The night market as public space?

Yolande Pottie-Sherman
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia

NIGHT MARKETS

Urban & suburban markets in Metro Vancouver

Chinatown Night Market, Vancouver

Summer Night Market, Richmond

Questions

- What is the role of the night market in the integration process?
- In what ways does it function as a public space?

Richmond Market

The “new” night market

- “…The people that once knew what this market was about found that with us running it, it was something completely new to them and something that they had to sort of re-learn. It wasn’t a typical night market of Asia where, you know, you go down there and really its food and all counterfeit. And we are a really very multicultural festival type of a market now”

~ night market organizer

But is it a public space?

- Suburban public spaces
- Act of making “public space” in private parking lot
- Degrees of “interdiction”?

Performing citizenship

1. Young people as Entrepreneurs

2. Young people as consumers of culture

Nighttime leisure culture

"There are a few coffee shops and no. 9 restaurants. There's no nightlife in Richmond basically" ~ night market participant, age 19

Nostalgia

- "The people that do live in Richmond, I would have to say… a good majority are new immigrants or at one time were new immigrants, that come from Asian cultures that have night markets, so *it gives them sort of a resemblance of home, so that when they come out, they can feel right at home again*"
  - ~ night market organizer

- "You would think that the whole idea of a night market came from Hong Kong…what do you do if someone came [to visit] from Hong Kong? You take them to night market, as if that would be totally different and Canadian"
  - ~ night market participant, age 24

Sense of Obligation

- “They’re [the vendors] not gonna have anywhere to see their things anymore. Its like, they’re Chinese, I’m Chinese, and I should still go, and help keep it running so they know that people still want to keep this going… If a lot of people don’t go, its like.. oh yeah its just some shady Chinese night market…. Someone told me that it was shady and I was kind of offended… I was like, what is shady about Chinese people? Excuse me!? (laughs)”
  - ~ night market participant, age 21

Bilingualism/trilingualism

- "I think I do order in Chinese, because I just feel like they will be nicer to you if you do… its like, oh this is my mother tongue…this is their mother tongue… the attitude they give you is different depending on what language you speak…like, oh, why aren't you speaking Chinese to me… this is a sign of respect" ~ night market participant, age 25

Strolling in the ethnoburb

Public Displays of Affection

"As somebody going in there who is Chinese, its a hodge-podge of stuff, and its interesting, and the food is good, and its a good place to take a girl... We felt pretty free while we were there. We held hands, we cuddled, we linked arms" ~ night market participant, age 24

Closing