Power & the City: an Embodied Approach to Analysis

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Power & the City:

an Embodied Approach to Analysis

by Sabina Sethi Unni

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“This city of Tenochtitlan is famed, it’s glorious.”

--deep within the Cantares Mexicanos

“Cities were built by kings and nobles. Buildings are their arrangements that sent ideological messages about power and identity.”

-- Michael Ernest Smith in Aztec City-State Capitals
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Introduction

“The organization of space is a social product.”

--Edward Soja in Postmodern Geographies

“The senses as themselves [are] a kind of structuring of space and defining of place”

--Paul Rodaway in Sensuous Geographies

In the fall semester of my third year at Wellesley, to immerse myself in Spanish language and literature, I studied in the allegorical and once syncretic city of Córdoba. In my endless pursuit of (seemingly) anthropologically minded courses, I took a seminar on the history pre-Hispanic America, writing my final research paper on Aztec sacrifice. By no fault of my professor, unwittingly-biased student commentary on course texts made clear the lack of agency we credit to early non-Western cultures, particularly in city and polity planning. This false representation reproduces itself in pop culture, in documentaries that claim aliens built pyramids and temples, or in movies dramatizing religious piety and sacrifice, rather than acknowledging that these public spectacles of theater were calculated political decisions. This should come as no surprise; academia is not immune from these logical fallacies.¹ In fellowship interviews for this thesis, I was asked, “how do we know for sure that these cities were intentionally planned?” Analytically, this line of thought and pernicious bias manifests in an artificial binary of cosmology and policy; on the one hand, overemphasizing cosmology denies agentive power to

¹ Despite academia and anthropology’s biases, I took a course on human sacrifice, taught by Professor Minor, who helped to disentangle some of these fallacies, emphasizing the critical role of individual agency and nuanced nature of decision making in the deep past.
thoughtful and intentional elites and leaders planning cities, ignoring cosmology erases indigenous onto-epistemologies.

Cosmovision, or cosmology, can be looked at as “the religious worldview of a people that contains its local codes about how space and time are integrated into a meaningful whole or picture of the universe” (Carrasco 2008: 450). To the Aztecs, the imperial capital of Tenochtitlan was imbued with religious significance; it existed as the “symbolic” marriage between earth and the outerworld (Carrasco 2008: 451). The spatiality of Tenochtitlan was laden with religious significance. This thesis explores how the city was planned in deliberate ways to corral behavior.

How is behavior intentionally shaped and constituted using space? In an interview with philosopher Michel Foucault, upon (justified) criticism for using space as a metaphor, rather than exploring the relationship between analyses of power and space, he noted that “space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power,” (Soja 1989: 19). In other words, space is a means of control. Henri Lefebvre, as translated by David Harvey, explores the relationship between space and sociality, arguing that space is constructed in tandem with social hierarchies; “space and the political organization of space express social relationships but also react back upon them” (Soja 1989: 76). A critic of this line of thought may look to analyses by Marxist Urbanists and doubt the relevancy to pre-Capitalist and pre-Marxist Tenochtitlan. Harvey, amongst others, theorizes the city through labor and production: what is Harvey’s urban revolution if not an overthrow of capitalism? I argue that the intentional social ordering of space is not exclusive to one form of economic analysis or socioeconomic system. Soja’s argument, that creating social life through spatial ordering renders social relations concrete, does not require one form of social relations to be coherent.
As my thesis will demonstrate, space is productively a reflection of hierarchy, class, and rule. I use space in this thesis through exploring three facets of the city, (I) ethnic neighborhoods, (II) markets, and (III) public monuments (specifically, the Templo Mayor). Neither strictly cultural anthropology nor archaeology, in that I explore alternatives to strict participant observation or excavation, I take a varied approach to all of these chapters. I use primary texts (such as codices and city plans) and conventional secondary sources about Aztecs and/or the city. In the second half of each chapter, I take a more experimental approach to spatial analysis, by writing about embodied and affective experiences of the city. I ask not just how was the city planned, but also how was it designed to conjure affect? What did the city feel like?

To situate myself within existing literature, while I have relied heavily on the research of Mesoamerican archaeologists, I also look to contemporary urbanists and scholars of affect. I have found the disciplinary turn to the archaeology of the Body and sensory ethnography to be an imperfect but worthwhile means of understanding daily lives of non-elites. The city is an uncontrollable affective mass, but sensory experiences can be designed to shape behavior, like the intense crowds and noise from markets.

In Chapter I, I discuss how neighborhoods are spatially ordered, and how sociospatial seclusion both reflects and creates hierarchy and isolation. Aztec cities were deeply segregated and spatially organized. On an organizational level, calpolli were districts within altepetl, comparable to neighborhoods within city-states (Berdan 2014: 44). Leading scholars consistently argue against the existence of ethnic segregation within calpolli and altepetl. Francis Berdan, who I cite extensively in this thesis, strongly insists that there was not a strong relationship between city-state and ethnic group, but rather that ethnic groups “tended to cluster” in particular settlements (2014: 44). I take issue with this use of passive voice, which makes decision making
unclear. Are settlement patterns due to the decision making of individuals in ethnic groups? Religious authorities? Leaders of kin? Heads of household? While Berdan argues that this segregation was perhaps not imposed, I argue that it was both socially constructed and enforced by the polity, both implicitly and explicitly.

Berdan also notes that “ethnic groups seem to have been integrated into and even subsumed within the more basic residential units and social institutions” (2014: 45). Critical scholars of race would take this argument to mean that modern definitions of ethnicity are not universal, and that Mesoamerican meanings of ethnicity were fluid. Berdan believes that residence, social class, and occupation are more important than ethnicity for determining social hierarchies and mobility. I take these categories to be inextricable; in Tenochtitlan, it was impossible to separate ethnicity and occupation and social class and residence; these factors compound to create a fluid identity with tangible social consequences.

In Chapter II, I discuss how markets are a site of inclusion and dispersion at the same time, reproducing hierarchy through access, but intentionally hemming and corralling populations into space at intentional moments. I look to the periodicity and frequency of marketplaces and how regularity was enforced by the polity, as well as the spatial framing of the market in relation to nearby religious and political monuments.

Finally, in Chapter III, I discuss the monument as a site of intentional inclusion of diverse populations into the empire, but at the same time, one that creates a more monolithic picture of history. The Aztec state was a secondary state to the early cities of Teotihuacan and Tula (Berdan 2014: 33). To provide a frame of reference, the temporal distance between modern Mexico City (2019 CE) and the conquest of Tenochtitlan (1521 CE) is almost double the temporal distance between the founding of Tenochtitlan (1325 CE) and the height of
Teotihuacan (425 CE). This theoretical stance clarifies aspects of Tenochtitlan that are unclear through excavations and codices. Practically, aspects of the physical city of Tenochtitlan that are similar to aspects of the physical city of Teotihuacan gives evidence for the intentional nature of city planning. For example, both cities were grid based, and had both North to South and East to West avenues running throughout the city (Berdan 2014: 35). Rather than assume grid layouts mapped the environmental terrain or landscape of the city, it is more productive to think about the material reasons for planning the city in a particular way.

Throughout my thesis, I will argue that planning is meant to draw a linkage between the ritual and the secular, to bolster the legitimacy of the state and blur the lines between the two. I argue this is in part to create mythic ties between Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan. Just as how Rome is a mythic city in American imaginaries, cities such as Tula and Teotihuacan were “revered legendary-mythical centers” and were “considered forgers of civilization, creating law, government, fine arts, and virtually all that was grand and valued by high-minded Aztecs,” (Berdan 2014: 33). This is best evidenced through copying Teotihuacan architecture in temples throughout the city, as well as using objects (original or replicated) from Teotihuacan in ceremonial precincts (Berdan 2014: 35). Associating the two cities through objects, architecture, and planning was to “reaffirm direct links to the revered and semimythical world” of Teotihuacan (Berdan 2014: 34).

Tenochtitlan is an intense case study for a critical examination of space and social relations. The positioning of the city on an island on Lake Texcoco forced creative manipulation of the built environment. While as anthropologists we cannot assume inner states of interlocuters, policy makers, or elite decision makers, especially from within the deep past, we
can look to how the built environment was shaped, and how space was uniquely used, to gauge information and potentials areas of exploration about city planning and strategies of rule.
Chapter I. Spatiality and Rule

“it pushes me into certain corners, into some moist houses, into hospitals where the bones fly out the window, into shoeshops that smell like vinegar, And certain streets hideous as cracks in the skin.”

--Pablo Neruda in “Walking Around”

“Temporal and spatial organization serve to constitute the social order through the assignment of people and activities to distinctive places and times.”

--David Harvey in Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference

“Cities must exhibit intense expressivity.”

--Nigel Thrift in “Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect”

City planning has always been a vehicle for and manifestation of state power. In this chapter, I argue that city planners and imperial leaders within Tenochtitlan exploited segregation and intentionally distributed space to promote integration and group formation in some ways, as well as disintegration and discontinuity in others. First I will examine the administrative structure of calpolli and altepetl, then I will shift to the likelihood of ethnic enclaves throughout residential structures, and finally I will take a more sensory approach to understanding the built environment.

In writing this chapter, and in thinking more broadly about urbanism in Mesoamerican cities, I rely upon both Mesoamerican Urbanists as well contemporary specialists who do not focus on Mesoamerica to provide a theoretical framework for my analysis. In using Michel de Certeau, Jane Jacobs, or David Harvey to understand the City, I am conscious of veering into ethnocentrism and making claims to universality. By asserting that neighborhoods in London or
New York City are perfectly comparative, or even somewhat comparative to neighborhoods in Tenochtitlan, it seems I am pronouncing that all neighborhoods are somewhat similar, and that there are universal aspects that unite them all—a claim that I’m not comfortable making. After all, what does Jane Jacobs know about Tenochtitlan, anyway? Using these anachronistic sources flattens the complexity inherent to different cities and ways of living. At the same time, it is an act of Othering to assert that cities are so steeped in radical alterity that they are past comparison. This is particularly the case for Tenochtitlan, a somewhat modern city; to provide a frame of reference, the tail end of Tenochtitlan overlaps with Martin Luther’s Ninety-five Theses or Süleyman the Magnificent’s reign in the Ottoman Empire. Yet despite Tenochtitlan’s technological advances and pioneering feats of urban design and aestheticism, Non-European cities are not often used as a point of comparison because they are seen as less advanced or assumed to be unintentionally planned. By placing Western theorists in conversation with Tenochtitlan, I am affirming that Tenochtitlan is a thoroughly complex city that (Western) scholars could benefit from understanding. I cautiously use these theorists to guide my analysis, but seek to properly balance their work with Mesoamerican specific theorists as well.

