured cities of Europe and America.”

As opposed to the 1803 vendors’ emphasis on their important moral and charitable roles in the community, the only time that the later vendors appeal to ethics is when they mention their families. The public/private divide – underwritten, as Nicholas Blomley notes, by the ownership model of property – was a central part of the Liberal project. The ownership model, characterized by individual private property rights, apparently resolves the tension between liberty and obligation inherent in conceptions of property. It does this by protecting liberty in the public legal realm and ascribing moral action to the private, self-regulating realm (Jsi16). The vendors, then, were not only savvy manipulators of contemporary rhetorical tools, as Christina Jimenez argues in her paper on Morelia street vendors, but their ways of understanding the world – their subjectivities – were generated from material practices.

City practices regarding public spaces articulated the Liberal attempt to keep private and public separate, strictly categorizing spaces by their function. Veracruz's leaders were principal supporters of the Liberal party and of progressive reforms favoring policies amenable to the port's commercial interests. Concurrent with the Liberal proclamation of the Reform Laws, Veracruz sought to separate work and home spaces, a separation inherent to the alienation of labor and space that had already become a hallmark of European capitalist cities (Hoffman, Fainstein and Judd 2003). The city's 1857 municipal ordinances are full of attempts to draw boundaries between the public and private spheres (1857a). Public diversions, for example, were regulated and circumscribed to specific sites and times. Streets received special attention in these mid-century ordinances, as spaces specifically set aside for public transit. People were prohibited from sitting on the streets and from lying down in any public area. Neither were domestic chores such as hanging laundry to be performed on streets. Changes in the conception of the street are especially apparent when we compare the 1857 ordinances to city regulations from just 50 years earlier. The management of streets was an important component of the city ordinances of 1793 (1793). However, those earlier regulations emphasized keeping garbage off streets and procedures for paving streets. At no point is what people do on streets mentioned. As in other modernizing cities (Yeoh 1996), marking the Veracruz streets as sites for transit became important in the mid-19th century, in an attempt to bring order to increased traffic and city population. The 1857 document contains 11 separate ordinances that either regulate transit on the street or prohibit specific disturbances that might block such transit.

Like the 1852 establishment of the police force, however, these municipal ordinances were not an unambiguously local creation. They are drafted multiple times over a period of more than eight months. During this time, they are revised and annotated by the state, and

change considerably from first version proposed by the city hall to the final one approved by the state. Compared to the “Localism” of the first period of the 19th century, I characterize this period as one of “Struggling Sovereignities.” In their creation of public spatial practices that constituted meanings for city inhabitants, ecclesiastic, national, and local leaders fought for authority over those very meanings. In other words, the struggle for sovereignty that played out on Veracruz city streets was a struggle for sovereignty over subjectivities.

It is helpful to stop at this moment to discuss the theoretical import of the argument so far. As it reads, both modes of practices that I have termed “Localism” and “Struggling Sovereignities” seem to be expressions of the structural changes of the period. That is, “Localism” as a mode of practices was determined by the importance granted to cities and the weak national government, while “Struggling Sovereignities” as a mode of practice was influenced by the rise of the Liberal party and capitalist rationalities. In this second period, according to the liberal narrative, inalienable rights sanctioned by the nation replaced inalienable lands sanctioned by use and local governance. The story becomes more complicated, however, when we note important divergences between proclamations and practice. In particular, historians of the period have amply demonstrated that in practice, land throughout the 19th century remained in both Church and communal hands (refs).

