

<https://doi.org/10.23913/ricsh.v9i17.207>

*Artículos Científicos*

## **La representación fotográfica en el estudio de las ciudades guerrerenses 1930 -1980**

***The Photographic Representation and the Study of the Cities in Guerrero  
1930-1980***

***Representação fotográfica no estudo das cidades de Guerrero 1930-1980***

**Esperanza Hernández Árciga**

Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, Centro de Investigación y Posgrado en Estudios  
Socioterritoriales, México

[esperanzaarciga@uagro.mx](mailto:esperanzaarciga@uagro.mx)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9705-5662>

### **Resumen**

Desde sus inicios, la fotografía ha estado relacionada con la ciudad. Las imágenes inspiradas por los elementos urbanos son variadas: desde paisajes urbanos, fotografía de arquitectura y foto de calle hasta registros técnicos de obras de urbanización. Dichas imágenes, en gran parte de los casos, se usaron con fines de difusión, por lo que fueron puestas en circulación a través de diversos medios. Ese fue el caso de las imágenes que acompañaron el proceso de impulso y consolidación de Acapulco como destino turístico. El punto de partida fue la consideración de que para comprender el discurso fotográfico es necesario entender su relación con el contexto histórico-cultural del que surgió. Por lo que se analizaron las imágenes generadas para su promoción durante la trayectoria turística de Acapulco, y el proceso de expansión, considerando la organización territorial del puerto en términos de su vocación turística y la relación con otras ciudades, especialmente con Chilpancingo, capital del estado de Guerrero. Este artículo es parte del proyecto “La ciudad representada. Fotografía urbana en Guerrero”, cuyo propósito es analizar las representaciones visuales de las ciudades guerrerenses. Por las diferencias en la temporalidad en que ocurren las



transformaciones de una y otra ciudad, se consideraron fotografías producidas en las décadas de los 30 hasta los 70, para la ciudad Acapulco; y entre los años 50 hasta los 80 para Chilpancingo. Solo se consideraron aquellas imágenes que han sido incorporadas en libros académicos, de arte o promoción. La intención del artículo es proponer la fotografía como fuente fundamental en los estudios urbanos, y mostrar, a la vez, la importancia de documentarla adecuadamente.

**Palabras clave:** Acapulco, Chilpancingo, fotografía urbana, representación visual, tarjeta postal.

### Abstract

Since its very beginnings the photography and the city have been related. Urban landscapes, architectural photography, street photography and timely records urbanization processes, they are images that inspired the elements of the urban space. Such images were used, mostly, to be spread, so they were placed in the social media channels. The case of Acapulco images accompanied the process of its momentum and consolidation as tourist destination. The starting point was the consideration that it is necessary to understand the cultural-historical context in which the photographic speech was enrolled. We analyzed the images generated for Acapulco promotion during its tourist trajectory and expansion process, considering the port territorial organization, in terms of its tourist vocation and the relationship with other cities, especially with the state capital of Chilpancingo. This paper is part of the project *The represented city. Urban photography in Guerrero*, its purpose was to analyze the visual representations of the cities in Guerrero between the 30's and 70's for Acapulco, and 50's and 80's for Chilpancingo. We only took those images that have been incorporated into academic, art or promotion books. And its intent is to recommend the photography as a fundamental source in urban studies, showing the importance of document it properly.

**Keywords:** Acapulco, Chilpancingo, urban photography, visual representation, postcard.

## Resumo

Desde a sua criação, a fotografia tem sido relacionada à cidade. As imagens inspiradas em elementos urbanos são variadas: de paisagens urbanas, fotografia arquitetônica e fotografia de rua a registros técnicos de obras de urbanização. As referidas imagens, em grande parte dos casos, foram usadas para fins de transmissão e, por isso, circularam por vários meios de comunicação. Foi o caso das imagens que acompanharam o processo de promoção e consolidação de Acapulco como destino turístico. O ponto de partida foi a consideração de que, para entender o discurso fotográfico, é necessário entender sua relação com o contexto histórico-cultural do qual emergiu. Para tanto, foram analisadas as imagens geradas para sua promoção durante a carreira turística de Acapulco e o processo de expansão, considerando a organização territorial do porto em termos de vocação turística e o relacionamento com outras cidades, principalmente com Chilpancingo, capital do estado. Este artigo faz parte do projeto “A cidade representada. Fotografia urbana em Guerrero”, cujo objetivo é analisar as representações visuais das cidades de Guerrero. Devido às diferenças de temporalidade em que ocorrem as transformações de uma cidade e de outra, foram consideradas fotografias produzidas nas décadas de 30 a 70 para a cidade de Acapulco; e entre os anos 50 e 80 para Chilpancingo. Somente foram consideradas as imagens incorporadas em livros acadêmicos, de arte ou promocionais. A intenção do artigo é propor a fotografia como fonte fundamental nos estudos urbanos e, ao mesmo tempo, mostrar a importância de documentá-la adequadamente.

**Palavras-chave:** Acapulco, Chilpancingo, fotografia urbana, representação visual, cartão postal.

**Fecha Recepción:** Diciembre 2019

**Fecha Aceptación:** Mayo 2020

---

## Introduction

This article presents the progress of the ongoing investigation “The represented city. Urban photography in Guerrero”,<sup>1</sup> whose objective is to analyze the visual representations of the Guerrero cities through their photographs, especially those that are put into circulation with the purpose of spreading the urban image. Among the images studied are postcards, technical images taken for the purpose of registering urban works and press photography. These images were incorporated into other print media (books, brochures, etc.) in order to spread the Government's achievements. In this particular case, I review the books where photography is the protagonist. A part of them, as shown below, were published by the Guerrero state government, and distributed by government institutions for advertising or educational purposes, as mentioned in some. Another part is academic works of history and architecture.

