

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Space Culture – Public Engagement in Space through Culture (9)

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SPACE CULTURES AND SPACE IMAGINARIES IN MEXICO: ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIALOGUES
WITH THE MEXICAN SPACE AGENCY

Abstract

In this paper, drawn from anthropological research done for a project on Mexican imaginaries of outer space, I consider the role of the AEM, or Mexican Space Agency, in space education and outreach in Mexico, focusing on the ways in which the AEM engages with different sectors and social groups, including elementary age children, college students undertaking STEM careers and artists who use space imagery and technology in their work.

The research undertaken for this project consists primarily of formal and informal interviews with key actors engaged with outer space who project space into Mexican futures from different perspectives, from enthusiastic involvement in technological advancement as a means of fomenting social and economic progress, to the artistic uses of space and technology as a means of critically reflecting on earthly issues of human relationality and geopolitical power. In addition to interviews, I draw on information gathered from documents, works of art, online discussion groups and attendance at events sponsored by the Mexican Space Agency.

I am particularly interested in exploring the implications of the agency's mission to "promote space culture", as I critically confront anthropological notions of "culture" with the uses of this concept in the public sphere. I am also interested in understanding what is "Mexican" about Mexican space culture, and how national institutions and actors relate to their international counterparts.