Conceptual resistance to the idea of private property as well as continuing political instability made property rights completely insecure, despite their spectacular expression in the decreed privatization of corporate land. But allegiances and meanings cannot be as summarily redefined as government policies, and Mexicans sought to navigate between contending factions of politics parties and of meanings and practices. Some bought Church property then later repented and returned it; others bought property only to have later Conservative governments declare such transactions illegal. There was mass bureaucratic

confusion regarding the titling of properties, amplified by the later economically desperate nationalization of ecclesiastic property. As Robert Knowlton writes of the early 1860s, “uncertainty shrouded property dealings because proprietors could not sell for fear of threatened revision. As a result, transactions in real estate were even more static than when the clergy had held the property in mortmain” (133). In addition, many peasant communities found ways to get around the laws and continue to use the lands communally.⁴ The liberal capitalism that was taking shape in Mexico had its idiosyncratic contours and particularities. Just as the transforming national structures pitted Church against nation, nation against city, and produced practices that I’ve characterized as exemplifying “Struggling Sovereignities,” everyday practices in turn defined the particular architecture that embodied those structures. This will be seen even more clearly in the next section, which looks at the mode of practices in the third period of the 19th century, a mode of practices that I will characterize as “Emplacement.”

Late 19th century Veracruz and Emplacements

Practices in this later period, which runs from the late 1860s through 1910, are distinguished by an emphasis on territorial and metaphorical fixity. It is in this third period where the practices of the marginal groups most clearly opposes national and local political agendas, generally due to the fact that this period’s authorities sought “Order and Progress” over all other considerations. In terms of urban public spaces, this agenda implied the physical and social marginalization of groups of people working on the streets. Such state action is eloquently described by Claudio Lomnitz:

During the Porfirian dictatorship, it was the state, and its power to arrange space and to regiment an order, that was the subject of political ritual and myth...
Whereas the law and the citizen were the ultimate fetishes of the era of

⁴ cf lib theory and peasant practice article

instability, progress, urban boulevard, railroads and the mounted police (*rurales*) were the key fetishes of a Porfirian era that upheld the state as the promoter of that progress. (73)

We can see Veracruz authorities' quest for the practical order of public spaces in their quantification of public areas and the physical containment of people who worked on the streets. Documents from the late 1860s through the end of the century are replete with measurements of vendors' stalls. But the most explicit limitations – both territorial and social – were placed on “public women,” as prostitutes were then known. Not only were prostitutes required to live on certain streets, but all women seen repeatedly in the company of prostitutes were officially categorized as prostitutes. Anyone so labeled was then prohibited from entering buildings – such as hotels and restaurants – open to the rest of the public. Documents from the period repeatedly mention the need to “contain” the scandal these women cause.

Another example of this strategy of containment to regulate public spaces is city leaders' efforts to move vendors from their traditional location. The municipality's continued attempt to move the All Saints Day Fair to a new location, for example, is most fiercely criticized by the fair's vendors (*MAV* 1882). Vendors in 1869, 1875 and 1878 also request that they not be forced to leave the places where they have traditionally been located. They make clear that the success of their trade depends on the spatial practice of fixity. Vendors also contrast their dependability to the instability of the *rancheros*, farmers who sell in the town market for a few hours in the morning. As opposed to these *rancheros*, street vendors reliably provision city inhabitants, even during the stormy season, when the *rancheros* are often absent (1862). Veracruz residents could count on the vendors to, literally, be there.

These vendors' emphasis on physical emplacement was further heightened by the fact that many of them were immigrants. The commercial reputation of the port beckoned

many Mexican migrants from the region and beyond. Between 1844 and 1866, the population of the city increased from about 7000 to about 11,000 (Siemens 1990, 77).⁵ By the 1880s, however, that number had risen to almost 16,000 (García Díaz 1992, 94). One vendor's plaintive appeal for consideration "as most of us have come from far-off lands to expose ourselves to this inclement environment" (1878), stresses the dependence of these immigrants on place. For many of them, the spaces they clung to were their destinations, the endpoints they hoped would sustain them.

This practical emphasis of emplacement reaches a poignant pinnacle in the 1875 request of vendor Luciano Vazquez to the city hall. Paralyzed as a result of wounds received while serving in the military, he now supports himself by selling in the market plaza. "I am gravely prejudiced by having to be carried on the shoulders of two men to the poor house of my in-law [each night], only to repeat this again each morning" (1875). The vendor requests that he be allowed to sleep in the plaza; his attempts to remain fixed are summarily denied.

