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Countercultures, youth cultures and protest cultures in Ecuador during the disruption of the Global Sixties in a transnational perspective.

My doctoral research focuses on the way countercultures and protest cultures emerged in Ecuador during the Global Sixties.

In this presentation, I will first focus on the theme of Disruption, as it is central to the sixties and the seventies. Secondly, I would like to show that it was a time of upheavals in the entire world, that it was a global phenomenon. Lastly, I will focus my presentation on Ecuador as a specific location to study this global phenomenon.

1. An age of disruption

When we talk about the Sixties and Seventies, we often think of representations of young people demonstrating in the streets, young hippies listening to the sound of rock music, smells of flowers or other drugs swallowed by young individuals searching new perspectives on life.

One actor remains present in all these representations: young people. Indeed, the period has seen the emergence of a new central actor: the youth. Actually, young people all around the world were willing to overthrow the established arrangements of the world. The global sixties were a time of global disruption. Global, in the sense that a lot of areas were concerned about. It was a time of protest: protest against political institutions, governments, events and decisions. In May 68, young people took the streets of France in order to reject the president politics. In the United States, the end of the decade was colored by anti-Vietnam War protests. Authorities (as specific governments, particular actors) were contested, and authority (as a concept) was challenged. Major disruptions could be observed in these rebellions, demonstrations in public spaces or even in the culture. Some artists supported these protests, by creating songs, paintings, and organizing events in order to nourish these movements.

The cultural disruption meant also that this new generation offered and called for new cultural frames. Many social values were brought into question, for example youth claimed for a more liberated sexual norm. Young people developed new ways of experiencing the world. They were confident in their ability to transform it, resorting to spirituality – among other ways – to address their need to perceive it differently. History of art was forever changed thanks to

the introduction of new modes of expression: psychedelism, rock music or beat literature get the old frames move. In short, this generation fostered new ways of living, shattering the certainties of the older generations.

The Sixties and seventies were a time of disruption in many ways, and they were characterized by the rise of a specific actor: the youth.

2. A global phenomenon

The phenomenon of disruption during the sixties and the seventies is also a global event because the entire world was concerned.

Given that the circulation of the information was more and more significant, the news about some specific disruptions occurring in very specific places were broadcasted all over the world. For example, the situation in Paris in May 68 was present in the national newspaper of many countries, images of the antiwar demonstrations in the United States were broadcasted to African, Asian and Latin-American countries. As many studies about militancy in the student population in Latin-American countries shows, young individuals were informed about what their French fellow were doing, despite the hundreds of kilometers separating them.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that a global sphere of struggles arises from this circulation of information in the militant youth. As Martin Klimk write in the introduction of *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties* : “These [moments of disruption settled locally] reflected and sought to reshape political and cultural contexts and were linked by a dense web of transnational connections, real and imagined, desired by many and feared by many others.”¹. Historians, and every observer of the period, noticed that global trends emerged also from the period. A new way of dressing, with large pants or miniskirts, a new way of doing one’s hair, with long hair for the boys, begun to be adopted in different part of the world.

The evolutions of the field’s historiography go along with the evolutions of the global history. The first approaches of the Sixties were focused on the West Countries as centers of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, at the end of the XXth century, a more global and transnational approach appears. The look turns toward transnational actors, global South, the non-aligned

¹ CHEN Jian, KLIMKE Martin, KIRASIROVA Masha, NOLAN Mary, YOUNG Marilyn B. et WALEY-COHEN Joanna (éd.), *The Routledge handbook of the global sixties: between protest and nation-building*, Londres, Routledge, 2018., p.1.

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movement. The conceptualization of the concept “global Sixties” emerged from the idea that there was a global revolutionary movement, of course existing by national movements, with local variation but with common characteristics. Studies about the Third World in the Global Sixties permits to put the hegemony of the West World into perspective, showing other actors and a multiplicity of global trends, events, forces that shaped the protesting and countercultural Sixties. To borrow the expression of the title of a collective book directed by Karen Dubinsky, a *global consciousness* of the Sixties, which decenter the look from Europe and the United States, arises. A new frame, explicitly transnational, highlights the role of “peripheric” spaces, to show that they were not peripheric spaces which received the flow of what happened in Central spaces, but real actors of the change.

3. Settling in a specific location

As It was a central line in my master’s thesis, my purpose is to demonstrate the globality of this object by understanding how this phenomenon appears and come within the scope of Ecuadorian’s particularities. To show the reality of global events, the reality of common characteristics, we need to observe and analyze the anchorage of this phenomenon on a very particular context. Universality is seen in particularity.

Ecuador is a little country in the Andes. Far from the connections big cities have with the Western World, like Buenos Aires or Mexico in Latin America, I think it is very interesting and relevant to study how a “little” country can be part of global events, global trends and how it is inscribed in transnational circulations. Moreover, it permits to analyze how a specific global phenomenon, as *The Global Sixties*, penetrate a local space, twisting to adapt to a particular context. During the two decades I study, Ecuador was a place of an intense politic instability. Military juntas, revolutionary and progressist coup d’Etat, came one after another. How did protest actors and counterculture creators and consumers react and readjust to these changes? The traditional Ecuadorian artistic circles were fixed in unalterable institutions and had a particular link with other social classes. In such a particular context, how some young artists found the opportunity to overthrow the norms? How did young Ecuadorian people receive, absorb and appropriate trends coming from very different backgrounds?

My principle lines of research are part of global history concerns. I would like to understand how a cultural movement carried by a generation in disruption with esthetic, political and moral

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values took shape in the particular context of Ecuador. How did the Ecuadorian youth perceive and interpret the international context? What elements were particular to the Ecuadorian counterculture and what were common to the transnational movement?

I would like to understand how global characteristics of a transnational youth combine with specific elements of a country's reality. Transfers (as Michel Espagne defined them), exchanges, circulations will be at the center of my thesis.

In conclusion, I apologize for not have given specific example in my presentation, given the limited time to talk but particularly the covid epidemic context. I couldn't go to Ecuador to carry out my researches on the sources. Yet, to investigate these questions I will study newspapers, journals, small publications of some specific movements, cultural objects but also interview the actors of the period. This research is at the crossroads of Ecuadorian history, Latin American history, cultural history, global history and also oral history.

Thank you.