This chapter aims to understand if calpolli were socially integrative. The city of Tenochtitlan was organized by discrete spatial units or neighborhoods known as “calpolli” (also referred to as “calpulli”). In origin stories and mythic retellings of Tenochtitlan’s history, as documented in codices and well noted in literature, calpolli were “a group of families united by a common deified ancestor” (Carrasco 2012: 19). These families migrated together from a desert northwest of Lake Texcoco and were united by governance. Despite this, scholars consistently argue that calpolli were not kin based groups, but rather membership was based on market and craft specialization, among other factors. Scholars could potentially argue that in origin stories,
calpolli were kin based, but, as the city developed, calpolli became less explicitly segregated. I argue that this is also not the case. Calpolli were civic-ceremonial complexes, containing temples for tutelary deities, markets, schools, headquarters for local authority, and offices for the council of elders (Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith 2012: 36). The number of calpolli increased as Tenochtitlan became more involved in conquest and land invasion. Towards the height of the empire, Tenochtitlan was divided into thirty districts (Carrasco 2012: 58). This is due to land expansion, but also perhaps because as the empire became more ethnically diverse, it became more spatially divided.

I.i Calpolli and Altepetl

It is clear that calpolli were segmented, as each had discrete resources and rituals, as evidenced by temples with local deities, and well documented through spatial maps. The level to which neighborhoods were rigidly bound is unclear. Berdan argues that “it was common for altepetl to be multiethnic and for residence in any city or community to be somewhat fluid in the face of considerable population movements and displacement” (2014: 44). However, this does not clarify the fluidity of calpolli, and seems to argue group movement, rather than individual movement, was fluid. One would imagine there were high levels of fluidity between different neighborhoods, because of high levels of trade and market interactions, particularly if calpolli membership was based on artisan specialization. Calpolli essentially became forms of local governance – taxes were collected from each calpolli, and there was centralized leadership each group answered to (Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith 2012: 6). There is little archaeological data available about segmentation within calpolli, or the symbolic significance of the location of calpolli throughout the city, largely because there are few excavations of residential architecture.
in modern day Mexico City, under which Tenochtitlan falls directly. Understanding more about where calpolli were spatially located, and how groups within calpolli were located can garner information about quality of and access to resources and public goods, amount of taxes collected, access to public theaters and rituals, and potential integration of public space from conquered territories.

This section focuses on neighborhoods, a spatial unit of organization within calpolli. Smith and Novic argue that neighborhoods are “based on face-to-face social interaction, and districts are larger zones that serve as administrative units for civic authorities” (Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith 2012: 2). In that neighborhoods imply a sense of familiarity, they are a means of studying both non-elite activity and the impact of elites on non-elite activity. Similarly, within residential neighborhoods, Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith provide a distinction between neighborhoods and districts; districts contain social authorities, such as religious figures, whereas neighborhoods consist of the activities of non-elites (2012: 6). Scholars know more about elite activities than non-elite activities, in the case of Tenochtitlan, this is because friars and conquistadors had greater access to elites. Even more generally, representation requires access and control, so it is academically unusual that this section is focused on the activities and spatial placement of non-elites. Mesoamerican scholars note that within literature, there is a large gap in the analysis of the everyday activities of non-elites in Tenochtitlan; in trying to understand non-elite behavior, I will contribute to the intellectual and ethical project of painting a broader picture of the agency of non-elites. For a further discussion of elite activities, refer to Chapter III.
I.iI Sociospatial seclusion and ethnic enclaves

How can we understand how neighborhoods were structured within calpolli? In “Social Space & Symbolic Power,” Pierre Bourdieu posits that “groups, such as social classes are to be made,” (1989: 18). Calpolli, like any other groups, were intentionally created – their particular ordering is not inherent to the structure or function of a given society. Furthermore, it is understood that within and between calpolli there were high levels of segmentation; Mesoamerican scholars note that this is particularly visible when analyzing architecture, as access to resources was easily demonstrated by style of house, ranging from “relatively permanent and opulent to perishable and plain” (Kowalski 1999: 9).

In order to procure more data to better understand sociospatial segregation within Mesoamerica, we can consider ethnic enclaves within the late pre-classic city of Teotihuacan. Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan provide an interesting comparative example due to their intertwined imagined pasts. Teotihuacan was a sacred city, and its mythic legacy helped provide legitimacy for the foundation and rule of Tenochtitlan. Carrasco notes that the mythic relationship between Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan was politically salient, and that leaders exploited this for political and symbolic capital (2012: 25). For further discussion of the dynamic relationship between Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan, see Chapter III on the Templo Mayor.

Teotihuacan is particularly unique within Mesoamerica for its plurality; the city was populated by “ethnically Teotihuacan people as well as by different foreign communities which over centuries maintained and reproduced the customs and traditions of their homelands” (Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith 2012: 75). Despite diversity, the ancient city is notorious for segregation; there were residential areas segregated for ethnically Teotihuacano people, and “foreign enclaves” for outsiders (Smith and Novic 2012: 6).
Archaeologists can begin to understand the degree of integration and difference through house forms, a marker of status and class, as well as an aesthetic and highly visible marker of difference between elites and non-elites. Within ethnic neighborhoods they were architecturally and aesthetically different than standard residential neighborhoods, even further reflecting the multiethnic character of the city. Berdan posits that elite houses were more elaborate and visually distinct, often built on raised platforms and larger in size (2014: 67-68). Biological archaeologists also have used both strontium isotope and ceramic analyses to make these assessments and determine ethnic diversity within the city (Manzanilla, Arnauld, amd Smith 2012: 57, Price, Manzanilla, and Middleton 2000: 903).

It is unclear if the level of explicit ethnic segregation was the same in Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan, because the data on daily lives of Teotihuacanos is much richer than that of non-elite members of Tenochtitlan. Given the multiethnic character of both cities, and well conserved imperial strategies of power and control, I argue that there were likely similar structural divisions in both cities. As Tenochtitlan became more prosperous and engaged in territorial expansion, the city became more ethnically varied, and polities likely used deliberate methods of population control in order to assert and yield social strata and hierarchies between groups, while ensuring new subjects were not rebellious. Some scholars argue that calpolli were explicitly kin based in previous history, implying some level of ethnic divisions inherent within calpolli, but others, such as Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith, argue that somewhat modern census data indicates membership was not kin based (2012: 5). While I wrestle with this claim throughout the chapter, I would immediately challenge the use of census data, as it reflects a static picture of ethnicity, failing to capture the nuanced and changing nature of ethnicity and membership identification. It is not a bold claim to argue that census data of the modern city is consistently flawed, reflects
biases, and places individuals into pre-existing groups. Census data often reflects the biases of the data collectors, in this case, friars or conquistadors, especially when categories are fluid. Ethnohistorians will argue that calpolli developed as craft based, but artisan specialization could have developed along ethnic lines.

Sociospatial seclusion, or the deliberate formation of enclaves dispersed throughout the city is a crucial theoretical framework to understand ethnic neighborhoods in Teotihuacan and segregation in Tenochtitlan. Sociospatial seclusion is a term coined by sociologist Loic Wacquant and is defined as a “process whereby particular social categories and activities are corralled, hemmed in, and isolated in a reserved and restricted quadrant of physical and social space” (2010: 165). This seclusion can be urban or rural, self-selective or imposed. Seclusion can be selective, with “affinity from within” (Wacquant 2010: 165). Many ethnic enclaves, like global variants of “Chinatown” or “Little Italy,” often have roots in imposed sociospatial seclusion, but in contemporary practice, there seems more room for selective sociospatial seclusion and agentive decision making. It is interesting to tease out the nitty-gritty of the term “selective,” i.e. what level of choice and agency marginalized people are afforded, and what is agency, but that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis. In contrast, I argue that ethnic enclaves in Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan are marked by institutionalized, imposed sociospatial seclusion and forced divisions. Imposed sociospatial seclusion is driven largely by “hostility from without” (Wacquant 2010: 165).

In Teotihuacan, spatial locality of ethnic enclaves is further evidence for their imposed nature. The neighborhoods were within the hinterlands of the city, both physically and theoretically peripheral. This is not unlike many modern cities, such as New York, where marginal enclaves exist on the periphery of large cities, with restricted access to resources,
transit, and information. As existing on the margins of society is not ideal for access to rituals, resources, and larger integration within the city, I agree that members of ethnic enclaves were “forced by external powers to attach their activities, curtail their movement, or restrict their residence to a given location” (Wacquant 2010: 165). It is likely that the subjects of conquest would be forced to endure some sociospatial seclusion, due to their ethnic and religious plurality in tandem with their subordinate social status (to reinforce the legitimacy of conquest and superiority of the empire). Their status on the physical periphery of the city perhaps initially was due to the nature of territorial expansion, but the lack of evidence for dynamic movement through calpolli indicates that over the long term it was caused by sociospatial seclusion.

If introduced to this argument, I think Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith would argue that the sociospatial seclusion inherent to neighborhoods is not self-imposed; they argue that concepts of mutual association, friendliness, and neighborly behavior that are often associated with modern cities may not have been present in Tenochtitlan because of “poverty” (2012: 4). Thus, the friendliness and familiarity and kinship associated with selective enclaves could not exist: neighborhoods were determined by elite actors. To shed some doubt on this argument without addressing the inherently classist bent: modern theorists argue that social cohesion and group mentality is bolstered by some sense of community and familiarity between group members. In *the Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Urbanist Jane Jacobs argues that there must be some element of friendliness and trust inherent to the functioning of a neighborhood; in any city with a large number of people, “a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers” (1961: 30). This safety and security is a means of maintaining public peace, which “is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves”

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2 The authors actually use the term “Western society.”
Friendliness as a form of social control is not an argument for selective sociospatial seclusion of these enclaves, but rather, it is an argument for cohesion and structural integrity within these enclaves. One could also point to Frankfurt School political scientist Benedict Anderson’s theory of the imagined community as a counter to Manzanilla, Smith, and Novak’s argument: groups are envisioned as horizontal and structurally equal collections of peers despite anonymity of members and inequality inherent within the group (1991: 11). This theory would posit that despite sociospatial seclusion and deep divisions within society, Tenochtitlan falsely appeared as equal and non-stratified to members of society, acting as an enforced imagined community, because all had to participate in similar performative public rituals, such as proper marketplace behavior, displays of human sacrifice, etc.

Joyce argues that identity in Mesoamerica was structured around dynasties and ceremonial centers. In this case of Tenochtitlan, where civic ceremonial centers correspond to calpolli, I wonder if this promotes segmentation - this shared sense of community would bolster allegiance to and cohesion with calpolli rather than the state at large. Who holds this shared identity when considering neighborhoods with ethnic enclaves? Is shared identity flattened, or would civic ceremonial centers reflect this ethno-religious diversity?