The period selected for the investigation covers from 1930 to the 70's<sup>2</sup> for Acapulco, and between the 50s and 80s in the case of Chilpancingo. The reason for this cut is due to the fact that it is trying to show the paradox of this process: the Mexico-Acapulco highway was announced as an opportunity that would solve poverty and promote the development of the entity; 40 years later, however, with the rise of the guerrillas and the violence of the so-called dirty war, there was an evident exacerbation of the economic contradictions: only a few actually benefited from the boom achieved in previous years and the vast majority of the population suffered from impoverishment.

This is not the only magnifying glass with which it is intended to analyze the images of Guerrero. It is of special interest to locate them in the light of urban development, which implies both the trends of their expansion and growth and the transformations generated from priority economic activity. In this sense, the two main cities located in the circuit of this dynamic were considered, Acapulco and Chilpancingo, which, for the same reason, underwent a very violent urbanization process, depending on the role they played in the development of tourist activity. , and whose physiognomy had very drastic changes, to the extent that, Babini, Alcaraz, Hernández and Salgado (2009) assure, are the two cities with

---

<sup>1</sup> Desarrollada durante una estancia académica en el Instituto Mora, institución a la que agradezco su hospitalidad, en particular a la Dra. Regina Hernández Franyuti y al Dr. Alberto del Castillo Troncoso

<sup>2</sup> Periodo que parte de la apertura de la carretera México-Acapulco y el inicio de la actividad turística en el estado a la década en la que algunos autores (Garibay, 1978; Ramírez, 1987) ubican el periodo de declive de dicha actividad, debido a factores de violencia y de contaminación de la bahía.



the greatest losses in architectural heritage. Undoubtedly, it is a situation that, by itself, allows us to consider the great documentary value that the photographic gaze contributes in the study of the urban development of Guerrero.

Therefore, it is assumed that urban research can be enriched by studying the visual representations of the city. In this way, the intention of this article is to show urban scholars that photography can provide information. At the same time, it is expected to influence authors who already incorporate photographs in their studies on the importance of documenting them adequately, providing the basic coordinates: date, place and authorship.

Seven books and two brochures were reviewed, of which four are from Acapulco and five from Chilpancingo. In the first case, it is the book by the writer Francisco Tario with photos by Lola Álvarez Bravo (1993), and three academic texts on architecture (Alcaraz 2007; 2009; and Fares 2010). In the second case, a book on the social movement of 1960 with photographs by Jesús Salmerón (1991), the book by Blanca Jiménez and Samuel Villela (1998) on the Salmerón family, a text from the history of Chilpancingo (Gutiérrez and Rodríguez, 1987) and two brochures produced by the Government of the state of Guerrero.

## Materials and methods

Photography was present in social life from its first years of existence. In personal interactions through business cards and postcards, the views of cities were the same as photographs of characters from the theater or the so-called popular types, with characters from the town. Very soon its use was introduced to other areas such as the press, advertising, police records or other types of registration. Thus until reaching the present day, in which images dominate communication through the media and social networks.

However, the social studies seen from the production of images, or those that consider photography as a source of information or a methodological resource, are extremely recent. In our country, the first such approach was in 1980 with the book by Claudia Canales (1980) on the photographer Romualdo García. The method used by the author involved placing the studied character and her production in the social context that she had to live, in a critical way. This method is a constant in other photographic studies because it is an adequate approach to the understanding and reading of photographic images, because it not only addresses the social historical context of a certain time, but also considers its visual culture.



To enrich the historical method, the study is complemented by an iconographic and iconological analysis, since they are visual documents built according to artistic composition rules. However, since the camera is involved in its construction, which introduces elements that do not always resemble the referent, not all the proposals from the history of art are adequate. In this sense, Boris Kossoy's (2014) proposal is taken up again, since it is considered much more appropriate to analyze photographs that not only have an aesthetic sense, but also a political, economic or social purpose.

In this proposal, Kossoy (2014) states that the iconographic analysis is "like the archeology" of photography and serves to document as much as possible the data of its production, including material conditions, as well as the "inventory of coded information" that contains the image (p. 179). The iconologist, on her own, starts from the consideration that the photographed subject is a representation. Although it has a relationship with the real referent, the fact that it is a construction prevails, which corresponds to a "way of seeing and understanding" (p. 179), a particular point of view of the world. Therefore, at this point in the interpretive phase, one enters the dimension of mentalities and the analysis of the visual culture of an era in general, and of the author in particular.

In the case studied, this way of approaching the subject is very pertinent because it allows us to understand the context of the production of urban views and their nature. Well, these are images that quickly took a leading place in the production of the first photographers, since they constituted a way of spreading the new invention among the curious who swirled to observe, and at the same time, had an important commercial use, due to the fact that very soon they became collectibles and obligatory gifts for those who traveled, to send to family and friends. However, beyond the romanticization, it should be considered that their production mainly obeys advertising needs, so they are photographs built with the intention of attracting visitors. "Postcards are not neutral or scientific documents, but since culture and history are 'built' to be consumed and, therefore, they are fictions of complicated manufacture" (Burian, 1999, p. 46).