Contemporary urban theories would understand Vazquez's situation in one of two basic ways. The first is typified by the literature that emphasizes the structural production of marginality; the other emphasizes the heroic agency of marginal actors. Authors such as Janice Perlman, Jorge Ayuero and Loic Wacquant argue that the "new" marginalities – with their geographies of exclusion and access – express the violence of structures displaced onto the everyday. The latter view focuses on the creativity of actors' responses to structural conditions; the extreme version of this perspective is Hernando de Soto's interpretation of informal workers as the new entrepreneurs. Yet neither of these views adequately captures the ways that these marginal practices actually constitute the institutions and structures that

⁵ Although a census of the city was conducted in 1864, that number only includes those living within the walls. The numbers given here include residents living just beyond that central district, in the neighborhoods known as *extramuros*. Siemens's numbers come from the counts made by Manuel Trens and de Emperán.

define them. To more clearly explore this issue, I return to the institutions of property and citizenship.

As we saw in the discussion of the period of “Struggling Sovereignties,” the security of property rights and prominence of nationalism remained a discursive rather than practical reality. The Mexican Restored Republic, regained from a five-year-period of French rule, inherited a state beset with economic woes. It had been hoped that disamortization and nationalization would finance national recovery and the wars against American and European predation. But the Mexican economy was in such dire straits in the mid-century that foreign debt payments were suspended in 1861, an act that led to French occupation. Nevertheless, it was critical financial shortages that also ended the French rule in Mexico.

Massive amounts of investment were required to promote economic development, but political instability and the insecurity of property rights kept foreign investments away. The solution of the government of Porfirio Diaz – who ruled Mexico from 1876-1910 – was to seek exclusive rather than inclusive rights and nationalism. In their analysis of the politics of property rights in late 19th to early 20th century Mexico, Haber et al convincingly demonstrate how Diaz selectively enforced property arrangements and rights through a system of triangulated checks and balances. Needless to say, marginal groups had no place in this system, and their rights and associations were glossed over in the name of order. By exclusively securing the property rights of national capitalists and foreign investors, and through authoritarian rule, Diaz was able to bring some measure of apparent stability to the country, court foreign investments and stimulate economic growth.

Although representing the Church-backed Conservative party, Diaz’s policy of conciliation with the institution did not return to its previous scope of power. Instead, Porfirian legislation regarding the Church was aimed at promoting peace, order and

economic progress. For example, the Diaz regime did not attempt to return Church property, as did various short-lived Conservative governments that came before him. By the late 1860s, national leaders had recognized that such policies only led to further uncertainty regarding property rights, and instead sought to stabilize the question of property. An 1874 decree, for example, reiterated the 1850s prohibitions on corporate ownership of land, but granted exclusive rights of use, maintenance and improvement of buildings on those properties to occupying ecclesiastical institutions, until such time as “consolidation” was ordered. “In this way the law divided ownership, granting control of use (*dominio util*) to the churches while the actual ownership (*dominio directo*) remained in the nation” (RKn205).

This separation of use and ownership is a disaggregation of what has been legally termed the “bundle of rights” inherent in jural conceptions of property. Such a separation hints at the ways that late 19th century Veracruz vendors appropriated the use-value of property. As Henri Lefebvre shows critical to early capitalist structural changes is the commodification of labor and space through their alienating shift from use-value to exchange-value. That is, the “Struggling Sovereignities” practices of the mid-century period of Liberal Mexico can be understood as struggles between the use-value of local community authority and the exchange-value of individual property rights. The Liberal rhetoric of national citizenship and universal law sought to establish widespread property rights. Nevertheless, cultural resistance stemming from subjectivities generated by “Localist” practices proved too strong for the weak new nation to suppress.