Collective action theory, as argued by Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith, postulates that collectivity arises at the cost of social integration and complexity. Group activities, like gathering for a religious festival, or cooperating economically at a marketplace, require some level of collectivity, so there are larger levels of segmentation and centralized authority in ethnically complex cities such as Tenochtitlan. This is cohesive with structures of neighborhoods and calpolli – there are large amounts of segmentation and divisions in order to maintain and corral a large and diverse populace.

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3 One could look to gender parity in Nordic countries as modern evidence for this.
Understanding which populations endured imposed sociospatial seclusion helps to understand the nuance of social control. In order to promote cohesion, leaders were incentivized to degrade exterior populations, while also integrating them to an extent to promote some levels of collectivity. Sociospatial seclusion would deprive “tainted populations… of economic and cultural capital” (Wacquant 2010: 165). On a wider scope, understanding this tells us that cities were intentionally planned for rule in a particular way. It is unlikely that populations were randomly dispersed throughout time in fully equitably treated calpolli in universally geographically desirable placements throughout the city. It is more than likely that systems of exclusivity and design stemmed through the polity’s desire to yield population control.

I.iii An embodied sense of space

In my analysis of how Tenochtitlan was spatially structured, I will begin my discussion on affect and the senses. Each chapter of this thesis will discuss the sensory aspects of the political institution (the neighborhood, the market, the temple) it is referencing. This is not for the sake of rich description, but rather to provide political analysis of actors and structural design. I do not believe that conventional academic writing is an apt or viable medium for eliciting strong sensory responses, so writing a sensory ethnography or eliciting a physical response from the reader is not my main goal. Trying to elicit an embodied response through writing, when (de)coding the sensorium of the deep past, actually assumes a sense of sameness of sensation despite a temporal lag, and eliminates moral assessments associated with sensation. If when writing these chapters I tried, through creative writing and literary techniques, to accurately depict the sensation of walking through a marketplace, I would rest on the faulty premise that the sensations in the marketplace are the same now and then. Perhaps we can even
capture what incense smelled like, and theorize the affective entanglements with the smell, but it is harder to capture moralistic judgments without written or oral history. While there is epigraphic information about sensory experiences, including haptic feels of different cloth and fibers, colors, etc, there are fewer instances where non-elites write about the senses themselves, and how sensory experiences feel.

There is not a long history of the academic relationship between urbanism and affect. Human geographer Nigel Thrift argues that in the study of cities, there is rarely a discussion of affect, despite the claim that “cities may be seen as roiling maelstroms of affect” (2004: 57). Aside from the use of the word maelstrom, this quote is conceptually well representative of the foundational undergirding of the sensory sections of my thesis. The city is a mass of people intentionally planned, and is thus teeming with invigorating sensory responses, intentionally placed to cultivate particular emotional relationships with place, or political responses. Joyce argues that archaeologists failing to address or analyze sensory experiences “miss significant aspects of human experience in the past, experiences that motivated people to act in particular ways” (2005: 147). We are not just motivated by tangible and physical experiences, but seemingly immaterial and emotional lived experiences.

Thrift’s analysis of affect and cities is intentionally central and exclusive to Euro-American cities. I hopefully extend this approach appropriately, especially considering the somewhat universal nature of affect (not affective responses). In talking about sensory responses to planned aspects of cities, I am also discussing affect. Thrift defines affect as “a form of thinking, often indirect and nonreflective, it is true, but thinking all the same” (2004: 60). I conceptualize affect as not just a more intense emotional response to stimuli in the environment, but also a socially charged and co-constructed bodily phenomenon, inextricable from the senses.
Thrift notes that seemingly aesthetic choices throughout cities are rather purposeful decisions of rule, arguing that “affect structures encounters so that bodies are disposed for action in a particular way” (2004: 58, 62).

Despite this, Thrift still argues that affect is autonomous (2004: 63); I rather propose that affect can be conjured in subjects in a polity, through forcing elicitation in responses to public displays of cruelty. Thus it is not autonomous if it is relational, uncontrollable, and exists in a coercive relationship with others; affect is drawn out of subjects perhaps against better individual judgment. The use of affect in Tenochtitlan is part of the strategy of rule. Affective responses were encoded into the layout of the city and planned precisely, just as how space is designed to lead to particular behaviors, space can be designed in a way that is evocative of affective responses. Thrift argues that affect must be “placed within a set of disciplinary exercises” and that in contemporary Euro-American cities, “urban spaces and times are being designed to invoke affective response according to practical and theoretical knowledges that have been derived from and coded by a host of sources” (2004: 68). The use of public displays of ritual violence and executions, of mandatory sensuous marketplaces, of zoos and carnage, are all aspects of Tenochtitlan that invoke affective responses.

A critic may ask, how is this understanding of sense unique? Is it not just a Foucauldian interpretation of the movement of bodies in space, merely another means of conceptualizing governmentality and the creation of malleable citizens responding to structure? I think that one can conceptualize the use of sensory responses as a tactic of rule that Foucault describes; the public executions in *Discipline and Punish* are immensely sensuous and affect laden. The bridge between archaeology and anthropology becomes, then, the perfect location to discuss affect and cities. Archaeologist Yannis Hamilakis argues that “reconfigured, counter-modern (or, better,
alter-modern) archaeologies can redeem and restitute the multi-sensorial, experiential modes of engaging with the world” (2015: 4). Engagement with the senses as a mode of spatial analysis is a burgeoning but promising approach.

When Spanish conquistadors initially visited Tenochtitlan, the flow of human activity moving throughout the city was immense as compared to London, Sevilla, or Madrid. Imperial capitals were “densely packed,” and markets were specialized due to intensive trade (Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith 2012: 2). The splendor and opulence of the city was immediately apparent and easy to quantify archaeologically through material culture, grand monuments, frequency of dedicatory offerings, and richness of long distance trade. The sensory experience of noise and motion during the empire’s height is hard to comprehend. Political anthropologist William Mazzarella, in his discussion of affect, muses on the strong and embodied experience of being in a crowd; the splendor of the city would have been amplified due to the bodily experience of being in a mass. Mazzarella describes crowds in urban space as “affectively effervescent… the energy generated by proximate bodies in motion, each mirroring the other’s excitation, operates as a principle of solidarity and commitment” (2009: 296). In discussing how cities were selectively planned, and which bodies coalesced to form excited masses, it is crucial to recognize the overwhelming sensory and embodied experience inherent to Tenochtitlan.

Codex Mendoza offers find rich, ethnographic accounts of daily life. Berdan and Anawalt deem the Codex Mendoza as a sumptuous rendering of “pre-Hispanic” or “pre-Contact Aztec life” (FIGURE 1). At the same time, Berdan and Anawalt note that the codex was compiled twenty years after colonization and conquest; even the papers themselves were European, and although they were written by indigenous scribes, they were “under the supervision of missionary priests” (Anawalt and Berdan 1992: xiii). Missionary priests added commentary to
these papers in Spanish. Fittingly, the Codex rests in the Bodleian Library, in Oxford. To be clear, the Codex Mendoza is a child of conquest. Its intent must be interrogated and its scholarly impact should be nuanced, but it was a creation of Spanish friars. Parts of the codex were copied from pre-existing indigenous texts, but it is unclear which were edited and featured “European intrusions” (Anawalt and Berdan 1992: xv). Anawalt and Berdan justify their language of “pre-Contact,” by claiming that many sections of the Codex were copied over from preexisting texts. However, part three of the codex, which is considered the rich, ethnographic material, was newly created post-Conquest.

I find this caveat to be politically and ethically necessary, but it also is an important analytical interlude. Considering that our sensory experiences are culturally created, and mutually co-created between subjects, knowing authorship and presence is crucial. Despite this, the Codex was created about 20 years after conquest, as watermarks throughout the Codex date it to mid 16th century, compared to similar watermarks on formally dated legal and official documents (Anawalt and Berdan 1992: 14). We see marked presence of intervention through incorporation of European artistic style, and writing from the top to the bottom, rather than from the bottom to the top. Despite this, the Codex Mendoza is a fairly interesting primary source to use because of the social positioning of the scribes. Rather than the Florentine Codex, which Mesoamerican scholars use as an ethnography of everyday life, the Codex Mendoza was written by commoners, rather than elite informants.

The Codex provides some specific detail about sociospatial seclusion, alluding to the possibility of “barrios” of merchants (Anawalt and Berdan 1992: 85). This becomes relevant if one considers neighborhoods, calpolli, or parts of calpolli to be occupied by specific types of artisans or laborers. The Codex provides a few examples where certain types of laborers live in certain neighborhoods or sections of Tenochtitlan. Details from the Codex reveal that featherworkers occupied a neighborhood named Amantlan and metalsmiths lived in a neighborhood named Yopico (Anawalt and Berdan 1992: 85). While the codex does not specify if their existence was relegated to particular neighborhoods, there is certainly grouping of craft specialization. The codex also points to distinct cultural and sociological formations of these niche neighborhoods. Members of Yopico worshipped their own god, Xipe Totec (Anawalt and Berdan 1992: 85). The codex notes that certain place-names are translated to particular types of artisan skills. For example, Tlaximaloyan is translated as “Place Where They Do Carpentry”
(Anawalt and Berdan 1992: 219). The majority of place names are related to mythology, and aspects of the ecological (built) environment, but the relationship between place and craft becomes clear. Similarly, the codex displays pictorial imagery of fathers teaching their sons particular skills and crafts, passing down techniques of working with feathers through generations. It sounds almost tautological, but if craft groups were a factor in determining social hierarchy, and were passed down from generation to generation, and if craft groups lived in particular areas of neighborhoods and calpolli, was housing and living not segregated due to class, income, kin, and craft at once? The relationship between social markers and ethnicity seems permanently intertwined.

Tenochtitlan’s spatial design forced bodies to cluster in particular ways, as seen by the sociospatially secluded neighborhoods. Through design, through mythology, and through religious ritual, the divisions of four became highly relevant, embedding boundaries and demarcations into the feel and embodied sense of the city (FIGURE 2). There were four highways as entrances to Tenochtitlan, all intersecting at the Templo Mayor. The sensation of isolation and division must have restricted access and flow, causing groups of people to cluster in organized segments. Because of the rigid organization of entrances and exits in Tenochtitlan, all aspects of public life must have involved crowds and high levels of sociability. Even the Codex itself was divided into four sections; pages are “divided by a line into four horizontal zones” (82). Division and hierarchy manifested in conceptual layouts of ideas and thoughts.
A sense of space was embedded into the city, highlighting hierarchy and divisions. This manifested through the built environment (through avenues and structures of temples), through cosmologies and ritual mythologies of four and ontologies of symbolic division between aspects of the natural world, and through physical planning of neighborhoods. Divisions in the city were not just theoretical, but also physical and fixed (FIGURE 3). I argue that sociospatial seclusion was a key facet of control in the city, restricting the flow of populations and creating social order. My next chapter focuses on markets, another site of population control, but authors will
argue social order is more malleable in this public site. I argue that markets, like neighborhoods, were also a site of deliberate control and order.