The warning is important to understand what kind of images one works with, since the same author warns that, although they have historical value, it can also happen that they show "a world that never existed" (Burian, 1999, p. 46). On the other hand, in her book on the construction of imagery in Mexican architecture, Catherine Ettinger (2017) uses these types of sources, placing them in the context of trends in architecture and in a broader,

historical and social one, which allows understand the appearance of new types of buildings in the urban landscape, such as gas stations, and others related to the mobility of tourists.

In addition to postcards, you must also understand the production of architectural photography.<sup>3</sup> According to Laura González (2010), it is not a portrait of a motif only, but of a concept, in the sense that the production of images of architectural events varies according to their evolution. In this way, the author exposes how, from the appearance of new styles, diverse photographic approaches are generated that are clearly related to each other.

Other images incorporated in the analyzed books come from photojournalism. For its analysis it is necessary to make a distinction also between documentary photography, whose interest is to denounce or publicize social problems, from press photography,<sup>4</sup> which, in some cases, was in charge of spreading the actions of the authorities as a political strategy. These were generated from the control of the press or payment for their services.

Finally, to contextualize the photographs, in terms of the territorial trajectory and urban growth, aerial photography of both cities was essential for the analysis of the sources consulted. The bird's eye view was very important for urban planning and territorial rearrangement. The Aerofoto company<sup>5</sup> It has been marketing vertical images to real estate agents, builders and urban planners since the 1930s. Acapulco was one of the sites photographed for these purposes from the early appearance of this type of photography. This fact makes aerial photography a first-hand document in the study of the transformations of the territory:

The plane is a kind of atlas in action. Her movement on the landscape allows us to appreciate with the gaze the territorial forms and the limits of these forms, the spatial discontinuities, the differentiated uses of space that are juxtaposed in the world (Besse, 2003, p. 353).

Distinguishing all these images, different from each other by the conditions of their production in terms of the intentions, and therefore, by their technical and compositional resources, which respond to these objectives, is essential. For the purposes of research, the

---

<sup>3</sup> Es importante distinguir entre foto de arquitectura y las fotos técnicas, necesariamente descriptivas, que ingenieros y arquitectos usan en los espacios de proyección y durante los procesos de construcción o de obra pública. Y que pasado el tiempo también se difunden con otros fines.

<sup>4</sup> Rebeca Monroy (2015) sitúa la diferencia de la siguiente manera: la fotografía documental es un trabajo independiente y la de prensa se realiza bajo las órdenes de un medio periodístico.

<sup>5</sup> Acervo custodiado actualmente por la Fundación ICA.

distinction is essential, since understanding the production circumstances of each image allows for solid elements for analysis.

In summary, contextualizing the photo properly implies, in addition to identifying its basic coordinates (time, space, authorship), that the rhetoric of each era, the aesthetic that prevailed, the influences of travel photographs, of the postcards and other hegemonic uses that each era printed in the production of images. Otherwise, we would not understand why certain areas of the cities, the least, were captured from different angles, perspectives and at different times, while large urban areas remained in the dark. And if they were portrayed, it was for a different purpose.

To conclude this section, it is emphasized that, although there are more books that could be included, only seven books and two brochures were selected, of which, as already mentioned, four are from Acapulco and five from Chilpancingo: Tario's book. with photos by Lola Álvarez Bravo (1993) and three academic texts on architecture; a book on the 1960 social movement (Salmerón, 1991), Blanca Jiménez and Samuel Villela's book on the Salmerón family (1998), a text on the history of Chilpancingo (Gutiérrez and Rodríguez, 1987) and two pamphlets produced by the State government, respectively. The selection criteria respond to the fact that they include images of both cities during different moments of their urban expansion process.

## Results

In an article published in 1988, Carlos Illades presents an annotated bibliography of basic texts on the Guerrero state. Grouped into 13 themes, the books on the history of the entity stand out (it also includes titles on geography, anthropology, literature, among others). First of all, Illades (1988) does not miss the opportunity to point out the paradox of the small number of texts that address the events that occurred in Guerrero compared to other states, despite the great participation that the Guerrero population has had in events national historical and despite its geographical location, so close to the center of the country.

The detailed bibliography presented by the researcher is the result of the consultation in 12 libraries. And although it is a very complete relationship, the absence of the book Acapulco in the history and the legend of Vito Alessio Robles from 1932, which for the purposes of this work was important not only for its content, but also as evidence of the interest that Acapulco, in particular, and Guerrero in general, aroused as a result of the



opening of the Mexico-Acapulco highway, given that the author makes it explicit (an objective that is reinforced by starting the text with the image of the first urban plan of the city of Acapulco by the architect Carlos Contreras, prepared in 1931 for the Ministry of Communications and Public Works). Carlos Illades (1988) also does not include Francisco Tario's book with photos by Lola Álvarez Bravo (1993); Yes, on the other hand, the monographic book by Angélica Gutiérrez and Héctor Rodríguez (1987), but only referring to the text and the information it contains, not the photographs.

These absences, and the fact that new books with graphic information have come out after the publication of that article, were an impulse to contribute a new chapter to the effort to inventory texts that contribute to the social study of the state. In the particular case, directing the gaze to the texts that incorporate images, and that allows us to rethink them as social documents that can be used as sources of information.