The Diaz dictatorship, in contrast, made little attempt to create an inclusive nation. Participants of his national system were those Mexicans and foreigners that had both the means and the meanings to benefit the capitalist agenda of economic progress. “Emplacement,” as I described above, was the mode of spatial practice that constituted the

response of subordinate groups to their physical, economic and social marginalization. Their attempts to establish their fixed position on Veracruz city streets can be understood as a particular enactment of property, a claim to, as Carol Rose calls it, “un-real estate” or illusory property.

Propertied Citizenship and Practices

I now turn to two remarkable books that unsettle our notions of property to help us better understand “Emplacement” as a mode of spatial practice. In two recent and remarkable books, Carol Rose and Nicholas Blomley provide different perspectives on the performativity of property. Rose writes of the illusory element of property, that is, the assertion and acknowledgement of property claims, despite the fact that those claims may have no legal status. These claims to “un-real estate” can also be understood as the enactment of alternative modes of property. Nicholas Blomley writes that property – whether private or otherwise – is enacted in terms of persuasion as well as “in more material and corporeal ways. Bodies, technologies and things must be enrolled and mobilized into organized and disciplined practices... Similarly, the definitional boundaries of property must also be policed.” Blomley maintains that the policing complicit with the institution of private property and property rights effectively erases the enactment of property from our purview.

Understood as such, the Veracruz vendors’ pursuit of fixity as a strategic spatial practice was a refusal of that erasure and the assertion of alternative claims to property and citizenship. By asserting their “right to the city,”⁶ they challenged the Diaz regime’s structure of propertied citizenship that marginalized them. The form of capitalism that Diaz sought to establish in late 19th century Mexico was characterized by exclusive and transnational

participation in economic and social progress. Whether or not particular Veracruz vendors' claims to spaces were successful, their historically contingent practices and subjectivities – and the analogous practices and subjectivities of thousands of marginalized urban Mexicans – helped to shape of Diaz's national political and economic structures. The exclusionary capitalism which ensued was not of Diaz's making, but rather was wrought through the violent action and reaction of meanings and subjectivities grounded in everyday practices.

By describing the changing modes of practices by marginalized groups of Veracruz city streets – from “Localism” to “Struggling Sovereignities” to “Emplacements” – I have sought to show that they were both produced by and productive of the macro-structures of the emerging nation. Neither a purely structural understanding of these marginalized groups nor a romanticized version of their resistance goes far enough in examining the mutually constitutive relationship of structures and agency. Marginalized practices – necessarily defined by structural hierarchies of power and historical trajectories of subjectivity – are critical to the construction of those very macro-structures. Questions of meaning and identity, then, as generated by institutionally organized practices, are central to our understanding of specific ceaselessly transforming structures.

Benedict Anderson has influentially described the imagined community of nationalism. Likewise, Carol Rose maintains that: “Seeing property is an act of imagination,” (296) limited by the cultural and hierarchical formations of meaning and imagination. Scholars have focused on the structural violence that grows out of dominant imaginings, but the importance of subjectivities in constituting structures is not limited to those of higher authority. As we have seen, subordinate subjectivities are generative in their own right, participating as well in the production of structures that in turn determine broader practices.

⁶ Lefebvre

In Andreas Reckwitz's excellent review of practice theories (2002), he ends with a short section on the effects of practice theory. He remarks on the shifted self-understanding that practice theory encourages and wonders what this might mean for the ethics of an outlook on the individual and the social.

It does not seem out of place to assume that practice theory encourages us to regard the ethical problem as the question of creating and taking care of social routines, not as a question of the just, but as a question of the 'good' life as it is expressed in body/understanding/things complexes (259).

In this paper, we have looked at changing modes of practices during a period of revolutionary change in order to specify the relationship between everyday spatial practices in 19th century Veracruz and the emerging structures of the period. I have tried to show that looking at such daily action is critical to our concrete understanding of the particular shifting structural architectures. Following Reckwitz, I would finally like to suggest that it really does matter how we conceive of structures and agencies, of power and marginalization, and that the theories we conceive should help us articulate and approach the structural transformations we strive for.