Chapter II. The Market as Means of Upholding Social Order: Non-economic Social Functions of Markets

“Cities were founded by kings for political reasons”

--Smith, Nichols, and Berdan in *Rethinking the Aztec Economy*

“Let us go on and speak of those who sold beans and sage and other vegetables and herbs in another part, and to those who sold fowls, cocks with wattles, rabbits, hares, deer, mallards, young dogs and other things of that sort in their part of the market, and let us also mention the fruiterers, and the women who sold cooked food, dough and tripe in their own part of the market; then every sort of pottery made in a thousand different forms from great water jars to little jugs, these also had a place to themselves; then those who sold honey and honey paste and other dainties like nut paste, and those who sold lumber, boards, cradles, beams, blocks and benches, each element by itself, and vendors of ocote firewood, and other things of a similar nature. *But why do I waste so many words in recounting what they sell in that great market? – for I shall never finish if I tell it all in detail.*”

-- Bernal Díaz Del Castillo in *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*

This fragment is from Bernal Díaz Del Castillo’s quasi-ethnographic text, the *History of the Conquest of New Spain*. Díaz Del Castillo, soldier under Hernán Cortéz and chronicler of the bloody and violent colonization of Mesoamerica, is describing Tlatelolco, a market near Tenochtitlan that served 60,000 people daily (Kurtz 1974: 689).

When Diaz Del Castillo arrived at the market, he was “astounded at the number of people and the quantity of merchandise that it contained, and at the good order and control that was maintained, for [he] had never seen such a thing before” (Díaz Del Castillo 2008: 173). I interpret this journalistic account as an obvious ploy to seduce monarchs in Spain of the wealth available in Mexico: a justification of funds for colonialism. Yielding indigenous markets as legible and socioeconomically comprehensible to Spanish imperials also could have been a means of making wealth both comparable and accessible to conquerors. However, modern
archaeologists and historians also confirm the grandeur of Tenochtitlan’s markets. Mesoamerican archaeologist Michael Smith notes that, even within Aztec settlements, Tenochtitlan was distinctly impressive, atypical, and eccentric for “the monumentality of its towering pyramids, for the tens of thousands of people in the streets and markets every day, and for the opulence created by a powerful expanding empire,” (Smith 2008: 2). Markets in Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco were not the norm in terms of their size, diversity of treasures, and deliberate organization. Díaz Del Castillo at one point notes that “each kind of merchandise was kept by itself and had its fixed place marked out”. All Aztec markets were imbued with deliberate religious symbolic significance.

Tenochtitlan’s economy is typically seen as market-based, but evidence from ethno-historians indicates that there were labor-based components as well, such as tributes and/or taxes (a discussion of this terminology will come later). Leaders commissioned artisans in calpolli to create sculptures and statues of their likeness, and repaid them lavishly in food and other valuable goods. Archaeologist Gary Feinman notes that individual profit was a central concern in markets, a primary function of haggling and counterfeiting (besides perhaps individual agency or subtle acts of resistance outside of the hands of the tax collecting polity, but this, again, involves individual profit). While there was no uniform form of currency, there were goods with roughly translatable values, such as cloth bundles, cacao beans, and copper axes (Feinman 2013: 456). Like any form of currency, these translatable values helped form in and out groups, distinguishing foreigners from commoners.

Throughout this chapter, I will be exploring the non-economic functions of the markets in Tenochtitlan. First, I will examine the interplay between markets and ritual, focusing on ideology and the periodicity. Secondly, I will consider the integrative functions of markets, including
taxes and tribute, in disagreement with scholars classifying the markets as a site of resistance. Finally, I will investigate the spatiality of the marketplace, analyzing its extreme sensory response, well-documented in literature. By the process of probing the many functions and purposes of the markets, it is apparent that they were a site of social control and organization.

Architect Amos Rapoport provides a model for understanding the built environment, such as markets, through identifying multiple levels of architectural communication. High level meanings look to understanding the symbolism of buildings and structures, by employing textual analysis; middle level meanings look to identity and power; and lower level meanings look to thought and behavior. This section will largely use higher-level meanings of how Aztec markets were built and used as the apex of ritual behavior. Smith notes that “ritual is used to constitute power, not just reflect power that already exists” (2008: 163). Ritual behavior in market places, as determined by administrative and elite figures, helps shape and constitute the behavior of non-elite citizens. Establishing urban meaning is complicated, but understanding the relationship between ritual and the built environment helps parse how surroundings were intentionally materially constructed to achieve specific objectives.

This chapter puzzles through an ethno-historical approach, using archaeological, historical, and quasi-ethnographic sources to understand the Aztec economy. This methodological approach is fraught with numerous challenges, so I will quickly touch upon the usage of quasi-ethnographic sources authored by conquistadors, friars, and other colonizers of Mesoamerica. The knowledge produced by friars was immediately used for imperialist purposes, as they “believed that an understanding of native beliefs and rituals would help them convert people to Christianity” (Smith 2008: 2). Talal Asad, in “Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter” notes that anthropology is “rooted in an unequal power encounter between the West
and Third World” (1973: 16). Kathleen Gough, in “New Proposals For Anthropologists,” notes that “we [anthropologists] have virtually failed to study Western imperialism as a social system, or even adequately to explore the effects of imperialism on the societies we studied,” (1968: 405). Considering that this thesis focuses on pre-contact Mesoamerica (before Spanish invasion in 1519 CE), it is ethically nefarious and intellectually dishonest to fail to critically engage with these problematic texts. At the suggestion of David Carrasco, in his book on Bernal Díaz Del Castillo, I will also try to include indigenous voices and cosmology. It’s also importance to nuance that claim, as indigenous voices, like conquistadors, were also not homogenous authors of societally equitable claims; they, too, were individuals harboring goals of upholding the status quo, rupturing social facts, or communicating personal ideals. Existing records of indigenous voices were more likely than not to be elite, and in direct communication with and subordination to conquistadors.

II.i Ritual and periodicity

What were the administrative functions of markets in Tenochtitlan? Markets were used by the state to police and control behavior, through the entanglement with cosmic and ritual practices. The threat of divine order was a strategic declaration of ideological domination; Latin American archaeologist Warwick Bray reports that it was not permissible to sell goods on the way to the market, or one might anger the market gods (1991: 110). I would argue that the invocation of Yacatecuhli, the god of merchants, could also have been deployed as a means of squelching black markets to avoid merchants escaping taxes and tribute. Leaders purposefully blurred religious legitimacy and state authority. Markets are not merely consequences of settlement and human activity. In the case of Tenochtitlan, anthropologist of Mesoamerica, Ross
Hassig, remarks that it is “both unreliable and misleading to assume market interaction from settlement patterns” (1982: 346). In fact, markets came to be because of intentional decision-making on the parts of elites; they are imbued with symbolic and practical significance.

Mesoamerican scholars vacillate between ascribing religious or political significance to decisions and policies that leaders enact. Smith argues that Aztec cities were built by polities to “reinforce their power, their wealth, and their legitimacy,” but also that political significance overshadowed religious significance (2008: 1). In contrast, chapters in the book *Rethinking the Aztec Economy*, by the aforementioned Smith, Nichols, and Berdan, argue that “state religion was a public good; that is, temples, rites, and festivities were services provided by rulers for the benefit of the entire urban population” (2017: 50). Rather than choosing one analytic framework, or seeing them as mutually exclusive, I argue that religious and political significance are intrinsically linked. A holistic perspective on cultural analysis precludes disaggregation of the delicate interplay between politics and religion. This approach does not to deny the agency and belief systems of non-elites, nor undermine the significance of religion and religious rituals; the state can enforce rituals based on divine precedent, and the populace can fully believe in and spiritually benefit from the rituals.

Ritual becomes embedded in everyday activities by the frequency at which markets congregated. Many scholars look to the periodicity of markets, and the intervals at which they met, as a means of understanding Aztec economies. In tandem, the location of markets, in their placement in conjunction with temples and their integration of ritual objects within the market, created a tangible link between religious and secular activities; Hutson notes that “the architecture of the market and its physical context communicated an intangible, symbolic sense of order” (2000: 129). Just as Anthony Giddens argues that the regionalization of space
facilitates domination, deliberate ordering and placement of markets facilitates control of the use of space.

Aztec cities maintained both periodic markets and ritual markets. The temporal frequency of markets, according to Hassig, was largely based on the Aztec calendar, which was both (1) a tool of the polity, (2) scientifically/naturally based, and (3) wholly sacred. But why not have markets meet every day? Hassig argues that market efficiency is part of the calculus of frequency; it is more profitable for goods to be sold infrequently. Firstly, this assertion relies on the faulty assumption that the demands and logic of capitalism predate formal capitalism. I think that Hassig should rather argue that the systematic exclusion of select populations that resided in the hinterlands is a potential reason for infrequent markets. People from distant populations come to town centers in order to engage in marketplace transactions and social interactions – forcing commoners to attend the market includes them in daily behaviors, rituals, information, and resources. If polities seek to exclude select populations, through deliberate sociospatial seclusion, denying them regular and continued access to resources and common spaces may be an efficient way to do so. Markets are a means of social integration, and a polity aiming to systematically exclude groups would limit access to these structures. Rather than this, though, I would argue that the periodicity of markets could be seen as a way of incorporating larger swaths of the population into everyday activities of the centralized polity. Lack of daily frequency could lessen the burden of polities forcing attendance, allowing disparate populations to be incorporated into rituals and shape their behaviors in a particular way. Strategic integration of these remote populations was a key means of social control.

Markets in different calpolli and altepetl were held on different days in correspondence with local calendars; Smith describes how “smaller rural markets met every 20 days, and the
largest urban markets convened daily” (1979: 112). Almazán also found that most markets were held once every five days (1999: 169). These markets were staggered not just because it was economically pragmatic (i.e. to match harvests), but also to yield symbolic significance to markets. Markets lined up with calendric significance and feast days, according to Kurtz; I argue that the symbolic linkage of markets and social significance (ritual) is another means of encouraging attendance. Particularly with larger markets, people outside of the larger central areas of cities could travel and become incorporated into larger networks of exchange on market days.