### **Acapulco**

On November 11, 1927, the Mexico-Acapulco highway was inaugurated, although it would be completed until 1933. This fact is indicated in other studies (Ramírez, 1987; Valenzuela and Coll, 2010) as a primary factor for the entity, since although there had been had an important role in the previous centuries as a commercial port, sources agree that commercial operations with the center of the country had been suspended and the region had been isolated in the post-independence era.

Ramírez (1987) located between 1927-1954 the take-off of the tourist activity with the construction of adequate infrastructure: hotels, avenues, airstrips and gas stations, which also drives important changes in the growth of the city and its landscape. For their part, Valenzuela and Coll (2010) emphasize more on the characteristics of the process that the city and its inhabitants lived by dividing this stage into two moments. One related to the land link and the process of expropriations to achieve the expansion of the territory destined for tourism (they point out that from 1928 it began with the expropriations to the ejidos for private benefit). A second moment, from 1946 to 1952, relates it to its projection as an international destination, where Hollywood and Mexican cinema played a very important role.

This period, the author Ettinger (2017) calls it “motorcyclists”, as it is related to the adequacy of cities and roads for the use of the car. In this way, the urban expansion of Acapulco begins



with the construction of hotels in the Beaches Peninsula, but very soon others are built in different points of the bay: the coastal avenue inaugurated in 1949 and photographed by Lola Álvarez Bravo is inscribed in this strategy.

A second period is its consolidation, which the authors of both texts place in the 1970s. From then on, they consider that violence, urban problems and pollution of the bay, among other factors, place the port in a crisis situation. The images included in the reviewed books allow observing the changes in the urban landscape in the years studied.

### *A photographic book: Acapulco in the dream (1993)<sup>6</sup>*

Between 1949 and 1950, Lola Álvarez Bravo photographs Acapulco in full tourist boom. The photographs are accompanied with aphoristic fragments, written by Francisco Tario, which are "deliberately photographic, they want to reproduce in writing the instantaneous of the photography, the movingly immediate of the image without time" (Espinasa, 2000). The information circulating on the Internet, about the process of registering images for the book, shows Tario accompanying the photographer. Despite this, the writer is credited with the book, and it is only mentioned "with photographs by Lola Álvarez Bravo", which suggests that the photos accompany the text, and not that both express the dream from different areas. acapulqueño. The reason perhaps lies in the fact that the same photographer distanced herself from this work because it was an unusual task for her, since the requested images were very close to advertising photography (Hernández, 2017).

Within the images, which for the most part correspond to the sea and its surroundings, three large general planes of the city of Acapulco stand out (Figure 1). These images are not accompanied by any text, perhaps because they are placed on two pages. Two of them have very similar perspectives: the maritime station is focused on the right of the photo and the central area of the city on the opposite side, where the hotel buildings of the time stand out. In one image, the city is shown with a great contrast of shadows, an effect produced by dusk: while white buildings shine with light, shadows darken the landscape. The other is a night scene. The framing of this allows to see, through the line of light from the street lamps, the trace of the newly opened coastal.<sup>7</sup> The beams of light traced by the few cars that were driving also do the same.

---

<sup>6</sup> La 1.ª edición está fechada en 1951.

<sup>7</sup> El 28 de febrero de 1949 por Miguel Alemán Valdez.

**Figura 1.** Tres grandes planos generales de la ciudad de Acapulco



Fuente: Tario y Álvarez (1993)

A third image focuses on the bay in the Caleta area. You can clearly see the routes laid out to cross the Beaches Peninsula, which began to develop from the early days of tourist activity. What the images show, without being their purpose, is an aspect of the urbanization of the port at that time, where the growth of roads in order to exploit different parts of the bay was one of the priority actions in those years.

At the end of the text, Tario recounts the places that make up Acapulco, and records three points, three lagoons, twenty beaches and thirty-one neighborhoods, which account, if supported by other documents, perhaps cartographic, of the territorial extension urban at the time.

The text quoted is a facsimile of the first edition, published in 1993 by Fundación Televisa. Between the original and the cited edition there are 10 photographs that had to be replaced because the negatives had been lost. Of the books reviewed here, this is the one with the largest circulation, since 7,000 copies were printed from the first edition and 20,000 from the second.

### ***Three texts on Acapulco architecture***

Laura González (2010) ensures that the photography-architecture relationship has always been very close. Perhaps this is why architectural texts are always accompanied by photographs. However, this does not guarantee that these are given adequate treatment. But it does happen, as we will see below, that the images selected for these studies tend to cover a wide range, since, as González (2010) says, the architecture photo was generating creative solutions as technology improved and the city it incorporated new architectural and urban forms (p. 93).

In this section, the selection includes three academic texts on architecture in Acapulco: two of them address the architecture of hotels (Osbelia Alcaraz, 2007, 2009) and the other deals with the history of architecture in the state (Fares, 2010) .

It should be noted that, although the three books incorporate many images, both old and recent, they do not provide the data of these. In some cases, the cards mention the date, a concise description of where the image was taken, or the authorship. But there is no constant rule in each file or caption that accompanies the image, especially in the books of the author Osbelia Alcaraz (2007, 2009).