The location and spatiality of markets was used to uphold the symbolic significance of polities. Market places were positioned near large state buildings, such as temples, palaces, schools, and central government, according to Kurtz. The market place itself was a physical site of symbolic and religious significance, as “statues of deities were situated within the market place” (Kurtz 1974: 697). Mine argues “the market provided a central place in which political authorities could communicate directly to their subject population on a regular basis” (2009: 365). Introduction of religious symbolism into daily life is also subtle; the imagery and ideology of the state permeated the lives of regular citizens on a daily basis. Hutson points to religious stone altars with painted solar iconography at the market, as a reminder to market-goers of their spiritual and legal obligations (2000: 127, 129). He further observes that location of the markets near temples as “proxemics cues against moral irreverence” (Hutson 2000: 129). Rather than contend that markets were designed to shape pious citizens, blindly devout to the will of Yacatecuhtli, I would maintain that markets made tangible the relationship between apparatuses of the state and religious moral codes. The market is not a fixed, natural, and unregulated entity where bodies move uninhibited through space. The market was a locus of state intervention,
through the vehicles of taxes/tribute and behavioral monitoring. The strategic invocation of the
divine blurs the line between temporal and empyrean.

\textit{II.ii Tax/tribute and social integration}

Earlier in this chapter I argued that the Aztec economy was labor-based, rather than
solely market-based, as partially evidenced by tax and tribute collection. Markets and tribute
were largely intertwined; markets were largely bolstered by tribute, as a site of collection. Smith
implores Mesoamerican scholars to differentiate between tribute and taxes, arguing that Aztecs
paid taxes, rather than tribute (2014: 19). His posture is based upon largely ethical and semantic
reasons; to assert the complexity of the market system and to act as a useful means of
comparison between other tax based, rather than tribute based, systems. Smith differentiates the
two on the basis of the “bewilderingly complex” nature of Aztec states (2014: 19). Despite his
reservations, I find tribute to be a valuable term because it implies a sense of dependence, and
establishes a social hierarchy, as I will argue below.

Tribute collectors, or calpixque, served an official role in Aztec society; tribute was a
means of securing control over subordinate populations throughout the empire (Almazán 1999:
171). Almazán explains that only non-elites (or commoners) paid tribute, not nobility since they
were considered allies of the state. However, only certain non-elites were forced to pay tribute,
usually “only those residing in a specific calpulli” (1999: 171). This further establishes
sociospatial seclusion within calpolli, as I argue in Chapter I. Only certain calpolli within subsets
of the altepetl were forced to pay tribute, and commoners, rather than nobility were forced to pay
tribute. This explicit hierarchy created, those with a higher social capital were not forced to pay
tribute, implies and likely establishes a social hierarchy within and throughout calpolli, indicating the possibility of sociospatial seclusion based on social stratification.

Tribute and tax officially interacted with the market in two different ways, through tax collection at the market and through promoting social integration/isolation in a similar way (FIGURE 4). Firstly, in the case of Tlatelolco, transactions were taxed at a 20 percent rate, according to Bernardino de Sahagun (Nichols, Berdan, Smith 2017: 31). Smith documents the domineering presence of the state, by collecting a percentage of any goods entering the market (2014: 21). This is not unprecedented in Aztec society, scholars have classified ten different types of taxes, particularly imperial taxes: triple alliance tax system, triple alliance gift-tribute system, and conquest-state tax system, and city-state taxes: land tax, rent on royal estates, rotational labor, public works corvee, military corvee, market tax, military supply tax, and labor by youths in the telpochcalli (military school).

In this way, the relationship between taxes and markets were intertwined due to physical taxation at the market; specific city-state taxes, such as rotational labor, rent on royal estates, and public works, also bolstered market activity. Secondly, Brumfiel et al detail how goods collected from the tribute system or “extraction” were sold at the marketplace, specifically obsidian and cloth (1980: 460). Pointing to the disparities between food and goods produced in rural hinterlands and consumption in urban centers, Brumfiel et al argue that specialization occurred in rural centers, yet commoners in urban areas paid tribute, rather than specializing in the production of goods. The second section of the Codex Mendoza outlines names of tributary towns and the tribute collected, such as clothing, costumes, food, paper, honey, feathers, and artisan crafts such as woven mats and gourd bowls.

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4 The term “extraction” refers to the coercive and undesirable nature of tribute collection.
Taxation and tribute both promoted social integration, though this seems counterintuitive, since the state demanding resources from members of the polity does not seem to obviously promote integration. Even more so, the resources were collected in a way that upheld, or arguably created, social hierarchies (in that nobilities did not pay tax and tribute to the same extent). Anderson looks to the idea of the nation as “an imagined political community” which is
bounded, and “finite” (1991: 15-16). According to Anderson, members of the nation have not met every member of the nation, but imagine “communion” and horizontal equity between members, despite actual difference (1991: 15). This idea of the nation is promoted through joint routine and ritual behaviors; Anderson gives the example of reading the newspaper in the morning; the analogy here is ritual taxation and tribute, an activity which would yield an imagined community amongst non-elites.

Since non-elites in society could attend religious and legal duties in town on market day, Smith illustrates how it became a largely social event; market day could be experienced as a festive event with lighthearted social significance, including exchanging information, meeting marriage partners, and building community. This characterization of the market is a refutation of the argument that pre-industrial neighborhoods lacked community. At the same time, markets are a means of upholding social control, according to Minc, who views them as an “exemplary ideological space that underscored principles of morality, social hierarchy, and political order” (2009: 365). By forcing populations to interact in the same place at the same time, on a regular basis, polities could deliberately expose the populace to culturally hegemonic ideals and uphold their legitimacy. Markets further promote the nation, and create imagined communities in the political imaginations of citizens, as a ritual activity where all must participate, creating affective bonds.

Although markets in smaller Aztec settlements met with less frequency, larger cities, such as Tenochtitlan, had daily markets. Daily markets were not just an opportunity for integration and cohesion, cultural anthropologist Donald Kurtz suggests that these daily markets demanded mandatory attendance. Kurtz argues that there was no secular enforcement of attendance, but rather religious enforcement, by the threat that lack of presence would enrage the
divine. Rather, I would posit that this enforcement is secular and state-led: the culling of populations through the legitimacy of divine scorn is a means for ruling elites to control its population through exposure to ideology. Hutson agrees, recounting that people within a 20 kilometer radius were mandated to attend market every five days (2000: 127). While Hutson believed that citizens attended this festival with jubilation, I still argue that it was under coercive pressure, and for the larger cause of social integration, and to promote cohesion under the state’s image.

Scholars such as Smith, Nichols, Berdan, and Hutson, in understanding the social functions of Mesoamerican markets, believe that markets are a site of subversion and that people can thrive outside of the polity through market mechanisms (Smith, Nichols, Berdan 2017: 46). These scholars do not really explain how the market is subversive, but I would assume that they are referring to economic agency as well as presumed agency of behavior. This argument is directly in tension with the thesis of this chapter, that the market was a means of state consolidation and control, and not a way for individuals to rupture the status quo. Hutson most clearly and brilliantly argues this point, contending that “the market, as a Foucauldian heterotopia, simultaneously represents, contests, and inverts ordinary sites and ideologies in Aztec society” (2000: 124). Edward Soja, in his analysis of postmodern geographies, outlines Foucault’s definition of the “heterotopia” as an external space, comparing it to Lefebvre’s “l’espace vécu” or the “actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices” (Soja 1989: 17-18).

It is comforting and intellectually valuable to position non-elites in a posture of subversive power. To provide an extreme example, it is not unprecedented to argue that even under modes of total domination, there is room for intimate and everyday resistance; feminist
historian Stephanie Camp, in her book *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*, argues that enslaved women’s subtle acts, like clothing modification, were “quiet ways of reclaiming a measure of control over goods, time, or parts of one’s life” (2006: 2). In an oppressive and domineering state, like the Aztec empire, it would be logical that the market provided an opportunity for subtle acts of reclamation. I argue that space and ritual in the market was structured to lead to particular behavior, and “individual acts of resistance” or subversion, or inversion, or any seeming acts of agency were merely mediated through the state and barriers of acceptable behavior.

It is important to tease apart this argument; in understanding the integrative functions of markets, I will largely address two different parts of Hutson’s arguments that: (1) markets are anti-hierarchical, and (2) public acts of theater as a site of social irreverence.

Hutson argues that despite “disciplinary strategies of the state,” the market allows for “the erosion of hierarchy and social structure” (2000: 124). He further argues that the market has an “anti-hierarchical nature” (2000: 125). Instead, I propose that the market is a microcosm for society’s entrenched hierarchies. Accumulation and usage of wealth is not just at play in the market, it is reified. Those with social and economic capital continue to have economic capital and access to resources in the market. Even stalls and vendors were spatially segregated based on craft and good; artisan specialization was also a means of demonstrating hierarchy within the empire. Although there is not specific evidence for hierarchy between different artisan groups, that some goods were considered luxury, sacred, and noble (obsidian and feathers), and others were considered common or profane (maguey thorns) indicates the existence of an implicit hierarchy. It is unlike an anthropologist to argue for the totalizing nature of any institution or
practice, but I think it is romanticizing markets to assume anarchy or anti-establishment politics in this case.

Hutson points to the “contagious, participatory happenings” of the market, such as marriages and executions, as exemplary of social irreverence (2000: 131). As I have noted in previous chapters and throughout this chapter, the slippage between state, home, and religious ritual behavior was a means of legitimizing the role of the state. I will consider each example Hutson provides; he argues that markets were site of flirtatious gender role reversal and explosion, where marriages could be discussed and finalized (Hutson 2000: 133). Marriages are not an apolitical site of romance – marriages are a means of reinforcing social hierarchy and kin groups; even if one were to call this position cynical and unromantic, the state’s explicit involvement in marriages in the market renders them political. Hutson also argues that acts of deception and trickery in the marketplace, as noted by Friars, denote public insurrection. To a modern anthropologist, this seems to be a keen example of stereotyping the Other as tricky, deceptive, thieving, manipulative, rather than an accurate characterization of marketplace behavior.

Hutson looks to public executions in open space as a site of chaotic spectacle, laden with joy and frenzy. While there are vast differences between public executions in market space and ritual sacrificial killings, I find the two to be analytically comparable. Public spectacle, like execution in the marketplace, and even the grandeur of the marketplace, are largely for purposes of state power and control, with the underlying goal of reifying particular hierarchies and social facts (such as rules about stealing or proper behavior in public). Any acts of revelry that Hutson identifies were promoted by the state or exhibit normative and even encouraged behavior (such
as seeking out marriages, or paying attention to public executions), these were not acts of rebellion but acceptable actions within the status quo.

II.iii Space, place, and the market

The market was a sensuous site of orderly disorganization. Conquistadors, as they were guided through the market, were immediately exposed to strong affective responses. While there are no official writings on smells, reports from friars, tributary and tax reports, and drawings all point to the immense smell of foodstuffs, such as honey and strong spices, and animals in the market.

The market was designed to display the grandeur of the empire, manifesting in strong sensory responses to new and foreign goods. The variety and new nature of foreign goods could prevent commoners from being enculturated to the market; long term similarity in experience would mediate and dampen their responses. The grandeur of markets in Tenochtitlan was exemplified by long distance trade; archaeologist Leah Minc argues that this points to the lack of self-sufficiency of individual neighborhoods. One could also look to the amount of specialization in individual neighborhoods as proof of this trade; individual calpolli were kin-based, but scholars believe that they were grouped based upon artisan craft specialization. Cultural insiders and outsiders would flow through market due to short and long distance trade. The grandeur and spectacle of the marketplace was not an accident; exotic and unusual goods helped boost the state’s wealth and prestige (as evidence of the state’s capacity for trade, alliances, or conquests). Diaz Del Castillo noted that “I could wish that I had finished telling of all the things which are sold there, but they are so numerous and of such different quality and the great marketplace with
its surrounding arcades was so crowded with people, that one would not have been able to see and inquire about it all in two days” (2008: 175).

Díaz Del Castillo found Tenochtitlan to be fragrant, intensive, with massive towers, impressive organization, transportation, and pyramids, while indigenous voices found the city to be a nexus of relation between the outerworld and the temporal sphere. Looking to high-level architectural communication, we can see how polities exploited or worked within the confines of cosmovision to embed daily activities with ritual and religious significance.
Chapter III. Templo Mayor

De la muerte
Enterradla.
Hay muchos hombres quietos, bajo tierra,
que han de cuidarla.
No la dejéis aquí –
Enterradla.

On death\(^5\)
Bury it.
There are many silent men, underground,
who have to take care of it
Do not leave it here –
Bury it.

-- Jaime Sabines

“The Templo Mayor was nothing less than the materialization of centralized power.”

-- Leonardo Lopez Lujan in *The Offerings of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan*

“The past must be subjugated and harnessed in order to create the social order of the present”

-- Norman Yoffee in *Negotiating the Past in the Past*

There are conflicting interpretations of meanings of urban space that Mesoamerican Urbanists use to conceptualize and understand cities. Many gravitate between approaches that prioritize agency of non-elites, understanding cosmic rituals, or ecological deterministic methods. Approaches consider agency of non-elites and validating beliefs of religious observers, such as Geographer Paul Wheatley known for his cosmovision approach, theorizing that “people

\(^5\) Translation by author.
built cities in an attempt to replicate on earth the natural order they observed and charted in the sky” (López Luján 2012: 3).

This chapter prioritizes the built-environment approach, which seeks to understand how structures “influence behavior and perceptions by channeling the flow of people and providing clear visual signals about boundaries, interactions, and appropriate behavior” (López Luján 2012: 5). In terms of a theoretical perspective, I assert that the built-environment approach accounts for individual acts of everyday decision-making, resistance, or even sabotage. While space is designed in specific ways to lead to particular behaviors, it is also important to consider the multiplicity of ways that individual people rupture or use space in their own ways; these two are also in a constantly tenuous relationship with each other, intentionally restrictive and hostile planning can squelch resistance and individual agency. These approaches to urban meaning are not necessarily mutually exclusive – when considering individual agency, and not assuming that all change was driven by elites, and that elites were not a homogenous body, I think it is possible to use these approaches in tandem to flesh out a rigorous picture of the city.

The everyday experience of Aztec people was radically different than that of conquistadors and friars encountering space. Conquistadors, who have authored the accounts modern anthropologists and historians are using to construct narratives, may have had access to particular spaces, or the ability to walk through markets and temples in particular ways, this is not the same for non-elites. This is particularly important when discussing sensory experiences; the strong embodied experience that conquistadors felt would have been mediated by space and time; their same experience must have been dampened by lack of access for non-elites.

This chapter seeks to understand the social and religious role of the Templo Mayor through the use of architectural and material cultural analyses. Largely, the material culture of
the temple served two functions, (1) to invoke a comparison to the ancient city of Teotihuacan and (2) to addresses the issue of religious plurality within the empire. Finally, this chapter will take a more experimental approach to understanding affective and sensory responses that the Templo Mayor was designed to create.

The centrality of Templo Mayor was a point of symbolic and practical significance. Tenochtitlan was founded in AD 1325, and the Templo Mayor was created around the same time, undergoing seven stages of construction throughout the course of the empire (Matos Moctezuma 1994: 9). The Templo Mayor was the “symbolic as well as physical center of the Aztec universe” (Matos Moctezuma 1994: 9). Physically, the temple was in the center of the city, demanding attention. Tenochtitlan was a fairly small city (10 square kilometers), centered in the middle of Lake Texcoco. Symbolically, the temple is the center of a creation myth for the city of Tenochtitlan. Once Aztecs found their “sacred site,” as determined by white plants and animals, the temple was formed in the center of the city, and smaller shrines were established around it (Matos Moctezuma 1994: 44). The temple acted as the city’s axis mundi, connecting the outerworld and earth via its centrality (FIGURE 5).

The Templo Mayor is currently at the center of Mexico City, demanding visibility from onlookers. The Templo Mayor was a sacred precinct, which Lopez Lujan describes as “the presence of a building that acts as the center of the universe, the ceremonial precinct itself, and its relationship to the city in which it is found” (Lopez Lujan 2012: 423). In terms of physical structure, the temple is a pyramid facing west, featuring two staircases divided by a double balustrade (Lopez Lujan 2005: 48). On each side, there are shrines dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, god of war, and Tlaloc, god of water (Matos Moctezuma 1994: 59).
The symbolic and antithetical significance of the two gods was profound, and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, head of the archaeological project (Proyecto Templo Mayor) that unearthed the temple, argues that agriculture and tribute were both central to Aztec society, and inherent in the symbolism of the Templo Mayor. Before delving into the analytical aspect of the chapter, I will quickly summarize the stages of construction of the Templo Mayor (FIGURE 6). The water level prohibits excavation of Stage I, and Stage II is described by Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Sahagún as shrines for Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli. Stages III and IV yielded a larger pyramidal...
base, adorned with serpents and laden with offerings. Stages V to VII produced stucco plaster, additional temples, and shrines.

Figure 6: López Luján, Leonardo, Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano. 2005. The offerings of the Templo Mayor at Tenochtitlan. Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Pr.

III.i What’s past of the past?

The architectural style and dedicatory offerings within the Templo Mayor were a strategic harkening to the past on the part of leaders within Tenochtitlan. Mesoamerican archaeologist David Carballo notes that comparisons between Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan were explicitly forged, just as how the capitol building in Washington D.C. mimics ideas of great civilizations of the deep past. In personal communication with Dr. Carballo, he noted that Aztec
mythology achieved a carefully constructed balance of humble and grand beginnings to fit imperial narratives. Just as the United States constructed a narrative of historical legitimacy through making strategic ties to Greco-Roman ideals, leaders also constructed a narrative of scrappy hard workers through highlighting plights of pilgrims and pioneers. Rather than deconstructing these faulty narratives, in the case of both the United States and Tenochtitlan, this chapter discusses the Templo Mayor’s role in constructing a similar historical narrative for the Aztecs, through connecting the post-classic Aztecs to their Teotihuacano ancestors.

The architectural value of the Templo Mayor was not just artistic and aesthetic, but communicated particular social facts to those who saw it. Richard Blanton, Mesoamerican archaeologist who studies early state formation, discusses canonical and indexical communication that architectural forms yield. He notes that canonical forms of communication use “architecture to convey adherence to a cultural norm or tradition” (Smith 2008: 13). Templo Mayor was used as a means by which leaders could rely on the historical legitimacy of leaders from Teotihuacan; this is particularly interesting when examining Templo Mayor’s role as a public building. Unlike residential architecture, in which builders were making repeated and standardized structures, communicating vast information about class and cultural identity, the Templo Mayor was uniquely central and somewhat individual.

Examing the seven stages of the temple reveals continued administrative focus on the monument, underscoring its centrality in the city, and thus my analysis. Smith notes that “the construction and enlargement of monumental temples was a deliberate ideological claim about power and control, and the very act of building and enlarging such temples helped legitimize kings and contributed to their political power” (Smith 2008: 13). While Smith argues that the continual reconstruction of the temple conveyed control, perhaps via signaling of stability of
resources and labor, Yoffee warns against assuming construction is coercive, it rather can indicate collaborative visions of the future. I propose the turn to constant construction as continual need to establish and display legitimacy. Legitimacy is not stable, it is a negotiated relationship between commoners and elites.

There are many structures and monuments throughout the city of Tenochtitlan that are valuable for critical analysis, but studying the Templo Mayor is particularly fruitful, as Matos Moctezuma calls it “a superstructural reflection of the economic foundation of that society” (Lopez Lujan 2005: 15). Matos Moctezuma describes the Templo Mayor as superstructural, reflective of ideology that shapes and maintains the economic structure of Tenochtitlan. While these theories seem to place more agency and thought on the role of elite actors, who can make temples to reflect their ideology and means of production, it is important to not view solely elites as capable of contributing to change, but rather realizing the power elites did have to make ideological change and massive statements. Similarly, Yoffee notes that elites are better positioned to “inscribe” their version of past than non-elites (2007: 79). Studying monuments inevitably considers the agency of elites, and while this thesis does not explore public art, looking at graffiti and vandalism of monuments and murals would be a productive means of capturing dissent, dissatisfaction, and non-elite voices.

The physical structure of the Temple relied on particular visual cues that provided symbolic links to sacred precincts in Teotihuacan. The Temple in Tenochtitlan faced west, as did the pyramid of the sun in Teotihuacan. Like sacred temples in Teotihuacan, the temple in Tenochtitlan was symbolically divided into four. The city of Tenochtitlan also featured divisions of four; there were four cosmic roads that lead into the city, echoing the parallelism with the ancient city. Both sacred precincts had a strong stream and marine presence, sacred mountains
and caves, as well as figurative elements underlying the binary of life and death. This binary is also symbolized in individual shrines to the gods Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. There are two larger elements of both temples that echo themes of denied access and symbolic power; both sacred precincts had large platforms and boundaries for privacy. Both sacred precincts were also a large center of human sacrifice.