The book of Fares (2010) boasts a large collection of photographs that span a wide period. Some are series that show the architectural object from various points of view. Thus, some buildings can be seen in context, isolated or in detail, and with perspectives of pitted or contrapied. As already mentioned above, if in the case of Alcaraz (2007, 2009) the study focuses only on hotel architecture, Fares's study expands its range by incorporating private homes, religious, sports, commercial, and governmental architecture. Likewise, the hotels that have been built in the port at different times.

Unfortunately, Fares (2010) did not carry out a photo analysis work, because with such an important collection he could have enriched the work with better and greater data about the buildings studied. At the end of the text, however, it does provide a clue, as it lists the people who provided the images; in some cases they are collections by the same architects.

### **Chilpancingo**

The growth of the city occurred as a result of its role as a capital city, but also because it is located on the edge of the Mexico-Acapulco highway. It should be remembered that the context is that of the consolidation of the port as a tourist destination. Chilpancingo's 1951 aerial photograph shows that its morphology was square and the dimensions were still similar between its four sides. In that year, the stream of tourists still moved through the central streets. Its limit to the west was the Huacapa river.

In 1955 a bypass is built, so the flow of tourists moves outside the city. Likewise, its expansion begins to lengthen in parallel with the road. Separate areas of the city are already visible in the 1961 aerial photograph, grouped together along the road. Despite this, the Huacapa continues to be a hard margin. But it is not until 1971 that trend is more clearly



evident. New settlements emerge, both for the south and north and to the west, on the other side of the road. The establishment of urban developments was driven by the policy of Rubén Figueroa, whose intention was to displace traditional shopping malls and administrative offices from the city center.

In Chilpancingo two growth logics are presented, which can be observed in two different urban areas. A first growth, by contiguity, is observed on the north-south axis. Growth that is not only due to the layout of the road, but also to the shape of the valley, and the fact that this entire area is located on the lowest and flattest part of it.

The other dimension, in which growth through the road system is more clearly evident, are the colonies established on the hills that surround the valley, both to the east and to the west. The settlement procedure in these cases has been to open gaps towards areas in habitable conditions. So if you turn to see, from the lower parts to the hills, what you see is a large number of paths with crossings everywhere.

As for the urban appearance, it begins to change from the introduction of the road, since elements that did not exist before appear in the landscape, such as gas stations; some of them arranged in popular public spaces. And some houses become hotels and restaurants. The images included in the texts discussed below are produced between the 40s and 60s.

### ***The social movement of 1960: 1960: Graphic history of a social movement (1991)***

The year of 1960 was very important in the history of the city of Chilpancingo and the state of Guerrero. In 1957 Gral. Raúl Caballero Aburto had taken possession as Governor of the State before the disagreement of the people. In the same year, an earthquake, whose epicenter was located in the municipality of Chilpancingo, caused serious damage in the central region of Guerrero. This fact accelerated the urban changes that the city had already undergone since the 1950s in its appearance, since houses built with vernacular architecture were replaced by other types of buildings.

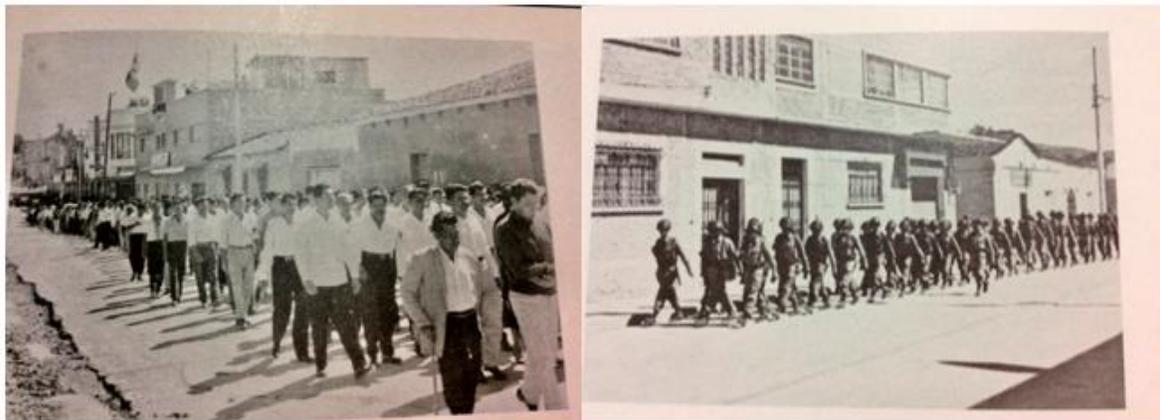
The resulting disagreement was channeled into a university movement, to which other sectors of society soon joined in support of the students. The text of this section shows an important part of the images disseminated in the press at the national level during that moment of effervescence.

The image book of Jesús Salmerón (1991) was published after 30 years of the movement for university autonomy in 1960. It is divided into two parts: in the first part,

testimonies of participants and scholars of the movement are exposed; in the second 101 photos of the event are presented. The two parts are separated, since the texts make no mention of the images, and in the chronology of events the dates mentioned in one and the other do not correspond. The selection of the photographs is not very accurate, because although an attempt is made to follow a sequence of events, there are some images that do not show what the caption indicates about the key moments of the movement.

Since a large part of the events of the movement occur in the streets, most of the images are views of public spaces, where, although the focus is on the crowd, in the details you can see buildings, parks and streets (Figure 2). As I mentioned, the transformation process in the face of the city had started from the passing of tourism towards the port, and had increased in the 1950s. This is reflected in the images where a mixed composition of houses is observed. and buildings made of bajareque and tile coexisting with concrete and earthenware constructions, in the center of the city, which is where the main actions took place. Likewise, the non-concrete floor of a street edge allows to see the road extensions of that period.