The scale of human sacrifice as well as the number of platforms within temples in the sacred precinct were much larger in Tenochtitlan than Teotihuacan (Lopez Lujan 2012: 434). If leaders aimed to mimic architecture to draw a historical parallel between Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan, why scale up the level of sacrifice and draw visually recognizable distinctions between the two cities? Lopez Lujan comments on the important relationship between ritual acts and sacred space; noting that “hierophany, the manifestation of the sacred, is subject to spatial and temporal rules” (Lopez Lujan 2005: 37). This does not explain, however, why one sacred precinct would be the sight of such a high level of violent sacrifice. Lopez Lujan asks, “why do Mesoamerican theater states depend on ritual violence to such a degree and at times with such intensity?” (2012: 450). While this quote does not point to the diversity in intensity of ritual violence, his answer is that “religious spectacle with its lavish aesthetics is in fact the state” (Lopez Lujan 2012: 449). Taking this Weberian view of statehood, how would he account for this difference in violence? This thesis does not have a clear answer, but several authors cited in this thesis would point to growing plurality and difference within the empire.

The material offerings within the temple also served to symbolically link Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan. Findings within the temple included sculptures imitating gods from Teotihuacan, particularly a sculpture of the god Huehuetéotl (FIGURE 7). There were also offerings that date back to Teotihuacan, including Offerings 20 and 78 (Lopez Lujan 2012: 437).
Arjun Appadurai posits a theory of cultural turnstiling, wherein the tastes of the ruling class provide “models, as well as direct political controls, for internal tastes and production” (1986: 31). The selection of artifacts and offerings from Teotihuacan, rather than other nearby Mesoamerican civilizations (why not place such an emphasis on comparison to Monte Alban?) was an active choice on the part of rulers, to draw a symbolic link between Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan. Why create this link between Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan for internal and external audiences alike? The audiences for the architecture of the temple and the material culture within the temple are perhaps different due to access that everyday people may have within the empire. Yoffee notes that “the past must be subjugated and harnessed in order to create the social order of the present” (2007: 1). In order to create a social reality where leaders
within Tenochtitlan were distinctly legitimate rulers, they made decisions to link their rule and place of worship to past leaders in Teotihuacan. There was also an internal reflection, in which religious leaders also made the symbolic link between Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan, perhaps internally cementing the legitimacy of leaders in charge. Given the plurality of the Aztec empire, it was a specific decision for leaders to pick Teotihuacan as part of the past to uphold, as “people make choices of which part of the past to accommodate and which to reject and how the past can be, within limits, created” (Yoffee 2007: 3). Rather than highlighting Otomi rituals or Tula sculpture, Aztec leaders picked a particular part of history, cementing a more monolithic picture of history.

**III.ii Plurality and place**

The material offerings also served the purpose of addressing the issue of religious plurality within the empire. When considering the social effects of religious plurality, was Aztec society socially integrated or fractured? This section seeks to understand how the empire controlled and regulated the behaviors of citizens through religious ritual and imagery, despite religious dissimilarity. One could argue that Mesoamerican religion was not broad enough to warrant a discussion of plurality within masks of the temple: was the Aztec experience of religion so different than that of the Olmec? Lopez Lujan notes that religion within Mesoamerica should not be seen as “a collection of elements unchangeable in time and space,” but rather “a current of concepts and practices in continuous, multisecular evolution and with notable regional differences,” (2005: 31). While I agree that religious beliefs are malleable, I argue that the state looks to regional differences, and exploits them for empire building, contributing to the malleable nature of religion.
One can look to economic exclusion and exploitation to understand societal integration within Tenochtitlan. When discussing theories of exchange, Moctezuma and Lopez Lujan both point to large networks of trade in their research on Aztec economies. Lopez Lujan points to the systematic exclusion of diverse and multiethnic groups within the city, noting that “like satellites, the multiethnic populations of the city, of the centers of production, and of the peripheral tributary regions that periodically sent raw materials and finished goods to Tenochtitlan gyrated around it” (Lopez Lujan 2005: 68). But, non-Aztecs, who were introduced to Tenochtitlan because of conquest, military expansion, and changing territories, were forced to contribute tribute to the empire – their difference was recognized on a state level. Matos Moctezuma notes that “there were numerous attempts at rebellion against the Aztecs in order to escape payments, but these uprisings were violently crushed” (1994: 52). This indicates a tenuous relationship between diverse populations and the state – a history of sociospatial seclusion, economic exploitation, and violent rebellions. It is plausible that the state considered these tensions when building and constructing monuments to centralize power within the city.

At the same time, the offerings within the Templo Mayor reflected a spatiotemporal sense of religious plurality; there is a Toltec style chacmool in the Templo Mayor itself (Lopez Lujan 2012: 440). At first glance, this seems like a way of legitimizing regional varieties in religion, perhaps at the expense of underscoring the validity of centralized State religion. As Catherine Lynn Crawford asks, in her study of monumental diversity within Mesopotamia, “why would such a process of cultural appropriation ‘legitimize’ local power?” (Crawford 2007: 12; Yoffee 2007: 12). Crawford argues that memory legitimizes and assimilates, and that objects can be manipulated because of their physicality. I argue that the incorporation of religious imagery from regional variations of Aztec deities leads to an intentional flattening of religious diversity and
also uses the ideological legitimacy of tutelary deities to uphold support for the empire. Lopez Lujan notes, when talking about individual relationships with gods, “as time went by the government tended to institutionalize and control the principal communal forms of the cult” (Lopez Lujan 2005: 32). While his quote is referring to hyper-localized and familial relationships with gods, rather than larger subsets of religious diversity, similar principles applied: leaders institutionalized plurality to centralize and control religious beliefs.

III.iii Rendering a digital archaeology

In capturing and understanding the everyday experience of the Templo Mayor, and trying to cultivate an embodied experience of the deep past, I use theorists of urbanism, paired with reconstructed 3D models of the temple to understand how affect was conjured. Unlike understanding markets and neighborhoods, there are excavation reports, drone footage, and digital visualizations recreating pictures of what scholars and artists thought the temple looked like based on tangible data and material culture. Despite Templo Mayor’s location amidst the chaos and energy of Mexico City, the discovery of a circular sculpture of the goddess Coyolxauhqui and the persistent efforts of archaeologist Eduardo Matos Moctezuma convinced the then president of Mexico, José López Portillo, to generously finance and permit excavations (FIGURE 8).

Upon Coyolxauhqui’s discovery, emboldened by the goddess of the moon, López Portillo proclaimed: “I felt my full power. I could, if I wished, transform the reality that hid the fundamental roots of my Mexico, precisely at the original center of its history, the mystic sphere of her still unresolved, dialectic tragedy,” (López Luján 2005: 13). This quote exemplifies the central themes of this chapter in two distinct ways. First, just as how leaders in Tenochtitlan
drew a symbolic linkage between Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan, López Portillo is cosmically intertwining the histories of modern Mexico and Tenochtitlan. López Portillo is commenting on colonialism, and how cities were fundamentally changed post-Conquest. However, he also, through creating the Templo Mayor Project and holding the excavation on a pedestal of shared spirituality (“mystic”), is once again centralizing the Templo Mayor at the center of the city, permanently tying the historic past of Tenochtitlan to the current future of Mexico City. Michel de Certeau notes that “in discourse the city serves as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies, urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded;” López Portillo utilizes the mythic city and the contemporary city for strategic legacy building (1988: 95).
López Portillo’s speech also begins the discussion of sensory awe and affect in relation to the Temple and the art within it. What about the location, embodied feel, and architecture of the Templo Mayor caused the president of Mexico to feel his “full power” almost five hundred years later? In this case, can affect be antisocial? What can we learn about how insiders to Tenochtitlan’s rule, such as priests, would have felt? Would the sensory experience have been as profound for outsiders for whom the architecture was designed? Could subjects have been ruled and disciplined in a particular way through how the Temple channeled affect in particular ways?

In my understanding of the Templo Mayor, I have found Google Earth images of the carcass of the Templo Mayor to be deceptive and flat (FIG 9). While visiting the Templo Mayor would have provided an interesting insight into how people walk through space, the nature of the Templo Mayor is radically different now than in 1500 AD. The reverence and emphasis of its role as a sacred space has changed; it is seen as a relic of the past, rather than a cosmologically crucial monument actively shaping futures. Other temples within the sacred precinct are bulldozed or replaced by nearby churches, and only one level of the Temple remains; it is no longer towering above the city. The noise of visiting the Templo Mayor would be from tour guides, food and merchandise vendors, tourists speaking different languages, the hum of cars from la Avenida Republica de Argentina, hourly church bells from the Mexico City Metropolitan Cathedral, and dogs from the neighboring park. These provide for interesting affective responses, yet distinctly new ones all the same.
The shape and design of the temple is conducive to intentional sightline creations. In engineering and physics, sightlines can be defined as “the actual sight area divided by the total unblocked sight area” and is often used practically to determine that “all spectators will have an unobstructed view of the event.” More conceptually, one can understand sightlines to be “vertical and horizontal planes [that] become the edges or boundaries of enclosure” (Grobler and Le Roux 2006: 49). I argue that Aztec architects carefully considered sightlines: while the peak of the pyramidal edifice demands to be seen, the massive size of the temple also obscures the interiors of the temple. Aztec commoners did not have perfect access to the Templo Mayor; sightlines allowed for controlled visibility of particular aspects of the temple and ceremony. The use of a pyramidal shape and structure suggests total access for some and restricted access for
others. Those administering rituals could have full access to all members of the crowd, whereas it would be harder for members of crowds to see other non-elites, being forced to look up, with all sides constricted. This could forge a sense of anonymity and disorientation within crowd members.

Matos Moctezuma notes that the complex was enclosed by a wall, and access was only possible through four gates, which were “oriented to the cardinal directions, as were the great causeways that led out of the city” (1994: 44). While the top of the shrines to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli may have been seductively visible to a larger audience, the Templo Mayor necessarily had a different, and perhaps mediated affective impact on audiences that were unable to see and denied access to the entire complex. This is relevant to consider when understanding the everyday sensory impact of the temple, but also important to underscore when considering the social value of the temple as a site of exclusion. Affective ties were also intentional for insiders, as many of the offerings and art within the temple would be visible only to priests and leaders, so the symbolic linkage of Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan was for elites and non-elites alike.

“Walking in the City” by Michel de Certeau is a pivotal text in urban studies. I read it for the first time in my first anthropology class during my first semester of college at Wellesley for my advisor, Professor Ellison. The first time I read it, I was simply unable to parse through the dense language, doubting my place in the discipline and even as a student at my college. Through the kind help and thoughtful pedagogical ethics of my professor, I began to understand the complexity of the text, and embodiment. This is to acknowledge the mentorship of my advisor, but also to note that de Certeau’s picture of the city is by no means self-evident. I use it
as a useful comparison, but as noted throughout this thesis, it is a fair critique to argue that de Certeau’s view of the city is not universal.