**Figura 2.** Fotos cuyos detalles permiten observar el proceso de transformación urbano en Chilpancingo durante el inicio de la segunda mitad del siglo XX



Fuente: Salmerón (1991, pp. 69 y 62, respectivamente)

*Academic study from photohistory: The Salmerón family*

The first academic study on Guerrero photographs is the text by Blanca Jiménez and Samuel Villela published in 1998. In it, the photographic production of three generations of the Salmerón family is addressed. The differences of this book with the others reviewed, regarding the documentation of the images, are evident.

Mraz (2001) quite rightly states that the book subscribes not only to a graphic history, since it shows us how to incorporate the information that the photography contains and locate it in the historical context in which it was produced, but also, its study. It is part of the history of photography, since they present the technical conditions of their photographic production and the means through which they spread their work, elements that make this one very complete.

Jiménez and Villela (1998) mention that the first photographer of the Salmerón family began her career in the city of Chilapa, where she opened her studio. However, later on, some of her descendants moved to Chilpancingo, and in that city they carried out several of their best-known works. As it has been seen in other reviewed texts, the photographs of Amando and Jesús Salmerón are obligatory references for those who have been interested in showing the image that the city had in other times. And although a good part of the photographic production presented in the book are studio photos, the mentioned photographers, who were very versatile and also worked as photojournalists, also recorded moments and places in Chilpancingo on various occasions.

Within the text there are several views between 1930 and 1940; Of these, there are two that attract attention for the purposes proposed here (Figure 3). The first, recorded in 1940, by Amando Salmerón, is an aerial panoramic view, obliquely, that attempts to encompass the city. In the foreground is the Alameda and the university facilities, both located three blocks from the center to the north; that is, taken from north to south. In total, following the avenues that are clearly visible, you can count about 10 blocks that the city reached at that time. Due to the framing, it is a little more complicated to write down the same from west to east, although knowing that the western limit is the river, we can assume that the space shown in the image is the first block.

**Figura 3.** Foto 1: Panorámica de Chilpancingo, ca. 1940; foto 2: Cortejo fúnebre para los ahogados en el Balsas, en el paso de Mezcala. 4/XI/1930<sup>8</sup>



Fuente: Jiménez y Villela (1998)

The second image, also of Amando, this one from 1930, shows a multiple procession that goes down Morelos street towards the pantheon. Five coffins are displayed and the caption of the photo reports that they are people who drowned in the Balsas River. What interests me to highlight is the house that is in the foreground, already very close to the river, with an adobe wall, apparently, and a palm roof. These materials were common in another era, there is even a journalistic chronicle of the 1902 tremor<sup>9</sup> which mentions that the church had a palm roof in the early 20th century. However, that photo provides an image of a town near the coast, since Chilpancingo is more related to tile roofs. Another image taken three years later, about the visit of Niño Fidencio, shows in another location the coexistence of both types of roofing.

Several of the images exposed in the book are now widely circulated online and in the informal commercialization of images, a process through which, unfortunately, the information in the photograph is lost. Fortunately, there is the text by Jiménez and Villela (1998) who documented those images.

<sup>8</sup> Pies de foto en el libro.

<sup>9</sup> Nota publicada en el *Sol de Chilpancingo* el 18 de enero de 2003 en la columna *Silueta* del periodista que firma con el seudónimo Chanssonier.

*Cervantes Delgado government publications: Chilpancingo yesterday and today  
(1987) and two brochures*

During the six-year term of Governor Alejandro Cervantes Delgado (1981-1987), a series of materials on Chilpancingo was published that emphasized the history and urban actions undertaken by the administration in turn. The extension, morphology and structure of the city had undergone drastic changes since the Rubén Figueroa Figueroa government; with Alejandro Cervantes these changes increased even more.<sup>10</sup> The measures implemented in both six-year terms were related to urban policies at the federal level. In fact, many of the actions implemented had been carried out with financing granted through federal projects.

In this context, the printed and videographic materials that were published by the state government were intended to spread these changes. The most important publication of the period is the monograph of Angélica Gutiérrez y Salgado, a recent graduate of the BA in History from the Autonomous University of Guerrero (UAGro), and who was conducting her research to graduate. Knowing about this work, since Angélica worked at the Guerrerense Institute of Culture, she was asked by a close collaborator of the governor to work on the writing with a view to a publication, whose intentions were to "make sense" of the geographic and historical data. that they had from Chilpancingo (p. 8).

For the publication, photographer Oliver Loaeza was hired, who recorded recent shots and also reprographed old paintings, drawings and photographs, including photos of Amando Salmerón, Jesús Salmerón, Guadalupe Damián and Raymundo Lujano.

The text is organized chronologically. The images, for their part, do not necessarily follow this sequence; the logic that followed was intended to illustrate the different themes and stories in the book. In such a way that we have some recent images illustrating the exposition of historical events, without specifying that the photographed place is not the one mentioned in the story. There are also some inaccuracies, such as considering photographs of a series of lithographs of public buildings from the 19th century that had been destroyed as a result of various tremors; and assign the date of 1959 to the UAGro teaching building, since it had serious cracks in the earthquake of 1957, so a new one was demolished and built.