I pair the reading of Walking in the City with videos of modern imaginations/reconstructions/artistic renderings of the Templo Mayor in order to understand how the experience of being near the monument was embodied. Reconstructions are not just privy to, but consumed by modern biases. Still, there is much to be learned from virtual reconstructions. In asking: how can I understand of the sensory environment without being physically at the Templo Mayor, 3D interpretations are a natural place to look.

One virtual reconstruction by artist Christopher Antoniou is a, to its credit, thoroughly researched rendering of the Templo Mayor, but biases in sound design reflect Western troupes about indigeneity and the deep past. While the video perhaps accurately portrays noises of birds and rushing water, it features stereotypical drum and song beats, as well as constant screaming. It also does not have any people or crowds, perhaps due to the difficulty of animating figures. William Mazzarella in his 2009 essay “Affect: What is it Good for?” describes affect as having “tactile, sensuous, and perhaps also involuntary connotations” (291). In doing so, he tries to describe the particular affective response that ritual crowds yield, describing urban gatherings as “affectively effervescent, and that “the energy generated by proximate bodies in motion, each mirroring the other’s excitation, operates as a principle of solidarity and commitment” (Mazzarella 2009: 296). Even though Mazzarella takes an over generalizing and Eurocentric approach to his studies of affect, one can understand how crowds and people would yield a different sense of embodied sensation.

Other virtual reconstructions reveal the segmented nature of the Templo, planned in four quadrants, like the rest of the city (FIGURE 10). The embodied sense of division is manifested
not just in neighborhood planning, but spatiality of the temple. The Temple is not just segmented in four, but vertically has a main base, with four bases atop it. The Field Museum’s reconstruction reveals the centrality of the temple within the island, and how different the temple looks, in its white color, than others within the sacred precinct. It is also a reminder of the chaos of the sacred precinct, and other buildings obscuring the view. Other aspects of the sacred precinct would be highly visible; directly to the west was the ball court, Temple of Quetzalcoatl, and sites for coronation and funerary rights for emperors. These particular buildings being in the sacred precinct further link the secular and the divine.

Figure 10: from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5AAniC1DIE
The video also reiterates the theme of height and distance throughout the city. In his analysis of skyscrapers, de Certeau notes that to the observer, “his elevation transforms him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance” (1988: 92). The elevation of the temple is immense. The distance between elites, priests, and those given access to the temples was immense in comparison to observers, drawing a physically manifested divide between the polity and commoners.

Even users in Minecraft attempt to recreate the building to get a greater virtual understanding of the temple. An anonymous user, under the name Tlatoani (which translates to king in Nahuatl), created a colorful replication of the temple, which, despite creative liberties, helps to create a picture of perspective and sightlines. While artistic decisions, such as placing brick furnaces to light the walls, were not verifiable, and plausibly incorrect, details about proportionality of the steps and distance from the plaza to the top of the temple was clear. The temple demands to be seen. Sightlines become particularly relevant; de Certeau notes that “the ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below,’ below the thresholds at which visibility begins” (1988: 93).

Virtual and non virtual understandings alike both cannot escape exoticizing troupes of music and noise, from pan flutes, to loud drums, to Indiana Jones-esque dramatic music of adventure. In looking at non-virtual walk-throughs of the temple, new issues of leakage from the contemporary world are introduced, such as the ringing of church bells, foreign tongues, hand rails and ramps, totally unrestricted access to any part of the temple. These walk-throughs teach us that the view of the temple, and of the action, was deeply obstructed. This is coherent with excavation reports and analyses of the temple, as there were over 70 distinct buildings located within the sacred precinct. I argue that the rituals of the temple must have relied on other senses,
besides sight, to create a strong experience of affect. There is a gap in the literature on this; while we understand that grand gestures of public theater relied intense visual structure, what did it sound like? Can we imagine screaming? Or, would familiarity breed less surprised responses? What did it smell like?

There are particular sensory experiences distinct enough to be revealed in the codices. The Codex Mendoza, in description of rituals at the Templo Mayor points towards two distinct and powerful fragrances. First, the smoke and fragrance of incensing rituals: thick, overpowering, and laden with tobacco. There is a lack of agentive control with the smell and sight of smoke. It is an embodied experience, and through its deliberate incorporation into rituals, must have been tied to memories and repeated ritual behaviors. Smoke is inescapable. Wind carries it, and it sticks to cotton clothes, like those in Tenochtitlan would have worn (Anawalt and Berdan 1992: 247), reminding citizens of the ritual and reach of the state long after the ritual was finished. The Codex also points to the smell and sight of blood, on the ears of priests during ceremonies (Anawalt and Berdan 1992: 145). The profound and deliberate violence could not be escaped with a turn of the head or closing one’s eyes, but the smell of blood must have wafted throughout. Even if commoners could not smell blood from far away, the sight of blood on priests is graphic and intentional.

Artistic renderings of human sacrifice at the Templo Mayor also focus on smell. In Julio Cortázar’s “La Noche Boca Arriba,” a surrealist story about sacrifice, Cortázar describes the sensation of sacrifice, noting “it smelled like death, and when he opened his eyes, he saw the bloodstained figure of the sacrificer coming towards him with the stone knife in his hand.”

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6 The original quote in Spanish is: “olía la muerte, y cuando abrió los ojos vio la figura ensangrentada del sacrificador que venía hacia él con el cuchillo de piedra en la mano.” Translation by author.
Fictive imaginaries of the Templo Mayor also focus keenly on the senses, because ethnofiction, or even poetic renderings, hone in on the importance of affect.

When Smith notes that “Tenochtitlan was impressive for the monumentality of its towering pyramids, for the tens of thousands of people in the streets and markets every day, and for the opulence created by a powerful expanding empire,” it is important to note that perhaps this experience was mediated, and less strong for everyday Aztec citizens (2008: 2). This is not to imply that the sensory experience of being in Tenochtitlan was not powerful, hegemonic, intentional, or designed, but to underscore that it perhaps did not actively pervade every life, rather, imbuing affective experiences in a more subtle way.

The accounts that modern archaeologists and historians have from Spaniards that arrived to colonize the continent should be contextualized for two main reasons. As I acknowledged throughout various chapters in the thesis, and as centuries of scholars have noted, depictions of grandeur and spectacle were over-hyped by conquistadors to convince Spanish monarchs to fund conquest, mimicking Spanish romantic style poetry and prose, adding to the levels of misrepresentation. Though in his book, Matos Moctezuma says (on quoting from Catholic priests), “I take no apology for quoting extensively from them;” I apologize for quoting from them, because they give us a distorted picture of the sensorium we are seeking to understand (1994: 10). When tourists visit Times Square in New York City for the first time, they are overwhelmed, in awe, and often hyperstimulated. While tourists undergo a strongly powerful and sensorally overwhelming experience, locals have a very different affective response to Times Square. Rather than seen as a sight of media notoriety and cultural relevance, it is a dismal scene to be avoided at all costs. The sensory experience is grating, rather than wonderfully new. As a New Yorker I could never compare the historic Templo Mayor to the nauseating Times Square,
but in both cases, regularity and familiarity dull the affective and sensory experience of a
precinct, sacred or not. While Spaniards were “overwhelmed” and in “awe” of the city, average
citizens may not have been (Smith 2008: 2). I think it is likely that they were also subject to
strong and overpowering affective reasons, but it would be a wrong assumption to infer these
from accounts authored by Spaniards.

Even if we were to assume that Spaniards and Aztecs had the same embodied response to
the Templo Mayor and the theatrics of the Templo Mayor, this rests on the premise that both
Spaniards and Aztecs had equal access to the Templo Mayor, which they did not.
Conclusion

Power is regulated in the city based on how space is organized. This thesis has moved through three specific sites within the ancient city, each revealing nuances about the nature of space as a mechanism for social control. Neighborhoods, often seen as individual, selective, and private, were cloistered and enclosed to create hierarchy and division within the city. Markets were manufactured by polities as a site where social relations were modeled, reproduced, and highlighted. Social inclusion was promoted via regularity and tribute. Temples, particularly the Templo Mayor, were both sites of selective access and disorientation.

Each of these three institutions intentionally blurs the line between ritual and state. The modern dichotomy between state and church is not self-evident (and arguably non-existent) but emperors and polities were separate institutions from religious leaders. The two were not mutually exclusive (emperors had divine legitimacy), and I argue that the neighborhood, the market, and the temple each make the sacred and the profane inextricable. In some ways this is clear through standard analyses (maps of the market reveal the proximity of religious monuments to Tlatelolco), but I move to a more embodied analysis to understand the overpowering experience of the three sites.

There are many questions that this thesis does not answer. Why study aspects of Mesoamerican cities rather than take a hollistic approach? Understanding discrete units of the city (such as the Templo Mayor) promotes the analysis of other units (the ballcourt), because aspects of the city are never discreet (the ballcourt is directly visible from the Templo Mayor). Fleshing out a sensory understanding helps provide a methodology which archaeologists can use on different aspects of the ancient city. Why study Mesoamerican cities? It is only due to racism and colonialism that spatial and political analyses of Tenochtitlan are not central to academia and
meta-narratives of global history. I take issue with ranking cities in terms of complexity, implying a linear movement all cities must follow to become as developed as Western cities, but it must be acknowledged that Tenochtitlan was incredibly institutionally complex. The study of Mesoamerican cities is crucial because of their novel design, also crucial is the ability to resist the desire to re-explore the spatiality of Athens or modern European cities, rather to bring Mesoamerica into larger historical discussions. While the study of Tenochtitlan is not perfectly comparable to studies of modern cities, it is of utmost urgent to look at Tenochtitlan as exemplary of when modern city planning may go wrong.

Each chapter of this thesis reveals new areas for future research, including the analysis of public art, other temples and buildings within sacred precincts, and elite forms of house and aestheticism. Future research potential includes the nuances digital archaeology more fully, and the potentials it has for exploring the spatiotemporally distant. Finally, my future research will include visiting Mexico City, for a more complete sensory ethnography.

In his last speech, Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor delivered a profound speech about the fall of his beloved city. His last speech reverberates as I write:

“Our Sun has gone down
Our Sun has been lost from view
and has left us
in complete darkness
But we know it will return again
that it will rise again
to light us anew.”

While the sun will never rise again on Tenochtitlan, it is our duty to release the shroud of darkness from Tenochtitlan, to uncover, to theorize, to analyze, and to make clear facets of daily life. Our goal is not to save or to salvage, but to understand.
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