---

<sup>10</sup> Integrante de la corriente de políticos tecnócratas del periodo de Miguel de la Madrid que le apostaban a la planeación pública, y nacido en Chilpancingo, se empeñó en cambiar la imagen de la ciudad y proyectar su desarrollo.

Despite these errors, the testimonial value of the book and of the images of which we do have certainty, which are those registered with a view to publication, is to show us the city in a period of its history. Assets that can (and should) be tracked. Unfortunately, for editing reasons, some black and white photographs were provided with unusual shades: yellow and blue, making their reading a little more complicated.

Two other brochures extend this window to the city of that time (Directorate of Civic, Social and Cultural Activities of the State 1981; Patronage of the 1986 Fair). Both clearly intend to offer a comparison between the years preceding and those following the urban actions of the Alejandro Cervantes government. And to do so, they contrast images of some places captured at different times. Although all the images used were scarcely documented, they constitute a first clue to look for collections from some of the mentioned authors or to generate interest in using images as a source of documentation of urban changes.

## Discussion

Social and historical studies that use photography as a documentary source in Mexico are very recent, although there has been increasing interest in recent years. The topics covered are mainly inscribed in photohistory, a term coined by John Mraz (2007), and generally analyze the production of some photographer or photographer, placing him in a certain social and visual context, the study of some historical event where photography is the resource main methodological or image is analyzed from its aesthetic quality. In this project, it was decided to analyze the visual representation of the cities of Guerrero, combining the study of urban expansion and the growth of infrastructure with its image. The foregoing, considering that there is a relationship between urban and architectural events and the image publication circuit, in order to disseminate them in different formats, for economic, political, or artistic and cultural reasons.

Despite the impetus that the methodological use of images has had in social studies, they are still members of small circles who incorporate this approach.<sup>11</sup> In his text on the philosophy

---

<sup>11</sup> Los seminarios de fotografía del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) y la Mirada Documental del Instituto Mora, así como el Laboratorio Audiovisual de Investigación Social (LAIS) del Mora, y otros espacios audiovisuales en el Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (Ciesas) y la Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia (ENAH), son ejemplos de ello. Estas instancias de discusión y formación permiten poner en contacto a estudiosos de distintas latitudes, y conocer las nuevas temáticas que se abordan desde este campo de estudio.

of photography, Vilém Flusser (1990) explains how images, originally fundamental to humanity in the registration and representation of reality, were relegated by linear writing. This moment was crucial for human communication, but resulted in suspicion of the image. The philosopher calls this capacity to abstract flat forms to represent outer space-time imagination (p. 11). For its part, the abstraction presented in the written text is a conceptualization. But this happens not as a representation of the real, but as a mediation between people and the images they have of that reality (p. 14)

In this way, the history of scientific discourse shows the absolute dominance of the written text. The images, despite fulfilling an important registration function in disciplines such as botany or anthropology, are presented in the publication of results to illustrate, by way of example, graphic exposition, and even to make the text more attractive. The video Successful images of the researcher Fernando Aguayo, from the Mora Institute, provides several examples of this; it exposes the secondary role assigned to the visual by showing the null recognition of space and time of some images that have been frequently reproduced. In such a way that a photograph of trains taken at the beginning of the 20th century illustrates the same texts about Cuba as about different parts of the country, and they are also located with different dates. Sometimes the ignorance about the image is even more evident, when it is placed next to texts that provide contradictory information to it, such as the example of a Tacubaya tram map in the video cited.

This situation is understandable if one considers the difficulties involved in reading it. In his book, Vilém Flusser (1990) offers an important key to understanding these documents. Since photographs (technical images) are constructed from cultural codes, "the 'cultural condition' can inform the photographic act, and —as thesis— it will be possible to decipher it from the photographs" (p. 33). These cultural codes must be made visible.

But Flusser (1990) takes his reflection to the apparatus and the program it contains for the production of these images. Then, he argues that there are tensions between the photographer's intentions and his own cultural codes in the construction of the image, and the camera's programs with his own. Anyone who undertakes a critical use of images should be able to distinguish the predominant codes in these (p. 44). And a second tension has to do with photography and its distribution channels:

The distribution channels, the media, encode the final meaning of the photographs. This encoding is the product of the struggle between the photographer and the distribution devices. By hiding this struggle, the normal photography critic makes the media generally invisible to the recipient of the photographic message. (Flusser, 1990, p. 50).

In this way, it could be said that the analysis of the photographs implies revealing their history through knowing the production and dissemination codes, so that the information contained in the image contributes to the study of society, and in this case, to the of the cities, from their visual representation, as well as the imaginary that was generated by putting them into circulation through different media.

## Conclusions

There is a growing trend in the use of photography as a social document and a greater recognition as a discourse that must be analyzed in a broader social context; This trend is evident in the increase in publications that incorporate it as a core part. However, in the case under study, the treatment is still very unequal, as there is no proper identification of these, and sometimes there is not even authorial recognition. The only text of those mentioned in the article is the one published by the INAH, as its purpose is precisely to recognize the photographic production of the warriors.

The photographic selection in most of the reviewed texts, since they do not have an investigation behind it, does not have its own, autonomous narrative, which can be understood only if one looked at the images. There is also no correspondence between text and image. With the exception, of course, of the book by Francisco Tario and Lola Álvarez Bravo (1993), who did the work together, and by Blanca Jiménez and Samuel Villela (1998).

As for the relationship between urban development and the images disseminated through this medium, it is possible to establish some correspondence between one and the other in the books published by the Government, especially if we consider that they are framed in that purpose. The differences in the urban development of both cities are objectified in the fact that their photographic stories are very different. While in Chilpancingo the known photographs are mainly produced by local photographers, with the exception of cases in which photographers were expressly hired for a publication; in the port of Acapulco, on the other hand, the existing images are much more abundant and are photographs captured by

both locals and photographers recognized in other latitudes, mainly due to the role that this place had as a world tourist destination.

The intention of this work was to contribute to the social and urban study of the state of Guerrero, with the incorporation of the photographic gaze as one more source. Surely this first effort is still insufficient, since photographic production in Guerrero offers more possibilities for study in this perspective. In favor, it can be said that the investigation has not yet concluded, since work is still being done on postal and press images that are not part of a group of images included in current publications; for which it is tracked in private collections, such as that of the historian Francisco Montellano, the Héctor García Foundation, the López Quiroga Gallery, the Salmerón family and some Facebook pages that incorporate photographs of private collections from both cities.

## References

- Aguayo, F. (2013) *Imágenes exitosas*. México: Instituto Mora.
- Alcaraz, O. (2007). *La arquitectura de los hoteles de Acapulco. 1927-1959*. México: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero.
- Alcaraz, O. (2009). *Evolución de la arquitectura hotelera en Acapulco*. México: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero / Conacyt.
- Alessio, V. (1932). *Acapulco en la historia y la leyenda*. México: Mundial.
- Babini, A., Alcaraz, O., Hernández, J. y Salgado, A. C. (2012). El deterioro urbano en las ciudades del Triángulo del Sol en Guerrero. En Rodríguez, M. A. y Rueda, R., *Atlas de Guerrero* (pp. 1-20). La Habana, Cuba: Instituto de Geografía Tropical de La Habana.
- Besse, M. (2003). Geografías aéreas. En McLean, A., *La fotografía del territorio* (pp. 336-363). Barcelona, España: Gustavo Gilli.
- Burian, E. (1999). La arquitectura en instantáneas. *Artes de México*, (48), 44-51.
- Canales, C. (1980). *Romualdo García, un fotógrafo, una ciudad, una época*. México: Gobierno del estado de Guanajuato.
- Dirección de Actividades Cívicas, Sociales y Culturales del Estado. (1981). *Síntesis histórica*. México, Guerrero: Gobierno del estado de Guerrero.
- Espinasa, J. (2000). Francisco Tario y el aforismo (algunas hipótesis). *Revista Casa del Tiempo*. Recuperado en <http://www.uam.mx/difusion/revista/dic2000/index.html>.



- Ettinger, C. (2017). *La arquitectura mexicana desde afuera: episodios en la construcción de un imaginario*. México: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo / Miguel Porrúa.
- Fares del Río, R. (2011). *Acapulco. Arquitectura y ciudad*. México: Academia Nacional de Arquitectura.
- Flusser, V. (1990) *Hacia una filosofía de la fotografía*. México: Trillas.
- Garibay, R. (1978) *Acapulco*. México: Grijalbo.
- González, L. (2010). Técnica e imagen. La fotografía de arquitectura como concepto. *ArtCultura: Revista de Historia, Cultura e Arte*, 12(21), 91-109.
- Gutiérrez, A. y Rodríguez, H. (1987). *Chilpancingo ayer y hoy* (fotografía de Oliver Loeza, Amando Salmerón, Jesús Salmerón, Guadalupe Damián y Raymundo Lujano). México: Instituto Guerrerense de la Cultura.
- Hernández, E. (2017). Fotografía y género. Lola Álvarez en Acapulco. En Cárdenas, A., *Saberes, memoria e imagen. Una construcción con enfoque de género*. México: Ítaca / UAGro.
- Illades, C. (1988). Textos básicos sobre el estado de Guerrero. *Secuencia. Revista de Historia y Ciencias Sociales*, (10), 57-75.
- Jiménez, B. y Villela, S. (1998). *Los Salmerón. Un siglo de fotografía en Guerrero*. México: INAH.
- Kossov, B. (2014). *Lo efímero y lo perpetuo en la imagen fotográfica*. México: Cátedra.
- Monroy, R. (2015). Nuevos retos para los fotohistoriadores: de la fotografía analógica a la digital. *Iztapalapa. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 36(78), 15-44.
- Mraz, J. (2001). Historiar con imágenes. *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe*, 11(1), 77-92.
- Mraz, J. (2007). ¿Fotohistoria o historia gráfica? El pasado mexicano en fotografía. *Cuicuilco*, 14(41), 11-41
- Patronato de la Feria. (1986). *Chilpancingo ayer y hoy* (fotografía de Jesús Salmerón y Juan Plata). México: Banamex.
- Ramírez, J. (1987). Turismo y medio ambiente: el caso de Acapulco. *Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos*, 2(3), 479-512.
- Salmerón, J. (1991). *1960. Historia gráfica de un movimiento social*. México: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero.

Tario, F. y Álvarez, L. (fotografía) (1993). *Acapulco en el sueño*. México: Televisa.

Valenzuela, E. y Coll, A. (2010) La construcción y evolución del espacio turístico de Acapulco (México). *Anales de Geografía*, 30(1), 163-190.